

# ABILITIES DIGEST

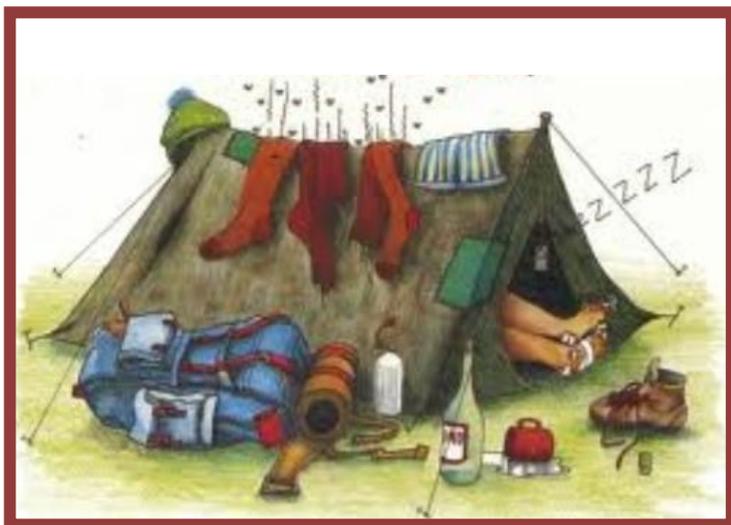
Prepared. For Life.® Vol. 9, No. 1

Winter 2022  BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

## Adapting Events: Long Term Camp SND Camp Planning for Parents

*Of all the schools the camp is far and away the best for teaching... A week of this life is worth six months of theoretical teaching in the meeting room, valuable though that may be.*

--Robert Baden-Powell, *Aids to Scoutmastership*, 1920.



For many, camp is a place of fun and excitement, and experienced Scouts and Scouters look forward to the great adventures they are going to have in that week away from home. For new Scouts, Scouts with special needs or disabilities (SND), and their parents, camp represents a week away from the safety of routine and the known. Parents can reduce the stress and anxiety with preparation and planning, ensuring a positive, life-changing experience.

### In This Issue

- **Adapting Events:** Focus on long-term summer camp planning and communication for campers with special needs or disabilities (SND) between parents, unit leaders, and camp staff; helping adult volunteers outside your unit.
- **Enhancing Awareness** Seabase Keys Experience, Philmont Zia Program, 2022 National Order of the Arrow Conference (NOAC).
- **Awareness Events:** Philmont SND Conferences, SND Roundtable, and Fall national SND training conference.
- **Recognizing Abilities:** The Torch of Gold Award.
- **Helpful Links:** Accessing special needs and disabilities materials

Particular scouts may have unique issues that must be taken into consideration. Are there triggers that cause a Scout to run off or disappear without letting others know? When frustrated, do they act out or are they prone to emotional outbursts? Are there medications leaders need to be aware of? Information about medications is essential for unit and leadership planning purposes. Parents must speak frankly with unit leaders about their Scout's known issues and what has worked for them to mitigate the circumstances. Do not be afraid to discuss leadership concerns with the parents, or vice versa. This is a team effort.



As a parent preparing to send your Scout to camp, it is important to set expectations for your Scout. Are you sending them to camp to have a good time or are you sending them to camp to return with as many merit badges as possible? Take time to discuss with your Scout what the expectations might be in camp; who will be their buddy; which adult do they go to if they are feeling stressed out or homesick or just need additional guidance. Let them know that they will most likely experience being homesick and that it will be OK.

All long-term camps are required to provide a leaders' guide; these are generally found in the same location as camp registration information. Councils usually conduct an information session, either in person or as a webinar, to help prepare unit leaders and parents for their camp and camp program. General information in the leaders' guides include maps, menus, merit badge opportunities, daily schedules, additional programs, what to bring and what not to bring to camp, rules and regulations, as well as contact information for key staff. Generally, this document will be one of the best resources before and during camp.



Look in advance at the merit badges your Scout plans to earn and take the time to work on any pre-requirements at home in advance. Scouts with compromised manual dexterity may prefer to do research using internet and computers before camp, and avoid the less-familiar challenges of using books and writing utensils at camp. The anxiety arising from unfamiliar study styles can be the difference between a completed merit badge and a partial. Also review the camp merit badge schedule to make sure your Scout has enough time to get to and from the unit's campsite and merit badge sites. It is not necessary to sign up for every merit badge time slot, especially if the Scout may need extra time due to mobility issues or other reasons. Consider arranging a camp visit before check-in to help identify issues that impact the Scout and work out viable solutions beforehand. Parents should be sure to discuss these concerns with the unit leadership, as well as tips and plans for working with your child. You are your Scout's best advocate.

## SND Camp Planning for Units

Approximately 15% of all youth experience one or more special needs or disabilities. Whether hidden or visible, these youth appear in almost every troop or unit. Special needs pose the greatest challenge when the youth is in a novel environment, like long-term camp. A successful camp experience, for youth and adult leaders alike, depends on planning ahead, especially since some campers are affected by special needs.



### Managing Subscriptions to *Abilities Digest*

*Abilities Digest* is designed for any leader who would offer a Scouting program to youth who have special needs. Any Scouting volunteer or professional may subscribe.

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

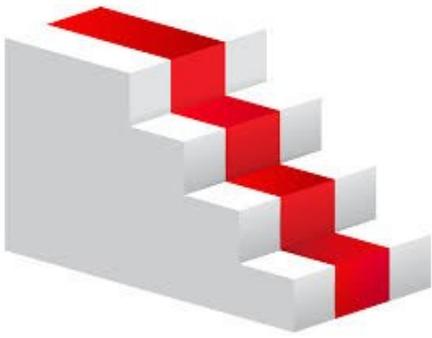
**Unsubscribing by email.** To decline future issues please reply and enter "REMOVE" in the subject line. We will remove the subscription within the next two weeks.

**Receiving Multiple Email 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 Email 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.

**Subscribing online.** Visit the web site [ablescouts.org](http://ablescouts.org). The page's lower left corner displays a small gray rectangle with the word "Follow" and three dots. Click on the word "Follow" and enter your email address. You will receive an email whenever a new *Abilities Digest* appears, plus an email when articles are republished.



**First step** unit leadership should take to prepare for camp is to make sure parents and leaders have reviewed the camp Leaders' Guide. Each long-term camp provides such a guide, and it outlines all camp requirements and activities.

**Second ESSENTIAL step** adult leaders should perform is pre-trip research, such as determining when and how to travel to and from camp.

Always follow the Guide to Safe Scouting for drive times. If a Scout has special needs, consider other issues: Will the length of the trip have implications for fatigue or emotional outbreaks? Will the Scout require a quiet car? Will frequent stops be necessary?

**Third step** is to decide how to handle medications for youth. This plan should comply with the camp's local rules and laws and with BSA's safe use of medication policy. BSA's policy is described in a "Safety Moment" and in a detailed document.

**Fourth step** the unit should take is to arrange a camp informational meeting for campers, parents, and adult leaders. The agenda should include the following:

- Share the travel plan with all participants and make adjustments as needed.
- Provide a vivid description of the camp experience. This could include a virtual tour if provided by the camp or if available through Google Maps.
- Create a duty roster for both youth and adult leaders. This gives all campers a preview to their daily personal obligations, and reduces uncertainty.
- Provide the schedule for camp programs, merit badge classes, or other activities. Try to schedule individual merit badges and program opportunities with plenty of time for additional needs, such as changing time when Scouts are doing any water or swimming activities.
- Discuss arrangements for Scouts to take the camp swimming test. Many camps allow Scouts to complete these before arriving, which frees up time at camp. Scouts with special needs may be more successful at a unit-organized swim test before camp, since it may provide a less stressful environment for the test.

- Explain how youth medications will be handled at camp. Warn parents that long-term camp is a very bad time for youth to take a “medication vacation.” Provide parents with a discreet, confidential way to discuss medication management with unit leaders.
- Be sure to collect information about food allergies, mobility restrictions, or other special needs. As with medications, provide a discreet, confidential way for parents to provide the information.
- Assign buddy groups among Scouts attending individual merit badges. No Scout should attend merit badge training alone.

Unit leaders should try to talk one-on-one with parents whose campers require medications or adaptations for special needs or disabilities. Leaders should also take the additional step of contacting the camp staff and sharing necessary information about special accommodations or other needs.

While these recommendations apply particularly to Scouts with special needs and disabilities, they improve the experience for all participants. Advance planning reduces uncertainty and anxiety for Scouts and adult leaders alike.

## Communicating Needs at Long-Term Camp

A successful camp experience for all Scouts relies on effective and detailed communication. This requires contact between the unit and the camp staff in advance, especially for campers with special needs or disabilities. The camp staff can best accommodate a camper’s special requirements if they know about them ahead of time. Communication continues within the unit’s camp site through shared activities, announcements, and signage.



Communication with the camp staff begins at the time the unit registers. It is important to identify any known food allergies/sensitivities and provide camp site location requests (not all camp sites are ADA compliant). Additional pre-camp communication should include camp medication policy, if it is not provided in the Leaders’ Guide, and confirmation of acceptance of swim tests completed in advance. Information provided to camp in advance will help make the experience better for everyone.

Once arriving in camp, assign an adult from the unit to follow up on all the pre-camp communication. This should include:

- Arrangements with the Health Lodge
- Confirmation with the Dining Hall regarding dietary restrictions
- Checking in with merit badge instructors on the first day of classes

Provide the assistance or information merit badge counselors need to work with your Scouts. Make sure to be discreet and continuous about sharing information. Counselors at camp are often youth, so please be mindful. If you observe youth camp staff needing additional support while at camp, find and work with the Camp Commissioners and the Program Director to provide appropriate guidance.

In the unit campsite, visibly post all schedules and duty rosters, including those for individual Scouts. This gives everyone insight on upcoming events and duties. It also lessens the element of surprise for all Scouts when pairings are announced. You may also want to provide pictures, copies of the schedules, or a more detailed to-do list as some Scouts may need to check-off completed tasks or activities. This can help Scouts with organization and time management.

Review schedules with the entire unit and not just with specific Scouts. This promotes inclusion. You should be rigidly flexible: be well organized up front to give you the most flexibility later. You will always be making program changes as you progress through your camping experience. As a leader in camp, make sure there are enough other adults to help share the burden. When sharing supervision, it affords parents and leaders a break from monitoring and supervising. If the parent has accompanied their Scout, the Scout too gets a break from their parent, and feels connected more with the unit.

## Adapting Activities – from the Inclusion Toolbox

### Helping Volunteers from Outside Your Unit

One of your jobs as a unit leader is to be an ambassador for your Scouts with disabilities when they need to engage volunteers outside your unit. While these people will have important interactions with your Scouts, they weren't there at your unit activities to get used to your Scouts and understand their uniqueness.



Day Camp staff, summer camp staff and merit badge counselors are obvious examples, but there are others too. If your Scout is going to a training course like NYLT, the course director and staff will want to know how to be effective and bring out the best in your Scout. If your Scout is going on an Order of the Arrow Ordeal, the OA leadership needs to know what accommodations are needed so they can make arrangements. If your Scout is hired for camp staff, the camp director and the Scout's direct supervisor will want to know about social and communication differences. If your Scout can go with a contingent

to a jamboree, the contingent leaders and senior youth leader will want to be brought up to speed. When your Scout is getting ready to get an Eagle Scout project approved, there will be district advancement volunteers that want advance information about your Scout.

[Module E](#) of the *Inclusion Toolbox* ([ablescouts.org/toolbox/e/](https://ablescouts.org/toolbox/e/)) provides detailed information for how a Scout with a disability can meet advancement requirements as they are written, how to develop alternative advancement requirements when the regular requirements are unreasonably difficult, and how to get formal approval for the exceptions. The primary responsibility for developing alternatives rests with you as the unit leader and with the family of the Scout with a disability. Even though you should have trained Scouters available at the district and council level to guide, assist, and advocate; they do not have the personal experience you have with your Scout to come up with the best alternatives for your Scout. Reach out for these experienced volunteers to help you, but understand that they cannot make decisions for you.

A unique feature of the Scouts BSA program that needs to be addressed here is the merit badge. To review,



merit badge counselors (MBCs) become involved when a Scout is ready to take on a merit badge. While many unit leaders also counsel some merit badges, the MBC role is distinct from the regular unit leadership. A Scout notifies the Scoutmaster of which badge the Scout wants to pursue and the Scoutmaster helps the Scout find the right merit badge counselor. For a Scout with a disability, this means more than finding someone who is technically proficient.

Remember that the trust you have built with the Scout and his or her family is with you, and not the MBC. This means that you, as the Scoutmaster, will need to work closely with the MBC to ensure a smooth transition. With the permission of the family, you will need to relay to the MBC what the accommodation needs are and the best teaching strategies you have for your Scout. It's OK to discuss "out of the box" ways for the Scout to complete the requirements with the MBC but remember that requirements must be completed as written. If you are dealing with an inexperienced counselor, there may be an issue where the MBC does not understand the scope and limits on their discretion. If they seem uncertain, you can point them to the BSA training resources for MBCs. If the MBC feels uneasy about being able to work with this particular Scout after you have talked it over, it is better to look for another counselor than to push a bad situation.

You can look beyond your unit, district, and council for a counselor.

## Adapted Events

### Seabase Keys Experience 2022

Sign up today for the Keys Experience for Special Needs and Disabilities, from March 21-April 1 at <https://www.campspot.com/book/sfcbasa>.

You choose the dates you and your family want to attend between March 21 – April 1 and enter "KEYS EXPERIENCE" in the additional information when registering. A member of the NSNDC committee will be in touch after registration to follow up for additional information to insure that the best support is available for your Scout.



### Philmont Zia Program 2022



When: July 24-30, 2022

The Zia Experience is a Philmont adventure for Scouts with special needs or disabilities. Our team of Philmont staff and highly trained volunteers will work with a wide range of functioning and abilities to provide an awesome Philmont experience for Scouts and their family members. Zia takes place the same week as two SND-related training conferences at Philmont, described elsewhere in this newsletter. For more information and registration, visit the [Philmont Training](#)

[Center web site](#).

### National Order of the Arrow Conference 2022



The BSA and NOAC promote a culture where everyone feels a sense of belonging. At NOAC 2022, the [Admonition](#) Team of trained volunteers is building affinity spaces where every Scout and Scouter feels respected and valued and has an awesome NOAC 2022 experience. There will be

four affinity spaces – Scouts with Disabilities, Women in Scouts, ArrowPride, and Scouts of Color. The affinity spaces will be conveniently located. The Scouts with Disabilities space is an area for Scouts and Scouters who

are in need of some down time and/or regrouping time when experiencing sensory overload (Tranquility Base). After deescalating, they can resume and enjoy the rest of the NOAC program. There will also be opportunities for Scouters to ask questions and get information so everyone can have a great experience.

## Awareness Events

### SND Roundtable: Getting Ready for Camp

**When:** Tuesday, April 12, 2022 at 6:30pm, Central Time

Summer camp is an amazing time for every Scout! And being prepared is key to a successful experience. Join this interactive roundtable discussion as we dive into how to help all of our Scouts get ready for a great time at camp! Who should attend? Parents, unit leaders, camp leadership, special needs and disabilities committee members and anyone interested in engaging on this exciting topic.

The National SND Committee hosts periodic roundtable webinars for all interested Scouts and Scouters. We announce them on the AbleScouts.org web site and on Facebook groups about SND Scouting, notably “No Scout Left Behind.”

[Click Here to Register](#) for the April Roundtable.

for additional information to insure that the best support is available for your Scout.

### Philmont SND Conferences

When: July 24-30, 2022

Philmont Training Center offers two separate training conferences on SND topics this summer, both during the week of July 24-30: Adaptive Special Needs, and Growing Your Special Needs Program. These conferences take place the same week as the Zia Experience described earlier. For more information and registration, visit the [Philmont Training Center web site](#).



#### Adaptive Special Needs

This national training offers a week of learning best practices in outdoor and camping programs for special needs. The week will help volunteers and professionals learn how to mainstream special needs scouts into everyday outdoor/camping programs. Adults will also learn about the latest adaptive programs including shooting sports, horsemanship, Project COPE and hiking while working with the Scouts attending the Zia Experience. The conference will also include: dietary and medication safety, program and facilities

management, adaptive equipment, advancement, and program development for serving special needs Scouts.

## Growing Your Special Needs Program

This course is designed for Scouters, professionals, chartered organization leadership, and school district personnel who want to expand their knowledge in order to positively impact youth with disabilities within your local Council.

Empower yourself and your Council Committee to make a difference in the lives of others. Learn to maximize resources and manage expectations, while creatively exploring ways to make modifications and accommodations to Scouting advancement.

## National SND Training: Save the Date

The National SND Committee is planning a series of in-person training events on Scouting with special needs and disabilities. Each will take place in a different part of the nation. The first will be hosted by Patriot's Path Council in New Jersey on the weekend of October 28-30, 2022.

## Recognizing Abilities

### The Torch of Gold Award



The Torch of Gold Award is a distinguished council-level award of the Boy Scouts of America. It recognizes adults who have given exceptional service and leadership to Scouts with disabilities. Each council may recognize one Scouter per year with the Torch of Gold Award.

A completed nomination form ([No. 512-945](#)) must be submitted to the council Special Needs and Disabilities committee, or its designee, according to council procedures and deadline.

The nominee shall be currently registered with the Boy Scouts of America, have a least three years of service in any Scouting leadership capacity related to Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, Venturers or Sea Scouts who have special needs and disabilities, including educating other Scouters about disabilities and working with youth who have disabilities. The nominee must have completed all activities related to Scouts with special needs and disabilities on a strictly volunteer basis.

Adults who have earned the [Special Needs Scouting Service Award](#), may be good candidates for the Torch of Gold, but earning the SNSS award is not a requirement. Some examples of the types of service that qualify include leadership of a unit (or den) that includes Scouts who have special needs and disabilities, presenting training at any level that helps other Scouters and Scouts to better understand special needs & disabilities, participating in a special needs and disabilities focused event (such as a “disabilities awareness challenge” at a Camp-o-ree, Roundtable, or even at a Jamboree), advocating for Scouts who have special needs and disabilities, and involvement in the Council Special Needs and Disabilities Committee. The candidate must work to ensure that the Scouts they serve have a great Scouting experience and benefit from the Scout programs.

If you know of an active Scouter in your Council who meets the criteria, NOMINATE him/her for the Torch of Gold! They are doing our Scouts immeasurable good and these individuals deserve to be recognized!

## Helpful Links

Scouting with Disabilities landing page: [scouting.org/resources/disabilities-awareness/](https://scouting.org/resources/disabilities-awareness/)

AbleScouts: *Abilities Digest* articles posted online: [ablescouts.org](https://ablescouts.org)

## Links in Articles

The Inclusion Toolbox: <https://ablescouts.org/toolbox/>

### Medication in Scouting

- **Safety Moment:** <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/safety-moments/safe-use-of-medication-in-scouting/>
- **Policy Summary:** [https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/healthsafety/pdf/safe use of medication in scouting.pdf](https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/healthsafety/pdf/safe%20use%20of%20medication%20in%20scouting.pdf)

## About *Abilities Digest*

*Abilities Digest* is the official e-letter of the Boy Scouts of America National Disabilities Awareness Committee. Its mission is to 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).

Philmont Zia and Conference Registration: <https://www.philmontscoutranch.org/ptc/ptc-conferences/>

Seabase Keys Experience: [campspot.com/book/sfcbasa](http://campspot.com/book/sfcbasa)

SND Roundtable Registration: [https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fscouting-org.zoom.us%2Fmeeting%2Fregister%2FtZAscu2pqD8sGdOZEICAqCnFvcNSTu3wQhSZ%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR1dEnY8kD0AXAEfrktP3NJBbwuwEbLUzu3Trub-crCz\\_FCFazYQa4YtaZHA&h=AT18q0x0FqYukHy7B9zbanSqK2j05ycG5DttIVW-lqShmBlyWlPpWW](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fscouting-org.zoom.us%2Fmeeting%2Fregister%2FtZAscu2pqD8sGdOZEICAqCnFvcNSTu3wQhSZ%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR1dEnY8kD0AXAEfrktP3NJBbwuwEbLUzu3Trub-crCz_FCFazYQa4YtaZHA&h=AT18q0x0FqYukHy7B9zbanSqK2j05ycG5DttIVW-lqShmBlyWlPpWW)

Torch of Gold Award: [scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-945.pdf](http://scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-945.pdf)

Woods Services Award: [scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-258.pdf](http://scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-258.pdf)

## Social Media



Twitter: @AbilitiesDigest



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

Facebook *No Scout Left Behind*: [www.facebook.com/groups/1967878213431320](http://www.facebook.com/groups/1967878213431320)

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