



May 17, 2023

To: PPC Unit Key 3 (Unit Leader, Committee Chair and Chartered Organization Representative)

Cc: PPC Executive Board, District Volunteers and Staff

Re: FBI Investigation - Frequently Asked Questions

On May 4, 2023, we were informed by the FBI that William Mickel, who was formerly employed as a part time clerk at the Winnebago Scout Reservation trading post, had been arrested earlier that day. Mickel was indicted on federal charges of possession and distribution of child pornography.

The FBI provided us 3 hours' notice before they released their public statement, and we immediately began working with the BSA and FBI to coordinate a message to our Scouting community that would be supportive of the FBI investigation. On May 5, 2023, the message was jointly approved by the BSA and our volunteers at 11:00 AM and by the FBI at 1:00 PM. At that time, we immediately started distributing the message to more than 1,000 volunteers.

Our Scouting families reactions have been mostly supportive; however, some parents and volunteers have questions about exactly what happened and what information we are permitted to share.

We are committed to transparency and have shared all the information that the FBI provided and will continue to do so to the extent we are permitted. We fully cooperated with the authorities and complied with

all BSA protocols. In addition, we have been personally addressing individual inquiries. We will continue this practice and will take all steps to protect the safety of all Scouts and their families.

We are hopeful that these FAQ's will be helpful in providing answers to the most common questions we have received. We encourage each leader to contact Scout Executive, Marc Andreo at marc.andreo@scouting.org on behalf of their unit families if they have any additional questions.

1. The link to the FBI questionnaire in the email to volunteer leaders did not work when forwarded, can you provide the link again?

While it was rare that it did not work when forwarded, here it is:

<https://forms.fbi.gov/williammickel>

2. Was there a background check performed on the alleged perpetrator?

Yes. Mickel had a criminal background check.

3. If the alleged perpetrator was first arrested in 2022, why didn't the council inform us then? Why wait a year?

When Mickel was arrested by local authorities in 2022, we were directed by law enforcement not to comment, to avoid potentially jeopardizing their ongoing investigation. We were not advised of any details or the extent of Mickel's alleged crimes until May 4, 2023. When Mickel was arrested in 2022, we immediately revoked his registration and added his name to the BSA's Volunteer Screening Database thereby precluding him from any future registration as a volunteer, employee or participant in any capacity in the Boy Scouts of America.

When we asked the Morris County Prosecutors Office if there was anything we could do that would be helpful to law enforcement, the Assistant Prosecutor thanked us for our cooperation and stated that there was no information to report, the investigation was ongoing and if anything changed, they would let us know.

4. Why is there such a broad time period being covered?

Mickel worked periodically for the Council from the summer of 2015 until his arrest as a part time clerk at the Winnebago Scout Reservation Trading Post in 2022. Camp Somers is also being covered because Mickel had a key to the trading post to periodically rotate inventory. The timeframe of August 2019 through March of 2022 was provided by the FBI we believe this to be out of an abundance of caution.

5. What did the FBI share with the council?

On May 4, 2023, we were informed by the FBI that Mickel set up hidden cameras at Winnebago Scout Reservation and Camp Somers at Mt. Allamuchy Scout Reservation. As part of its ongoing investigation, the FBI is trying to identify potential victims who may have visited either camp between August 2019 and March 2022. While Patriots' Path Council is cooperating with the FBI, the FBI has not provided us with any specific details of their ongoing investigation and, therefore, we have no way of ascertaining the Scouts, volunteers or families that may have been affected by this. Additionally, we have no knowledge of the number of images, or the number of Scouts and Scouters involved. This is why, along with the FBI and BSA, we asked our units' leadership to forward the May 5, 2023 message to their Scouting families if a unit or a Scout visited these camps during this time period. Prior to May 4, 2023, the FBI had not contacted us regarding these alleged crimes, nor were we aware of their investigation.

6. How can this happen at one of our camps?

Sadly, this can and does happen throughout society. It can and does happen at schools, within other organizations, and at other camps. The most important thing we can all do together is raise awareness.

7. What precautions are being taken to prevent this from happening again?

We have covered power outlets in areas of risk and continue to check power outlets and buildings for devices at the end of each session of camp. That includes weekends and during summer camp. We will begin doing random checks of these public areas while camping is in session. Again, awareness is a major part of keeping our youth safe, and we believe that our camps are safer now because of this awareness.

Based on what we learned on May 5, 2023, our council under the direction of our Risk Management / Scouting Safely Committee will be implementing the following hidden recording device precautions prior to our summer camps:

- Sweep of camps by industry consultant prior to camp
- Purchase detection equipment and train our Rangers to perform weekly and periodic sweeps throughout the year
- Place outdoor security cameras in public areas of camp
- Continue displaying BSA Barriers to Abuse posters
- Develop and display PPC posters - specific to hidden recording device precautions to raise awareness
- Consult with other organizations on best practices

Additionally, we will implement the following general safety features prior to our summer camps:

- Purchase license plate readers to monitor vehicles on our properties
- Place guard houses at entrances to camp
- Place trail cameras and signage around property boundaries
- Implement colored bracelet system to identify groups in camp
- Distribute Scouting Safely postcards to raise awareness

As a reminder, the BSA and PPC have a multilayered process of safeguards including the following measures, all of which are designed to act as barriers to abuse:

- mandatory Youth Protection training for all volunteers and employees that must be renewed biannually.
- a leadership policy that requires at least two Youth-Protection trained adults be present with youth at all times during Scouting activities and bans one-on-one situations where adults would have any interaction alone with children — either in person, online, or via phone or text,
- a thorough screening process for adult leaders and staff including criminal background checks,
- a ban on the use of recording devices/cell phones near bathrooms and shower houses, and
- the prompt mandatory reporting of any allegation or suspicion of abuse to law enforcement.

The BSA also offers a 24/7 Scouts First Helpline (1-844-SCOUTS1) and email contact address (scouts1st@scouting.org) for help reporting suspected abuse or inappropriate behavior. For more information about the BSA's Youth Protection policies and our efforts to be part of the broader solution to child abuse, please visit [Scouting.org/YouthSafety](https://www.scouting.org/YouthSafety).

8. Were images posted to the internet?

Due to the ongoing investigation, the FBI will not disclose this to us.

9. Were both boys and girls potentially victims?

Due to the ongoing investigation, the FBI will not disclose this to us.

10. Will the BSA provide counseling to individual youth who have been impacted and whose family request this service?

Yes, the BSA provides access to counseling services to at no cost to the family. Parents should contact Scout Executive, Marc Andreo at marc.andreo@scouting.org if their child is experiencing trauma and would like to engage services.

11. Is this the first camera incident the council is aware of?

We are aware of one previous issue. During the summer of 2021, we had an incident at Winnebago Scout Reservation during summer camp where a Scout found a recording device in the trading post bathroom. He immediately turned in the device and we immediately alerted the Rockaway Township police department. Detectives came to the camp the next morning to check the entire property for additional recording devices and none were found. Working with detectives, we informed leaders in camp of the matter. Law enforcement provided suggestions to protect the privacy of those attending camp and prevent future occurrences. We immediately covered outlets that were in the trading post bathrooms as a precaution. We also began checking and continue to check those areas in both of our camps. With our full cooperation and assistance, law enforcement investigated to determine who may have

placed the device in the bathroom but did not inform us of any suspects. We were relieved when we were assured by law enforcement that the device found could not transmit to the internet and had no images on it. When asked, the FBI confirmed that this incident was not related to their ongoing investigation. For months, we continued to follow-up with the Morris County Prosecutors Office to see if their ongoing investigation had discovered anything new. We were continually assured that if anything changes as it relates to Scouting, they would let us know.

12. Did the Patriots' Path Council or law enforcement find any cameras or recording devices?

On May 11, 2022, we were asked by Chester Police to allow law enforcement access to both of our camps to check for hidden cameras. On May 20, 2022, a representative of our council met the New Jersey State Police Electronic Device KP Unit at Winnebago Scout Reservation and Camp Somers at Mt. Allamuchy Scout Reservation to offer our council's support in an extensive electronic storage device search using the State Police and canine assets. There were no positive alerts from the canines. No devices were found and both camps were deemed free and clear of any recording devices. We were not alerted to and did not otherwise know that the search was potentially related to Mickel's arrest.

13. Does the council have specifics on what was found and where?

Again, no cameras were found at camp. We do know that based on us identifying photographs (with no youth images) that the Winnebago Trading Post bathrooms and the bathrooms at Turkey Lodge which are the bathrooms directly outside the Camp Somers dining hall were

impacted. We do not know, and the FBI will not disclose, the potential of other locations due to the ongoing investigation.

14. Why is Patriots' Path Council asking the Unit Key 3 to forward the email to families?

We strategized with key council leadership, the BSA's National Youth Protection Executive who has 30+ years of law enforcement experience and separately with the FBI special agents and based on the number of Scouts that attend our camps and based on our leaders having the most reliable distribution lists, we felt it would have the best and most effective way to reach our families.

15. Should we send the email to past Scouts parents who may have participated at Winnebago Scout Reservation or Camp Somers at Mount Allamuchy Scout Reservation?

Yes, we believe that is very important.

16. Will the FBI be contacting us if we send a picture?

Currently, individuals contacting the FBI are receiving an automatic reply message. The FBI did not disclose if they would be replying to every submission.

17. Should adult volunteers and families that were potentially affected send their pictures as well?

Yes, The FBI has requested adult volunteers and families send their pictures as well. This was in their original message.

We would like to contact the agents at the FBI with questions or concerns about the investigation – who do we call or write to?

The FBI has directed us to not provide special agent contact information to concerned parents and volunteer leaders. All parents and volunteer leaders can forward questions and information to the WMVictims@fbi.gov email address and are still urged to complete the questionnaire. The FBI also clarified that they do not provide updates on how they manage their investigations or what steps they are taking to collect evidence. They also shared that at this point the case is pending and if there are any changes, they will update only those that are identified as victims.

18. What council resources are available to help support our Unit in respect to Youth Protection issues?

We encourage everyone to visit the Patriots' Path Council Scouting Safely page <https://ppcbsa.org/scoutingsafely/> that has both local and BSA resources available for all aspects of Youth Protection and the BSA's commitment to safety in our programs. Additionally, we want to remind everyone to report any incident that could potentially affect youth or volunteer leaders regardless of the potential severity.

Additionally, the BSA offers a 24/7 Scouts First Helpline (1-844-SCOUTS1) and email contact address (scouts1st@scouting.org) for help reporting suspected abuse or inappropriate behavior. For more information about the BSA's youth protection policies and our efforts to be part of the broader solution to child abuse, please visit Scouting.org/YouthSafety.

19. If I am contacted by the media, what should I do?

As with any situation involving the media, please direct any requests for more information or media inquiries to pr@scouting.org