

# ABILITIES DIGEST



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Summer 2016  BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

## Membership and Inclusion

Starting with this issue, *Abilities Digest* adds a new occasional section on enhancing membership by including more youth with disabilities or other special needs.

### STEM Scouts Offer New Opportunities for Youth with Special Needs



STEM Scouts is a new BSA program to help both girls and boys learn about science, technology, engineering, and math through creative, hands-on activities, field trips, and interaction with STEM professionals. There are now pilot programs in 14 cities with more expected to join as the program evolves.

Some youth with disabilities and special needs face special challenges in the traditional outdoor program, like navigating dirt trails, latrines, and tents. The STEM Scouting program delivers advancement and leadership opportunities via lab activities for elementary through high school students. STEM Scouts experience the purposeful fun of Scouting activities in settings more accessible to those challenged by outdoor activities.

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STEM Scouting provides learning and achievement opportunities for young people at various levels of maturity and intellectual capacity. The pilot programs have already yielded success stories. For example, STEM activities changed the life of an elementary-aged boy with Down Syndrome. Through STEM Scouts, the boy learned and successfully advanced in a hands-on environment that matched his abilities and allowed him to work with his more typical (chronological) peers. For another STEM Scout with high-functioning autism and ADHD, the program helped improve his social skills, develop friendships, and have a greater view of the world.

As STEM Scouting evolves, it should be available in all councils nationwide. The program will also be fully supported by all levels of the BSA. There will be STEM Scouting programs at national high-adventure bases. For example, the Summit-Bechtel Reserve will have special STEM Scouting events, and Philmont will offer special STEM treks. The program, which incorporates the Scout Oath and Law, includes an advancement program centered around the program's lab activities.

## Upcoming Events

### Save the Date: Conference at Seabase, January 15-21, 2017



The National Disabilities Awareness Subcommittee is hosting a one-week training conference at Seabase early next year from January 15-21. Participants will be brought up to date on best practices for training leaders to include Scouts with disabilities and special needs. This remains an underserved population in most council areas, and represents an opportunity for membership growth.

### Staff Opportunity at the 2017 Jamboree



Sign up to staff the 2017 disAbilities Awareness Challenge at the 2017 National Scout Jamboree, July 15-29, 2017.

The disAbilities Awareness Challenge at the 2017 National Scout Jamboree will once again be a signature activity at the Summit Center (next to Action Point!). Improved transportation, warm showers and better hours have been worked into the plan for staff! We have it from a very reliable source that there will

also be a disAbilities Awareness Challenge at the 2019 North American World Jamboree at the Summit. Although staffing in 2017 is not officially a prerequisite for staffing the 2019 Jamboree, it is highly encouraged!



# Leadership Abilities

## Arranging a “Joining Conference” with New Scout Parents

A good pack, troop, or other unit strives to include everyone wishing to join. The *joining conference* is an opportunity to talk with the parents of every new Scout, though it is especially valuable when a new scout has special needs. The tone should be relaxed and friendly, and the goal should be for unit leaders to understand the new Scout.

This conference is especially valuable if the Scout has disabilities or other special needs. Statistics show that about 15% of Scouting-age youth have some form of disability. However, family privacy or other reasons may prevent a parent from disclosing a disability outside of the privacy of a joining conference.

The joining conference builds trust and rapport with the parents as partners in delivering the Scouting program. It gives each Scout leader useful information about the unique attributes of the youth that will help them play to each youth’s strengths, provide for each youth’s special needs, and prevent conflict between unit members. Parents are *the experts* on their child and a source of valuable information and resources that leaders would not want to overlook.



The joining conference should take place as soon as practical after a youth joins the unit, typically within the first month. The conference isn’t intended to weed out “unsuitable” Scouts; Scouting is open to all youth. The youth has nothing to prove before joining the unit. The conference should happen *after* the youth has joined.

The conference is attended by one or both of the youth’s parents (or an appropriate guardian) and one or two adult leaders who will work with that youth. Ideally, one or both of the leaders should be trained in disability awareness. At the Cub Scout level, the Den Leader should be included and the youth is not typically included. At the upper levels of Scouting, the youth is often included in the meeting, but good sense should prevail when deciding whether or not to include the youth.

The conference is a candid and private conversation with the family, so the meeting should be out-of-earshot of others. It is okay to do this at a regular unit meeting, but you might have to hold the conference at a different place or time to ensure privacy.

The parent decides what to disclose to the unit leaders. Assume everything is confidential until the parent gives permission to share with other leaders. If the youth will benefit from other leaders knowing about his or her situation, ask the parents for permission to share the information, and explain why the other leaders need to know. If the parent wants the information kept private, respect their instructions.

Here are some specific topics to cover in the conference:

What are the youth's unique strengths and struggles?

What accommodations/adaptations are made at home and at school for special needs?

Does anything in particular trigger emotional or behavioral struggles?

How does he/she act when things are about to be overwhelming?

What concerns do the parents have about putting their child in Scouting?

Never press for a diagnosis. Practically speaking, you don't need to know what the condition is called as long as you know what to watch out for and what to do. Parents can provide valuable advice on how best to share such information with the troop as they have already introduced their child in other settings.

Here is a sample script to begin a joining conference:

Hi. I'm name and I'm the leader position of unit type ###. I'm glad you and youth name have joined our unit type. The other leaders and I want to give your child the best experience we can. I know we have told you what our unit is like, and it will help if you can tell us what makes your son/daughter unique. Can we have a few minutes? – To start with, is there anything you are concerned about? What are his/her strengths? Is anything harder for him/her than for others? Is there anything that helps him/her be successful at home or at school? Is there anything I need to watch out for or avoid doing with your son/daughter? Is there anything I need to make sure I do for your son/daughter? When he/she is struggling, how do you help him/her? .....

## A Peek Ahead

### Topics Planned for Future Issues:

**Enhancing Awareness:** Looking forward to summer camp with Scouts with special needs, interpreting services used with augmentative communications devices.

**Abilities Training:** Further information on the upcoming Seabase conference.

**Adapting Advancement:** American Sign Language Interpreter Strip, The Disabilities Awareness Merit Badge – counseling Scouts with disabilities.

**disAbilities Awareness Challenge (dAC) at the 2017 Jamboree:** A signature activity and an opportunity to participate as staff. This dAC will also be a precursor for a similar activity at the North American World Jamboree in 2019.

While anything the parents say could be helpful, keep focused on helping the Scout succeed in a safe and meaningful way within the unit.

## Enhancing Awareness

### “Like” Abilities Digest on Facebook!

We have recently updated the Abilities Digest Facebook page and we invite you to “Like” it if you haven’t already. The new page will play a greater role in the quarterly Abilities Digest. We will share timely news items on the Facebook page that also appear in the quarterly Digest. We may also pose questions to our readers and share responses in quarterly articles.



### Augmentative Communication Devices and TRS



Under the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) regulations and the Americans with Disabilities Act, telephone and videophone companies provide telecommunications relay services (TRS). These allow persons with hearing or speech disabilities to place and receive phone calls. TRS is available in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U. S. territories for local and/or long distance calls.

Familiarity with these devices may make it easier to communicate with Scouts and/or family members. They will also allow you to make sure that programs using electronic communications (even things as simple as sharing a video) will be accessible to all.

Here are examples of telecommunication relay services:

**Captioned Telephone Service (CTS)** uses the telephone network to enable persons with some residual hearing to read displayed captions on a captioned telephone.

### About *Abilities Digest*

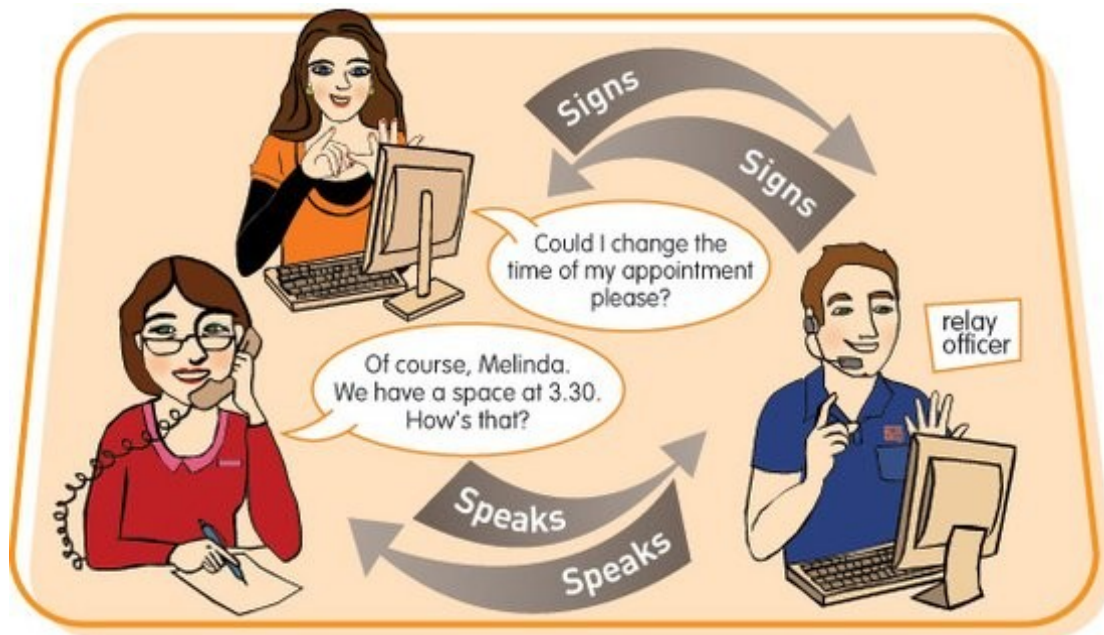
*Abilities Digest* is the official e-letter of the Boy Scouts of America National Disabilities Awareness Committee. Its intent is to help expand membership through helping parents and Scouting volunteers to improve their understanding, knowledge, and skills related to including and serving the special needs population. Therefore, districts and councils may reprint articles from this publication. Our plan is to distribute four issues of *Abilities Digest* annually, but special editions may go out whenever there is important information to share. Feedback, suggestions, and letters to the editor are welcome at [disabilities.awareness@scouting.org](mailto:disabilities.awareness@scouting.org).



**Internet Protocol Relay (IP Replay)** uses the internet rather than traditional phone lines to display typed text for voice telephone calls.

**IP Captioned Telephone Service** uses the internet to combine elements of captioned telephone service and IP Relay.

**Video Relay Service (VRS)** enables persons with hearing disabilities who use American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate with voice telephone users through video equipment (video phone or web cam).



**Voice Carry Over (VCO)** – allows a person with hearing disability to speak directly to the other party using his/her own voice but receives responses in either text or American Sign Language.

**Speech-to-Speech Relay** – is used by a person with a speech disability. Specially trained operators understand a variety of speech disorders and can repeat what the caller says in a manner that makes the caller's words clear and understandable to the called party. No special telephone is needed.

**Text-to-Voice TTY-based TRS** is an older TRS service using a TTY where text is display via telephone lines.

**Shared Non-English Language Relay Services** - Due to the large number of Spanish speakers in the United States, the FCC requires interstate TRS providers to offer Spanish-to-Spanish options.

**711 Access to TRS** - Dialing 711 connects one to certain forms of TRS anywhere in the United States.

More information can be obtained by visiting this link: <https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/telecommunications-relay-service-trs>

**911 Emergency Calls:** In some larger populated cities, **Text to 911** is available to place emergency calls to 911.

One might even be able to get text alert broadcasts like amber, weather, and other such emergencies through the local 911 response center. One needs to register their cell phone for the text alerts first.

## disAbility Awareness Challenge: Simulating Sensory Loss

The mission of a disAbilities Awareness Challenge is to instill knowledge and sensitivity about a disability through an experience similar to having the disability. The simulated disability helps illustrate the challenges arising from that disability for everyday living. These simulations never equal the long-term profound impacts of the disabilities, but instead provide insight and encourage reflection on helpful adaptations.

The examples here focus on partial sensory loss experienced by individuals with neuropathy and loss of vision in one eye. People suffering from neuropathy may lose tactile senses to some degree, and participants experience it by trying to locate small items mixed in a bowl of rice. Significant loss of sight in one eye may eliminate depth perception, and participants simulate that by trying to “fish” with an eye patch covering one eye.

At national jamborees, the disAbilities Awareness Challenge consists of 20 or more such activities that each simulate a disability. Camporees can host a smaller scale Challenge. Most activities require common, low-cost materials.

### Finger and hand tactile challenge

The participant places hands in a rice bowl and using eyes and fingers picks out 10 small safety pins in under 30 seconds. The follow up is to put hands under a shelf and search for 10 small safety pins out of a bowl containing 25 or more. The bowl also contains 10 each of medium, large, and extra large safety pins as well as a handful of

## Managing Subscriptions to *Abilities Digest*

***Abilities Digest* is designed for council and district disabilities awareness committees, related staff advisors, and any leader who would offer a Scouting program to youth who have special needs. Any Scouting volunteer or professional may subscribe.**

**Subscribing.** Send a message to [disabilities.awareness@scouting.org](mailto:disabilities.awareness@scouting.org), with “SUBSCRIBE” in the subject line. Indicate your name, email address, and council in the message text.

**Unsubscribing.** To decline future issues please reply and enter “REMOVE” in the subject line. We will remove the subscription within the next two weeks.

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paper clips. The task is to use fingers to touch and separate and find as many small pins as possible in one minute. The participant is instructed not to remove the hands until the task is finished. This challenge begins with an awareness of eye-hand coordination and ends by mimicking nerve loss sensation (neuropathy) in hands and fingers.

### **Depth perception challenge**

Multiple points of reference are used in cell phone towers, missile launches, GPS mapping in automobiles, planes, and boats. Stereo sound is produced through two or more speakers. The full richness is dependent on multiple channels of input. Stereo vision requires two eyes. Depth perception relies heavily on stereo vision.

Participants in this “fishing” game are asked to hook the fish using only one eye. Without the advantage of dual vision, it is very difficult to focus hook and “ring” to make the successful catch.

Enjoy the adventure!

## **Recognizing Abilities**

### **The Special Needs Scouting Service Award**

At long last, thanks to prodding from the field and the persistence of dedicated Scouters, the Special Needs Scouting Service Award, proposed by the National Disabilities Awareness Subcommittee, was approved by the Awards & Recognitions Task Force on April 29, 2016.

This award differs from the Torch of Gold and the Woods Services Award in that those awards are made only to nominees. The Special Needs Scouting Service Award must be earned, and it can be earned by both volunteer and professional Scouters.



The new award will share a newly-designed square knot (above) with the Whitney M. Young Award, the iScouting, Vale la Pena award, the Asian American Scouting Spirit Award and the Native American Silver Wolf award. Additionally, a unique device to signify the Special Needs Scouting Service Award on the square knot, a certificate, a lapel pin, and a medal were approved for recognition for this award. The recognition regalia is currently being designed by a task force of the National Disabilities Awareness Subcommittee. The requirements for the Special Needs Scouting Service Award will be posted on Awards Central, along with an application form to be completed.



## Requirements to Earn the Special Needs Scouting Service Award

Here are the requirements for the Special Needs Scouting Service Award:

### I. Complete the following two (2) requirements:

1. Be a registered adult or professional staff with the B.S.A. and maintain current Youth Protection Training.
2. Actively participate in activities concerning youth who have disabilities/special needs through either the unit (pack, troop or crew), or at either the District or Council or Area or Regional or National level for three (3) years.

### II. Complete 6 of the following 12 requirements:

4. Attend a training seminar or conference on disabilities/special needs sponsored and conducted by the B.S.A or through an organization that serves youth and/or adults with disabilities/special needs, i.e. A.R.C., Blind Associations, Cerebral Palsy Agencies, Independent Living Resource Centers, Autism Societies, Special Olympics, etc.
5. Present one of the nationally approved disabilities/special needs classes (e.g., classes within the College of Commissioner Science curriculum or classes prepared by the National Disabilities Awareness Task Force) at any level.
6. Serve as a Staff member at either a District, Council, Area, Regional or National event which presents a theme of youth with disabilities/special needs in Scouting.
7. Create and organize a unit (pack, troop or crew) to primarily serve youth with disabilities/special needs and be open for membership by youth not possessing disabilities/special needs.
8. Serve as a Mentor for a Scout who has disabilities/special needs for six (6) months.
9. Serve as a Group Discussion leader on Scouting for youth with disabilities/special needs at either a Roundtable or District Commissioner meeting or similar gathering of volunteer Scouters and/or professional Scouters.
10. Promote and assist in organizing and conducting an outdoor event for youth with disabilities/special needs, or one that promotes disabilities awareness and acceptance among those who don't have a disability.
11. Recruit and register either two (2) adults to volunteer in providing Scouting opportunities to youth with disabilities/special needs or recruit two (2) youth with disabilities/special needs to join Scouting and remain a member for one (1) year.

12. Assist the District or Council in forming a Partnership with an organization that serves individuals with disabilities/special needs.
13. Actively serve on a District, Council, Area, Regional or National Committee on Scouting with disabilities/special needs for two years.
14. Assist the local council in efforts to raise funds for Scouts with disabilities/special needs concerning activities within the Scouting program.
15. Assist the local council in a public awareness campaign to heighten knowledge of Scouting with disabilities/special needs.

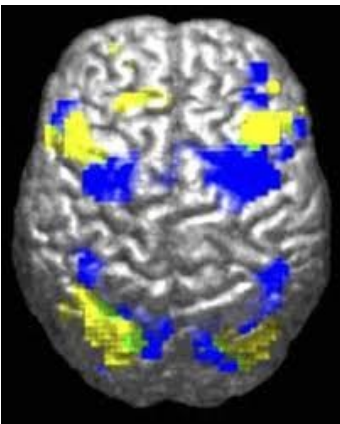
This Award is retroactive for purposes of satisfying the above requirements.

This Award may be earned by volunteer Scouters and professional Scouters.

Once an individual has completed the requirements to this award, he or she shall forward the completed application to the District for review and approval by the Council Scout Executive. When a person completes the requirements for this award through participation on an Area or Regional or National level in Scouting, the completed application will be forwarded to the designated Area or Regional or National staff person (Special Needs Scouting Specialist) for review and approval.

## **Adapting Advancement**

### **Youth with ADHD: Useful Tips for Scout Parents and Leaders**



The mission of the Boy Scouts of America — “to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law”—has provided a structure, challenge, and an outdoor physical focus that has helped youth succeed. For that reason, Scouting has long been a great program for youth who have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADHD, and for many, their successes have not just occurred while they were Scouts, but have continued throughout their lives.

Here are some tips to share with parents of Scouts with ADHD:

1. If your Scout has ADHD, let your Scout leader know. Tell him or her what works well and what does not work well.
2. If your Scout takes medication to help him focus at school, it may also help him focus better during Scout activities. You may want to discuss this issue with your Scout’s physician.

3. Make sure your Scout knows that his medication is meant to help him focus, not to make him behave or “be good.”
4. Be sure to tell the Scout leader what your son’s needs are, whether he is going on a day trip, a weekend camping trip, or a week at summer camp. There are many things the leader can do to help your Scout be successful and have fun—if he or she is informed.
5. Consider getting trained to be a Scout leader yourself.

Here are additional tips for Scout leaders:

1. Try to let the Scout who has ADHD know ahead of time what is expected. When activities are long or complicated, it may help to write down a list of smaller steps.
2. Repeat directions one-on-one when necessary, or assign a more mature buddy to help him get organized.
3. Compliment the Scout whenever you find a genuine opportunity.
4. Provide frequent breaks and opportunities for Scouts to move around actively but purposefully. It is NOT helpful to keep Scouts with ADHD so active that they are exhausted, however.
5. When you must redirect a Scout, do so in private, in a calm voice, unless safety is at risk.
6. Whenever possible, sandwich correction between two positive comments.
7. Be aware of early warning signs, such as fidgety behavior, that may indicate the Scout is losing impulse control. When this happens, try a private, nonverbal signal or proximity control (move close to the Scout) to alert him that he needs to focus.
8. During active games and transition times, be aware when a Scout is starting to become more impulsive or aggressive.
9. Expect a Scout with ADHD to follow the same rules as other Scouts. ADHD is NOT an excuse for uncontrolled behavior.
10. Offer feedback and redirection in a way that is respectful and that does not embarrass the Scout. When Scouts are treated with respect, they are more likely to respect the authority of the Scout leader.
11. Keep cool! Don’t take challenges personally. Scouts with ADHD want to be successful, but they need support, positive feedback, and clear limits.
12. Find out about medical needs. Make sure you have what your council requires to ensure the Scout’s medical needs can be met, or have the parent come along.

13. Offer opportunities for purposeful movement, such as leading cheers, performing in skits, assisting with demonstrations, or teaching outdoor skills to younger Scouts. This may improve focus, increase self-confidence, and benefit the pack or troop as a whole.

14. Young people with ADHD are often bullied and teased by their peers. While this behavior is never acceptable in Scouting, leaders should be especially vigilant on behalf of Scouts with ADHD.

15. Scouts with ADHD are generally energetic, enthusiastic, and bright. Many have unique talents as well. Help them use their strengths to become leaders in your troop.

While these tips are particularly important for Scouts with ADHD, they easily apply to any Scout regardless of ability.

## Helpful Links

Here are links to current materials to aid volunteers and Scouts with disabilities:

### Official Materials Posted on Scouting.org

Scouting with Disabilities landing page: [www.scouting.org/disabilitiesawareness.aspx](http://www.scouting.org/disabilitiesawareness.aspx)

A variety of materials can be found on this page, including the new Scouting with Disabilities training presentations.

## Other Web Resources

Working With Scouts With disAbilities: [www.wwswd.org/](http://www.wwswd.org/)

Autism Empowerment website: [www.AutismEmpowerment.org](http://www.AutismEmpowerment.org)

Autism and Scouting Website - [www.autismempowerment.org/autism-scouting-program/](http://www.autismempowerment.org/autism-scouting-program/)

Children with Special Needs - [www.childrenwithspecialneeds.com/disability-info/](http://www.childrenwithspecialneeds.com/disability-info/)

Kids with Special Needs - [kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/friend/special\\_needs.html](http://kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/friend/special_needs.html)

Special Child: For Parents of Children with Disabilities - [specialchild.com/index.html](http://specialchild.com/index.html)

## Social Media



Twitter: @AbilitiesDigest

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/pages/Abilities-Digest/824105334298165](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Abilities-Digest/824105334298165)

