

Presenter's Notes



Including Scouts With Disabilities

Expiration Date

This presentation is not to be used after December 31, 2015.
Obtain an updated version at www.scouting.org/advancement.



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

Slide 1



Presenter Notes: Begin with a simple opening ceremony using the Pledge of Allegiance and the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

Then state: *“Virtually every Scouting unit at one time or another will have the opportunity to serve youth with special needs. In fact, in a recent study in the Midwest, we found that 15 percent of the membership has some sort of disability requiring special attention or consideration from leaders.”*

Welcome everyone and thank them for attending. State that you know they could be doing something else with their time, but that they chose to be at this presentation speaks to their dedication. Challenge participants to ask questions and encourage them to join in the discussions.

Background note to the presenter with supplies needed:

This presentation provides leaders and parents with the basic knowledge and skills needed to work with youth who have special needs. We hope it will inspire participants to seek more information about specific disabilities they encounter in their Scouts. The session takes approximately 60 minutes depending on experience level.

Like all of the new orientation and educational experiences under production by the National Advancement Committee and its Webinars and Education Task Force, this session has an expiration date, after which it is not to be used. Upon that date a replacement session will be available at the URL shown on the first slide.

We encourage presenters to have at least one copy of the following publications for use during the presentation:

- *Guide to Working with Scouts with Special Needs and Disabilities*, No. 510-071, www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/510-071.pdf
- *Application for Alternative Eagle Scout Rank Merit Badges*, No. 512-730), www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-730.pdf
- *Individual Scout Achievement Plan (ISAP)*, <http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-936.pdf>
- *Request for Registration Beyond the Age of Eligibility*, www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-935.pdf
- *Scouting with Youth with Disabilities* manual, No. 34059, www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/34059.pdf
- *Guide To Advancement*, No. 33088, section 10, www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/33088.pdf

A flip chart or white-board, and pens may come in handy.

The National Advancement Team welcomes any and all feedback at advancement.team@scouting.org, but would ask that questions and concerns first be shared with local district and council volunteer or professional advancement administrators.

**Why Scouting for
Youth Who Have Disabilities?**

- ♣ Scouting can have value for all eligible youth.
- ♣ Youth with disabilities often live in isolation from the rest of the world.
- ♣ Scouting teaches skills that help prepare them for life in our society.
- ♣ Scouting provides broader associations.

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- 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 boy can be successful as a Scout, and for many youth who have special needs, this may be the only time they can truly feel they have worth. 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.

Slide 3

Documenting a Disability...

Required to qualify for alternative requirements or registration beyond the age of eligibility.

- ✦ Obtain letter from parent describing disability
- ✦ Provide youth application or membership card
- ✦ Complete BSA health form (parts A and C)
- ✦ Obtain statement from health professional
- ✦ Obtain letter from unit leader
- ✦ Provide other available supporting documentation, such as an "IEP"

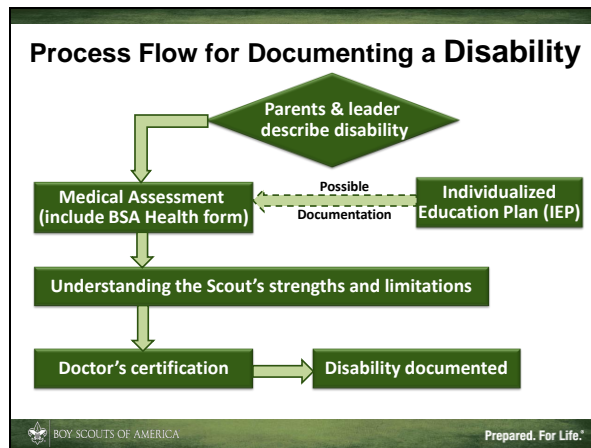
See *Guide to Advancement*, 10.1.0.2

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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.

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!

Slide 4



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 *cannot do*, however, but capture his *strengths* as well.

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

A health professional must certify that the disability exists.

Registration Beyond the Age of Eligibility
Guide to Advancement, Topics 10.1.0.0 & 10.1.0.2

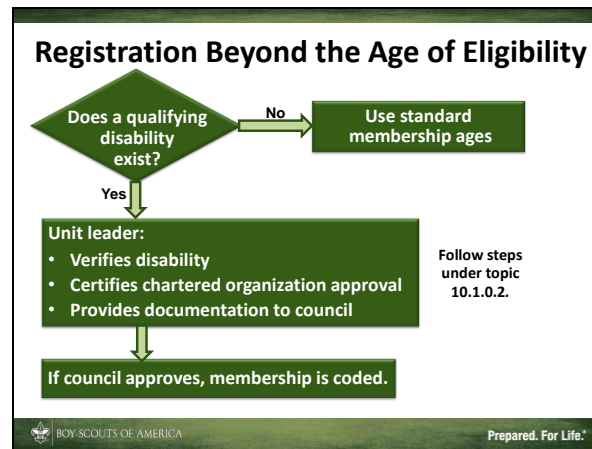
- ✦ Disability must be documented as permanent and severe
- ✦ Arrangement is permanent; not an extension of time to earn a rank
- ✦ Process applies in all BSA programs from Cub Scouting through Venturing and Sea Scouts
- ✦ Council executive board must approve

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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, he 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 him there for a period of time. If a child is 12 or 14 years old physically, but mentally 8 years old, he 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 Committee 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.

**Possible Criteria for Registration
Beyond the Age of Eligibility**
Guide to Advancement, Topic 10.1.0.1

♣ Physically disabled	♣ Blind or sight-impaired
♣ Cognitively impaired	♣ Deaf or hearing impaired
♣ Developmental delay	♣ Emotional or behavioral disorder
♣ Down Syndrome	♣ Multiple coexisting disabilities
♣ Traumatic brain injury	
♣ Autism Spectrum Disorder	

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A disability can range in severity from mild to near total incapacitation. 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, his educator, and his 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 someone with just one disability may be normal in all other respects.

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.

What if a Scout is unable accomplish requirements as written?

Alternative requirements are available.

- ♣ To Scouts registered beyond the age of eligibility.
- ♣ To Scouts with a permanent physical or mental disability, or a disability that is expected to last two or more years or beyond the 18th birthday.

Alternative requirements procedures are specific to each Scouting program.

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

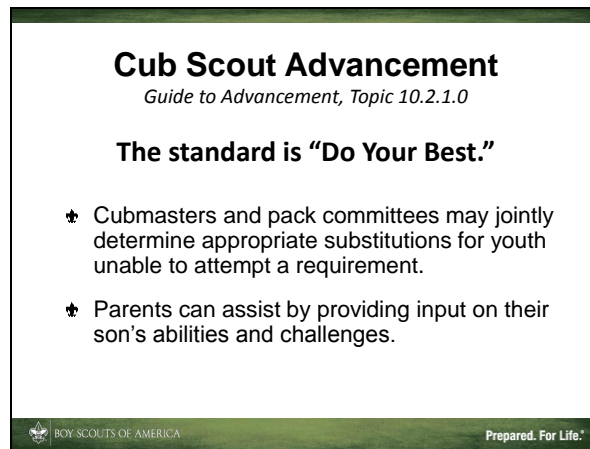
First, if the Scout is registered beyond the age of eligibility, we can move on to the alternative requirements process.

But even if a Scout is not registered beyond the age of eligibility, if he 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.



Cub Scout Advancement
Guide to Advancement, Topic 10.2.1.0

The standard is “Do Your Best.”

- ♣ Cubmasters and pack committees may jointly determine appropriate substitutions for youth unable to attempt a requirement.
- ♣ Parents can assist by providing input on their son’s abilities and challenges.

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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 done his best?” It may take him longer to attempt requirements and demonstrate his best, but his accomplishments will be rewarding—to him, his parents, and his 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 he can “do his 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 boy to advance, then application must be made for alternative requirements. We’ll get into how that works in a moment.

Boy Scout Rank Advancement

Guide to Advancement, Topic 10.2.2.0

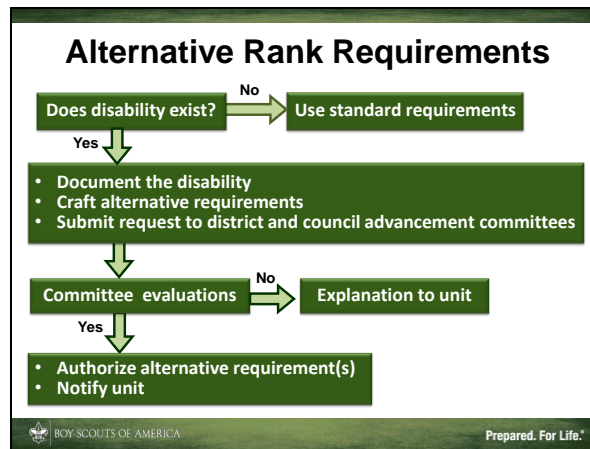
- ♣ Rank requirements are to be completed as written, no more and no less.
- ♣ Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class can be modified via a request for approval from the council advancement committee. (*Guide to Advancement, Topics 10.2.2.1 and 10.2.2.2*).
- ♣ Venturers and Sea Scouts working on Boy Scout advancement, and Varsity Scouts, are treated as Boy Scouts.

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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.



Alternative Merit Badges
Guide to Advancement, Topic 10.2.2.3

Merit badge requirements **must not** be modified, but it is permitted to substitute one entire badge for another.

- ♣ Substitute must be “as challenging.”
- ♣ Application for Alternative Eagle Scout Rank Merit Badges, No. 512-730, is required.
- ♣ All required merit badges achievable by the Scout must be completed before applying.

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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, he 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 must not be approved until after the Scout has completed all those required merit badges that he 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.

Boards of Review
Guide to Advancement, Topic 10.2.2.0

Some responsible flexibility is allowed if a Scout's disabilities could affect the outcome of a board of review.

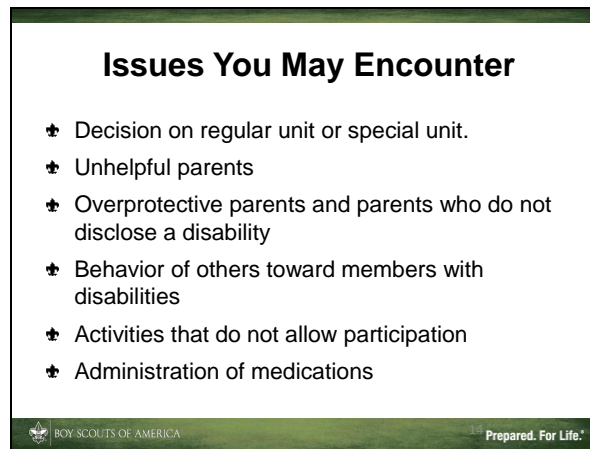
- ♣ Inform board of review members ahead of time about the special circumstances.
- ♣ Be sure the unit leader is able to attend.
- ♣ Allow the parents or guardians to attend and assist with interpretation and insight.

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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 his work on requirements and to his 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 his 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 son'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.

Individual Scout Achievement Plan

What is an “ISAP?”

- ♣ Like an IEP, but specific for Scouting
- ♣ A roadmap for parents
- ♣ A “contract” that can be followed and updated
- ♣ A guide for district and council decision makers

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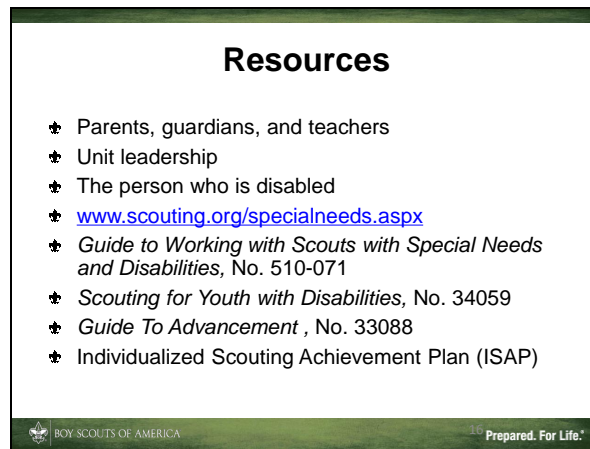
An Individual Scout Achievement Plan is like the Individual Education Plan that is used in schools to map out the process to qualify a student for special education and identify objectives that should be accomplished.

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 he 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 Committee 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.



Resources

- ♣ Parents, guardians, and teachers
- ♣ Unit leadership
- ♣ The person who is disabled
- ♣ www.scouting.org/specialneeds.aspx
- ♣ *Guide to Working with Scouts with Special Needs and Disabilities*, No. 510-071
- ♣ *Scouting for Youth with Disabilities*, No. 34059
- ♣ *Guide To Advancement* , No. 33088
- ♣ Individualized Scouting Achievement Plan (ISAP)

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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.

Slide 17

SCENARIO 1

A Scout permanently uses a wheelchair. He needs to hike and wants to join his troop for a day hike. Is it considered "hiking" if he is in his wheelchair? Why or why not?

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Let's see how we're doing.

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

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 wans.]

Slide 18

SCENARIO 1

Yes,
if this is his normal mode of transportation.

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The answer is yes. If this is his normal mode of transportation, then his wheels are his feet. He 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 his normal mode, then that is permissible, too. Keep in mind the intention of the requirement and the learning experience.

Slide 19

SCENARIO 2

A Scout is well on the way to Eagle. He is planning on finishing by the time he is 17½ but at 17 is in an automobile accident. He is in the hospital and then rehab for six months and cannot participate in Scouts. Might he qualify for an extension of time for his Eagle rank?

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

Slide 20

SCENARIO 2

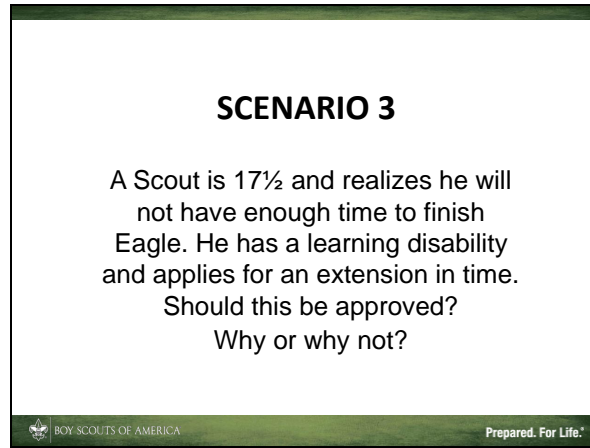
Yes.

Although this may not be a permanent situation, he was on track and should not be denied Eagle due to an incident beyond his control.

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

Slide 21



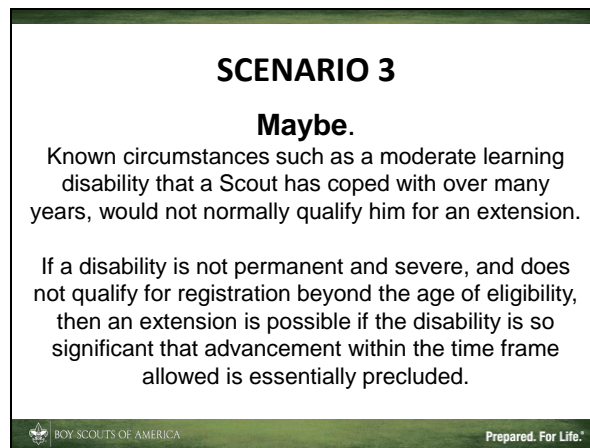
SCENARIO 3

A Scout is 17½ and realizes he will not have enough time to finish Eagle. He has a learning disability and applies for an extension in time. Should this be approved? Why or why not?

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

Slide 22



SCENARIO 3

Maybe.

Known circumstances such as a moderate learning disability that a Scout has coped with over many years, would not normally qualify him for an extension.

If a disability is not permanent and severe, and does not qualify for registration beyond the age of eligibility, then an extension is possible if the disability is so significant that advancement within the time frame allowed is essentially precluded.

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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 he has a *significant* learning disability, but not one that is so severe that he could qualify for registration beyond the age of eligibility, then he 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 his condition is severe and permanent. If a Scout has kept up with his grade in school, or otherwise been somewhat successful in extracurricular activities, etc., then it would suggest his disability is moderate and that if he had focused on advancement he could have kept up with that, too. If a Scout “all of a sudden,” at age 17½, for example, tells us he has a learning disability, it may mean that he simply wasn’t focused on advancement, and that now he’s run out of time. A disability is considered “significant” if it is possible he could fulfill the requirements for Eagle, but that even with constant and consistent focus and effort, he 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 he has coped with in the past, should not suddenly become an issue shortly before his 18th birthday.

Slide 23

SCENARIO 4

A blind Scout reports he has completed Astronomy merit badge. You ask him how he identified constellations. He replies that his merit badge counselor punched holes in a paper plates, held them over his head outside at night, in the right place for the night sky, and he used his hands to feel and identify the constellations. Should this be acceptable? Why or why not?

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

Slide 24

SCENARIO 4

Yes.
He completed the requirement with a reasonable level of assistance.

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Yes. He completed the requirement using a technique for “seeing” through his sense of touch. He can feel the shape of the constellations, and through discussion with his leader 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.

Slide 25

SUMMARY

disabilities = different abilities
We all have them.

Youth who have disabilities want the same personal growth opportunities that any youth does. It is our challenge to provide them.

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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 abilities. 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.

Slide 26

For More Information

- *Guide to Advancement*, No. 33088
- *Guide to Working with Scouts with Special Needs and Disabilities*, No. 510-071
- *Scouting with Youth with Disabilities Manual*, No. 34059
- Application for Alternative Eagle Scout Rank Merit Badges, No. 512-730
- Individual Scout Achievement Plan (ISAP)
- Request for Registration beyond the Age of Eligibility



Other advancement resources available at:
www.scouting.org/advancement

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[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.]