



Membership Standards

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



Unit Leaders

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.



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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.



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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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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.



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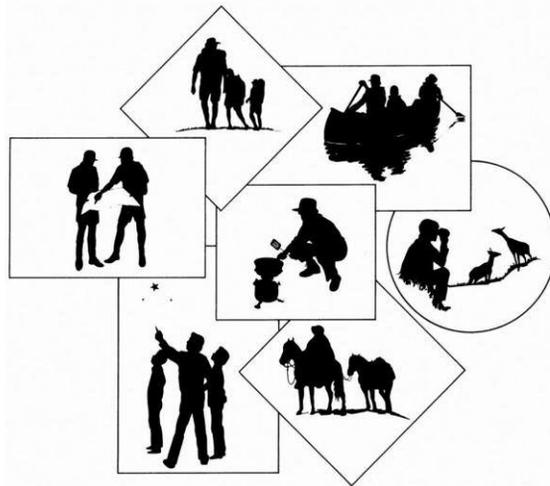
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How a Scout behaves – lives by the Scout Oath and Law – is the key factor, and that has not changed.



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

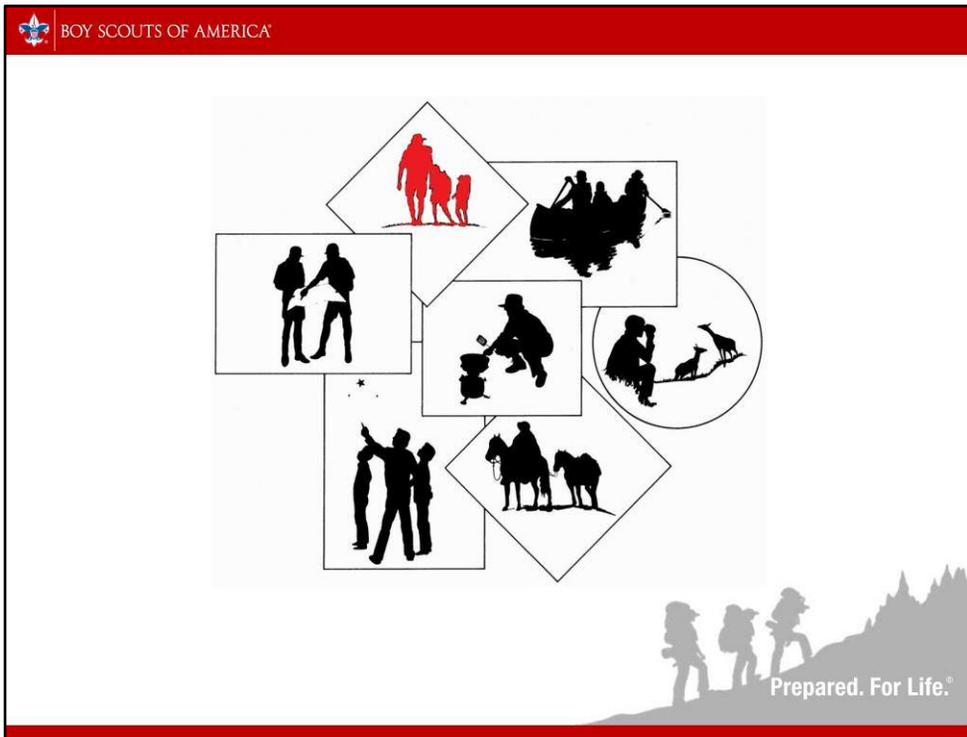


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There is no conceivable way the BSA can come up with an answer to every possible situation that might arise – no more than we have been able to for the past 103 years. Ultimately, people in leadership positions must exercise good judgment, common sense, 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.

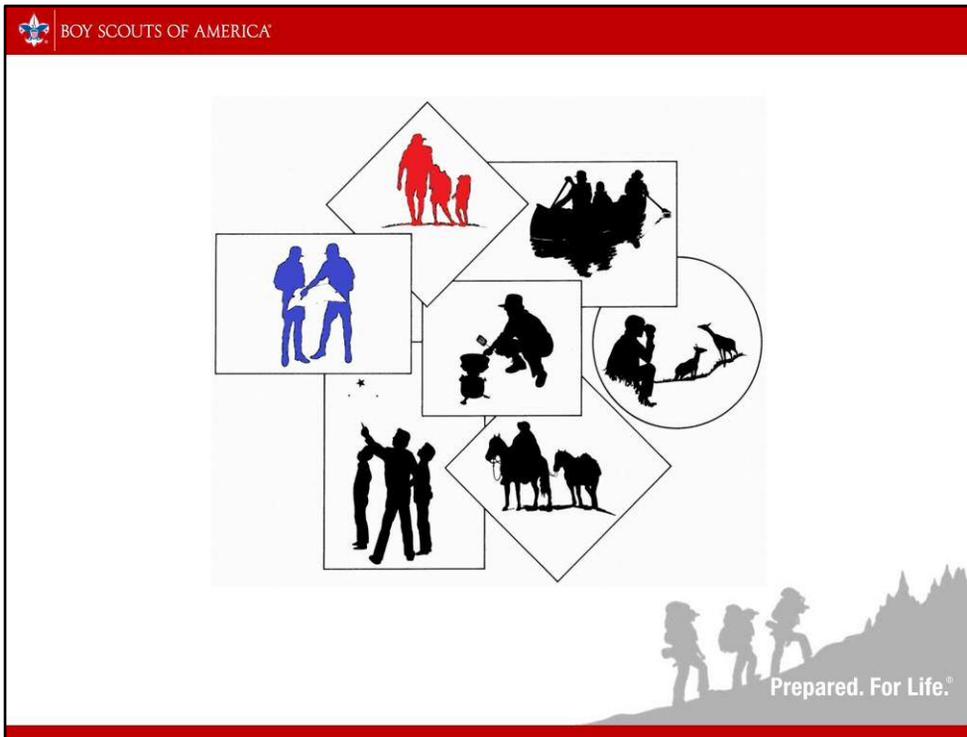


The BSA has stringent policies that protect the safety and privacy of youth and adult members. Scouting has always worked to ensure that it is a supportive and safe environment for all young people, both physically and emotionally. The following points are important as we move forward:

This change in membership standards is not a youth protection issue. To consider it a youth protection issue would lead one to believe that sexual abuse and victimization is considered inherent to sexual orientation. This is not the case.

The change in policy concerns healthy child and adolescent development and should be addressed as such. As always, our leaders are key to ensuring that the BSA always acts in the best interest of our youth members.

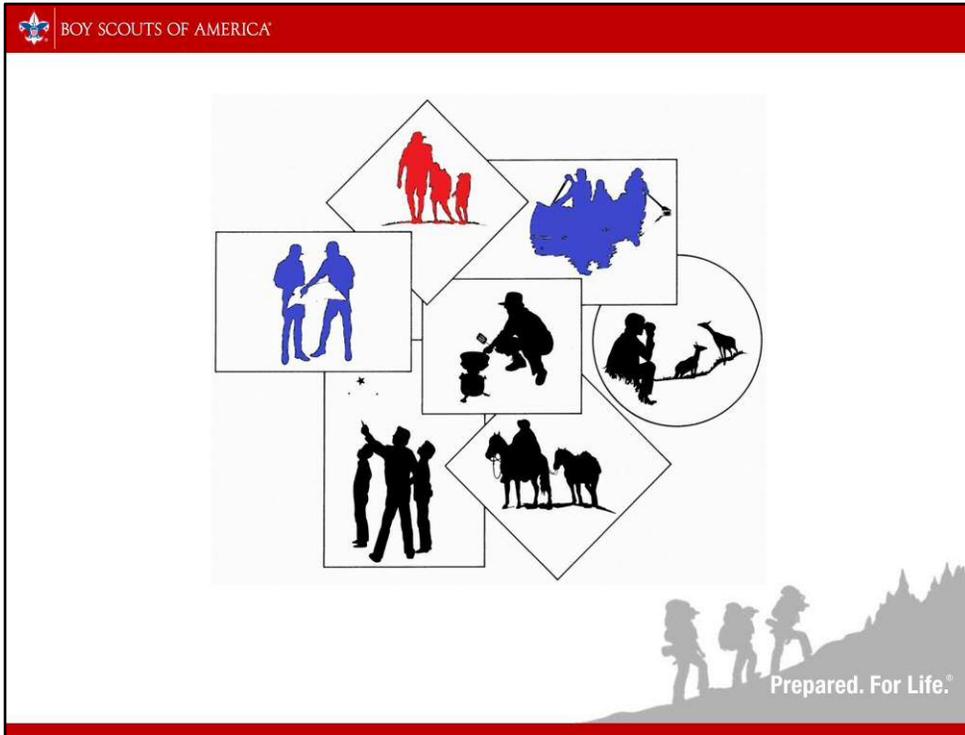
No youth should be singled out as a result of this change. If that were to happen, it would likely set up those youth to be bullied or ostracized.



It might be called a den, a squad, or a crew, but the idea is the same – the Patrol Method.

A group of friends participating in Scouting together, supporting each other, and learning Scouting skills together under the guidance of a quality adult leader and advisor is one of the biggest keys to the success of Scouting.

Properly done, the Patrol Method will create a positive environment for each member of the patrol.



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

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

When in a leadership role assembling buddy teams, you should be sure to take some things into consideration:

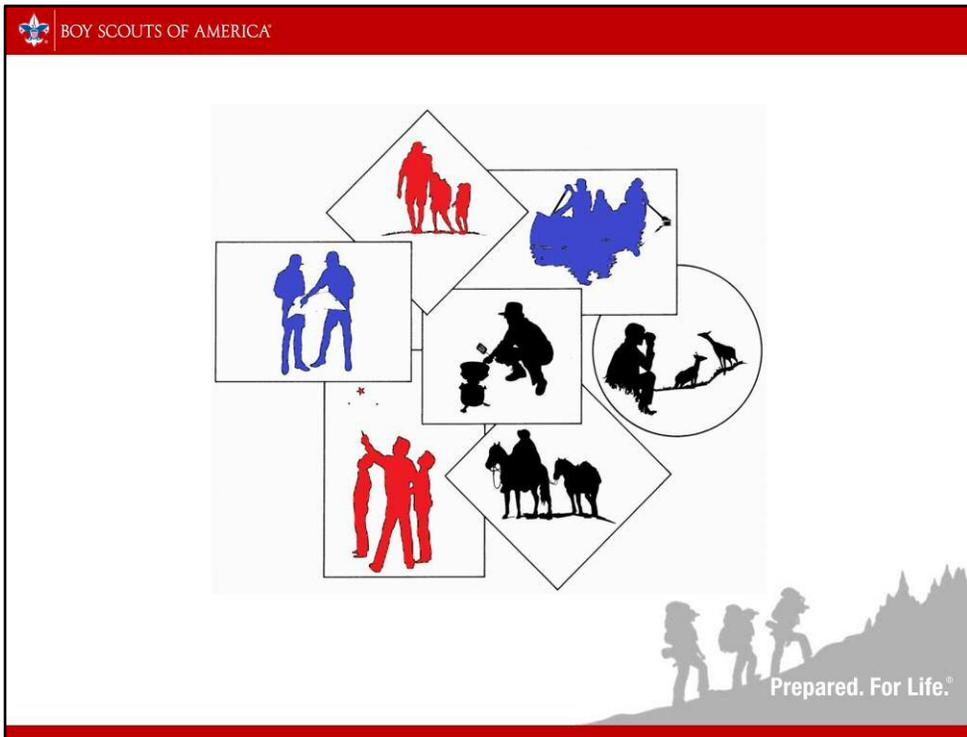
The members of the buddy team should know each other, and preferably be from the same patrol, den, squad, or crew.

The buddies should be part of the selection process.

And buddies should be of approximately the same age (no more than a three-year age difference) and Scouting experience level.

Circumstances will dictate when a buddy team can be coed, but buddy teams may *not* be coed in sleeping, tenting, bathroom, shower, or other privacy situations. They can be coed in group activities such as training sessions, aquatics, climbing, or other public activities.

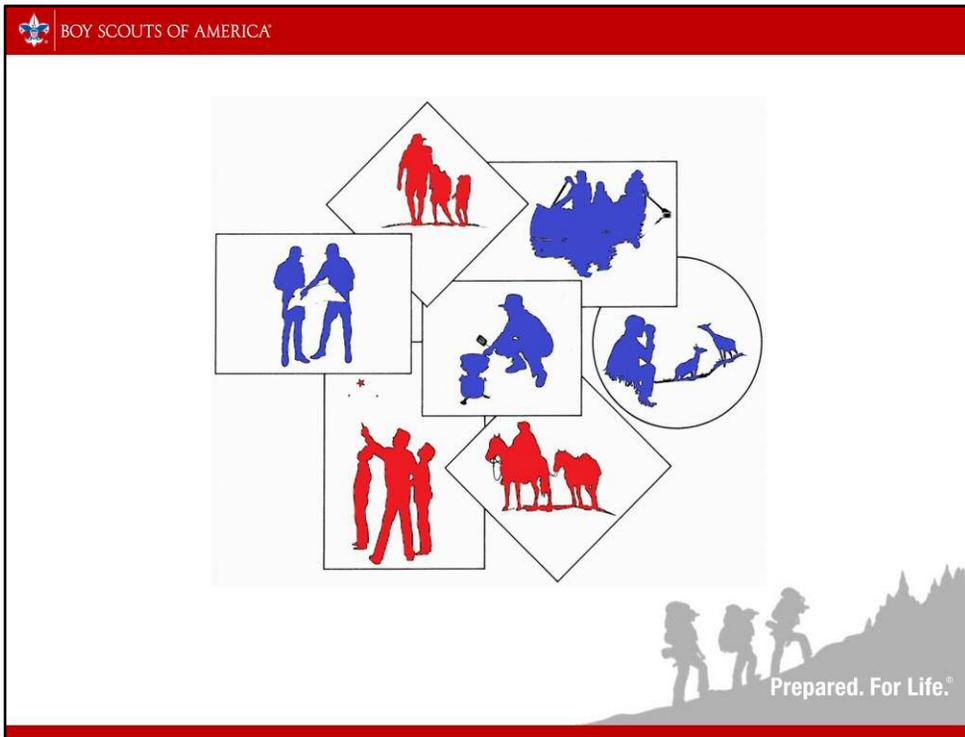
A general move toward individual toilet and shower facilities has been underway for several years, and individuals needing additional privacy can take appropriate actions on their own or request others to be respectful of their needs. As always, the adult leaders have the discretion to arrange private showering times and locations, as needed. The privacy and security of our youth members is among our top priorities.



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.



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!

You need to respect others and treat others as you 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.



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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 your life and 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.