



Membership Standards

What is the January 1, 2014,
change, and how does it affect
me?



District and Council Volunteers

August 29, 2013

Boy Scouts of America

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in helping others as they prepare to help young people in Scouting!

This course is intended to provide some basic information about the change in the membership standards of the BSA that will become effective January 1, 2014.

The course is intended to be conducted with an individual or in a small-group setting. It can be facilitated by unit, district, or council trainers.

This syllabus is intended to be read verbatim to ensure that a consistent message is being relayed. Too often people have inaccurately "read between the lines" and that should not be a part of the information.

Trainers should be familiar with the content of the slides and the FAQ documents, and have the skills to be able to present it effectively.

Necessary Resources:

- Computer and projector (or large monitor) to show slides
- FAQ Document(s) for participants.





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There has been a wealth of information in the news, in social media, on the Web, and around the campfire about the resolution passed by the voting members of the Boy Scouts of America in May – some of it accurate and some of it slanted in one direction or the other.

On May 23, 2013, a total of 1,232 voting members of the Boy Scouts of America voted on a resolution that maintains its current membership policy for all adult leaders and states that youth may not be denied membership in the BSA on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone. The resolution passed with 757 votes, a 61 percent majority. Through the process, the BSA conducted the most comprehensive listening exercise in its history, gathering perspectives from inside and outside of the Scouting family. There are no plans for further review of this matter.



Youth membership in the Boy Scouts of America is open to all youth who meet the specific membership requirements to join the Cub Scout, Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, and Venturing programs.

Membership in any program of the Boy Scouts of America requires the youth member to

- (a) subscribe to and abide by the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Scout Law,
- (b) subscribe to and abide by the precepts of the Declaration of Religious Principle (duty to God), and
- (c) demonstrate behavior that exemplifies the highest level of good conduct and respect for others and is consistent at all times with the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

No youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone.



First, let us take a look at the resolution itself.

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What has not changed:



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The values set forth in the Scout Oath and Law are fundamental to the BSA and central to teaching young people to make better choices over their lifetimes.



The Scout Oath begins with duty to God and the Scout Law ends with a Scout's obligation to be reverent, and that will always remain a core value of the Boy Scouts of America.



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Scouting's vision is to serve every eligible youth in America, and this policy would allow us to serve more youth and focus on their development.



The vision of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare every eligible youth in America to become a responsible, participating citizen and leader who is guided by the Scout Oath and Scout Law; and this policy will allow us to serve more youth and focus on their development.



Any sexual conduct, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting.



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Leaders have the responsibility and authority to set boundaries and address them with youth members.



The *Boy Scout Handbook* continues to define “morally straight” as: “Your relationships with others should be honest and open. Respect and defend the rights of all people. Be clean in your speech and actions and faithful in your religious beliefs. Values you practice as a Scout will help you shape a life of virtue and self-reliance.”



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If you were a Scout, take a look at your *Handbook* and you will see something very similar.



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We know that youth are still developing, learning about themselves and who they are, developing a sense of right and wrong, and understanding their duty to God to live a moral life.



Accordingly, simply stating he or she is attracted to the same sex, but not engaging in sexual activity, does not make a youth ineligible for membership.



Effective January 1, 2014, no youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone.

Accordingly, simply stating he or she is attracted to the same sex, but not engaging in sexual activity, does not make a youth ineligible for membership.

However, any sexual conduct, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting.

As they always have, chartered organizations can require members to demonstrate behavior that exemplifies the highest level of good conduct and respect for others and is consistent at all times with the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

How a Scout behaves – lives by the Scout Oath and Law – is the key factor, and that has not changed either.



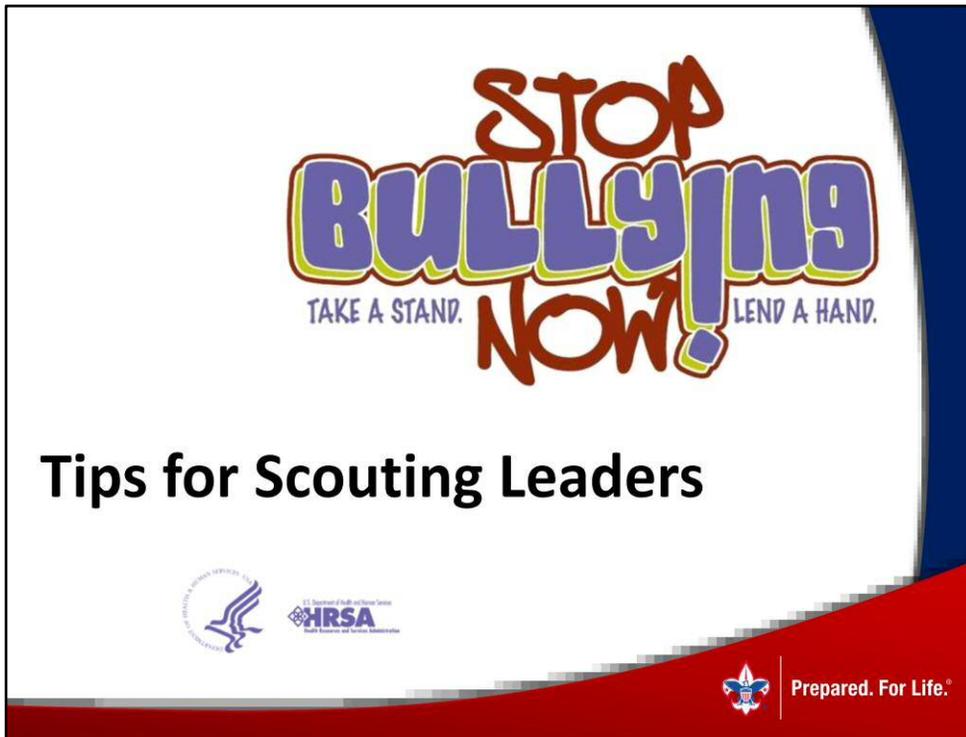
In large part, how this affects you depends on your role in Scouting, and on you!



There is no conceivable way the BSA can come up with an answer to every possible situation that might arise – no more than we have been able to for the past 103 years. Ultimately, people in leadership positions must exercise good judgment, common sense, and discretion when navigating through the “What if?” examples. The acid test must be the Scout Oath and Law and/or “Does a person’s behavior disrupt the delivery of the program?”

A list of Frequently Asked Questions can be found on www.scouting.org that will help you with some of the ones the BSA has heard and answered.

What follows are some things to keep in mind as a district or council Scouter.

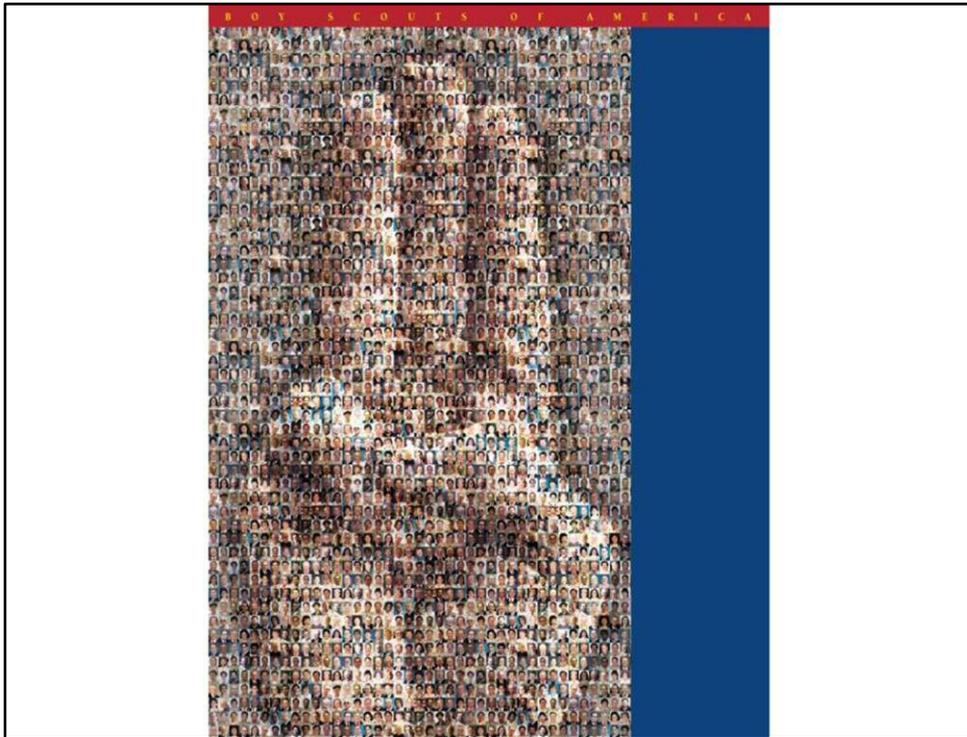


As has always been the case, Scouting teaches respect and courtesy for all people.

Remember, a Scout is friendly, a Scout is courteous, and a Scout is kind!

Scouts learn that they need to respect others and treat others as they want to be treated. Bullying, hazing, and teasing – for any reason – are not appropriate in Scouting.

Unit leaders must address any mistreatment of others that might occur. The leader's responsibility is to address the issue with concern and sensitivity, while ensuring the member understands the boundaries and potential consequences.



Scouting represents millions of youth and adult members in diverse communities across the nation, each with a variety of beliefs on this topic.

All local councils and chartered organizations agree to follow BSA national policies.

Any time we are aware of any inconsistency in the administration of a Scouting policy, we work with the local council to reiterate the policy and ensure compliance.

As they always have, chartered organizations can require members to demonstrate behavior that exemplifies the highest level of good conduct and respect for others and is consistent at all times with the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Scout Law.



Under the BSA's rules and regulations, a Scout may appear in uniform at a nonpartisan and nonpolitical gathering in a way that gives him the opportunity to render service in harmony with his training in the Scouting program.

However, the BSA is required to avoid involving the Scouting movement in any activity of a political character. Each youth member is free as an individual to express his thoughts or take action on political or social issues, but he must not use Scouting's official uniforms and insignia when doing so.

No member may use Scouting to promote or advance any social or political position or agenda, including on the matter of same-sex attraction.

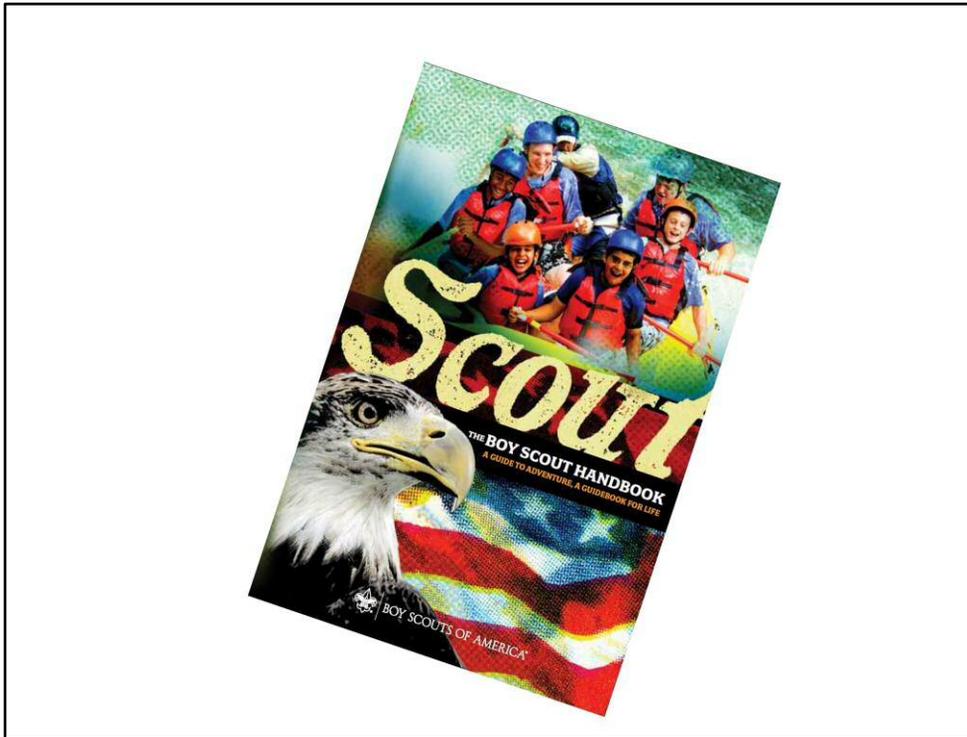


For generations the “buddy system” has been a safety measure for Scouting activities. The long history of the buddy system in Scouting has shown that it is always best to have another person with you when involved in any outdoor or strenuous activity.

A youth should never be made uncomfortable with his or her buddy.

A general move toward individual toilet and shower facilities has been underway for several years, and individuals needing additional privacy can take appropriate actions on their own or request others to be respectful of their needs.

Each unit’s leadership along with their committee will be responsible for working with their parents to determine appropriate sleeping arrangements. This is consistent with current practices that allow for unit leaders, in consultation with parents, to use their discretion to ensure the safety and comfort of the youth members in their charge. In the past, there have been a variety of issues that required these conversations and this will follow that process.



If a Scout is unsure about something that is going on in his or her Scouting experience or in their life, the *Boy Scout Handbook* tells them that “Your religious leaders can give you guidance for making ethical choices. Your parents, guardian, or a sex-education teacher can provide the basic facts about sex.”

As we said earlier, members of Scouting age are still developing, learning about themselves and who they are, developing their sense of right and wrong, and understanding their duty to God to live a moral life.

This is a time of change in their lives and in the lives of others their age.

It is an individual’s choice how public they wish to be about their sexual orientation. As always, Scouting teaches respect and courtesy for all people. It is the Scout leader’s responsibility to address the issue with concern and sensitivity, while ensuring the member understands the boundaries. The leader should emphasize that there is no place in Scouting for any sexual conduct by youth of Scouting age.

When in doubt, think of the words in the Scout Oath and Law and their meanings. Ask yourself, “How do they apply?” Then act accordingly or seek advice from others you respect.



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This policy allows youth who sincerely want to be a part of Scouting to experience this life-changing program while remaining true to the long-standing virtues of Scouting. While people have different opinions about this policy, youth are better off when they are in Scouting.

It is now up to each of us to provide the best possible program so that character development, citizenship training, and personal fitness become real in the lives of youth in Scouting. Our Scouting family will continue to focus on reaching and serving youth in order to help them grow into good, strong citizens. America's youth need Scouting, and by focusing on the goals that unite us, we can continue to accomplish incredible things for young people and the communities we serve.

For additional information, please see the Frequently Asked Questions on www.scouting.org/training in the Membership Standards section.