

FACT SHEET: SCOUTING WITH DISABILITIES



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 alternate (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."

Certification of the Permanent Physical or Mental Disability

Scouts must first obtain NCAC certification of their disability before pursuing alternate advancement requirements or merit badges. The table on the back lists the information that units and families must submit to the National Capital Area Council (NCAC) when they make such a request. Submit the information to Ben Lacy, 301-214-9157 / benlacy@bsamail.org

Cub Scouts With Disabilities.

The standard for every boy is "Has he done his best?"

A Cub Scout who is physically disabled may be given permission by the Cubmaster and pack committee to substitute electives for a few of the achievement requirements that are beyond his abilities; this does not require council approval.

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 of a permanent physical or mental disability may submit a request to the Council ARC to complete alternate requirements.

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

(NOTE: There is no need to partially complete a required Merit Badges.)

Step 2 – Prepare a request for alternate requirements.

Step 3 – NCAC approves/disapproves request and informs the unit and the family.

Alternate Merit Badges for the Eagle Scout Rank

The Eagle Scout rank may be achieved by a Boy Scout who has a permanent physical or mental disability by qualifying for alternate merit badges. 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 alternate 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 an alternate Eagle Scout rank merit badge (Form 512-730). 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; however, they must 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.

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

Exceeding The Age Limit

The NCAC Special Needs Committee reviews applications and submits its recommendation to the NCAC Scout Executive for Eagle Scout candidates over the age of 18 and Venturing award candidates over the age of 21 who have permanent physical or mental disabilities who have met the requirements as stated in the official literature of the Boy Scouts of America. (A representative of the Council ARC must be a member of the Eagle board of review.)

The Scout may also receive an extension based on extenuating circumstances, and where there is no permanent disability. These are conditions or situations are defined as being totally beyond the control of the Scout. This is rare and must be approved at the National level.

In either case, requests must be submitted before the Scout reaches his 18th birthday.

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.)
- Provide the required information to the NCAC so that the Scout is registered with the applicable disability code.
- It is not unreasonable to expect the Scouts 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. Refer to the matrix on the back and remember: You will not be present to explain what you meant to say but did not.

<p style="text-align: center;">What to include in the petition package you send to NCAC</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Your district special needs coordinator or advancement chairman can assist you with your submissions</p>	Submissions for:							
	Cub Scout Advancement Flexibility	Register With Applicable Disability Code	Register Beyond The Age of Eligibility	Alternate Advancement Requirements	Sea Scout/Venturing Advancement Flexibility	Alternate Merit Badges	Time Extensions	
Approved by:	Pack	NCAC					Nat'l	
Include checked (✓) items from the list below with your submission								
Letter from a parent or guardian describing the disability and its severity and permanence	Approved by the Cubmaster and the Pack Committee	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Youth membership application or proof of membership		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Annual Health and Medical Record form, signed by physician		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Physical disabilities: A signed statement from a licensed physician attesting to the nature of the disability, its severity, and permanent limitations		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Developmental/cognitive issues: Signed statement from licensed psychologist, psychiatrist, neurologist, etc. attesting to the nature of the disability, its severity, and permanent limitations		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
A letter from the unit leader advocating the request		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Supporting letter from parent or guardian		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Supporting letter from Scout (if possible)				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Optional: Other supporting documentation, such as an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), treatment summaries, etc.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Unanticipated occurrence: detailed description—provide as much information as you can								✓
What has been completed, what cannot be done and why, and suggested alternates				✓	✓			✓
Application for Alternate Eagle Scout Rank Merit Badges (Form 512-730), available online, along with supporting documentation showing which badge is replacing which and the justifications						✓		