



National Council, Boy Scouts of America

Local Council Membership/Participation Guidelines Regarding Communicable Diseases

Health and Safety Team • February 2012

In the event that a situation arises in Scouting involving a communicable disease (acute or chronic), the BSA's traditional membership and participation guidelines should be followed.

Local Scouting units and their chartered organizations traditionally determine their own membership and participation, absent any legal constraints. Accordingly, it is the units and sponsoring institutions that allow youth or adult members who have, or are suspected of having, a communicable disease to participate in Scouting activities.

The council health supervisor may be consulted by the unit and the council's enterprise risk management committee. However, decision-making authority remains solely with the unit and its chartered organization.

A unit should consider the legal and health requirements in its home location and any location where the unit has activities or events.

If the chartered organization and/or a local Scouting unit requests local council help or assistance, do the following:

Work through an evaluation team (one suggestion is the use of the council enterprise risk management committee augmented to meet needs) to evaluate individual situations. This evaluation team should consist of individuals from the following areas:

- a. Legal (to be in compliance with local or state laws regarding discrimination and disclosure)
- b. Medical (health-care professional, e.g., a physician)
- c. Insurance
- d. Public health
- e. A senior professional staff adviser (preferably the Scout executive)

The evaluation process will include a commitment to the protection of the individual's rights of privacy and confidentiality, and due regard for the public health interest of others. In arriving at such a determination, matters to be considered include the nature of Scouting activities, the degree of proximity to others, and the likelihood of exposure to the condition(s). In addition, because of the potential risks to other participants, every effort should be made to protect these individuals while at the same time protecting the confidentiality of the affected individual. In some cases, this may require communication of privileged health information to other individuals involved in the activity, but this should be avoided if at all possible. The safety of all participants is paramount. This evaluation process conducted by the council evaluation team should include such people as the child or adult's physician(s) and/or the parents or legal guardian.

The evaluation team should perform the following tasks:

1. Hold a meeting to review the facts with the evaluation team.
2. Conduct a follow-up meeting inviting such people as the child or adult's physician(s) and/or the parents or legal guardian(s) to accomplish the following:
 - a. Determine whether or not the individual can safely participate in the unit/camp activities or program.
 - b. Discuss what activities are to be encouraged or restricted.
 - c. Provide training—for example, to camp staff or other unit members—needed to deal with an emergency and/or preventive measures.
 - d. Hold a discussion to determine if any modification to the unit or camp is necessary.
 - e. Take steps to maintain the confidentiality of the affected individual until a plan of action is agreed upon. However, if there is a potential for harm to other participants during Scouting activities, it may be necessary to disclose information regarding the existence of the communicable disease to leaders and parents of youth members. This should be done only if absolutely required to maintain safety—and the information should be limited to protect the individual's confidentiality. Camp health-care workers who may come into contact with the affected individual should also be aware of the potential for harm. As stated above, the safety of all participants is paramount.
 - f. The council evaluation team and/or the chartered organization should meet periodically to reevaluate the individual's health status and determine whether any changes should be made regarding the child or adult's involvement in Scouting activities.

To help reduce the risk of transmission of infectious diseases, it is strongly advised that all individuals always follow universal precaution guidelines as developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention here: www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/bbp/universal.html. This includes having appropriate personnel protective equipment at all events in the case that first-aid emergency care is needed. Units may require multiple sets of protective equipment if they divide their activities and are geographically separated, such as on an excursion or hike.