

FACT SHEET: SCOUTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS



BSA Policy Since its founding in 1910, the Boy Scouts of America has had fully participating members with physical, mental, and emotional disabilities. The BSA's policy has always been to treat members with disabilities and special needs as much like other members as possible, but a local council may make some accommodations in advancement requirements if necessary. A Scout with a permanent physical or mental disability in compliance with this policy may select an alternative (i.e., substitute) merit badge if his disabling condition prohibits the Scout from completing the necessary requirements of a particular required merit badge. This substitute should provide a "similar learning experience."

Cub Scouts With Disabilities.

The standard is "Has the Scout done his/her best?" A Cub Scout who is physically disabled may be given permission by the Cubmaster to substitute electives for a few of the achievement requirements that are beyond his/her abilities; this does not require council approval.

Registration Beyond the Age of Eligibility

The NCAC reviews applications and submits its recommendation to the NCAC Scout Executive for Eagle Scout candidates age 18 or older and Venturing award candidates age 21 or older who have permanent physical or mental disabilities who have met the requirements as stated in the official literature of the Boy Scouts of America. NOTE: The Guide to Advancement states that a disability "should not suddenly become an issue shortly before [a Scout's] 18th birthday." DO NOT DELAY.

To request such registration, submit a completed Request for Registration Beyond the Age of Eligibility, No. 512-935 which may be downloaded from www.scouting.org/filestore/doc/512-935.doc. The form lists a number of required attachments; additional information is always welcome.

Though not required, we encourage registration beyond the age of eligibility when requesting alternative advancement requirements or alternative merit badges if not already accomplished. In any case, when registered beyond the age of eligibility, the Scout is also certified as a Special Needs Scout.

Note: The Scout may also request a "time extension" (which is not equivalent to being registered beyond the age of eligibility) based on extenuating circumstances, when there is no permanent disability (i.e., Special Need). These are conditions or situations are defined as being totally beyond the control of the Scout. This is rare and must be approved by National. Submit to council a Request for Extension of Time to Earn Eagle Scout Rank, Form 512-077 which may be downloaded from scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-077.pdf

Alternative Requirements for Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class Ranks

A Scout who is unable to complete any or all of the requirements for Tenderfoot, Second Class, or First Class rank because of a permanent physical or mental disability may submit a request to the NCAC to complete alternative requirements. The procedures appear below. This avenue (as well as alternative merit badges) is also available to youth with longer-term disabilities (such as those related to a severe injury) who want to continue advancing during recovery. Alternatives are not available for the Star, Life, and Eagle rank requirements; Scouts may request approval for alternative Eagle-required merit badges (below), but the other requirements for those ranks must be fulfilled as written.

Step 1 – Do as many standard advancement requirements as possible.

Step 2 – Prepare an Individual Scout Advancement Plan, No. 512-936, which may be downloaded from scouting.org/filestore/doc/512-936.doc. Send it to your district advancement chairman (who may assist in preparing your application) who forwards it to the NCAC.

Alternative Merit Badges for the Eagle Scout Rank

The Eagle Scout rank may be achieved by a Scout who has a permanent physical or mental disability or a disability expected to last more than two years or beyond age 18. (Registration beyond the age of eligibility is not required.) Note that merit badges are awarded only when all requirements are met as stated. No partial merit badges are awarded, even for disabilities. Completing the alternative merit badge in the same way as the other Scouts will instill pride in the Scout with special needs.

The candidate must earn as many of the required merit badges as his ability permits before applying for alternate Eagle Scout rank merit badges (Form 512-730) which may be downloaded from www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-730.pdf. Note: A Scout is not required to satisfy any of the requirements of a Merit Badge that he is not capable of finishing because of his disability; instead he substitutes alternate merit badges. Alternate merit badges must, however, be of such a nature that they are as demanding to the Scout with special needs as the required merit badges are to other Scouts. Send the application to your district advancement chairman (who may assist in preparing your application) who forwards it to the NCAC.

NOTE: The Scout should not begin an alternate merit badge until the application has been approved.

Suggestions for Unit Leaders

- As soon as you identify a disabled Scout in your unit, contact your district Special Needs focal point. (If your district does not have a Special Needs focal point, contact your District Advancement Chairman.)
- It is not unreasonable to expect a special needs Scout's parents or guardians to be active participants in the Scout's activities.
- When your unit and/or the family submits information to the NCAC, make sure the package is complete and keep a copy. Remember: You will not be present to explain what you meant to say but did not, so feel free to attach additional information.

Forwarding Applications to the NCAC

Submit all applications to Don Durbin, Director of Camping Services, National Capital Area Council, Marriott Scout Service Center, 9190 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20814 | (301) 214-9188 | don.durbin@scouting.org