FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY, INC.
P.O. Box 5007
Gainesville, FL 32627
October 20, 2026

Abuse Definitions and Reporting Procedures

1. Purpose and Scope

This policy defines abuse, molestation, and neglect, sets the response to inappropriate behavior between minors, and gives every covered person a clear path to report, including anonymously. It supplements Section 3 of the FNPS Code of Conduct (Working with Minors and Youth Programming, approved September 17, 2026), the FNPS Background Screening Policy (approved September 17, 2026), and Scouting America's Safeguarding Youth Training (https://www.scouting.org/training/safeguarding-youth/).

It applies to every FNPS staff member, contractor, intern, volunteer, board member, and Chapter leader in any FNPS role, activity, or event involving contact with minors. A minor is anyone under 18 years of age.

The Executive Director enforces the policy and the Operations Director administers and enforces this procedure. Each covered person reviews it and signs the Code of Conduct acknowledgment before any contact with minors, and again each year.

2. Definitions

FNPS adopts the following definitions, based on the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and consistent with Florida Statutes Chapter 39. Where Florida law defines a term more broadly, Florida law controls.

Child Abuse. Any recent act or failure to act by an adult that results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation of a minor, or that presents an imminent risk of serious harm. Includes acts or circumstances that threaten a minor with harm.

Physical Abuse. Any nonaccidental physical injury to a minor, including striking, kicking, burning, biting, or any action that results in injury or impairment.

Sexual Abuse and Molestation. Any sexual contact with a minor, or any use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of a minor to engage in or assist with sexually explicit conduct, including for the purpose of producing images. Includes rape, molestation, prostitution, incest, and any other sexual exploitation of a minor. Molestation means any touching of a minor for sexual purposes, whether over or under clothing.

Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking. Allowing or causing a minor to engage in prostitution, sexual performance, or the production of sexual images, and any sex or labor trafficking of a minor.

Emotional Abuse. Injury to a minor's psychological capacity or emotional stability, shown by an observable or substantial change in behavior, emotional response, or thinking, such as anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or aggression. Includes threats, humiliation, and intimidation.

Neglect. Failure of a person responsible for a minor to provide needed supervision, food, shelter, or medical care to the degree that the minor's health, safety, or well-being is threatened.

Grooming. A pattern of behavior by an adult or older youth that builds inappropriate trust, secrecy, or isolation with a minor, such as gifts, private messages, special attention, or testing boundaries, to prepare for abuse.

Peer-on-Peer Abuse. Any abuse listed above committed by one minor against another, including sexual contact, physical assault, bullying, harassment, or sharing sexual images.

FNPS has zero tolerance for abuse and molestation of any minor in its care. Any of the conduct above results in immediate removal from a covered role and a report under Section 4.

3. Inappropriate Behavior Between Minors

Adults supervising minors are responsible for preventing and stopping inappropriate or sexualized behavior between minors. Two-deep leadership and the Open Door Policy, as set out in Section 3 of the FNPS Code of Conduct, apply at all times.

Inappropriate behavior between minors includes sexual touching or contact, sexual talk or gestures, exposing oneself, sharing or requesting sexual images, bullying, hazing, threats, and physical aggression.

When an adult observes or learns of such behavior:

1. Stop the behavior immediately and separate the minors involved.
2. Ensure each minor is safe and supervised by two screened adults.
3. Notify each minor's parent or guardian the same day.
4. If the behavior involves sexual contact, sexual images, force, or injury, report it immediately as described in Section 4. Florida law treats sexual abuse of one child by another as reportable to the Florida Abuse Hotline.
5. Report all other incidents to the Executive Director within 24 hours under Section 5.
6. Document what was observed, who was involved, and what actions were taken, using factual language only.

4. How to Report Suspected Abuse

In Florida, any person who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse, abandonment, or neglect must report it. Every covered person reports directly; no one needs permission from FNPS, and no one may delay a report to investigate first.

1. **Immediate danger:** call 911 first.
2. **Report to the Florida Abuse Hotline right away:** call 1-800-962-2873 (1-800-96-ABUSE); TTY/Relay 711 or 1-800-955-8771; online at reportabuse.myflfamilies.com (not for situations that need immediate attention); or fax 1-800-914-0004.
3. **Then notify the parent/guardian** right after.
4. **Then notify the Executive Director** the same day. If the Executive Director is involved or unavailable, notify the Board President.
5. **Submit a written follow-up report** to the Executive Director within 24 hours.
6. **The Executive Director informs the Executive Committee.** The Executive Committee decides whether the person involved is removed from their role pending investigation.

What to tell the Hotline. Who was involved; what happened; when and where it happened; any injuries; and what the minor said, in their own words. Specific descriptions matter most.

Other resources. The Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-422-4453 (call or text, 24/7), offers guidance before or after a report. Suspected online sexual exploitation of a minor can also be reported to the NCMEC CyberTipline.

FNPS does not retaliate against anyone who reports in good faith.

5. Reporting Policy Violations and Concerns

A policy violation that does not involve suspected abuse, such as a lapse in two-deep leadership, a closed door, or an improper message to a minor, is reported to the Executive Director within 24 hours. The Executive Director reports it to the Executive Committee, which decides whether law enforcement or child protective services must be notified and whether the person may continue in their role.

Staff, volunteers, members, parents, participants, and the public may raise a concern through any of these channels:

- **Executive Director:** executivedirector@fnps.org or (352) 709-9070.
- **Board President:** when the concern involves the Executive Director, or when the reporter prefers.

- **FNPS Concern Form (anonymous):** an online form linked on fnps.org that requires no name or login, reviewed by the Executive Director and the Board President.

Anonymous concerns receive the same review as named ones. A concern involving suspected abuse is also reported to the Florida Abuse Hotline under Section 4; the anonymous form never replaces a Hotline report.

6. Responding When a Minor Discloses Abuse

A calm, supportive first response protects the minor and the investigation.

Do:

- Stay calm and listen.
- Tell the minor they did the right thing by telling you.
- Ask only what you need to make a report: what happened, who was involved, and where.
- Write down their words exactly, as soon as you can.
- Keep the minor safe and with two screened adults.
- Report immediately under Section 4.

Do not:

- Show shock, anger, or disbelief.
- Promise to keep it a secret.
- Question for details, ask leading questions, or investigate.
- Confront the person accused.
- Discuss it with anyone beyond those who must be told.
- Wait to see if it happens again.

References

- Child Welfare Information Gateway, Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect (current through June 2025), childwelfare.gov.
- Child Welfare Information Gateway, How to Report Child Abuse and Neglect, childwelfare.gov.
- Florida Department of Children and Families, How to Report Abuse, myflfamilies.com.
- Child Welfare Information Gateway, Parental Substance Use as Child Maltreatment and Definitions of Domestic Violence, State Statutes Series.