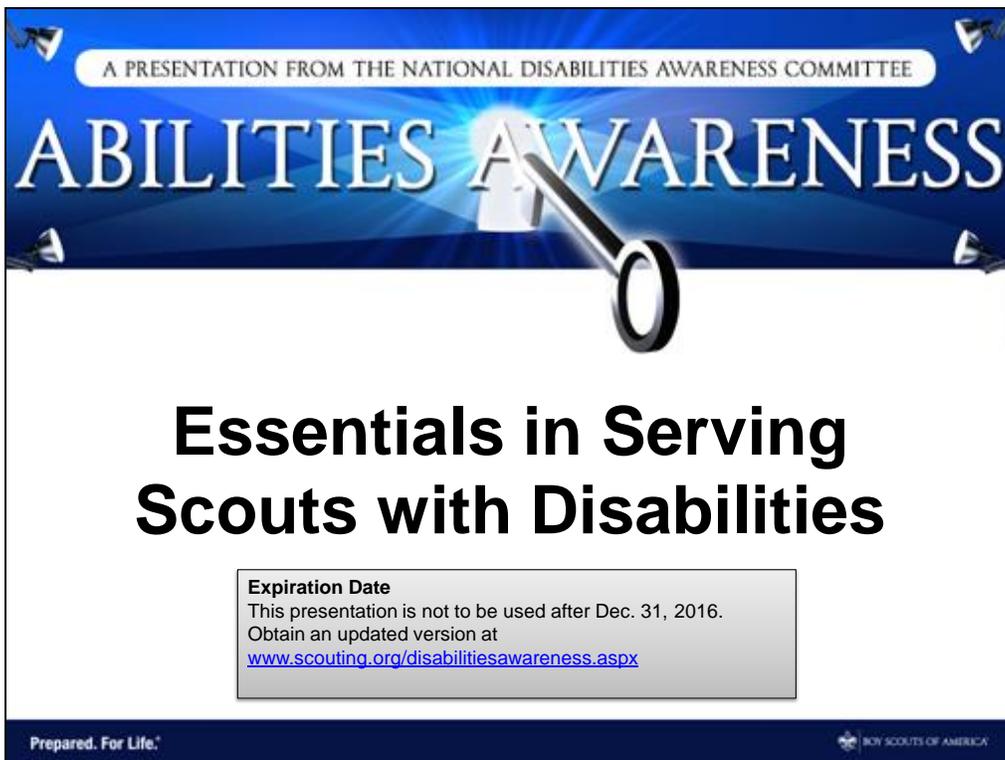


Presenter's Notes

Essentials in Serving Scouts with Disabilities



A PRESENTATION FROM THE NATIONAL DISABILITIES AWARENESS COMMITTEE

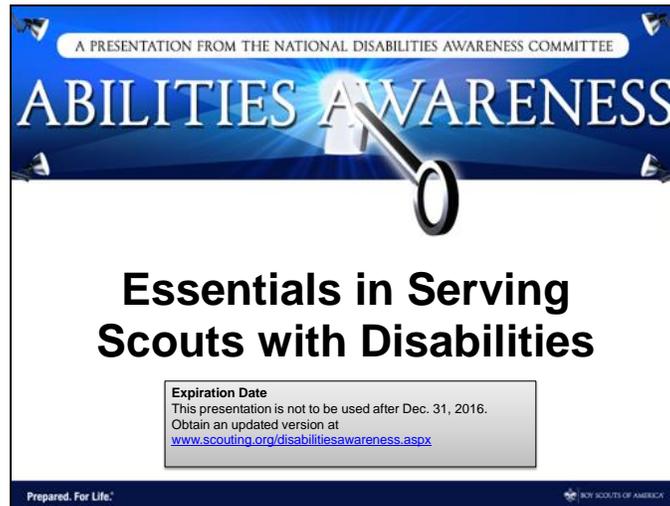
ABILITIES AWARENESS

Essentials in Serving Scouts with Disabilities

Expiration Date
This presentation is not to be used after Dec. 31, 2016.
Obtain an updated version at
www.scouting.org/disabilitiesawareness.aspx

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Presenter Notes: Begin with a simple opening ceremony using the Pledge of Allegiance and the Scout Oath and Scout Law. Then state: *“Virtually every Scouting unit at one time or another will have the opportunity to serve youth with special needs. In fact, in a recent study in the Midwest, we found that 15 percent of the membership has some sort of disability requiring special attention or consideration from leaders.”*

Welcome and thank everyone for attending. State you being here speaks of your dedication. [Presenter should limit the number of questions asked and control discussions.]

This presentation provides leaders and parents with the basic knowledge and skills needed to work with youth who have special needs. We hope it will inspire participants to seek more information about specific disabilities they encounter in their Scouts. The session takes under 60 minutes depending on experience level, and has an expiration date, after which it is not to be used. Upon that date a replacement session will be available at the URL shown above.

Presenters may want to have a flip chart, and should have at least one copy of the following publications for use during the presentation:

- *Guide to Working with Scouts with Special Needs and Disabilities*, No. 510-071,
- *Scouting with Youth with Disabilities* manual, No.34059
- *Guide To Advancement*, No. 33088
- Application for Alternative Eagle Scout Rank Merit Badges, No. 512-730),
- Individual Scout Advancement Plan (ISAP)
- Request for Registration Beyond the Age of Eligibility

The National Disabilities Awareness Committee welcomes any and all feedback at disabilities.awareness@scouting.org, but would ask that questions and concerns first be shared with local district and council volunteers or professional administrators.

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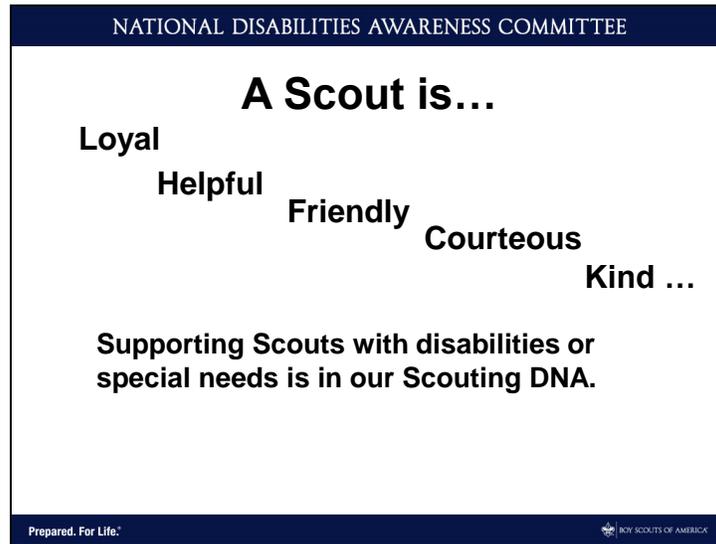
Course Objective

"1 in 10 children in the USA have a disability or condition that limits their functional skills." –Centers for Disease Control 2010

Help leaders create a positive and inclusive program for all youth in their unit, including those that have different abilities or challenges.

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- We all know that Scouting is good for our youth. But the child with disabilities often gets more out of the program than the “abled” youth do. Youth with special needs are often more driven to achieve and they probably have fewer outlets to satisfy this natural desire.
- Youth with special needs are often sheltered from things that may be difficult or frustrating to them. They often have parents or medical personnel around to make them content and comfortable. Scouting, however, can help develop the coping skills that may be helpful later in life. Our programs offer youth with disabilities an opportunity to tackle kid-sized challenges, and to work with others of their age.



Scouting is essentially a character building program, we need to remember the Scout Law when interacting with others no matter what their ability.

Refer to one or two examples of the Scout Law here. You will refer to it again later in the presentation.

A Scout is Courteous: A Scout is polite to people of all ages and positions. He understands that using good manners makes it easier for people to get along.

A Scout is Kind: A Scout treats others as he wants to be treated. He knows there is strength in being gentle. He does not harm or kill any living thing without good reason.

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A Scout Needs a Leader...

- With a positive overall outlook
- Who cares about the success of youth
- Who is focused on finding solutions to challenges
- Who sees a person, not just a diagnosis
- Who models and encourages appropriate behavior from all

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A Scout needs and desires a leader.

A leader that accepts all. Remember youth follow by our example – verbal and non-verbal expressions.

Leaders of Scouts who have disabilities report that one of the areas of greatest improvement is social skills. This not only applies to the youth with disabilities, but also to the other youth who have the opportunity to work with them.

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What is a disability?

A disability is a real and long-term condition that impairs functioning in one or more of the following areas:

- Physical
- Learning
- Cognitive
- Emotional
- Social

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Many disabilities are invisible. Most youth with a disability cannot be identified based on how they look.

If you see a Scout who struggles with a social or life skill, look for ways to support him or her, even if he or she has not been diagnosed or no one has shared a diagnosis with you.

Be aware that a Scout can have a combination of disabilities (comorbidity)

Examples of Disabilities – (not an exhaustive list, just some examples)

Physical - Cerebral Palsy (CP), Epilepsy, Vision, Hearing, Loss of Limb, Prosthetic

Learning - Dyslexia (reading), Dysgraphia (writing)

Cognitive or Developmental – Intellectual, Autism Spectrum

Emotional - Bipolar disorder, Depression, Anxiety

Social - ADHD

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"We are more alike than we are different" -
Maya Angelou

NEEDS ... Youth with disabilities have the same needs to be successful, and to be accepted, both socially and emotionally as others do. We must work with all youth to put success within REACH.

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It is noteworthy that often the other Scouts in the unit become the strongest supporters of these special Scouts, and develop a more realistic view of their own abilities—or lack thereof.

By putting success within REACH you are able to enhance the program not only for the Scout with disabilities, but also for the rest of the Scouts and leaders.

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REACH

REACH out to all Scouts to be sure they are part of the group.

- **R** – RESPECT
- **E** – ENCOURAGE
- **A** – ACCEPT
- **C** – CARE
- **H** – HONOR

You are the model.
It begins with your example.

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As a leader you are a role model for all Scouts to look up to and learn from. Focus on what the Scout CAN DO.

- **Respect** all Scouts as stated in the Scout Law.
- **Encourage** all Scouts to be challenged to do their best and to improve and achieve their goals. (This will look different for each Scout.)
- **Accept** where Scouts are in their journey through Scouting and show tolerance.
- **Care** and show concern for all.
- **Honor** each other's differences and help to grow all Scouts' abilities.

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Partner with Parents

Have a joining conference for **every** Scout

- Ask about strengths.
- Ask about parental concerns or anxieties.
- Ask about trigger situations.
- Ask what adaptations work at home.
- Do not ask for the diagnosis.
- If diagnosis is provided, be reassuring.

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It is helpful to have a joining conference (initial talk) with every Scout, disabled or not, and his parents. Remember to be mindful of confidentiality.

If appropriate to do so, include the youth in the joining conference with his parents. For Cub Scout--aged boys, meeting just with the parents is OK. For Boy Scout and Venturing--aged youth, including the youth in the initial talk is usually appropriate; however, this is just a guideline, not a rule.

Parents should control what you and other leaders may know or share. If they confide in you, ask their permission before telling anyone else. You may not learn the actual diagnosis, but it is more important to know the behaviors the Scout may exhibit.

Asking parents for suggestions on how to handle disruptions will help you know which appropriate action to take. This also shows parents you are willing to listen and work with them on what's best for their son or daughter.

There are many contributing factors that may cause inappropriate behaviors among Scouts with or without a disability. By knowing these factors in advance, you can mediate with the Scout and prevent some of these episodes from occurring. Contributing factors may include loud abrupt noises, whistles, PA systems, bright lights, changes in tones, changes in routine, and so forth.

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Partner with Parents

- Meet regularly with parents.
- Praise successes and encourage.
- Encourage parents to become leaders.
- Suggest parents may need to attend meetings or outings to assist.

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As you begin to understand a youth's disability, you may observe behaviors you should discuss with his parents. Don't wait for inappropriate behaviors to occur. Reach out and talk to the parents. Building an initial foundation of trust will help later.

One should understand that all youth, whether disabled or not, grow into maturity, and their behaviors change along the process. Most difficult behaviors lessen with maturity but there are some that become more extreme.

If you need to talk to parents or youth about a specific situation, make this an opportunity to be empathetic (have handout ready to distribute.) This way no one feels antagonized. A positive approach would be to say, *"I want to make sure the Scout is experiencing all that Scouting has to offer"* or *"How can I make it a success for the Scout?"* Focus on the behavior you want to change, not the person.

Do not rely on a parent always being able to attend meetings or outings as this may develop into a requirement for the Scout's active participation in the unit. In doing so, one places the burden on the parent to handle the inappropriate behavior instead of making this a learning experience for leaders and Scouts in the unit. There may be times, however, when a parent or caregiver must be present at meetings or outings. This will need to be addressed on an individual basis. **It will be important to watch this process closely to avoid hindering the Scouts development of independence.** **

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Partner with the Scout

- Communicate respectfully with the Scout.
- Assume the Scout can understand and handle the disability.
- Encourage the Scout to help create solutions.
- Encourage self-advocacy.
- Do not gossip or complain.

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- Be natural. Don't worry about using words related to the disability. For example: "See you later!" or "Give me a hand!"
- Speak directly to the Scout, not to his or her companion.
- Involve the Scout in problem-solving discussions. The more you include the Scout in the process, the more ownership the Scout will take in his or her behavior.
- Encourage self-advocacy. Some disabilities make it difficult for individuals to engage in a socially acceptable manner.
- Encourage all Scouts to ask for help, speak up and identify when they don't understand something, or may need extra help. Some Scouts may need to approach you individually to advocate for themselves. Some Scouts may need you to approach them to initiate conversation.
- Do not gossip or complain around the Scout, his peers, parents, or other leaders.

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Partner with Peers

- Develop peer partners. They may provide helpful information about particular Scouts.
- Encourage youth leaders to be patient and caring. Support youth leaders when they are frustrated.
- Develop peer buddies.
- Encourage peers to be advocates.

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Be Cautious!

Involving other Scouts in helping you address the concern can be risky. Always consult the parents and the Scout. Peers may volunteer information about a particular Scout but YOU SHOULD NOT PROBE. This could lead to other problems among members.

Peer buddy is an ongoing, supportive relationship between Scouts. It is not the same as the Buddy System.

You may have to work more closely and frequently with youth leaders. Remind them that this is a growing process and you will need to model patience and care.

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Planning Events

- Set the example with your attitude.
- Anticipate difficulties and address them.
- Be willing to experiment to find what works.
- Always have a Plan B.
- Be willing to slow down activities or work at different paces.

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- Flexibility is something everyone should prepare for. Addressing the concern does not have to be done the same way all the time. It should be handled in a way that meets the needs.
- Each youth's level of participation may vary considerably in length of time, intensity, and skill.
- Always have plan B, C, D and so forth handy.
- *** Ask a few participants to share difficulties and successes if time permits***

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Adaptive Approaches

EXAMPLES:

- Change resources used but not the objectives.
- Ensure accessibility for all.
- Use a “buddy.”
- Use group or individual instruction, whichever works best.
- Adjust the environment.

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- **Make sure routes are easily accessible for all!**
- Unit leaders can make accommodations for timing, scheduling, setting, presentation, and response when helping a Scout with his advancement.
- There isn't enough time to discuss every possible adaptation in this session. Offer some examples to get the participants thinking. [You can either share a few responses verbally or use the handout to spend more time on this slide. It contains more information for each adaptation]
- **Materials Adaptation**
- **Architectural Adaptation**
- **Leisure Companion Adaptation**
- **Cooperative Group Adaptation**
- **Scheduling Adaptation**
- **Environmental Adaptation**

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Advancement

- Cub Scout advancement
- Boy Scout and Venturer advancement
- Alternate rank requirements
- Alternate merit badges
- Participation beyond the age of eligibility
- Time extensions to earn the Eagle Scout rank

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Cub Scouts – (Do Your Best)

- The boy's advancement is assessed on the basis of whether he has done his best toward meeting a requirement.
- Requirements for any achievement can be substituted by the Cubmaster and pack committee.
- The Webelos leader should use the Cub Scout motto in determining whether a Scout has earned an activity badge. *Do your best!*
- Leaders should help parents draw the line between expecting too much and too little.

Boy Scouts/Venturer – (As Written, No More, No Less)

- Boy Scouts and qualified Ventures should be challenged to meet the requirements for ranks as stated in the *Boy Scout Handbook*.
- In cases where it is impossible for Scouts to complete merit badges required for the Eagle Scout rank, use the *Application for Alternate Eagle Scout Rank Merit Badges*, No. 512-730.
- Use an Individual Scout Advancement Plan (ISAP) to help the Scout modify rank requirements.
- Scouts with severe disabilities may join or remain in Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting or Venturing beyond the usual age limits to participate and continue to earn advancement awards. He or she must be approved by council in order to register beyond the age of eligibility.
- Time extensions require approval from the National Committee.

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When Conflicts Occur

- Don't make snap decisions.
- Cooling off time may be necessary but not a "punishment."
- Listen to all sides from the Scout's perspective.
- Help each Scout see the other's viewpoint.
- Watch out for bullying.

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A youth with a disability may see the world differently from everyone around him or her. For this reason, some unanticipated events may result in a conflict. Things may not always be as they appear. It is important to handle situations carefully and seek as much information as possible to gain a good understanding.

**** Presenter - Ask for examples of successful conflict resolutions if time allows****

Some social activities may result in anxiety building-up depending on the Scout's disability. Removing him from participating in the activity may be best. However, it is important to emphasize this is not a "time out" or punishment for misbehavior. In fact, you should encourage the youth to learn to monitor himself and let an adult know he needs to excuse himself from the activity or game when he feels anxiety coming on. Agreeing on a place he or she can go to "chill-out" helps. This empowers Scouts to take control of their actions which fosters independence and self-esteem.

Keep watch for possible bullying situations. Bullying is unfair and one-sided, characterized by continued hurting, intimidation, threatening, or leaving someone out on purpose. Confront these behaviors if you see them. Be careful when Scouts are engaged in competitive games. Scouts with special needs are not always competitive and this may lead into a situation where the Scout becomes frustrated.

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Corrective Action

- A disability is not an automatic excuse for poor behavior
- Corrective action should build...
 - Self-awareness
 - Coping and adaptation skills
 - Maturity
 - Wisdom

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A youth with a disability has the right to receive accommodations, but he or she also has a responsibility to adapt as best he or she can toward others.

A disability may cause poor impulse control, but it is not an automatic excuse for poor behavior. Keep in mind that certain types of youth behaviors may be a form of communication they cannot express in a traditional manner.

Self-awareness questions leaders may help youth in asking include:

- What was I feeling before I acted out?
- What exactly triggered my anxiety?
- Was the other person trying to bully me or did I misunderstand?

Use responsible flexibility to help the youth develop personalized strategies for coping in his or her environment. The youth may have to live with the disability but you can help him or her discover an inner strength despite the disability and develop his or her full potential.

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Summary

- LOYAL – Have faith in what youth can become.
- HELPFUL – Look for positive solutions.
- FRIENDLY – A Scout is a person not a diagnosis.
- COURTEOUS – Show and expect respect.
- KIND – Model caring behavior.

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At this time, you may want to conclude the session with reading two of the points of the Scout Law, for example:

A Scout is Helpful: A Scout cares about other people. He helps others without expecting payment or reward. He fulfills his duties to his family by helping at home.

A Scout is Friendly: A Scout is a friend to all. He is a brother to other Scouts. He offers his friendship to people of all races, religions, and nations, and respects them even if their beliefs and customs are different from his own.

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Resources

- Leaders in your unit, district, and council who work with similar disabilities
- Council and district disabilities awareness committees
- disabilities.awareness@scouting.org
- *Guide to Working With Scouts With Special Needs and DisAbilities*, No. 510-071
- *Scouting for Youth With Disabilities* manual, No. 34059
- *The Guide to Advancement*, No. 33088

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Scouts with disabilities BSA publications can be accessed online at: www.scouting.org/specialneeds.aspx. Additional information can be accessed at: www.wswd.org/.

Not all councils have disabilities awareness advisory committees, so let your audience know to direct questions to: disabilities.awareness@scouting.org. Volunteers from the National Disabilities Awareness Committee will help provide advice and support.