

NCAP Circular No. 9

NCAP elevates camps to new levels of excellence...

National Council, Boy Scouts of America

March 27, 2017

Understanding the Expectations for Standard AO-810: Preparing, Implementing and Assessing Continuous Camp Improvement

In NCAP Circular No. 8, the National Camp Accreditation Committee released the current version of Standard AO-810. Continuous Camp Improvement. The purpose of NCAP is to elevate camps to new levels of excellence and the Continuous Camp Improvement program is a central pillar in how NCAP achieves this goal. This Circular provides guidance to councils and camps on Standard AO-810 and the expectations surrounding it for the 2017 and 2018 camping seasons. This Circular is being provided to both camps and assessors to assist all parties in understanding expectations.

Standard AO-810 currently provides as follows:

AO-810. CONTINUOUS CAMP IMPROVEMENT

Effective January 1, 2017

STANDARD:

The camp participates in the BSA Continuous Camp Improvement Program that addresses improvements in:

- Staff
- Program
- Program equipment
- Facilities
- Sustainability
- Marketing and communication
- Attendees and participation

Discussion

Although the intent of the Continuous Camp Improvement Program is unchanged, NCAP has expanded the number of categories or areas that the program seeks to address based upon the Wisconsin Survey of camp conducted by the National Council staff. That review found that in addition to staff, program, and facilities, the provision of an adequate quantity of quality program equipment is also critical to camp success. Campers want to participate in camp activities and if there are not sufficient BB guns, rifles, woodcarving opportunities, pioneering poles or whatever is needed for the program the camp has selected, the delays while campers wait to participate in the activity detract from the fun and learning of Scouting. NCAP thus added program equipment as a category.

The other change to the category list is the addition of "Marketing and Communications" as a separate category (previously, it was included with program). Another key to a successful camp is accurately conveying to unit leaders, youth participants and their families what the camp offers, how to participate in the various activities, any prerequisites or other requirements, and what the camper can expect. Good marketing builds anticipation, helps units and youth be prepared for camp and improves success.

Specific Requirements of the Standard:

A. The council has performed an analysis to identify its stakeholders and involved them in gathering information on areas of possible improvement and areas of strength.

Discussion

The first step in the Continuous Camp Improvement process is to gather stakeholders and involve them in assessing areas of improvement and areas of strength. Stakeholders include camp staff, parents, campers, unit leaders, council committee personnel and others that use the camp. Involving stakeholders can be done by questionnaires, leaders' meetings at camp soliciting input, and telephone calls.

The council should ensure that the camp director or council camping representative is prepared to explain how the council and camp involves stakeholders in developing areas of strength to be preserved, areas of improvement and suggestions for improvement.

Specific Requirement B, the camp strategic improvement plan, is not required until 2019. We will pass over that requirement and move to Specific Requirements C and D, which are applicable in 2017 and 2018.

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C. Each year, the council will develop an annual camp improvement plan that addresses one or more areas of improvement and one or more areas of strength that the camp will address during the year, which collectively address at least four of the continuous camp improvement categories. Some of these measures may be based on the camp strategic improvement plan and some should be based on postcamp/precamp inspections, camp staff reports, customer satisfaction surveys, or other feedback. For each area identified, the council determines a goal, a quantitative metric, and success criteria.

D. Annually, the council collects data that indicates progress on the measures, and at the start of the following season includes in the Declaration of Readiness a report on the goals, their success criteria, and whether the goals were achieved.

INTERPRETATION:

Requirement C is the annual or seasonal improvement plan. These are the specific steps that the council will take during the

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year. Some of these may come from the camp strategic improvement plan identified in Requirement B, while others will be items that come up from camp staff, customer satisfaction surveys, or the work of council professionals or committees. The goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and have a targeted metric that can be tracked to show progress. The annual plan should be revised as needed during the season to address customer feedback and improve the camper experience.

Camps that operate off camp property should review the existing facilities for adequacy and may propose steps (such as negotiating for improvements or relocating), but are not expected to provide for physical improvements to non-council property.

COMPLIANCE VERIFICATION:

On the annual plan, the camp assessment team should review the Declaration of Readiness to ensure it includes: 1. The prior year's goals, metrics, and success criteria, and whether the goals were successfully achieved and, if not, any lessons learned; and 2. The current year's goals, metrics and success criteria. Effective January 1, 2017, failure to have prepared and measured goals in the prior year reported in the Declaration of Readiness or failure to have prepared and be measuring goals in the current by the date of assessment warrants a noncompliant finding. Partial or late compliance should be noted

with a deviation.

Discussion

Specific Requirements C and D are the focus of this year's assessment. As noted above, continuous camp improvement is a central pillar of NCAP. Accordingly, NCAP again calls all camps' and councils' attention to the **bold** *italicized* language above that participation in the annual plan is required and will be assessed this year.

Please note that the references to the *camp strategic improvement plan* in Specific Requirement C do <u>not</u> take effect until 2019.

What is NCAP seeking? In the Declaration of Readiness, you should have the prior season's goals, metrics and success criteria listed. You should indicate what categories/areas (out of the seven) that they cover and ensure 4 categories were covered. You should indicate which goals were successfully completed and, if some goals were not successfully completed, any lessons that the camp learned from those goals (e.g., not important to campers; insufficient resources requiring more planning; not appropriate for program after trying, etc.). The camp director or council NCAP representative should be able to discuss:

- the goals,
- how the council gathered input from stakeholders,
- what the metrics were;
- · how they were measured;
- whether the goals were successfully completed, and if not,
- any lessons learned.

For the current year camp, the

Standard AO-810 Expectations & Assessment continued

camp director or council NCAP representative should be able to discuss:

- the goals,
- that at least 4 categories covered.
- how the council gathered input from stakeholders,
- · what the metrics are; and
- how they are being measured.

It is important for both the 2016 and the 2017 year goals that the camp director or council NCAP representative can talk about how the goals selected fit with protecting the camp's areas of strength or work on improving the camp's areas of weakness and how the goals fit within the Continuous Camp Improvement categories.

Can I use a single continuous camp improvement plan for a camp property? Yes, if the continuous camp improvement plan addresses the minimum number of categories for each camp located at the camp property. However, the council must be able to demonstrate that the plan covers each camp and not just the camp property.

How can I get input from my stakeholders? A formal consultation process is not required. A camp can consult with leaders and units at camp by seeking and documenting input from leaders' meetings or customer satisfaction surveys. A camp can gather input from council committees by requesting and documenting input. Similarly, a request to camp staff for suggestions would satisfy the requirement. Any combination can be used.

How does the continuous camp improvement plan relate

to the long-term plan or strategic plan? The continuous camp improvement plan may, and probably should, include time-appropriate elements from the council's strategic plan or the camp's long term plan that are appropriate for implementation during the camping season. Just select an item from one of these plans, assign it to the appropriate NCAP continuous camp improvement category, assign and goal, metric and success criteria, and it would satisfy the Standard.

Future Requirements

The next change for continuous camp improvement is planned for 2019, as follows:

B. Effective January 1, 2019, the camp has a camp strategic improvement plan that identifies one or more areas of improvement and one or more areas of strength that the council will address over the next four to seven years, which collectively address at least five of the continuous camp improvement categories. For each identified area, the plan sets forth improvement measures, an approximate time for initiation and completion, and how the camp will determine the success of its measures.

INTERPRETATION:

Requirement B, effective in 2019, is the multiyear camp strategic improvement plan. It is intended that this plan ultimately work in concert with the Application and Authorization to Operate process, where the plan is prepared and submitted with the application and then updated during the Interim Progress Report. Beginning with councils submitting their Application for Authorization in 2016, councils will be rolled into this process. Until then,

councils are to develop a plan that takes them to or beyond their next application period. This requirement will become an enforceable part of the standard in 2019, but councils are encouraged to start well before January 1, 2019. The camp strategic improvement plan is not a term or condition of the Authorization.

Discussion

Specific Requirement B is the camp strategic improvement plan, which is the council's long or medium-range plan for the camp. This plan will be required starting in 2019. This plan can be prepared: (1) when the council does its council strategic plan, (2) as part of the Application/Authorization cycle, when much of the information needed for the plan is gathered, or (3) when the council updates its long-term plan for a camp or camp property. Any of these approaches will minimize the burden on the council and camp. NCAP will support councils that elect to undertake a camp strategic plan at any time. The only requirement is that the plan extend for from four to seven years. If the plan expires during the authorization period, there will likely be a requirement to submit an updated plan upon expiration of the prior plan.

Once the camp strategic improvement plan is in place, many items for the annual plan can be drawn from the strategic improvement plan, although camps should also adopt measures as needed for that season. This allows the annual camp improvement plan to include both long-term strategic elements and shorter term "tactical" changes to address immediate needs or issues spotted by camp staff or participants during the prior or current camp season.

Interim Standards in Effect in 2017

All council camping chairs, NCAP chairs, camp directors and camp staff, and all NCAP assessors are reminded that Interim Standards PS-201.1 (Personal Watercraft); PS-205 (All Terrain Vehicles), SQ-406.H (PWC staff), SQ-412.H (ATV staff) and FA-716 (All Terrain Vehicle facilities requirements) are in effect for camps that are offering these programs. Assessors should ensure that these programs are reviewed under the Interim Standards.

The Interim Standards currently in effect are reprinted below in this issue of the **NCAP Circular**.

NOTICE: Crossbow Restriction

All councils and NCAP personnel are notified that notwithstanding Standard PS-213, Specific Requirement A, *crossbows* are only authorized at The Summit pending further review by the National Council.

PS-201.1 [Interim] Personal Water Craft Programs

Effective April 15, 2016

STANDARD:

If offered, the camp provides a safe introductory program into personal water craft (PWC) use and operation.

Specific Requirements of the Standard:

A. **Program.**

- 1. The course or program must follow BSA's PWC Operations Manual in its entirety. No deviation is permitted from the course outline.
- 2. A qualified staff member (see Standard SQ-406.H) must be present at all times participants are riding. No unsupervised riding is allowed at any time.
- 3. PWCs may not carry passengers beyond the designated rider. The PWC may not be used to pull anyone or anything.
- 4. Course content must address the ethical use of PWCs using materials drawn from BSA's Outdoor Code and TreadLightly!, as appropriate.

B. **Equipment.**

- 1. The council must own or lease the PWC used for the program. These PWCs may not be leased to third parties during the off-season.
- 2. Personal PWCs are not authorized for use.
- 3. PWCs must be used and maintained in accordance with manufacturer's instructions at all times. Records of maintenance must be maintained.
- 4. All required safety equipment must be present and in good repair.

C. Course.

- 1. On-camp property courses must be addressed by and follow the camp's conservation plan to minimize impacts on the environment.
- 2. Off-camp property courses must have approval in writing from the land owner or land manager.

D. Safety and risk management.

- 1. Instructor PWCs or craft must carry the following at a minimum: first-aid kit, fire extinguisher, radio and cellphone, 25 feet of sturdy rope, and 5 feet of rolled duct tape.
- 2. Other PWCs must carry an approved audible signaling device.
- 3. Instructors and participants must be outfitted with life jackets and any other personal protective equipment required by the council's risk and safety review.
- 4. Each parent and/or guardian (for a minor participant) or participant must complete a permission slip, inclusive of hold-harmless language, prior to beginning the program.

Interim Standards in Effect in 2017 Interim Standard PS-201.1 continued

E. Approval.

- 1. Prior to seeking council executive board or executive committee approval, the council has convened a task force to review: all local, state, and federal guidelines, including vehicle registration and age restrictions, licensing and/or certification courses, equipment and personal protective equipment standards, number of riders, and any other standards recommended by the original equipment manufacturer or other governing body, costs, risks to participant and staff safety, impact on other camp programs, and impacts on the camp environment. This task force must complete a risk and safety review consistent with Standard PD-111 and ensure that the program conforms to BSA's Sweet Sixteen of Safety.
- The council executive board or executive committee must have reviewed the costs and risks of the proposed program prepared by the task force prior to authorizing the program. A copy of the executive board or executive committee resolution authorizing the program must be available.
- 3. The council has submitted its board resolution to Outdoor Programs at the National Service Center (email to outdoorprograms@scouting.org) and have written approval before conducting the course.

INTERPRETATION

Councils operating pursuant to a National Council approval using Form 430-045 may continue to operate their existing approved program pursuant to that approval for the 2016 and 2017 camping seasons.

VERIFICATION

- Councils operating pursuant to a National Council approval pursuant to Form 430-045 must provide a copy of that form to the assessment team.
- Councils operating pursuant to this Interim Standard must produce a copy of the Interim Standard, the Board resolution (E.1), National Service Center approval (E.3) conservation plan provision and any landowner approvals (C.1 & 2), maintenance records (B.3).
- Review with staff the course outline being followed and how it complies with the BSA's PWC Operations Manual (A.1) and outdoor ethics training components (A.4).
- Ensure safety equipment present.

Interim Standard SQ-406.H (associated PWC Staff Quality Interim Standard)

SQ-406. [Interim] Specific Requirement H

Effective April 15, 2016

Specific Requirement of the Standard

- H. If a personal watercraft (PWC) program is offered.
 - 1. Two staff members must participate in PWC activities in non-lifequarded areas.
- 2. All PWC staff must successfully complete the prescribed state safe boating training program and be trained in accordance with BSA's PWC Operations Manual.
- 3. All PWC staff must be familiar with applicable outdoor ethics principles and conservation limits on PWC activities.

History: CSTF 2013; Rev. Circ. 7 (Interim)

Interim Standards in Effect in 2017 Interim Standard PS-205

PS-205 [Interim] All-Terrain Vehicle Programs

Effective April 15, 2016

STANDARD:

If offered, the camp provides a safe introductory program into all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use and operation following the safety training program of the All-Terrain Vehicle Safety Institute.

Specific Requirements of the Standard:

A. **Program.**

- 1. The course or program must follow the ATV Safety Institute's SafeRider program in its entirety. No deviation is permitted from the course outline.
- 2. A qualified staff member (see Standard SQ-412.H) must be present at all times participants are riding. No unsupervised riding is allowed at any time.
- 3. Manufacturer restrictions on the age, weight and height of riders shall be followed.
- 4. ATVs may not carry passengers beyond the designated rider. The ATV may not be used to pull anyone or anything.
- 5. Course content must address the ethical use of ATVs using materials drawn from BSA's Outdoor Code and TreadLightly!, as appropriate.

B. **Equipment.**

- 1. The council must own or lease the ATVs used for the program. These ATVs may not be leased to third parties during the off-season.
- 2. Personal ATVs are not authorized for use.
- 3. ATVs must be used and maintained in accordance with manufacturer's instructions at all times. Records of maintenance must be maintained.
- 4. All required safety equipment must be present and in good repair.

C. Safety and risk management.

- 1. Instructor ATVs must carry the following at a minimum: first-aid kit, radio and cellphone, 25 feet of sturdy rope, and 5 feet of rolled duct tape.
- 2. Instructors and participants must be outfitted with helmets, safety goggles or full mask, long sleeves, long pants, gloves, footwear to support the ankles, and any other personal protective equipment required by the council's risk and safety review.
- 3. Each parent and/or guardian (for a minor participant) or participant must complete a permission slip, inclusive of hold-harmless language, prior to beginning the program.

D. Approval.

- 1. Prior to seeking council executive board or executive committee approval, the council has convened a task force to review: all local, state, and federal guidelines, including vehicle registration and age restrictions, licensing and/or certification courses, equipment and personal protective equipment standards, number of riders, and any other standards recommended by the original equipment manufacturer or other governing body, costs, risks to participant and staff safety, impact on other camp programs, and impacts on the camp environment. This task force must complete a risk and safety review consistent with PD-111 and ensure that the program conforms to BSA's Sweet Sixteen of Safety.
- 2. The council executive board or executive committee must have reviewed the costs and risks of the proposed program prepared by the task force prior to authorizing the program. A copy of the executive board or executive committee resolution authorizing the program must be available.
- 3. The council has submitted its board resolution to Outdoor Programs at the National Service Center

Interim Standards in Effect in 2017 Interim Standard PS-205 continued

(email to outdoorprograms@scouting.org) and have written approval before conducting the course.

INTERPRETATION

Councils operating pursuant to a National Council approval using Form 430-044 may continue to operate their existing approved program pursuant to that approval for the 2016 and 2017 camping seasons.

Councils should consult available resources for designing ATV trails to minimize injury risks to riders and the environment. The resources consulted and the safety and conservation measures implemented should be addressed in the task force report.

VERIFICATION

- Councils operating pursuant to a National Council approval pursuant to Form 430-044 must provide a copy
 of that form to the assessment team.
- Councils operating pursuant to this Interim Standard must produce a copy of the Interim Standard, the Board resolution (D.1), national service center approval (D.3), conservation plan provision and maintenance records (B.3).
- Review with staff the ATV Safety Institute course outline being followed (A.1) outdoor ethics training components (A.4).
- Ensure safety equipment present.

REFERENCES

Facility standards are set forth in Interim FA-716. Staffing standards are set forth in Standard SQ-412, Specific Requirement H.

History: CSTF 2013; Circ. 7 (interim)

Interim Standard SQ-412.H (associated ATV Staff Quality Interim Standard)

SQ-412. [Interim] Specific Requirement H

Effective April 15, 2016

Specific Requirement of the Standard

- If an ATV program is offered,
- 1. Two staff members must participate in ATV activities.
- 2. At least one ATV staff member must hold a valid current ATV Safety Institute's instructor certification. All other ATV staff must have been trained by an ATV Safety Institute certified instructor.
- 3. All ATV staff must be familiar with applicable outdoor ethics principles and conservation limits on ATV activities.

History: CSTF 2013; Rev. Circ. 7 (interim)

Interim Standards in Effect in 2017 Interim Standard FA-716

FA-716. [Interim] ATV Course and Facility Standards

Effective April 15, 2016

STANDARD

If offered, an ATV course is designed and maintained to provide safe, efficient operation of an ATV safety training program.

Specific Requirements of the Standard:

- A. On-camp property courses must be addressed by and follow the camp's conservation plan to minimize impacts on the environment.
- B. Off-camp property courses must have approval in writing from the land owner or land manager.
- C. Minimum course size is 150 feet by 200 feet. The course must also provide for covered, secured storage for the ATVs.
- D. The course must provide for a vehicle wash area and appropriate handling and disposal of wash waters.
- E. The course should conform to design standards of the National Off Highway Vehicle Conservation Coalition.

INTERPRETATION

Councils operating pursuant to a National Council approval using Form 430-044 may continue to operate their existing approved program pursuant to that approval for the 2016 and 2017 camping seasons.

VERIFICATION

- Review the conservation plan provision and any landowner approvals.
- Ensure course looks maintained in accordance with plan provisions.

REFERENCES

Program standards are set forth in Standard PS-205. Staffing standards are set forth in Standard SQ-412, Specific Requirement H.

History: CSTF 2013; Rev. Circ. 7 (interim)

When Is an Authorization Update Required?

Several camps have inquired about when they must update their application and authorization to operate because they are planning to make changes at a camp.

In general, if the camp is only going to extend its existing program for additional sessions, no additional notification is required. NCAP has already reviewed the camp and is satisfied that it is accreditable.

If a camp intends to add a program activity, such as a new water feature or climbing activity, then the camp needs to comply with applicable Standards, including Standard PD-111 and

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PD-112, and may then proceed.

If the council is going to open a completely new camp property and camp, a new application and authorization to operate is required before the camp may start (exceptions apply for day and family camps).

An existing resident camp seeking to upgrade to a high adventure or specialty adventure camp must file a new application before upgrading.

If an existing camp is going to offer a new camp program separate from the existing camp, either as a "new" camp or as a camp located away from the main camp, or using a different staff, then the "new" or "away" camp may require separate application and authorization before commencing. This is particularly true if the new camp program/activity resembles a trek, specialty or high adventure camp.

The application update (which needs cover only the new program and not resubmit all of the council information) must be submitted to NCAP@scouting.org prior to starting the new camp. A copy of the application goes to the regional chair. NCAP will provide guidance on how to get the necessary new approvals. Happy camping!

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