

# CED 722



## Supporting Mixed-Gender Scouting as a Commissioner

Time allotted	50 minutes
Teaching format	Instructor-led discussions with PowerPoint support, 2 Activities

### Resources

Handouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• none</li></ul>
Equipment and materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CED 722 – Supporting Mixed-Gender Scouting as a Commissioner</li><li>• CED 722 – Supporting Mixed-Gender Scouting as a Commissioner course PowerPoint presentation</li><li>• CED 722 – Activity #2 Scenario Cards</li><li>• Computer and projector</li><li>• Whiteboard or flipchart, appropriate markers, and eraser, if needed</li></ul>

### Course Connections

Connections to other CCS courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BCS 114 – Understanding and Communicating with Today's Leaders</li><li>• MCS 312 – Recruiting the 21st Century Volunteer</li><li>• DCS 512 – Recruiting for Diversity</li><li>• CED 720 – A Commissioner's Introduction to Valuing Diversity</li></ul>
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### Presentation Outline

#### Introduction and Course Objectives – 5 minutes

As commissioners, we respond to concerns from volunteers in various positions and also help prepare them to address concerns from Scouts and parents. Today's Scouting America programs continue to support the aims and methods of scouting, while expanding our reach to a larger audience. This course familiarizes commissioners with the considerations related to the expanded inclusion of girls in Scouting.

**Introduce the learning objectives, noting that by the end of this session, each participant should...**

- **Describe** the history of mixed-gender scouting domestically and internationally

- **Recognize** the importance of inclusivity to the mission and success of Scouting America
- **Respond** to common concerns about mixed-gender scouting and **share** facts that address those concerns

**Open question for the class:** What role do commissioners play in issues related to mixed-gender scouting?

*Allow the class to provide answers. The paragraph below provides one possible answer, though it is by no means the only applicable response.*

As with many other aspects of scouting, commissioners provide a supporting role. We answer questions, help make connections, and provide relevant information. If parents or adult leaders have questions about the policies, we may be able to provide clarification. Likewise, if myths are creating barriers, we may be able to help dispel them.

## **History of Mixed-Gender Scouting Domestically and Internationally – 25 minutes, including 10-minute activity (slides 4-9)**

### **Experiences with Mixed-Gender Scouting – 10 minutes, including activity**

*Note: If the class is small, this activity might work better as a group brainstorming activity. For a larger class, workgroups would be more effective. Groups of 3-4 would allow each individual to have an opportunity to speak.*

Before we get into the history of mixed-gender scouting, let's take a few minutes to discuss in small groups what experiences you have had with girls involved in scouting. Maybe there are some positive experiences to share. Perhaps someone has approached you with a concern or complaint about mixed-gender scouting or girls being allowed to join.

#### ***Mixed-Gender Scouting Activity #1 – 10 minutes***

**Instructor:** Please take five minutes to discuss your experiences with each other in small groups and be prepared to share some of your observations when we come back together as a class.

*After five minutes have passed, have the class reconvene and ask for each group to summarize what they discussed. When possible, convey that some of the material to come may connect with the issues they raise.*

For virtual presentation, consider the following strategies:

- Use breakout rooms for small groups.
- For the full-class discussion, which might be a discussion of the exercise or a post-breakout debrief, (a) allow participants to just speak up, (b) ask participants to post their responses in the chat line for the facilitator to read aloud, (c) ask participants to raise their hands for the instructor or facilitator to call on, or (d) choose a combination of these options.

### **Membership Trends – 2 minutes**

The Boy Scouts of America first allowed girls to join as registered youth members in 1971 in Sea Scouts, with Exploring and Venturing following soon after. From the 1970s to the 2010s, girls were limited to those programs.

Beginning in 2018 and 2019, however, girls were allowed for the first time to register as members in the flagship programs of Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA. In addition to access to the higher-profile programs, this permitted girls under the age of 14 to join for the first time. In the years that followed, girls became an increasingly substantial part of the organization's membership, as shown by this trend line.

### **Girls in Scouting, Globally – 4 minutes**

#### **World Organization of the Scouting Movement**

In addition to examining our own history, we should also consider the global Scouting movement as a whole, including its worldwide impact. Scouting America is a member of WOSM. Although it originated as being focused on male youth, the vast majority of its member organizations admit both boys and girls as youth members.

### **Girls and Women in “Boy Scouts” – 8 minutes**

Some have expressed concern that including girls in scouting is happening too quickly. However, upon closer examination of the history of scouting, it becomes evident that girls have been integral to this movement from its inception, and their inclusion has evolved over a century.

In America, women began to take on leadership roles within the first two decades. For the first half-century or so, women were primarily limited to the Cub Scouts program. But by the 1960s and 1970s, women became fully eligible to serve in most positions and receive the same recognition as men. The Order of the Arrow was one of the last holdouts, allowing women to become members in 1988.

On the youth side, two landmark moments in the U.S. allowed girls to participate in scouting. First, the Sea Scouts program allowed girls to join as official members in 1969. Exploring and Venturing followed suit in 1971. Although these programs may not have become iconic household names in the way that “Boy Scouts” and “Cub Scouts” did, those of you familiar with Sea Scouts and Venturing can attest that these programs include many of the same activities, methods, and practices that are found in the flagship programs. This means that Scouting America has over 50 years of experience with mixed-gender programs. The other landmark moment, of course, was the 2017 announcement that all programming would become open to girls.

Today, Exploring, Sea Scouts, and Venturing are all mixed-gender. Cub Scout packs may choose to be single-gender or mixed, and family-style packs with boys and girls are increasingly common. Scouts BSA Troops remain single-gender, with a growing number of girl troops forming across the country. A pilot program in 2024–2025 allowed some troops to operate as mixed-gender, although this option is not yet available nationwide.

From its earliest days to the present, the inclusion of girls in scouting has been less about rushing into change and more about steadily building on a long tradition of participation, leadership, and shared values.

## **Importance of Inclusivity in Scouting America - 5 minutes (slides 10-11)**

### **Benefits of Diversity in Scouting – 4 minutes**

Open question for the class: What are the benefits of diversity in scouting? And think about forms of diversity beyond those we've discussed so far.

*Allow the class to provide answers. Try to make connections with the content on the following slide when possible.*

Scouting is a true melting pot, bringing together youth from many walks of life—different family structures, faiths, racial and ethnic backgrounds, abilities, and life experiences. This diversity is one of Scouting's greatest strengths. It allows youth to learn from one another in ways that go far beyond what they might experience in their everyday lives. Exposure to peers with different perspectives fosters understanding, empathy, and respect.

In Scouting, differences—whether in culture, religion, physical or medical ability, income level, neurodiversity, or gender—are not obstacles but opportunities. They broaden our horizons, spark new ideas, and strengthen our teams. Girls gain valuable opportunities from Scouting's programs, and boys benefit from the perspectives and insights girls contribute. This is not a zero-sum game; the inclusion of more voices and experiences enriches the journey for everyone involved.

Diversity can present challenges, and building strong relationships among people from different backgrounds often requires extra effort and patience. Yet the payoff is immense: deeper friendships, stronger teams, and a richer Scouting experience. By fostering an environment where youth can grow, explore, and learn free from the political divisions of the day, Scouting ensures that these lessons are centered on mutual respect, shared adventure, and personal growth.

## **Common concerns about Mixed-Gender Scouting - 20 minutes, including 10-minute activity (slides 12-16)**

### **Common Concerns – 8 minutes**

Safety is a top priority for Scouting America, so it's natural for leaders and parents to have questions about mixed-gender programs. However, it's worth remembering that we've been running mixed-gender programs for over 50 years, with safety rules developed in collaboration with experts. Our two-deep leadership model offers strong protection, and research even shows mixed-gender settings can reduce aggressive behavior.

Some worry that including girls takes away the "boy space" essential for boys' growth. But research doesn't back that up—gender-segregated activities might hold back development. Studies show that girls often outperform boys in social skills, and experts say that both boys and girls benefit from shared experiences.

There are also myths about leadership, like teenage girls being too organized and leaving boys behind, or that girls need separate spaces to lead. In reality, leadership depends on various factors, including popularity, age, and personality, rather than just gender.

Finally, some feel we're moving too fast by opening Scouting to girls. However, mixed-gender Scouting has been in existence for decades worldwide, and changes here have been carefully tested through pilot programs over many years.

### Responding to Concerns – 10 minutes

For our next activity, we'll use what we learned today to address some hypothetical concerns presented to us.

#### **Responding to Concerns Activity #2 – 10 minutes**

**Instructor note:** *Print scenarios onto a sheet of cardstock paper, cut into six (6) cards, or write out on 3x5 cards. If the class is small, consider using groups of 3-4 for a brainstorming exercise. For a larger class, workgroups would be more effective, as they provide each individual with an opportunity to share their thoughts.*

Each group will be assigned one scenario and will be asked to discuss how to best respond to it. Keep in mind that many of the facts presented today may be helpful, but good responses are based on more than just facts. Making a personal connection, when possible, can transform facts from a debate into a shared understanding.

Please take five minutes to discuss your scenario with each other and be prepared to share some of your discussion when we come back together as a class.

*Have the class reconvene and ask each group to summarize what they discussed. When appropriate, offer additional connections to the material presented in this class.*

- For virtual presentation, consider the following strategies:
- Share the document containing the scenarios in advance so that participants can quickly refer to it rather than relying on memory or notes.
- Use breakout rooms for small groups.
- For the full-class debrief discussion, (a) allow participants to speak up, (b) ask participants to post their responses in the chat line for the facilitator to read aloud, (c) ask participants to raise their hands for the instructor or facilitator to call on, or (d) choose a combination of these options.

### Summary/Conclusion – 1 minute

**As an outcome of this course, each participant should now be able to:**

- **Describe** the history of mixed-gender scouting domestically and internationally
- **Recognize** the importance of inclusivity to the mission and success of Scouting America
- **Respond** to common concerns about mixed-gender scouting and **share** facts that address those concerns

Expanding the flagship programs to include girls has been a long time coming, and was not a hasty decision. It was built on decades of experience and tests. The evidence suggests that a mixed-gender environment benefits all participants. The aims and methods of scouting have not changed, but their effectiveness is being enhanced through our wider reach.

### Questions? – 1 minute