



# ABILITIES DIGEST



Prepared. For Life.® Vol. 4, No. 1

Spring 2017  BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

## Adapting Activities

### Key Ingredients to Great Summer Camp

*Contributed by a camp staff alum*

**Communication** and *teamwork* are the key ingredients to a great summer camp experience for Scouts with special needs.

It's been 30 years since I last worked on summer camp staff, but some of the most vivid memories I have are working with the Scouts and leaders of Troop 191 from the Widener Memorial School in Philadelphia. This troop of amazing men with various disabilities; both young and old, joined us for our first week of camp each season and it was as meaningful an experience for the staff as it was for the campers.

Their Scoutmaster Lou and his assistants would meet with the different program directors at the beginning of the week to tell us who from the troop would be signing up for the merit badges we offered, how we could help them, and explained to us a little bit about their disability/ability. They also told us something about each of them that would help us make an instant connection.



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- **Enhancing Awareness:** Hints on establishing a council disabilities awareness committee, an inspiring reading to use in adult leader training.
- **Adapting Advancement:** Guidelines for adapting the new Cub Scout requirements, standards and procedures for extending work on Eagle Scout requirements past age 18.
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As I look back to that experience, it's guidance that is still so helpful today. So, as we head in to the summer season, here are some helpful tips to make the most of the summer camp experience:

- Remember that most of the camp staff members are young adults and likely don't have much experience working with Scouts with special needs. Take the time to help them understand how they can work together with the Scouts and the leaders to help everyone have fun.
- Merit badges are tough and can eat up a Scout's entire week. Because of this, help your Scouts set realistic goals so they can have a balance of working on advancement as well as the experience of learning new skills.
- Invite the staff to participate in activities in the campsite with your unit. I had such a great time working with the Scouts from Troop 191 in their campsite that I'd often look forward to updates years after I was no longer working on staff in the summer.
- Try to partner with a unit of able bodied Scouts. The partner unit can help Scouts with mobility impairments travel to the dining hall or around camp. Sometimes we have to be willing to allow help from people who are willing to help but just don't know how to ask.
- Celebrate the successes that each Scout will accomplish in camp, whether it's catching a fish, swimming a lap, or dressing themselves in their tent without assistance. Find something that each Scout has accomplished during their time at camp and share that news with everyone!
- Most importantly HAVE FUN!!! Some of the best days of my life have been spent in camp, not just while earning badges, but by doing things I couldn't do at home in the city, and having fun with my friends. Don't ever lose sight of the fact that people keep coming back because of the fun they have!

Have a great summer camp experience and, if you have something really cool that you'd like to share in a future issue about your special needs unit achieving success in camp, contact *Abilities Digest* through [disabilities.awareness@scouting.org](mailto:disabilities.awareness@scouting.org). We are always looking for great stories that show advancement work for Scouts with special needs.

## **Awareness Events**

### **The disAbilities Awareness Challenge at the 2017**

#### **Jamboree**

Scouts and Scouters attending the 2017 National Scout Jamboree: be sure to stop by the disAbilities Awareness Challenge on Action Point! The Challenge contains fifteen activities from a dislexia simulation to wheelchair basketball. Participants who complete enough activities earn the 2017 Challenge award.



Scouters who aren't yet signed up for Jamboree: there is still time to apply for staff positions. Service with the disAbilities Awareness Challenge can apply towards the new Special Needs Scouting Service Award.

## **Philmont 2017 Conference: Growing Your Scouts With Disabilities Membership And Resources**



The National Disabilities Awareness Subcommittee has organized a Philmont Training Center conference to take place this August 6-12 (week 9). Both Scouting volunteers and BSA professional staff will learn some best practices for increasing membership among youth with disabilities, ways to keep them actively engaged in their Scouting experience, and how to sustain a quality Scouting program through foundation support.

## **Enhancing Awareness**

### **Does your Council have a Disabilities Awareness committee?**

For most councils, the answer is *no*. That needs to change as the Scouting movement moves forward. Given that approximately 15% of American youth have some form of disability, there is a need to help leaders provide a successful program for those youth. A council that has a disabilities awareness committee, or at least a "coordinator," will know the resources and how to deliver them to the leaders who need them. Bear in mind that disabilities, or as some call them, "different" abilities, are also "diverse-abilities" – they know no boundaries and are equal opportunity in whom they affect. This makes providing resources and support to all leaders a paramount need, and one that council disabilities awareness committees can clearly aid in fulfilling.



What does a Disabilities Awareness committee do, and how is it formed? Section II of the *Scouting For Youth With Disabilities Manual* (No. 34059) (<http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/34059.pdf>) describes what the committee is, what it does and how to form one. The process is presently being updated as the manual is rewritten and reconfigured as the *Guide To Disabilities Awareness*. Members of the National Disabilities Awareness Subcommittee, as faculty for seminars at Philmont and Florida Sea Base over the past two years, have presented an updated version of this process. That presentation is expected to be posted on the Disabilities Awareness landing page ([www.scouting.org/disabilitiesawareness](http://www.scouting.org/disabilitiesawareness)) soon. One key point to share now is that the structure of this committee and where it resides in a council organization is *not* cast in stone. There are at least four viable models

presently in successful use around the country – and it is likely that yet another model structure will be presented in the coming year!

If your council does not have a Disabilities Awareness Committee, check out the above references, contact the Subcommittee at [disabilitiesawareness@scouting.org](mailto:disabilitiesawareness@scouting.org) for suggestions on getting a committee started, and help strengthen your council's ability to serve youth who have disabilities.

The vision is to create a network that connects the National Disabilities Awareness Subcommittee with council disabilities awareness committees, with linkage through their area and region.

## Scouting is a Special Place

A reading that is often used during adult leader training programs to reflect on including Scouts with disabilities.

Life can be cruel, and growing up in the real world isn't easy. Kids pick on other kids for any reason they can find. The list is long, but anything that makes someone different is fair game: height, weight, gender, age, religion, bad hair day, clothing, where you live, kind of car, curfew, athletic ability, parent's jobs, their marital status, siblings, bad teeth, bad breath, glasses, braces, and any number of things regarding sexual matters, intelligence, learning disabilities, opinions, or following rules. Wouldn't it be nice if there were a safe place to go where everyone was treated fairly, honestly, equally, and respectfully? A place where everybody lived by the same rules? A place where mistakes could be made without fear of ridicule? Wouldn't the world be a better place if people could just learn to get along with each other?! Wouldn't it be amazing if we could do something about it? What would you do if you had that privilege ... that responsibility ... that obligation? What if you could change the world?!



## Scouting is a Special Place

**The rules are the ones we know well ...the Scout Oath and the Scout Law.**

**We create a safe haven in Scouting; a place where everyone should feel physically and emotionally secure.**

**We do this in several ways:**

- We set the example for ourselves and others by always behaving as Scouts should. We live the Scout Oath and Law each moment of each day to the best of our abilities.**
- We refuse to tolerate any kind of put-down, name-calling, physical aggression, or inappropriate behavior.**
- We communicate our acceptance of each other through expressions of concern, and by showing our appreciation whenever possible.**
- We create an environment based on learning and fun. We seek the best from ourselves and each other, and we do our best to help achieve it.**

# Adapting Advancement

## Cub Scout Activities and Advancement



Today's Cub Scouts have a whole range of opportunities. New rank advancements offer Cub Scouts different opportunities to excel. Cub Scouts also have numerous camping opportunities. In years past, a pack might go camping once a year, if at all. Today, Cub camping takes place all year long. There are often district or council events for Cub Scout and Webelos camping or advancement, as well as den and pack opportunities.

Cub Scouts with disabilities can pose a challenge in both advancement and camping. Members with physical disabilities face special camping challenges and may rely on special equipment like wheel chairs, braces, hearing aids, and so on. This also affects advancement when a Cub Scout's disability interferes with the requirements for a badge or award. Parents and pack leaders can work together to overcome these obstacles.

First of all, parents and guardians must be involved. A leader cannot be expected to know everything about every Scout or every disability. The parent/guardian needs to tell the leader what the Scout can do and cannot do. Discussing these issues beforehand improves the experience for everyone.

Cub Scouts can always advance. If a he can't complete a requirement as written, adult leaders may create alternative requirements that the he can achieve. These alternative requirements must be challenging to the boy and not appear as if the he has received a free pass. The requirement and achievement must always reflect the Cub Scout motto, "Do your best."

Leaders must develop and approve the alternative requirements *before* the Cub works on them. The alternative requirements are reviewed and approved by the pack. Here is a typical process:

- A leader discovers that a Cub Scout's disability warrants alternative requirements.
- One or more leaders develop these requirements.

### **About *Abilities Digest***

*Abilities Digest* is the official e-letter of the Boy Scouts of America National Disabilities Awareness Committee. Its intent is to help expand membership through helping parents and Scouting volunteers to improve their understanding, knowledge, and skills related to including and serving the special needs population. Therefore, districts and councils may reprint articles from this publication. Our plan is to distribute four issues of *Abilities Digest* annually, but special editions may go out whenever there is important information to share. Feedback, suggestions, and letters to the editor are welcome at [disabilities.awareness@scouting.org](mailto:disabilities.awareness@scouting.org).

- The parents and Cubmaster review and approve the alternative requirements.
- The pack committee reviews and approves the alternative requirements.
- The Cub Scout completes the alternative requirements and advances.

The den leader must decide how the Cub Scout's disability and accommodations will be discussed within the den. While den leaders must never share private medical information, the boys in the den often benefit from being kept in the loop. This gives the den leaders the opportunity to discuss what disabilities might be and how they might affect one's life.

Camping has always been the cornerstone of Scouting and a Scout with a disability will likewise enjoy the fun. Keep in mind that activities may need adjustment to include everyone. Leaders often achieve this if they "think outside the box." Some activities, however, cannot be adapted for particular disabilities. This calls for alternate activities or advancement opportunities. Keep "Youth Protection" policies in mind when planning for these cases.

One of the new elective adventures Webelos is "Aware and Care". Completing This adventure can help the Webelos understand what it is like to have a disability. And a Scout with a disability can use his disability to aid his fellow Webelos to understand what he goes through on a daily basis.

The biggest thrill any Scout gets is when he receives his advancement tokens and awards. The smile on his face is worth the challenge. When leaders do their best to help them advance, all Scouts will see the finest we all have to offer each other.

## **Managing Subscriptions to *Abilities Digest***

***Abilities Digest* is designed for council and district disabilities awareness committees, related staff advisors, and any leader who would offer a Scouting program to youth who have special needs. Any Scouting volunteer or professional may subscribe.**

**Subscribing.** Send a message to [disabilities.awareness@scouting.org](mailto:disabilities.awareness@scouting.org), with "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line. Indicate your name, email address, and council in the message text.

**Unsubscribing.** To decline future issues please reply and enter "REMOVE" in the subject line. We will remove the subscription within the next two weeks.

**Receiving Multiple Copies.** If you receive *Abilities Digest* at more than one email address, choose the one to be removed and reply with "REMOVE" in the subject line. Include a message requesting that we remove only that email address.

**Duplicate Copies.** If you receive more than one copy of *Abilities Digest* at the same email address, please reply to all but one of them with "DUPLICATE" in the subject line.

**Address Change.** If you want *Abilities Digest* sent to a different address, reply and enter "ADDRESS CHANGE" in the subject line. In your message, enter your council name and the email address you prefer.

## Extending the Time for Earning Eagle

As a Scout completes his seventeenth year, many scramble to complete their Eagle Scout requirements before they turn 18. A few Scouts may pursue Eagle after their 18th birthday, if they suffered unexpected setbacks.

These setbacks fall into two cases:

- Time extension: a Scout who should have been able to complete his Eagle on time encounters unforeseen circumstances beyond his control. The circumstances are so severe that they prevent him from finishing on time. A Scout within this case may be eligible for a *time extension* to complete the remaining requirements.
- Continued youth registration: a Scout suffers from disabilities such that his cognitive ability does not progress past age 18. The disabilities are severe and permanent. The Scout in this case may be eligible for *registration past age 18*.



Both cases require extensive documentation and review at the council level; time extensions also require the approval of the National Advancement Program Team. If the extension arises from medical conditions or disabilities, then a licensed healthcare professional must attest to the severity of the condition. If the extension arises from other events, adult leaders and other adults involved in or with first-hand knowledge of the events must provide written statements.

### Time Extension

A Scout may request a time extension, specified in months, if he foresees, due to no fault or choice of his own, he will be unable to complete the Eagle Scout rank requirements before age 18. The request is reviewed both at the local council and national level before it is approved.

A time extension must fulfill five conditions:

1. The Scout had joined his unit or returned after an inactive period with sufficient time to complete the requirements. For example, a Scout who earns Life less than 6 months before his 18th birthday is not usually eligible for an extension.
2. A circumstance has arisen that prevents the Scout from completing his requirements on time. The problem may have been a family emergency, relocation, severe weather, or a significant injury that the Scout could not anticipate.

3. The circumstances are beyond the Scout's control. In rare cases, this may include actions or omissions by adult leaders. Typically, extensions are granted to Scouts caught in unexpected or unforeseen circumstances.
4. The circumstances are severe and not a typical part of the Scout's life. For example, a history of moderate learning disability does not by itself qualify a Scout for an extension.
5. The circumstances are unforeseen and the Scout could not plan for them. An ongoing health problem might not qualify for an extension, but an intensification or complication could qualify.

The detailed policies and procedures are found in the BSA's *Guide to Advancement* topic 9.0.4.0 and 9.0.4.1. This description provides a simple overview. The process is intended to give Scouts an opportunity to earn the Eagle Scout rank even after facing personal adversity and tries to ensure fairness to all.



## **Registration Beyond Age 18**

This option provides Scouting opportunities to young people and adults who are developmentally disabled. Unlike the time extension, this option sets no time limit for the Scout to complete Eagle requirements. It is very satisfying to attend the Eagle Court of Honor for a man with Down Syndrome who has spent decades completing his Eagle requirements.

While the time extension accommodates Scouts who face unforeseen and temporary setbacks in the path to Eagle, registration beyond 18 accommodates those who face severe and permanent disabilities. These may include physical disabilities, hearing or sight impairment, autism spectrum disorders, cognitive or developmental delays, or combinations thereof.

Physical and sensory disabilities may qualify a member for registration beyond 18, but not always. If the member can advance successfully using alternative requirements and similar accommodations, then he probably doesn't qualify for registration beyond 18. If cognitive disabilities limit the member's capacity to less than age 18, then he may qualify.

*The decision to register a member beyond age 18 is made by the local council.* The parents, guardians, and/or adult leaders fill out the application for registration beyond 18. The application must be approved by the unit leader. A letter from a physician (for physical disabilities) or psychologist (for cognitive or learning disabilities) must indicate that the member's disability is severe and permanent.

**\*\*If you are aware a Scout needs an extension, do not wait.** Apply as soon as the situation is suspected.

# Recognizing Abilities

## Special Needs Scouting Service Award Knot Now Available

The Special Needs Scouting Service Award recognizes ongoing service to Scouting and Scouts with disabilities and special needs. This award must be earned, and is available to both volunteer and professional Scouters.

Council Scout shops and Scoutstuff.org now have the Scouting Service Award knot No. 625334 available. Scouters who complete the Special Needs award may wear a miniature device (shown right) on their knot; however, the device is not yet available.



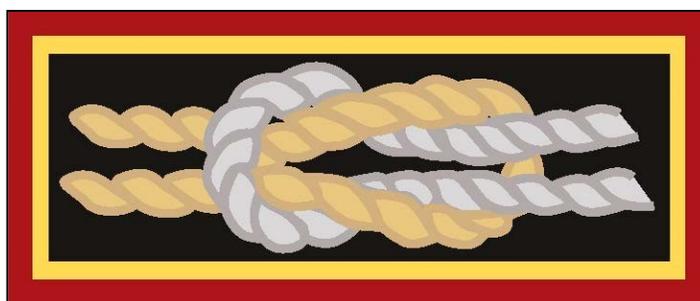
### SNSSA Requirements

I. Complete the following two (2) requirements:

1. Be a registered adult or professional staff with the B.S.A. and maintain current Youth Protection Training.
2. Actively participate in activities concerning youth who have disabilities/special needs through either the unit (pack, troop or crew), or at either the district, council, area, regional, or national level for three (3) years

II. Complete 6 of the following 12 requirements:

1. Attend a training seminar or conference on disabilities/special needs sponsored and conducted by the B.S.A or through an organization that serves youth and/or adults with disabilities/special needs, i.e. A.R.C., Blind Associations, Cerebral Palsy Agencies, Independent Living Resource Centers, Autism Societies, Special Olympics, etc.
2. Present one of the nationally approved disabilities/special needs classes (e.g., classes within the College of Commissioner Science curriculum or classes prepared by the National Disabilities Awareness Subcommittee) at any level.



3. Serve as a Staff member at either a district, council, area, regional, or national event which presents a theme of youth with disabilities/special needs in Scouting.
4. Create and organize a unit (pack, troop or crew) to primarily serve youth with disabilities/special needs and be open for membership by youth not possessing disabilities/special needs.
5. Serve as a mentor for a Scout who has disabilities/special needs for six (6) months.
6. Serve as a group discussion leader on Scouting for youth with disabilities/special needs at either a Roundtable, district commissioner meeting, or similar gathering of volunteer Scouters and/or professional Scouters.
7. Promote and assist in organizing and conducting an outdoor event for youth with disabilities/special needs, or one that promotes disabilities awareness and acceptance among those who don't
8. Recruit and register either two (2) adults to volunteer in providing Scouting opportunities to youth with disabilities/special needs or recruit two (2) youth with disabilities/special needs to join Scouting and remain a member for one (1) year.
9. Assist the district or council in forming a partnership with an organization that serves individuals with disabilities/special needs.
10. Actively serve on a district, council, area, regional, or national committee on Scouting with disabilities/special needs for two years.
11. Assist the local council in efforts to raise funds for Scouts with disabilities/special needs concerning activities within the Scouting program .
12. Assist the local council in a public awareness campaign to heighten knowledge of Scouting with disabilities/special needs.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Must recipients be nominated?**

No. This is an *earned* award similar to the Scouter's Key. Both volunteer Scouters and BSA professionals may earn the award.

### **What if a recipient completed requirements before the award was created? Must everyone start fresh?**

No. This Award is retroactive for purposes of satisfying the above requirements. The applicant may earn the award based on activities and service performed in the past.

## Is there an application to fill out?

The National Disabilities Awareness Subcommittee has created a provisional application. Potential recipients may use this application until the official application finalized and posted to the Awards Central website. The provisional application is posted on the [AbleScouts.com](http://AbleScouts.com) web site in both [MS doc format](#) and [PDF format](#).

## Who approves the award application?

This award is approved at the council level, by the Scout Executive or designee.

The National Disabilities Awareness Subcommittee would like to keep track of how many of these Special Needs Scouting Service Awards are awarded. Please send a brief email to [disabilitiesawareness@scouting.org](mailto:disabilitiesawareness@scouting.org) (SUBJECT: "SNSSA") with the council name and number of awards presented.

## Helpful Links

Here are links to current materials to aid volunteers and Scouts with disabilities:

### Official Materials Posted on Scouting.org

Scouting with Disabilities landing page: [www.scouting.org/disabilitiesawareness.aspx](http://www.scouting.org/disabilitiesawareness.aspx)

A variety of materials can be found on this page, including the new Scouting with Disabilities training presentations.



## A Peek Ahead

### Topics Planned for Future Issues:

**Enhancing Awareness:** Looking forward to summer camp with Scouts with special needs,

**Adapting Advancement:** American Sign Language Interpreter Strip, The Disabilities Awareness Merit Badge – counseling Scouts with disabilities.

## Resources from Articles

Scouting For Youth With Disabilities (#34059) <http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/34059.pdf>

AbleScouts: *Abilities Digest* articles posted online – [AbleScouts.com](http://AbleScouts.com)

Special Needs Scouting Service Award applications in [MS doc format](#) and [PDF format](#)

## Other Web Resources

Working With Scouts With disAbilities - [www.wswd.org/](http://www.wswd.org/)

Autism Empowerment website - [www.AutismEmpowerment.org](http://www.AutismEmpowerment.org)

Autism and Scouting Website - [www.autismempowerment.org/autism-scouting-program/](http://www.autismempowerment.org/autism-scouting-program/)

Children with Special Needs - [www.childrenwithspecialneeds.com/disability-info/](http://www.childrenwithspecialneeds.com/disability-info/)

Kids with Special Needs - [kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/friend/special\\_needs.html](http://kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/friend/special_needs.html)

Special Child: For Parents of Children with Disabilities - [specialchild.com/index.html](http://specialchild.com/index.html)

## Social Media

Email your comments and questions to: [disabilities.awareness@scouting.org](mailto:disabilities.awareness@scouting.org)



Twitter: @AbilitiesDigest

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/pages/Abilities-Digest/824105334298165](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Abilities-Digest/824105334298165)

