

Expiration Date

This presentation is not to be used after Dec. 31, 2020.

Obtain an updated version at www.scouting.org/disabilitiesawareness.aspx

Advancement, one of the methods of Scouting, is the one area involving Scouts with disabilities, that leaders and parents or guardians may have their biggest challenges at the unit level. Through this presentation we will endeavor to provide that audience with the fundamental information to help them address those challenges.



The Guide To Advancement (GTA), Section 10.0.0.0 specifies the guidelines for advancement for youth who have a qualifying disability.

Through this presentation you will become familiar with those specific BSA forms that are needed to document and support advancement decisions for these youth.

We will wrap up this presentation by discussing four separate scenarios where you will have an opportunity to evaluate a situation and decide what the proper course of action should be --- it will not always be "cut and dried"!



- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Any youth can be successful as a Scout, and for many youth who have special needs, the Scouting program provides a real opportunity to thrive. It is also 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.



The six points noted on this slide will become important in seeking alternative rank advancement requirements and for designating a Scout who is qualified to register beyond the normal age of eligibility for his program. A member registered in this way may remain a Cub Scout even though he has turned 11, remain a Boy Scout even though he is 18 or older, and stay in Venturing or Sea Scouts beyond age 20.

A youth application is required, except for participants who are 18 or older. The latter must complete an adult application with the proper position code (see next slide.)

Take a moment to become familiar with these requirements. If you have any questions, make a note of them. It's likely we'll cover them as we go, but if we don't, please ask!



In July 2019 the updated Registration Guidebook (100-092) required adult applications for all members over 18 and subsequent completion of Youth Protection Training and a background check. To protect an individual's approved registration beyond the age of eligibility, the new position codes for an adult application were added: "UP" (unit participant) for members in packs and troops, "VP" (venturing and sea scout participant) for members in crews and ships. A third code, "EP" (exploring participant) for members of posts will be added in June 2020.

The Registration Guidebook, page 80, includes the application for exemption from YPT --- it must be approved by National Council.



This chart reflects the sequence of actions that will normally be followed to document a disability.

Note that the process is initiated by the parent and leader.

A medical assessment is essential. Note that an IEP will not only help in documenting a disability, it can also help in determining what the youth can do, and what the Scout is unable to do!

We don't want to focus on only what the youth *cannot do*, however, but capture the Scout's *strengths* as well.

A health professional must certify that the disability exists.



The request for registration beyond the age of eligibility must be approved by the council executive board, but the board may delegate the process to a council operating committee or other group of responsible volunteers at the council level. This may or may not be the council advancement committee. Individual cases must be deliberated upon. It is important to note that the decision must not be delegated to any district or to any single individual, either professional or volunteer.

See the *Guide to Advancement*, topics 10.1.0.0 and 10.1.0.2. This registration may continue, so long as the disability remains and the individual functions in Scouting as a youth. If later it turns out that the member can function as an adult, and is of age, the individual may register as a volunteer Scouter.

As long as a youth is socially accepted and feels comfortable in a particular age group it is appropriate to keep the Scout there for a period of time. If a child is 12 or 14 years old physically, but mentally 8 years old, the youth may function well in a Cub Scout pack. It is important, however, to avoid a physically inappropriate grouping. For example, it would not be appropriate to have a 6' 3" eighteen year-old with special needs placed with six ten year-olds. In that case it might make more sense for the older youth to be a member of a Scout troop. Often, however, with great differences in chronological age and mental age it may be best to organize a "special needs" unit where the individual can function more normally with his developmental peers.



This chart shows the steps for completing a registration beyond the age of eligibility.

Again, the disability must have been diagnosed as permanent and severe, and it must be approved by the council executive board, or its designated council operating committee or other body. Your registrar will deal with the coding involved. If he or she is not familiar with the process, a call to the national BSA Member Care Center would be in order.

Please note that the National Disabilities Awareness Task Force has developed a "Request to Register Beyond the Age of Eligibility" form, which will walk parents, leaders, and councils through the process. It can be found at www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-935.pdf.

Remember that registration beyond the age of eligibility is available only for permanent and severe disabilities and the arrangement is intended to be permanent. However, the local council or the National Council, upon uncovering evidence that a youth was improperly registered with a disability code, or for whatever reason no longer meets the required level of severity, may make the decision to expire the registration. Registration of an adult as a youth member with a disability code may also be expired if it is determined the registrant has progressed sufficiently to become registered as an adult. *GTA*, topic 10.1.0.2, last paragraph.



A disability can range in severity from mild to severe with multiple coexisting disabilities capable of producing a severe impact which is greater than any one of existing "mild" disabilities". The greater the disability, the greater will be the challenge to the Scout leader to provide a program. Disabilities also come in a wide variety of forms. This makes it impossible to come up with a single policy or approach. The best resources for understanding the nature of a youth's disability are the parent or guardian, the youth's educator, and the youth's physician.

Complicating matters further, a Scout may have *several* disabilities. For example, a physical deformity may be accompanied by cognitive delays. Often children with fetal alcohol syndrome have learning disabilities as well as hearing loss. But on the other hand there are individuals with just one disability.

Note that topic 10.1.0.1 in the *Guide to Advancement* specifically defines "multiple coexisting disabilities." This refers to a diagnosis of two or more disabilities, none of which alone may be significant enough to warrant registration beyond the age of eligibility, but when considered in combination, may qualify. For example, a youth with a moderate learning disorder or ADHD may not be approved to register as a Boy Scout after age 18. If, however, another disability also exists, the combined impact might be significant.



Given this question as to whether a Scout is unable to fulfill a requirement as written, we have two scenarios to consider:

First, if the Scout is registered beyond the age of eligibility, we can move on to the alternative requirements process.

But even if a Scout is not registered beyond the age of eligibility, if the Scout has a permanent physical or mental disability, or a disability expected to last two years or more—or beyond age 18, then alternative requirements are still available. Note that this policy recently changed to include Scouts with longer-term temporary disabilities—such as those related to a serious injury—so they may continue to work on advancement during recovery.

The Scout, with assistance from parent and leader, can request alternative requirements. We'll discuss the process momentarily.

If not registered beyond the age of eligibility, all requirements—even alternative requirements—must be fulfilled by the 18th birthday—unless an extension of time to earn the Eagle Scout rank is approved. But remember; extensions are not necessary for those registered beyond the age of eligibility.

The process for alternative requirements differs in each Scouting program. Let's begin with Cub Scouting.



Advancement is so flexible in Cub Scouting that, with guidance, most Cub Scouts with disabilities can complete the requirements as they're written. So most of the time, alternatives are not necessary. The standard, of course, is, "Has he/she done his/her best?" It may take the Scout longer to attempt requirements and demonstrate their best, but their accomplishments will be rewarding—to the Scout, his/her parents, and his/her leaders. And perhaps even more rewarding because of the extra effort needed.

Cubmasters and pack committees may work together to determine appropriate substitutions that are consistent with the Cub Scout showing they can "do their best." For example, elective requirements could take the place of those required. Or in consultation with parents, other minor adjustments representing similar challenges could be made. Where more than this will be required for a youth to advance, then application must be made for alternative requirements. We'll get into how that works in a moment.



Boy Scouts and Varsity Scouts are expected to meet the requirements exactly as they are stated. There is no provision for simply doing one's best, as there is in Cub Scouting. This means that some Scouts with special needs are only going to go as far as their abilities will take them.

It is important, though, that we don't read into requirements what isn't there. For example, if a requirement says something must be written, it could be "written" into a computer; or even spoken, recorded, and transcribed by someone else. If we say something must be discussed, it could be discussed through a parent who has learned to understand a son whose speech is not as clear as yours and mine. If you have questions be sure to ask them at disabilities.awareness@scouting.org.

The Sea Scout rank and Venturing advancement award requirements—unless otherwise stated in official BSA literature—must also be fulfilled as written. But one may apply for alternative requirements in those programs, too.



This chart shows the process for determining if an alternative requirement for Boy Scout advancement is needed, and then developing the alternative and approving it for implementation.

In crafting an alternative requirement, the Scout, parent or guardian, and the leader should collaborate to determine what might offer the same kind of challenge. This is important; an alternative requirement must be as challenging for the Scout with special needs as the one that it replaces is for typical Scouts.

Bear in mind that alternative requirements must be approved by the council advancement committee.

Scouts must not use alternative requirements until after they have been approved.

Alternative requirements follow the procedures in the *Guide to Advancement*, topics 10.2.2.1 and 10.2.2.2.



Approval for alternatives to the merit badges required for the Eagle Scout rank follow the procedures in the *Guide to Advancement*, topic 10.2.2.3.

The process is essentially the same as for alternative rank requirements, but there is a form to use, called the "Application for Alternative Eagle Scout Rank Merit Badges," No. 712-530. It can be found at http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-730.pdf.

The most important point in considering alternative merit badges is that we are not permitted to modify requirements *within* a badge. All requirements for any one badge must be fulfilled as written.

If a Scout with special needs is not able to meet one or more requirements of a badge that is required for Eagle, the Scout may submit an application to work on another badge that presents the same kind of challenge. Note that an application for alternative Eagle Scout rank merit badges may be initiated as soon as it is determined that the Scout's disabilities preclude completion of a specific Eagle Scout Rank required merit badge.*

Note that an application for alternative Eagle Scout rank merit badges for Scouts who DO NOT HAVE a permanent disability must not be approved until after the Scout has completed all those required merit badges that the Scout is able to earn. This is because the same form is used not only for Scouts who are permanently disabled, but also for Scouts who have temporary disabilities—for example, from an injury. Some youth may improve and be able to earn a badge that was previously thought to be impossible. We want all the required merit badges that can be earned, to be earned first, and then Scouts may begin to work on alternative merit badges.

Remember, that any alternative merit badge must be as challenging for the youth with special needs as the merit badge being replaced is for other Scouts.

Scouts are not permitted to use merit badges they have already earned as alternatives Eagle-required merit badges.



The *Guide to Advancement*, in topic 10.2.2.0, provides the guidance for boards of review for youth who have special needs or disabilities.

Most importantly, it is permissible to allow parents and unit leaders to assume different roles in these boards of review. They most likely know these Scouts best, and they can help by prompting the Scout, and assisting by rephrasing questions from the board so candidates are better able to understand and respond. They can also bear witness to the Scout's work on requirements and to the youth's Scout spirit.

It would also be wise for a board of review chair to reach out in advance to the Scout's parent or caregiver. The more that can be learned about the candidate and their abilities, the easier it will be to create a positive, meaningful, and memorable experience.



- Ideally, youth with disabilities get more out of being in a typical Scout unit. This exposes them to a wider variety of people
 and other youth can become a support system. On the other hand, youth with severe disabilities and those significantly
 older, chronologically, may fit better and receive a more helpful program in a special unit of individuals in similar
 circumstances. For help in organizing such a unit, you should work with your district executive or Scout executive.
- Parental assistance is very important, but there are some who don't want to acknowledge a disability or simply choose not to help. Parents usually understand behavioral patterns, they know about medications, and they're often needed to help with communication and reminders. We really want them to be involved. If you encounter the unhelpful parent scenario, diplomacy is critical and you may want to request help from the council disabilities awareness committee.
- Many parents with children who have special needs may have been protecting and over-compensating for them
 throughout their lives—helping to overcome the obstacles they face. If they hesitate to disclose their child's disability, it
 may be for fear of consequences. We need to be sensitive to this. Leaders must listen to parents, gain trust, and work with
 them to provide the best possible experience. In many cases, this will mean helping parents to let go somewhat and
 increase their child's level of independence. As you can imagine this can be a delicate issue.
- Sometimes, due to a lack of contact or experience, other members of the unit—youth or adults—may be uncomfortable
 with a Scout who has a disability. We need to be sensitive to this, and work together to defuse any misunderstandings or
 difficult situations. We need to help Scouts and leaders learn the best approach in cases where special needs must be met.
- The goal is to include Scouts who have special needs in as many activities as possible. There will be, however, activities that
 are beyond their capabilities or beyond the unit's ability to safely support. This situation is not unique to Scouts with
 disabilities, and most will understand. Just use common sense, and do your best to include everyone as often as possible.
- Many Scouts must take medication to control behaviors or other symptoms of a disability. If the medication is prescribed to
 help the individual live a more normal life, it is not advisable to take a "medication vacation" while participating in Scouting.
 This will mean that a responsible adult must provide or administer the medication. The preferable solution is to have a
 parent or a qualified medical person do this.



An Individual Scout Advancement Plan is like the Individual Education Plan that is used in schools to map out the process to qualify a student for special education and identify objectives that should be accomplished.

The ISAP is nothing more—and nothing less—than a tool to help parents and leaders map out a plan for a Scout who has special needs. What do his abilities allow? What requirements can he fulfill as written? What merit badges will the Scout be able to earn? Where will we need to apply for alternative requirements or alternative Eagle-required merit badges?

Think about it. Wouldn't it be nice for parents, leaders, and district and council advancement administrators to have an understanding up front? Such a "contract" could be updated as the Scout advances and more is learned about his disability. The result provides guidance and focus for everyone involved.

But as an aside, isn't this something we might do for all Scouts? Such a plan for a typical Scout might not indicate where alternative requirements are needed, but it might indicate where some special support might be needed. A good example might include those of us who struggled to produce the requisite number of chin ups needed for Personal Fitness merit badge. An ISAP for that scenario might have called for a chin up bar at the meeting place and some regular workouts!

An ISAP form has been adopted by the National Disabilities Awareness Task Force and it is recommended for use by councils to document disability-related decisions for youth in the Scouting program. It can be found at www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-936.pdf.



Of course, your primary resource in working with Scouts who are disabled should be the Scout's parents, and then a knowledgeable teacher. Clearly, the Scout is a resource, too, especially if he disagrees with his parents about what he is capable of doing. Leaders should then trust their observations of the youth in action. Beyond these "live" resources, there is a website and several BSA publications listed on the screen that may be helpful. The second publication, Scouting for Youth with Disabilities is available on line at www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/34059.pdf.



Let's see how we're doing.

We have a number of scenarios for you to think about.

We'll divide the class into four groups and have each group address a scenario. Then we'll have each group report out.

{[resenter note: provide a copy of each scenario to each participant.]

Take a look at this one. What do you think?

How many say yes? How many say no? What's your reasoning?

[Move to the slide as discussion wanes.]



The answer is yes. If this is his normal mode of transportation, then the Scout's feet are the wheels of the chair. The Scout should do the hike without aid, but depending on the trail or path, there may be places where it would be reasonable for others to lend a hand. This is no different than any typical Scout getting a hand now and then. If the Scout uses an electric chair, and that is their normal mode, then that is permissible, too. Keep in mind the intention of the requirement and the learning experience.



[Read and discuss, then go to the next slide.]



Yes. Although this may not be a permanent situation, the Scout was on track, the incident was beyond their control, and the Scout should have the opportunity to make a case for carrying on. The Scout can, and should, apply for an extension of time to earn Eagle Scout rank. See the *Guide to Advancement*, topic 9.0.4.0.) for the procedures that must be followed.



[Read and discuss, then go to the next slide.]



So the answer is a good solid "Maybe."

The Scout in this situation could be considered for an extension if his disability is in a middle ground between "moderate" and "severe and permanent." If the Scout has a significant learning disability, but not one that is so severe that he could qualify for registration beyond the age of eligibility, then the Scout might get an extension. Registration beyond age of eligibility is intended as a permanent indication that a cognitive age of 18 will not ever be reached—that this condition is severe and permanent. If a Scout has kept up with their grade in school, or otherwise been somewhat successful in extracurricular activities, etc., then it would suggest the disability is moderate and that if the youth had focused on advancement the Scout could have kept up with that, too. If a Scout "all of a sudden," at age 17½, for example, tells us they have a learning disability, it may mean that the Scout simply wasn't focused on advancement, and that now they've run out of time. A disability is considered "significant" if it is possible the Scout could fulfill the requirements for Eagle, but that even with constant and consistent focus and effort, they will need a little more time past the age of 18. A "little more time" could be defined as around six months, give or take. If it were to take additional years instead of months, then registration beyond the age of eligibility might be suggested.

As a practical matter, known circumstances such as moderate learning disabilities or ADD/ADHD that the Scout has faced over many years, and which the Scout has coped with in the past, should not suddenly become an issue shortly before their 18th birthday.



[Read and discuss, then go to the next slide.]



Yes. The Scout completed the requirement using a technique for "seeing" through their sense of touch. The Scout can feel the shape of the constellations, and through discussion with theirleader the Scout can sense the vastness and inspiration we feel when we gaze into the night sky.

We need to be creative about ways to help these Scouts be successful. If we can do that, they will learn and grow from the experiences.



The slide says it all!

Stop and think! How many of us wear glasses or contacts to read or see distant objects? How many of us take medication to control blood pressure or cholesterol? How many of us use hearing aids, or use orthotics in our shoes? Some studies suggest that even one in ten of us has some sort of learning disability—that we may not even know about—and that one in 20 adults experiences problems with attention deficit.

The point is, that most all of us have some level of disability; and certainly, different <u>a</u>bilities. And we have different ways that we compensate and make the best of those abilities. Individuals with more serious *disabilities* are the same way! If we can tap into this concept we can begin to empathize, and meet the challenge before us.



[Note to the presenter: This is your opportunity to review any details or issues participants indicated earlier that they wanted to be sure were covered. Provide the answers to any that were not covered, and allow further questions from the group as time allows. This is also the time to gather feedback for passing on to the National Advancement Team. Please send any comments or suggestions to advancement.team@scouting.org.]