

ABILITIES DIGEST

Prepared. For Life.®

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BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

At Philmont Training Center, July 12-18, 2015

Disability Awareness: Building Unit, District, and Council Resources



Abilities Training Opportunities

Special Invitation from the National Disabilities Awareness Committee

Dear Disabilities Awareness Volunteer,

Does your district or council have a disabilities awareness committee? If not, would you like to know more about organizing and becoming part of a committee operating efficiently with strong leadership support? Volunteers working together have solid Scouts with disabilities programs. For this reason, the conference: "Disabilities Awareness: Building Unit, District, and Council Resources" is being held at Philmont July 12-18, 2015. Participants will learn effective ways to support unit leaders who work with Scouts with disabilities.

Volunteers with years of experience will be leading each session. Participants can look forward to a worthwhile learning experience coupled with great fun and fellowship in scenic northern New Mexico. So register now to attend the conference by visiting: www.philmontscoutranch.org/PTC/ConferencesO.aspx. A downloadable brochure with helpful information about Philmont can be accessed through the link.

Thank you for all you do to support Scouts with special needs.

—National Disabilities Awareness Committee

In This Issue

- **Abilities Training Opportunities:** Special Invitation from the National Disabilities Awareness Committee; New Advancement Educational Presentation Gains Traction; New Disabilities Awareness Educational Presentation on the Horizon
- **Enhancing Awareness:** Local Councils Promote Inclusion and Awareness on Youtube; Disabilities Awareness Now on Facebook and Twitter
- **Adapting Advancement:** Using the New Request for Registration Beyond the Age of Eligibility; Individual Scout Advancement Plan—More Than Just a Form; Creativity—The Key to Alternative Requirements
- **Your Feedback is Important!** Random Sample Survey Coming Soon
- **A Peak Ahead:** Topics Planned For Next Issue
- **Helpful Links:** Accessing Disabilities Awareness Materials

New Advancement Educational Presentation Gains Traction

Including *Scouts with Disabilities*, a 60-minute PowerPoint educational presentation accessible at: www.scouting.org/Home/BoyScouts/Resources/advancement_presentations.aspx

was developed by the National Advancement and Disabilities Awareness Committees to help parents and leaders understand how the advancement process benefits Scouts with certain types of disabilities.

Presentation content includes:

- Understanding disabilities
- What leaders can do to support Scouts with special needs
- Documentation needed to register a qualifying youth beyond the age of eligibility
- Working on alternative rank requirements and merit badges
- Resources available to support parents and unit leaders.

This presentation helps increase a leader's knowledge for working with a child with disabilities in Cub Scouting through parental support. Boy Scouting leaders learn to apply reasonable accommodations that may help Scouts with disabilities fulfill requirements as stated. This resource is ideal for individual learning or adaptable for instructor-led trainings with presenter's notes included.



New Disabilities Awareness Educational Presentation on the Horizon

The *Essentials of Serving Scouts with Disabilities* will support local councils' training objectives for growing Scouts with special needs. It will be among the first in a series of resources aimed at helping parents and unit leaders learn how to include and serve the special needs population in their communities. This PowerPoint educational presentation with presenter's notes will be accessible around the first week in March at: www.scouting.org/specialneeds.aspx and in the upcoming landing page: www.scouting.org/disabilitiesawareness.aspx.

Enhancing Awareness

Local Councils Promote Inclusion and Awareness on Youtube®

The Baltimore Area Council recently posted a six-minute Youtube video accessible at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=fl6AY57lq9U. It features a troop of mostly Scouts with disabilities engaged in fun activities while working on advancement. Testimonials from both adults and youth suggest any Scout, regardless of his disability, can receive a quality experience through support from unit leaders and parents working together. The video ends with a message of support for Scouts who have disabilities. An Eagle Scout and professional video editor by trade donated his services to produce the video.

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“Special Needs and Ability Awareness Scouting” and videos of similar quality are beneficial because unit leaders, most of them parents, communicate their unique experiences and offer program ideas to a much wider audience. On occasion, a professional care giver may discuss challenges involved in working with Scouts who have disabilities without giving any medical advice.

The National Disabilities Awareness Committee has been reviewing videos designed to educate and create awareness among Scouters in an effort to encourage inclusion of Scouts with special needs in their units. Abilities Digest staff will feature local council productions in upcoming newsletters that best reflect the NDAC’s purpose: *to expand membership through helping parents and Scouting volunteers to improve their understanding, knowledge, and skills related to including and serving the special needs population.*

Disabilities Awareness Now on Facebook and Twitter

The National Disabilities Awareness Committee has launched both a Facebook page and Twitter feed to share information on Scouting for youth with disabilities. Individuals may subscribe to the Twitter feed via the user name @AbilitiesDigest, and may visit, follow, or “like” the Facebook page using the URL: www.facebook.com/pages/Abilities-Digest/824105334298165.

These social media resources have been initiated to improve communications between parents and adult leaders in units, and district and council volunteers throughout the country. Opportunities to interact with NDAC members is an added benefit.



Social networking provides a forum to share inspirational success stories and practical experiences from leaders serving youth with disabilities. Its’ popularity with youth enables Scouts and Venturers to connect with fellow members who have disabilities.

About *Abilities Digest*

Abilities Digest is the official e-letter of the Boy Scouts of America’s National Disabilities Awareness Committee. Its intent is to help expand membership through helping parents and Scouting volunteers improve their understanding, knowledge, and skills related to inclusion and service to 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 welcomed at disabilities.awareness@scouting.org.

Adapting Advancement

Using the New Request for Registration Beyond the Age of Eligibility

The National Disabilities Awareness Committee is working hard to enhance parents' and unit leaders' proficiency needed to provide a quality program for Scouts with special needs. Updating publications for efficiency and relevance is one method used to accomplish the objective.

The Request for Registration Beyond the Age of Eligibility form, No. 512-935, has been developed to guide leaders on the essential steps and documentation needed to register Scouts beyond the usual age limits. The form is currently accessible at: www.scouting.org/filestore/doc/512-935.doc. To qualify, the Scout's disability must be permanent and so severe that it significantly impacts his ability to understand or fulfill advancement requirements. If approved, he is given unlimited time to participate in Cub Scouting past age 12, Boy Scouting beyond age 18, or Venturing past age 21. Registration as a Special Needs Scout must be maintained annually.

The form benefits parents, leaders, and staffs by providing instructions and a table listing the required paperwork and boxes to enter dates when the packet was mailed or delivered to council, and when it was received and reviewed by council staff. It also provides instructions for council executive boards. Once documents have been reviewed and a decision reached, instructions are provided for notifying all parties involved and for appropriate recording and filing of paperwork.

Most councils have procedures for handling registration beyond the age of eligibility, so parents and leaders are urged to contact their council registrars for guidance. Additional information is also provided in the *Guide to Advancement*, topics 10.1.0.0. through 10.1.0.2.



Individual Scout Advancement Plan—More Than Just a Form

The Individual Scout Advancement Plan, No. 512-936, is a resource that helps keep Scouts on track. The form— currently accessible at: www.scouting.org/filestore/doc/512-936.doc —affords Scouts the opportunity to work on advancement through creative thinking and action, effectively minimizing barriers. It simplifies the application and approval process for alternative requirements for Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class ranks only. To qualify, Scouts must have a permanent physical or cognitive disability, or one expected to last more than two years or go beyond his 18th birthday.

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The ISAP provides parents and leaders instructions for documenting the original and proposed requirement, as well as an approach for completing the alternative if approved. The plan also contains prepared statements that health care professionals and certified educational administrators can use and sign. A parental statement is also provided for his or her signature as well as a section for council advancement committee use.

Additional information on alternate requirements is provided in the *Guide to Advancement*, topics 10.2.2.1–10.2.2.2. Parents and unit leaders should contact their local councils for additional guidance if needed.

Creativity—The Key to Alternative Requirements

Leaders are often challenged to come up with an alternative requirement that's challenging to a Scout with special needs. Consider a common concern heard from many parents: "My son has a disability and cannot complete the swimmer rescue requirement 9c for the First Class rank:

"With a helper and a practice victim, show a line rescue both as tender and as rescuer. (The practice victim should be approximately 30 feet from shore in deep water.)"

In general, the following suggests an example of an alternative to the rank requirement proposed and approved by a council advancement committee:

A Scout was confined to an electric wheelchair with no use of his legs and little use of his hands, but did have a service dog. The rescue was performed in a rectangular swimming pool. His service dog first set the end of the throw ring line in the Scout's lap where he could grab it with his hand. The Scout then moved his wheelchair around the pool while holding onto the line; the throw ring was pulled along 20 ft. or so behind the wheelchair. Once the Scout turned to go around the other side of the pool, the line fell into the water, and as the Scout continued to circle around the pool, the throw ring was pulled into and across the pool until it came within reach of the practice victim.

This example was not the only solution, but it met the Scout's special circumstances. Leaders should try to be creative in their thinking, whatever the Scout's situation, special needs or otherwise. Remember, it is the responsibility of unit leaders to help youth succeed, not to put up unnecessary roadblocks.



Your Feedback is Important

Random Sample Survey Coming Soon

Identifying resources councils need to better serve Scouts with disabilities is important to the National Disabilities Awareness Committee. To help in this effort, BSA will soon be inviting a random sample of Scouters – both volunteer and staff – to participate in a survey around mid-March. Due to random sampling, not every subscriber to *Abilities Digest* will receive an invitation to take the survey, but those who do are highly encouraged to answer the survey by the deadline.

Past surveys have indicated councils vary in their service to Scouts who have disabilities. Generally, the more staff councils have, the greater the likelihood of having functioning council disabilities awareness committees that hold regular trainings for leaders, have a representative in each district, sponsor an annual outdoor Special Needs Scouting event, and offer resources to support unit leaders.

Smaller councils with staffs serving multiple districts are more likely to provide limited support to unit leaders that serve Scouts with special needs because of budgetary constraints. These councils have at the most one volunteer coordinator handling issues pertaining to Scouts with disabilities.

The results of this survey will provide feedback on current district and council disabilities resources including the current number of district and council disabilities awareness committees. The study will provide feedback from parents of Scouting youth with disabilities. Survey takers will also be invited to subscribe to *Abilities Digest* and receive information regarding the upcoming Philmont conference.

Helpful Links

Official Materials Posted on Scouting.org

Including Scouts with Disabilities

www.scouting.org/Home/BoyScouts/Resources/advancement_presentations.aspx

Registration Beyond the Age of Eligibility form, No. 512-935:

www.scouting.org/filestore/doc/512-935.doc

Will soon be replaced with: www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-935.pdf

Don't miss your opportunity to learn and share with fellow Scouters who want to promote and improve Scouting for those with special needs and disabilities! Attend the Philmont Training Center this summer: July 12-18.



(Continued on page 7)

Individual Scout Advancement Plan, No. 512-936:

www.scouting.org/filestore/doc/512-936.doc

Will soon be replaced with: www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-936.pdf

Upcoming Scouting with Disabilities landing page:

www.scouting.org/disabilitiesawareness.aspx.

Current landing page: www.scouting.org/specialneeds.aspx

Advancement for Members with Disabilities and/or Special Needs:

www.scouting.org/scoutsource/guidetoadvancement/specialneeds.aspx

Application for Alternative Eagle Scout Rank Merit Badges, No. 512-730:

www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-730.pdf

Guide to Working With Scouts with Special Needs and Disabilities, No. 510-071:

www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/510-071.pdf

Working With Scouts With disabilities:

www.wswd.org/

Social Media

Twitter: @AbilitiesDigest

Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Abilities-Digest/824105334298165

A Peek Ahead

Here is a glimpse of what we are working on for the next issue of *Abilities Digest*. Actual content may vary based on a number of considerations, especially to accommodate “late-breaking news” of immediate importance to our subscribers.

Topics Planned for Next Issue:

Abilities Training Opportunities: American Sign Language Interpreter Strip

Enhancing Awareness: Social Media Gains Momentum; Understanding The Autism Spectrum

Council Abilities: Preparing for Summer Activities

Adapting Advancement: New Cub Scout Program’s Disabilities Requirements

Professional Corner: Organizing Successful Scouts with Special Needs Units

We're Moving on Scouting.org!

Materials and guidance on Scouting with special needs and disabilities awareness are moving to this landing page on Scouting.org: www.scouting.org/disabilitiesawareness.aspx. The current link: www.scouting.org/specialneeds.aspx may still be in operation when subscribers receive this newsletter.



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, 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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