

National BSA Policy On Advancement for Youth Members with Special Needs

Resource Links

Advancement for Youth Members with Special Needs

The following are the guidelines for membership and advancement in Scouting for persons having disabilities or other special needs.

The American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) provides the following definition of an individual with a disability:

"An individual is considered to have a 'disability' if s/he has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (e.g., . . . seeing hearing, speaking, walking, breathing, performing manual tasks, learning, caring for oneself, and working), has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment.

"An individual with epilepsy, paralysis, HIV infection, AIDS, a substantial hearing or visual impairment, mental retardation, or a specific learning disability, is covered, but an individual with a minor, nonchronic condition of short duration, such as a sprain, broken limb, or the flu would not be covered by the ADA.

"The ADA definition protects individuals with a record of a disability and would cover, for example, a person who has recovered from cancer or mental illness.

"And the ADA protects individuals who are regarded as having a substantially limiting impairment, even though they may not have such an impairment. For example . . . a qualified individual with a severe facial disfigurement is protected from being denied employment because an employer feared the 'negative reactions' of customers or coworkers."

The Department of Education identifies a severely handicapped child as one who, because of the intensity of his physical, mental, or emotional problems, or a combination of such problems, needs education, social, psychological, and medical services beyond those that have been offered by traditional regular and special educational programs, in order to maximize his full potential for useful and meaningful participation in society and for self-fulfillment. Such children include those classified as

seriously emotionally disturbed or profoundly and severely mentally retarded, and those with two or more serious handicapping conditions, such as the mentally retarded blind, and the cerebral-palsied deaf.

Membership

The chartered organizations using Scouting determine, with approval from appropriate medical authorities, whether a youth member is qualified to register (based on the above definitions) beyond the normal registration age. The Cubmaster's signature on the Cub Scout application, the Scoutmaster's signature on the Boy Scout application, the Varsity Scout Coach's signature on the Varsity Scout application, the Advisor's or Skipper's signature on the Venturing application, or on the unit's charter renewal application certify the approval of the chartered organization for the person to register. The local council must approve these registrations on an individual basis.

The medical condition of all candidates for membership beyond the normal registration age must be certified by a physician licensed to practice medicine, or an evaluation statement must be certified by an educational administrator. Use the Personal Health and Medical Record Form [\[click here for forms\]](#). Any corrective measures, restrictions, limitations, or abnormalities must be noted. In the case of mentally retarded or emotionally disturbed candidates for membership, their condition must be certified by a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist. Current health, medical, or certification records of all youth members beyond the normal registration age who have disabilities are to be retained in the unit file at the council service center.

Boy Scout Advancement

All current requirements for an advancement award (ranks, merit badges, or Eagle Palms) must be actually met by the candidate. There are no substitutions or alternatives permitted except those which are specifically stated in the requirements as set forth in the current official literature of the Boy Scouts of America. Requests can be made for alternate rank requirements for Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class using the information outlined in this chapter. No council, district, unit, or individual has the authority to add to, or to subtract from, any advancement requirements. The Scout is expected to meet the requirements as stated -- no more and no less. Furthermore, he is to do exactly what is stated. If it says, "show or demonstrate," that is what he must do. Just telling about it isn't enough. The same thing holds true for such words as "make," "list," "in the field," and "collect, identify, and label."

Alternate 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 he is physically or mentally disabled may complete alternative requirements if the following criteria are met:

1. The physical or mental disability must be of a permanent rather than a temporary nature.
2. A clear and concise medical statement concerning the Scout's disabilities must be submitted by a physician licensed to practice medicine. In the alternative, an evaluation statement certified by an educational administrator may be submitted. The medical statement must state the doctor's opinion that the Scout cannot complete the requirement(s) because of a permanent disability.
3. The Scout, his parents, or leaders must submit to the council advancement committee, a written request that the Scout be allowed to complete alternative requirements for Tenderfoot, Second Class, or First Class rank. The request must explain the suggested alternate requirements in sufficient detail so as to allow the advancement committee to make a decision. The request must also include the medical statement required in paragraph two above. The written request for alternate requirements must be submitted to and approved by the local council prior to completing alternate requirements.
4. The Scout must complete as many of the regular requirements as his ability permits before applying for alternate requirements.
5. The alternate requirements must be of such a nature that they are as demanding of effort as the regular requirements.
6. When alternate requirements involve physical activity, they must be approved by the physician.
7. The unit leader and any board of review must explain that to attain Tenderfoot, Second Class, or First Class rank a candidate is expected to do his best in developing himself to the limit of his resources.
8. The written request must be approved by the council advancement committee, utilizing the expertise of professional persons involved in Scouting for disabled youth. The decision of the council advancement committee should be recorded and delivered to the Scout and his leader.

The council committee responsible for advancement must then secure approval of the council executive board. The Scout executive must attach a letter to the application indicating that the executive board has approved the application.

The candidate's application for the award must be made on the Eagle Scout Rank Application or Quartermaster Award Application and recorded on the Advancement Report form.

In the application of these policies for Scouts with special needs, reasonable accommodation in the performance of requirements may be made. These may include things such as the extension of time, adaptation of facilities, or the use of equipment or necessary devices consistent with the known physical or mental limitations of the handicapped individual. It is urged that common sense be employed.

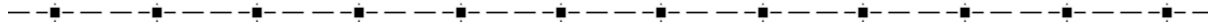
Alternate Merit Badges for the Eagle Scout Rank

1. The Eagle Scout rank may be achieved by a Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, or qualified Venturer who has a physical or mental disability by qualifying for alternate merit badges. This does not apply to individual requirements for merit badges. Merit badges are awarded only when all requirements are met as stated.
2. The physical or mental disability must be of a permanent rather than a temporary nature.
3. A clear and concise medical statement concerning the Scout's disabilities must be made by a physician licensed to practice medicine, or an evaluation statement must be certified by an educational administrator.
4. The candidate must earn as many of the required merit badges as his ability permits before applying for an alternate Eagle Scout rank merit badge.
5. The candidate must complete as many of the requirements of the required merit badges as his ability permits.
6. The Application for Alternate Eagle Scout Award Merit Badges must be completed prior to qualifying for alternate merit badges.
7. The alternate merit badges chosen must be of such a nature that they are as demanding of effort as the required merit badges.
8. When alternates chosen involve physical activity, they must be approved by the physician.
9. The unit leader and the board of review must explain that to attain the Eagle Scout rank, a candidate is expected to do his best in developing himself to the limit of his resources.
10. The application must be approved by the council committee responsible for advancement, utilizing the expertise of professional persons involved in Scouting for people with special needs.
11. The candidate's application for Eagle must be made on the Eagle Scout Rank Application, with the Application for Alternate Eagle Scout Award Merit Badges attached.

Certification. Certification must be given by the appropriate local council committee responsible for advancement that each Eagle Scout candidate over the age of 18 and Venturing award candidate over the age of 21 has met the requirements as stated in the current official literature of the Boy Scouts of America. (A representative of the council advancement committee must be a member of the Eagle board of review.)

Woods Services Award. This annual award was established to recognize volunteers who have performed exceptional service and leadership in the field of Scouts with disabilities. Nomination forms are sent annually to councils every September with a December 31 deadline. One person is selected each spring for national recognition.

Torch of Gold Certificate. This is for local council use in recognizing adults for outstanding service to youth with disabilities. Order No. 33733.



Source: *Advancement Committee Policies and Procedures*, #33088B, revised 1999

