

Garden State Boy Scout Council

Scouting and Special Needs Advancement

There needs to be a lot more emphasis on what a child CAN do,
instead of what he cannot do.

[Temple Grandin](#)



Scouting with Disabilities = Scouting with Abilities

We can learn to see each other and see ourselves in each other and recognize that human beings are more alike than we are unlike.

Maya Angelou

- All scouts with or without a disability want to be accepted, fit in, be part of a group, eager for adventure and have friends.
- Everyone experiences emotions, as well as scouts with disabilities, they just do not express them as others express them

BSA “Inclusion” Philosophy

- The BSA’s policy is to treat members with disabilities as much like other members as possible. Scouts with disabilities should participate in the same program as do their peers.

- It has been traditional to make some accommodations in advancement requirements if absolutely necessary.

- This policy is designed to help Scouts with disabilities succeed along with their peers.

- Practical suggestions are made to leaders as to adaptive approaches and methods they can use.

- Helping scouts develop socially
- Learn acceptable behaviors from their peers
- Learning life skills
- Teaches acceptance and tolerance to all scouts



Understanding the Scout

- Each scout will present unique needs
- They may be socially awkward
- Do not understand personal space
- They need and thrive on structure
- Do not understand idioms, very literal
- Their senses of smell, hearing, tasting, touching, sound & sight can be heightened more than others
- May experience melt downs from being over stimulated
- Visual – hands on learner
- Transitioning from one activity to another may be difficult

Communication



- How do you approach the families..
- Don't approach with how their scout should fit into the program.....rather how can you help their scout get the most out of scouting
- Find out their strengths, likes/dislikes
- Family may open up once they realize you have the scout's best interest
- When family informs you of their son's disability – do not ask for diagnosis – be sure to get their approval on informing other leaders and/or the Senior Patrol Leader
- Keep the line of communication open – let the family know how things are going after a few weeks or a month

INDIVIDUAL SCOUT ADVANCEMENT PLAN (ISAP)

- Non-Threatening Plan
- Like an IEP, but specific to scouting
- Tool to help parents and leaders map out a plan for the scout
- Adaptive approaches and methods that leaders can use
- Used to document proposed and approved advancement requirements
- A “contract” that can be followed and updated

Cub Scout Advancement

Guide to Advancement, Topic 10.2.1.0

The standard is “Do Your Best.”

- ❖ Cubmasters and pack committees may jointly determine appropriate substitutions for youth unable to attempt a requirement.
- ❖ Parents can assist by providing input on their son’s abilities and challenges.

Boy Scout Rank Advancement

Guide to Advancement, Topic 10.2.2.0

- ♣ Rank requirements are to be completed as written, no more and no less.
- ♣ Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class can be modified via a request for approval from the council advancement committee. (*Guide to Advancement*, Topics 10.2.2.1 and 10.2.2.2).
- ♣ Venturers and Sea Scouts working on Boy Scout advancement, and Varsity Scouts, are treated as Boy Scouts.

Documenting a Disability...

Required to qualify for ISAP, alternative requirements or registration beyond the age of eligibility.

- ♣ Obtain letter from parent describing disability
- ♣ Provide youth application or membership card
- ♣ Complete BSA health form (parts A and C)
- ♣ Obtain statement from health professional
- ♣ Obtain letter from unit leader
- ♣ Provide other available supporting documentation, such as an “IEP”

Alternate Requirements for Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class Ranks

- **Step 1—Do As Many Standard Requirements As Possible.**
- Before applying for alternate requirements, the Scout must complete as many of the standard requirements as his ability permits. He must do his very best to develop himself to the limit of his abilities and resources.
- **Step 2—Secure a Medical Statement.**
- A clear and concise medical statement concerning the Scout's disabilities must be submitted by a licensed health-care provider. It must state that the disability is permanent and outline what physical activities the Scout may not be capable of completing. In the case of a mental disability, an evaluation statement should be submitted by a certified educational administrator relating the ability level of the Scout.
- **Step 3—Prepare a Request for Alternate Requirements.**
- A written request must be submitted to the council advancement committee for the Scout to work on alternate requirements for Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class ranks. The request should include the standard requirements the Scout has completed and the suggested alternate requirements for those requirements the Scout cannot complete. This request should be detailed enough to give the advancement committee enough information to make a decision. The request should be prepared by the Scout, his parents, and his Scoutmaster. A copy of the medical statement in step 2 should be included.
- **Step 4—The Advancement Committee Reviews the Request.**
- The council advancement committee will review the request. The advancement committee may want to interview the Scout, the parents, and the leader to fully understand the request and to make a fair determination. The decision of the advancement committee should be recorded and delivered to the Scout and the Scoutmaster.

Alternate Merit Badges for the Eagle Scout Rank

- Before applying, he must earn as many of the Eagle-required merit badges as possible. Any alternatives must present the same challenge and learning level as those they replace. Unless the Scout has been approved for registration beyond the age of eligibility, all merit badges must be completed by the 18th birthday (reference Guide to Advancement, topic 10.1.0.1–10.1.0.2).
- 1. Obtain a clear and concise statement related to the nature of the disability from a qualified health-care professional.
- 2. The unit leader meets with the candidate and his parent or guardian to determine the alternative merit badges to replace those impeding his progression.
- 3. The unit leader, parent or guardian, and the Scout (if possible) prepare supporting letters to accompany the application.
- 4. The district and council advancement committees, in turn, review the proposed alternative merit badges. They may choose to speak with the Scout, his parent or guardian, or unit leader. If the council advancement committee approves, then the candidate may start work on the merit badges. Note: In approving the application, the district and council advancement committees must utilize the expertise of a health-care professional involved with youth who have disabilities.
- 5. Upon completion of the Eagle Scout rank requirements, using the alternative merit badges, the candidate appears before a board of review. This approved application must be attached to the Eagle Scout Rank Application.
- 6. Following a successful board of review, the council processes both applications and forwards them to the national Advancement Team. Local council action on alternative merit badges does not require national approval.

Possible alternatives for required merit badges

* These possible alternatives are merely suggestions that could provide similar learning experiences. The list is not considered all-inclusive. It is important for unit leaders to use reasonable accommodation and common sense in the application of the alternative merit badge program.

- **CAMPING** Backpacking Canoeing Kayaking Pioneering Rowing Search and Rescue Wilderness Survival
- **COMMUNICATIONS** Digital Technology Electronics Graphic Arts Journalism Moviemaking Photography Programming Public Speaking Radio Salesmanship Signs, Signals, and Codes
- **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS OR LIFESAVING** Fire Safety Motorboating Public Health Radio Rowing Safety Traffic Safety Wilderness Survival
- **PERSONAL FITNESS** Archery Athletics Backpacking Canoeing Climbing Golf Horsemanship Rowing Skating Water Sports
- **SWIMMING, HIKING, OR CYCLING** Archery Athletics Canoeing Kayaking Motorboating Rowing Small-Boat Sailing Snow Sports
- **ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE OR SUSTAINABILITY** Energy Fish and Wildlife Management Forestry Nature Oceanography Soil and Water Conservation Weather

Registering Qualified Members Beyond Age of Eligibility

- To qualify an individual for registration beyond the age of eligibility, must be permanent and so severe that it precludes advancement even at a rate significantly slower than considered normal. If ranks can be achieved under accommodations already provided in official literature, or with modifications as outlined below, then the disability probably does not rise to the level required.
- This is often the case in considering advancement potential for youth who have only moderate learning disabilities or such disorders as ADD/ADHD. If ranks can be earned, but it just takes somewhat longer, registration beyond the age of eligibility is not warranted.
- Registration beyond the age of eligibility is intended as a permanent arrangement to allow ongoing participation as a youth member in the Scouting program.

10.1.0.1 Possible Criteria for Registering Beyond Age of Eligibility

- Examples of conditions that, if severe, *may* be criteria that qualify a youth for registration beyond the age of eligibility include these:
 - Autism spectrum disorders
 - Blind or sight-impaired
 - Deaf or hard of hearing
 - Cognitive disability
 - Developmental delay
 - Down syndrome
 - Emotional or behavioral disorder
 - Physically disabled
 - Traumatic brain injury
 - Multiple coexisting disabilities
- “Multiple coexisting disabilities” refers to a diagnosis of two or more disabilities, none of which alone may be significant enough to warrant registration beyond the age of eligibility but when considered in combination may qualify. For example, a youth with a moderate learning disorder or ADHD, alone, may not be approved to register as a Boy Scout after age 18. If another disability also exists, however, the cumulative impact including that from medication can be significant.

10.1.0.2 How to Register a Member Beyond Age of Eligibility

- To register a person who will remain as a youth member beyond the age of eligibility, the following documents must be assembled and submitted to the local council.
- A letter from a parent or guardian describing the disability and its severity and permanence, and petitioning the council for approval of registration beyond the age of eligibility.
- A completed youth membership application or proof of current membership.
- A completed and signed Annual BSA Health and Medical Record form (parts A and C), online at <http://www.scouting.org/HealthandSafety/ahmr.aspx>
- A signed statement from a qualified health professional attesting to the nature of the disability, its severity, and *permanent* limitations connected with it. **For physical disabilities**, this must be a licensed physician; **for developmental or cognitive issues**, a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist, or as appropriate, a neurologist or other medical professional in a specialty related to the disability.
- A letter from the unit leader advocating and supporting the registration.
- Other supporting documentation, such as an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), treatment summaries, etc., which are optional, but can make a difference in the decision.
- Young people approved for registration beyond the age of eligibility may continue working on advancement, including the Eagle Scout rank and Eagle Palms, for as long as they continue to be so registered.

RESOURCES:

- Guide to Advancement 2015, No. 33088 (See Section 10.0.0.0)

Scouting.org:

- *Guide to Working with Scouts with Special Needs and Disabilities*
<http://scouting.org/filestore/pdf/510-071.pdf>
- *Individual Scout Achievement Plan*, No. 512-936
- BSA Disabilities Awareness web page:
<http://scouting.org/disabilitiesawareness.aspx>
- Scouting With Special Needs and Disabilities information sheet
- Scouting for Youth With Disabilities Manual, No. 34059
- Request for Registration Beyond the Age of Eligibility, No. 512-935
- Application for Alternative Eagle Scout Rank Merit Badges, No. 512-730
- **Inclusion – The Key to Disabilities Awareness**