Intro to Special Needs Scouting Resources

SN 100 (A)

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• Westchester-Putnam Council, Hawthorne, NY
  • 2017 Univ of Scouting, Iona Prep
BSA - Philosophy

• Leaders Help Raise Disability Awareness
• Target an inclusionary environment
• Adaptations as needed – specific guidelines available
• First Chief Scout Executive James West (1911—1943) was disabled.
WPC Special Needs Scouting Mandate

Assist all Scout Leaders in **developing and coordinating an effective Scouting program** for scouts with disabilities and special needs, using all available BSA & community resources.
How the new Special Needs Scouting Committee Supports Units:

- Promote Disability Awareness
- Assist with Intake Assessments (as needed)
- Assist with Disability-specific Advancement
- Approve & Assist Advancement Alternatives
- Approve & Assist Alternative Registration
- Provide Exceptional & Continuous Training
- Provide Community Service Opportunities
- Present Annual Torch of Gold Award to Adult Scout Leader for Exceptional Service
- Other Council-related initiatives *

* longer term
SN Scouting – General Leadership Techniques

- Accept, Respect & Embrace Disabled Youth – they are normal in most ways, but have additional challenges.
- Visit parents & learn more of child’s Abilities & preferences; does he/she know any of the other kids in the pack/troop?
- Become familiar with youth’s disability (from parents, teachers, therapists) and any special health-related needs.
- Set a good example regarding respect, punctuality, accuracy, conscientiousness, dignity & dependability.
- Become more involved & let youth know you truly care for him; encouragement can be powerful; judge by his abilities.
- Ensure your meetings & outings are well-structured.
- Focus reward on achievement and proper behavior and it will likely be repeated over and over again!
Signs of a Disability

- Avoids eye contact
- Day dreaming when others are paying attention
- Quiet/shy and displays the above
- Socially awkward or displays repetitive behaviors
- Inability to self-regulate behavior or stay focused
- Inability to vocalize answers or refuses simple requests
- Difficulty transitioning to new activities
Best Practices Intake Assessment Process

- First Year Scouts & Families
  - *(also works for existing Scouts)*
  - Obtain BSA Medical Form:
    - 1) Part A – Consent, Release, Authorization
    - 2) Part B – Medical History (A&B upon joining)
    - 3) Part C – Complete 2nd Month (by certified & licensed physician, lists medications).
- Renew All Medical Forms Annually
Best Practices Intake Assessment Process

- First Year Scouts & Families
  *(also works for existing Scouts)*

- 3 Key Questions For 1:1 Parent Conference:
  - 1) Any dietary restrictions?
  - 2) Any medications of ANY type?
  - 3) Does your son receive ANY additional support services at school?
If the answer to question #3 is “YES”, then:

- You need a 2\textsuperscript{nd} confidential parent meeting to discover more about the scout
- Use the Individualized Scout Achievement Plan form to create a reasonable game plan
- Review Annually – Conditions Evolve
- The Special Needs Scouting Committee can assist with this process
Best Practices Intake Assessment Process

Partner with the Parents

- Ask about strengths, concerns, anxieties, trigger situations
- Ask what adaptations work best at home and/or at school, etc.
- Meet / communicate regularly; Praise successes; Encourage active adult role
Best Practices Intake Assessment Process

Partnering

- Youth leaders - Encourage patience & caring and assisting when frustrated.
- Scouts - Create Youth Big Brothers or Buddies; encourage advocacy.
- Meet with Peers – May know your scout or have similar experience in similar situation.
- SN Scout – Communicate respectfully and assume he understands you; encourage self-advocacy; give him specific tasks.
SN Scouting – Key Message to Units

• Be prepared and welcoming of any special needs youth that wants to join your unit.
• Let youth leaders know that your unit is available to potential Special Needs youth.
• Be aware of alternative membership registration and advancement substitutes—SNS Committee will assist.
• Depending upon the severity of the disability or handicap--SNSScouting Committee will assist with (suggested) pre-joining family conference.
Supporting Info & Resources

- Special Advancement Issues
  - Defining Disability
  - Demographics
- Online Resources
A Word about Advancement

• “…To keep Scouts with disabilities as much in the advancement mainstream as possible, some advancement accommodation may be required…Bear in mind that the outcome of the Scouting experience should be one of fun and learning, not (just) completing the requirements for rank advancements, which might place unrealistic expectations on the Scout with a disability…”
Alternative Advancement

- **Cub Scout** – Do your best!
- **Boy Scout** – Do as much as possible; keep scouts mainstream; complete by age 18 unless have special registration status.

1. Lower Rank – similar process to age beyond eligibility—send written request & required confidential letters to Council for review. *

2. Merit Badges – submit confidential written request for alternatives (prepared by scout, parents and scoutmaster) to Council * including medical statement signed by doctor; must complete as much of existing merit badges as possible. **No Change in Upper Ranks.**

3. Application For Alternative Eagle Scout Rank Merit Badges – BSA Form 512-730. *

* reviewed by Advancement & Special Needs Scouting Committees.
Alternative Registration – Beyond the Age of Eligibility

- Applies to all Scouting Programs. Not an extension for rank of Eagle. Apply ASAP, though applications can be accepted.
- Requires certification by licensed health-care provider or a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist if candidate has cognitive or emotional disabilities.
- Requires letter from parents describing the disability and its severity and permanence and requesting approval of disabled registration. Include Individualized Education Plan (IEP) & any other supporting documentation.
- Requires advocate letter from Unit Leader.
- Paperwork is submitted, reviewed and approved at Council level by delegated Special Need Scouting Committee.
- All paperwork is confidential & kept in the unit’s file at Council.
- Source: GTA 10.1.0.2
Definitions of Disability

- **Learning** – an impairment in which a student functions below level in one or more academic or skill areas.

- **Cognitive** – a condition in which a student functions below their chronological age level in all areas of intellectual or cognitive functioning.

- **Developmental** – a condition in which a person functions below level in all academic or skill areas.

- **Physical** – a physical impairment.

- **Emotional and Behavioral Disorder** – an emotional or behavioral impairment.
“Special needs have generally been identified through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Young children who have been diagnosed as having developmental delays, or any child who has been evaluated as having one of a limited list of disabilities specified in IDEA are considered having special needs when they require special education & related services.

Nearly 7 million children with disabilities receive special education services under IDEA (270,000 infants & toddlers, 715,000 preschool-age children, and 6 million students from ages 6 through 21).” [2007 Dept of Education]

Recent survey in Three Fires Council: 15% of their 18,000 registered scouts had some form of special needs!

Est’d 57m people in US with disabilities (319m total) = 18%!
SN Scout Leader Training Resources

• BSA Literature –
  - Guide to Working with Scouts With Special Needs and Disabilities (11 pp)
  - Cub Scout Leader Book. Ch 17. (?)
  - Scouting for Youth With Disabilities Manual (157 pp)

• Univ of Scouting 2015 Slides – WPCBSA.org/SNScouting/snsuos

• Working With Scouts With Disabilities – wwswd.org

• Commissioner’s College – See curriculum at Scouting.org

• Autism Empowerment – autismempowerment.org

• World Organization of Scout Movement – Scouting with the Disabled
Westchester-Putnam Council has support for all unit leaders that have youth with Special Needs....

The Special Needs Scouting Committee has been formed to address the growing demand from packs, troops, crews and all scouting units for full support for all youth with any special needs and/or disabilities.

The SNS Committee meets monthly (except July & December) on alternating last Wednesdays and Thursdays of the month at the Council Service Center in Hawthorne, 7:30–8:30pm and we encourage any leader that is curious or has an interest in learning more about our SNS Committee or disability awareness efforts to join our meetings. Every unit should have an adult Special Needs Advocate and attending our meetings is a terrific way to learn how the SNS Committee is a helpful resource to unit leaders!

Special Needs Scouting Committee:
Tom McCandless - Committee Chair
Donna Ragusa – WPC, Vice President of Program
Algonquin: Andi Anderson, Steve Baker, Rob Levine, Tom McCandless, Monica Moss, Charlie Zegers
Manitoga: Kathleen Kaiser
Mohican: Lindsay Buttenshoch, Paxton Louis, Steve Owen, Donna Ragusa, Dominick Venturini, Jay Werner
Muscoot: Crystal Kennedy & Christine Zirkelbach
Professional Advisor: Andrew Nam

For any specific inquiries please contact the SNS Committee by email: SNScouting@wpcbsa.net
Course Evaluation

• Thank you for attending the WPC University of Scouting. In order to ensure a quality program for future events, please take a moment to fill out our survey. You do not have to put your name, but please let us know your position in scouting to assist us in our rating procedures.

• Course Title: Working with Special Need Scouts -- Advancement Course # SN100 (A)
  • Trainer: Tom McCandless
  • Feedback is a gift!