

ABILITIES DIGEST

Prepared. For Life.® Vol. 5, No. 1

Winter 2018  BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

From the National Task Force

Please note that the Web address (URL) for disabilities awareness materials on Scouting.org has changed. The new address is:

<https://www.scouting.org/programs/boy-scouts/the-building-blocks-of-scouting/disabilities/>

Adapting Activities When Food Becomes a Special Need

We've all encountered Scouts who are picky eaters because the menu is different from home and food is cooked in unfamiliar ways. Most food aversions work themselves out because most kids will not willingly starve themselves. That is not always the case, and Scout leaders need to be receptive and address special cases. One special issue with food is sensory overload. There are neurobiological disorders, including autism, where "ordinary" sensory input overwhelms the mind. Eating is a complex sensory experience because food has taste, smell, texture, and appearance. Some Scouts have sensory issues that are so intense that they refuse to eat many types of foods, no matter how much you encourage or reason with them. Parents in these situations tend to be reluctant to ask for accommodations for their child.



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Food aversions become a health and safety issue when there are not enough calories in the food that the Scout eats to sustain the Scout through the activity. At the same time, we need to preserve the dignity of the Scout and minimize the attention that a food aversion draws. Ultimately, you must find enough compatible food for the outing. Have a discreet and candid conversation with the parents to learn what foods work well at home and what foods are simply no-go. For short-term outings and summer camp, it may be enough to allow the Scout to bring some familiar snacks from home to supplement the regular menu items. High adventure trips with lightweight trail foods are another matter. One alternative is to seek out lightweight versions of foods that are well received at home, such as instant mashed potatoes, packaged meats, or dehydrated fruits and vegetables. Then, have the Scout's family test drive the lightweight versions at home. For freeze-dried foods, you can have a tasting event in advance of the trip for everyone in the group and use the results to accommodate the special needs. A strategy for non-cooked meals is to issue a variety of pre-packaged foods that the Scouts can trade as needed to accommodate food aversions. It is okay to sacrifice nutritional balance for energy content during a limited term outing. As always.....Be Prepared!

Summer Camp, Disabilities, and Special Needs



Summertime means summer camp for most Scouts. Every Scout wants to take part and, more importantly, have fun. This takes preparation, especially for Scouts with special needs.

The unit leader should take some time to think about each Scout as an individual and how each will react to summer camp routine. This is especially true of new Scouts who have not attended camp before. Identify roadblocks: features of camp life that prevent the Scout from participating or feeling comfortable. Make sure that one or more unit leaders watch for those roadblocks and are ready to help bring the challenge within reach of the Scout's abilities.

About *Abilities Digest*

Abilities Digest is the official e-letter of the Boy Scouts of America National Disabilities Awareness Committee. Its mission is 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. 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.

Involve the camper's parents in the planning process. Invite them to attend camp with the unit if appropriate. All campers have buddies, but those with special needs should have a buddy who understands their disabilities and can help with roadblocks.

If Scouts have anxieties about unfamiliar places, make the camp familiar ahead of time. For example, one venture crew produced a videotape of their campsite. This helped smooth the transition from home to camp. In another case, campers actually visited the camp ahead of time and saw their assigned campsite, the trails, and the activity centers.

Mobility poses a challenge, especially on camp trails. Use a camp map and pay attention to travel needs when planning a camper's activities. Some campers with Down Syndrome, for example, have low muscle tone. They tire easily from walking repeatedly back and forth between the campsite and activity areas. After lunch, instead of walking all the way back to the unit campsite to "rest" for an hour, campers and buddies should just hang out in the dining hall to wait for afternoon activities.



Campers with wheelchairs should be familiar with camp trail conditions. The unit should plan to bring a set of tools to maintain wheelchairs or other mobility equipment. Bolts often shake loose on bumpy trails.

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.

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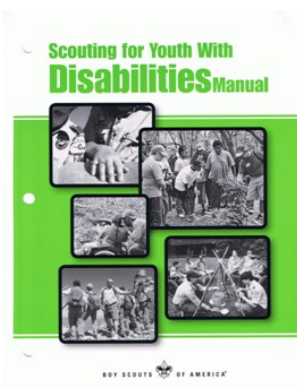
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Camp staff are another resource. Contact them ahead of time about each camper's special needs or restrictions. The staff may have suggestions for appropriate activities or alternatives for ones the camper should avoid. A bit of forewarning also lets staff and counselors make adjustments where possible. Not all camp directors can adapt their programs, but all strive to give campers a fun and rewarding experience.

When arriving at camp, leaders should identify a "cool zone" in each area the campers can visit. This is a quiet place campers can go to when feeling overwhelmed, over-stimulated, fed-up, etc. This is good for any Scout, not just Scouts with special needs. Caring leaders realize sometimes everyone needs a break to gather themselves. "Cool zones" should be within view of the leaders responsible for the area. Planning and preparation can make summer camp fun for everyone.

Enhancing Awareness

Updating the Guide to Disabilities Awareness



The National Disabilities Awareness Task Force is revising and updating the *Guide to Disabilities Awareness*. Revised content has been largely completed. However, reviews indicated that the *Guide* has an organizational problem: it tries to be too many things to too many people. The revised *Guide* may instead become two or more separate documents: one for unit leaders, one for district and council organizations, and possibly a third. The

editing and review of the new guides should be completed this fall.

Recognizing Abilities

Special Needs Scouting Service Award Medal and Device



There is now a medal available for the Special Needs Scouting Service Award: Item #641463, available from Scout Shops. The design features an international logo for Scouting with disabilities. A device with the same logo is available to wear on the Scouting Service Award square knot: Item #641462.

Previous recipients are eligible to wear this new medal. It must be special-ordered by the Council.

Include the Torch of Gold in Spring Council Recognitions



The Torch of Gold is a council-level distinguished award of the Boy Scouts of America to recognize adults for exceptional service and leadership in working with Scouts who have disabilities. Each council may recognize one Scouter per year with the award. Details are listed on the nomination form, available online.

The nominee must be a registered Scouter with at least three years of volunteer service supporting Scouting with disabilities. The service may be in any Scouting leadership capacity related to Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Venturers with disabilities, including educating other Scouters about disabilities and working with youth who have disabilities.

Recipients may be presented with the medal shown here, along with a lapel pin and certificate. The medal is item #645007 and the associated pin is item #645008.

Councils that award the Torch of Gold Award should also consider nominating the recipient for the national Woods Services Award.

Awareness Events

Wood Badge in American Sign Language



Scouters from all councils are invited attend a bilingual Wood Badge course conducted in both English and American Sign Language (ASL). The Great Salt Lake Council offers this course July 9-14, 2018, at the Monson Training Lodge. More information can be found at <https://www.saltlakescouts.org/woodbadge>.

The course uses a modified curriculum to enable and encourage both Deaf and hearing participants to engage with one another in a cooperative and supportive manner, while learning crucial leadership skills. Each leadership concept is presented in both ASL and English and all video presentations are closed captioned. A crew of full time interpreters interpret leadership concepts when presented and to assist in other communication needs between Deaf and hearing participants.

Disabilities Awareness at the 2019 World Scout Jamboree

As many of you may have heard, or experienced, there has been a “disAbilities Awareness Challenge” presence at every National Scout Jamboree since 1989. In shortly over a year, there will be a presence at a World Scout Jamboree. However, it will not be at one location, such as it has been (Action Point at the Summit) at the past two

National Jamborees. In 2019 there will be “Inclusion” activities at each of five focus areas spread across the Summit Center. They will be the INCLUSION lens through which participants will experience each of the five focus areas (relevant to global citizens in 2025) that encompass “Life in the 21st Century”. Those focus areas include, transportation, food, exploration, communication/media, and knowledgeable workforce.



Staff at a WSJ are called “International Service Team” or “IST” members. If you have a desire to participate as staff you are encouraged to register at wsj2019.us. First, read through the explanatory information regarding the cost of participation as an IST member and the caveat that the number of participants from the United States is limited. As an example, there will be approximately 9000 IST members, of which the US allocation is about 2000. That number could change depending on the number of IST that are available from other countries. In selecting an area for working as part of the IST, you should note that the disabilities Awareness activities fall under PROGRAM > CENTRO MONDIAL > Living in the 21st Century > INCLUSION.

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: <https://www.scouting.org/programs/boy-scouts/the-building-blocks-of-scouting/disabilities/>

Other Web Resources

AbleScouts: Abilities Digest articles posted online – ablescouts.org

Working with Scouts with disabilities - www.wswsd.org/

Autism Empowerment website - www.AutismEmpowerment.org

Autism and Scouting website - www.autismempowerment.org/autism-scouting-program/

Children with Special Needs - www.childrenwithspecialneeds.com/disability-info/

Social Media



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Email your comments and questions to: disabilities.awareness@scouting.org