# STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA COUNCIL WEBSITE INCLUDING DISTRICT AND COUNCIL COMMITTEE WEB PAGES AND UNIT WEB SITES

## 1. GUIDELINES - ADAPTED FROM BSA NATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR COUNCIL WEBSITES

### Rules and Regulations

The *Rules and Regulations of the Boy Scouts of America, No. 57-492* and the *Charter and Bylaws of the Boy Scouts of America, No. 57-491,* are primary resources for the rules and regulations of Web site management. This document is issued by the National Capital Area Council to provide specific and detailed guidance.

### Representation

Although the National Capital Area Council provides guidelines which govern the local district sites, each of these sites is the product of the local district. Any district that accepts being part of the council website must understand that their district or committee pages represent the National Capital Area Council as well as the district or committee that maintains it.

## 2. NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA COUNCIL STANDARDS

**The National Capital Area Council will not acknowledge or provide links to sites that do not meet the following eight guidelines.** The guidelines that are posted on the web will be deemed as the most current and will supersede any previously posted versions or any printouts of these guidelines.

### Approval Guidelines

1. **The district or council committee must have direct control over the content of its official Web pages, meaning the district or council committee webmaster controls the information on the web pages.**

2. **The content of the pages must be appropriate to the Scouting movement.**

3. **The pages cannot contain links to any sites that contain material that is not appropriate to the Scouting movement.**

4. **The pages cannot contain any advertisements or commercial endorsements.**

5. **The pages cannot engage in the electronic sale of BSA Supply Division merchandise or competing products.**

6. **The pages cannot replicate any BSA publication currently for sale through the Supply Division.**

7. **Web pages must abide by all laws regarding copyrights, trademarks, and other intellectual property, and by those pertaining to the Internet.**

8. **The pages must consider the safety and privacy of their members and participants by obtaining the necessary permissions to release information about or images of any individual.**

# 3. PROVIDING CONTACT INFORMATION

Regarding e-mail specifically, there remains the potential for a flood of correspondence (spam) to overwhelm the district staff if e-mail addresses are published on the Web site. The presence of e-mail addresses on a majority of council sites would seem to suggest that this potential has not become an actual problem, but the council and district should be prepared to react, possibly by removing contact from its site or even shutting down the mailbox, if problems do occur.

Contact information should only be published for a reason—specifically, whether there is a valid need for the members and/or the public to speak directly with a given individual because of that person's role in the organization.

Written permission must be obtained from the person providing contact information.  (Email printout is viable) The forms can be obtained from the Council or can be located on the Council website.  The district webmaster is responsible for obtaining the authorizations to post contact information.  Periodically, the Council will audit a district's pages and require proof of authorization forms from the webmaster for every person whose contact information is listed.

## Youth Participants and Parents

Contact information for youth participants should never be provided on the Internet. If the district or council committee wishes to maintain contact information for youth participants, these lists must be kept entirely off-line.

Concerning e-mail addresses in particular, districts or council committees should be aware that there are computer programs that crawl the Internet compiling lists of e-mail addresses that appear on Web pages. These lists are often sold to e-mail marketers who regularly send unsolicited advertisements, primarily for pornography and pyramid schemes.

## Adult Volunteers

Contact information for adult volunteers should be treated with caution, as it is likely this information will be personal in nature (home addresses, residential telephone numbers, and private e-mail accounts). If this information is made available on the Web site, it would be preferable to provide it in a password-protected area of the Web site to which the general public has no access. Exceptions may be made for those volunteers whom it would be necessary for third parties to contact in order to obtain information about joining, starting, or supporting individual units.

This information should only be published after obtaining written/emailed authorization, and that these individuals should know that they can (and how to) request the prompt removal of their information at any time.

# 4. WEB SITE CONTENT

## Web Pages
**Decorum**
Scouters should exercise propriety and good taste online. Material that will be posted to a unit site or sent from a unit e-mail account should be reviewed by at least three adult members of the unit committee. Access (the ability to place material on the site or send messages from the account) should be controlled by an adult who is responsible to the committee.

**Youth Protection**
**Names, and especially contact information pertaining to youth members, should *never* be gathered or published over the Internet. Additionally, photos should never identify a youth by name.**

**Copyright**
Do not "borrow" (without permission) content for use in unit Web sites. Written permission should always be obtained. Even when material is declared to be "free" or "public domain;" it might not be.
The web pages should provide information that is specific to their district. General information about the Scouting program, Council events, Council or National forms and other general Scouting information will be posted in the other sections of the Council Web site. The district pages will be able to link to this information.

Recommended types of information for district pages include: areas served, district meeting information (time and location), key 3 contacts, upcoming events, training dates, current news specific to the district, and district calendar dates.

## National Council Publications

Local councils and districts may reproduce the content of any BSA "bin resources" publication they feel is appropriate for their sites' audiences. However, councils and districts may ***not*** replicate any part of any publication currently for sale through the Supply Division. The difference between "bin" and "supply" items may seem unclear for those items the council and district purchases but then redistributes without charge to its members. Item numbers provide a reliable method of differentiation: bin items have five-digit numbers separated with a hyphen (00-000) whereas Supply Division items have four or five digits (the first is typically a 3 or 4) that are not separated by a hyphen (0000 or 00000). (The item number is generally printed on the back cover or at the bottom of the contents page.)

Content of *Boys' Life* and *Scouting* magazines should never be reproduced on Web sites without first obtaining permission from the Magazine Division. Many articles and images are included in the magazines under limited license and copying them could violate copyright law.

## Third-Party Material

If a district or council committees wish to include any content (whether text, photographs, illustrations, design, or programming), that is not developed by the district or by third parties under the terms of a contract or agreement with the district, it is important to obtain written permission from the owner of that material. Even if the material is owned by a volunteer or donor and is provided with the understanding it will be used in the district's site, written permission remains important.

In its simplest form, this written permission can be provided in a letter that explicitly states that the owner will permit the Boy Scouts of America to use the material. It is also common to indicate the duration (dates) for which the permission is granted, the medium (media) in which the reproduction may occur, and any restrictions that may apply.

## 5. MATERIALS FROM OTHER WEB SITES

Reusing material found on the Internet is *especially* dangerous. It is all too common for amateur Web publishers to take copyrighted material and reproduce it on their own Web sites and say that it is "free" or "public domain." A written agreement is prudent, regardless of any explicit disclaimer on a Web site, before using any material downloaded from the Web. It is especially important to obtain permission in advance for materials used on the Internet. Unlike newsletters, which are distributed only to members, the Internet is available to the public, and it is inevitable that the owner will discover your use of their material on your Web site.

## 6. LINKS TO OTHER WEB SITES

In general, districts should be cautious about linking to other Web sites. A user may follow a link from the district's site to another, which links to another and another ... and the chain of links may lead to a site that contains unacceptable content. Though experienced users recognize the ownership of Web pages, inexperienced ones may feel the district is culpable for content they are exposed to after clicking links that lead them several sites removed from the district's site.

*Links from district or council committee pages to other Web sites must be approved by the National Capital Area Council webmaster, which may take up to one week.*

Another significant implication about links is that a link to a third-party site implies an endorsement. It will be assumed that the district endorses the content for use by its audience, which is primarily composed of its membership.

## 7. THIRD-PARTY "SCOUTING" SITES

There are numerous Scouting-oriented sites on the Internet that are not maintained or authorized by the BSA. These sites provide a wealth of general-interest information on topics of interest to members and program participants (camping, games, songs and skits, crafts, etc.). Some of these sites also provide information such as program helps, advice for leaders, requirements, procedures, forms, publications, ceremonies, and other resources that would seem to be of an official nature, but which are not authorized by the BSA. In some cases, this information is misleading or incorrect, and could cause conflict with members who refer to unofficial sources the district "endorsed." Worse, these sites may suggest activities that are unacceptable or unsafe by BSA standards, causing potential liabilities for a district that "authorized" (by linking to) the site for use by its members.  Be VERY careful about linking to a third party scouting site.  Be sure to monitor the site routinely if you do link to it.

### Third-Party Commercial Sites

While many commercial sites provide valuable information of a non-commercial nature, districts should be careful when linking to these sites to avoid the impression that the district is endorsing commercial products or services. Annotation often makes the difference, as in this example: A link to xyzboots.com (the XYZ Boot Company's home page) appears to be a commercial endorsement. If you added the sentence "The XYZ Boot Company provides excellent advice for avoiding hiking injuries," and then linked directly to the page about avoiding hiking injuries, you clarify that the district endorses the information the company is providing rather than the product it is selling.

## Sites with "Free" Services

"Free" site components tend to be commercial. Certain sites offer services such as statistics, hit counters, guest books, animations, and the like to other Web sites. Like the bogus "awards," sites and sites offering "free" Web space or e-mail, the primary purpose of these giveaways is to advertise and plant links to the "donor" site on a wide range of Web sites in order to draw audience away from its "benefactors." Of course, there is plenty of legitimate reference Web sites as well. The best approach when you consider linking to a site is to "click through" the site while asking yourself, "Why are they offering this service? What do they want from me?" The answer should tell you whether you want to link to the site or not.

## 8. CONTENT AND LINKS TO AVOID

### Advertisements and Banners

Districts are prohibited from endorsing commercial products or services in any medium, including the Internet. Banner advertisements for commercial products and services are thus inappropriate for district Web sites. (NOTE: any use of the Internet for fund-raising is subject to the same policies and procedures as other fund-raising activities.)

Another popular type of banner on the Internet provides site owners with free promotion on other Web sites in exchange for promoting other sites on theirs. Though not strictly a commercial endorsement, these banners remain unacceptable because they provide a highly visible link from the district site to others, and the district does not control either the graphic that is displayed or the site to which it links - one or both may be patently inappropriate.

### Web Site Awards and Certification

There are a number of Web sites that offer "awards" or "certification" for other sites. These awards/certifications often require the honoree to display an URL or provide a click-through link that promotes the grantor's site. In many cases, such "honors" are ploys to draw traffic to other sections of the grantor's site, with a commercial or political motive. These must be avoided.

# GUIDANCE FOR UNIT WEBSITES

After considerable discussion and review, the BSA national council has issued the "Guidance for Unit Websites" below. These guidelines address a few vital items pertaining to unit Websites.  District Webmasters will be allowed to link to these sites if they follow these guidelines.  The Boy Scouts of America provides the following advice for units using privately owned Web sites and e-mail accounts to communicate information about Scouting.

**Decorum**
Scouters should exercise propriety and good taste online.  Material that will be posted to a unit site or sent from a unit e-mail account should be reviewed by at least three adult members of the unit committee.  Access (the ability to place material on the site or send messages from the account) should be controlled by an adult who is responsible to the committee.

**Youth Protection**
**Names, and especially contact information pertaining to youth members, should *never* be gathered or published over the Internet.  Additionally, photos should never identify a youth by name**
There's a federal law (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act) that explicitly prohibits using the Internet for publishing or collecting personal information for children under 13 without written consent from a parent (a signed letter). No contact information for scouts under the age of 13 should be published on any District or Unit site. We do not allow publication of contact information for youth even with parental consent and even if they're 13-17 years of age. For areas of the Scouting program that may have a need, such as the Order of the Arrow, the only contact information published, should be a generic email address that is redirected to the Scout. For example, if the Lodge wishes to have email addresses for key leadership positions, the email should be something like: chapterchief@chapter.org, then have the mail redirected to the appropriate person.

**Copyright**
Do not "borrow" (without permission) content for use in unit Web sites.  Written permission should always be obtained.  Even when material is declared to be "free" or "public domain;" it might not be.

**National Capital Area Council Links to Units**
When considering whether to link to a unit Web site, the National Capital Area Council, via the district Webmasters, will assess the unit's Website to ensure it complies with the guidelines.

**On-Line "Conversation"**
Chat, guest books, and bulletin boards are three forms of interactivity that are not permitted for districts pages or unit sites because they require dedicated resources to monitor and control them sufficiently.

**Chat Rooms.** These are on-line forums in which users "converse" by typing messages to one another in real time. Recent advances have also made it possible to audio- or videoconference on the Internet. The first concern for districts should be youth protection issues; also "chat" makes it impossible for districts to control the text content of their sites. Because conversations take place in real time, messages are immediately posted to the site for others to view. Also, because chat participants are anonymous, often there is much less discretion exercised than in most forms of conversation.
The Council doesn't allow district pages or unit sites to use  "live conversation" " technology altogether.

**Guest Books**. Guest book programs allow not allowed.

**Bulletin Boards and News Groups.** These are a form of chat in slow motion: Users post messages and others may read and respond at a later time. Bulletin boards have the same inherent risks as chat.  The Council does not allow bulletin boards and news groups.