

Advancement and the Special Needs Scout

What is a “special needs scout”?

A special needs scout is one who has a permanent physical or mental disability or condition that may necessitate special accommodation on the part of the Scout unit in order for the boy to participate in activities and advance in rank.

Two considerations with regard to advancement:

- * Reasonable accommodation
- * Consistency in the Scout program

Earning a particular rank or merit badge should signify the same level of effort and achievement for all scouts earning that rank or badge.

Procedure for obtaining approval on alternative requirements

For Trail to First Class:

1. Complete as many requirements as possible without modification.
2. Obtain a medical statement from a licensed healthcare provider confirming that the disability is permanent. For a physical disability, include an outline of physical activities of which the Scout may not be capable. For a mental disability, a professional educator should provide an evaluation of the Scout’s ability level.
3. Prepare a request for alternative requirements using the “Individual Scout Achievement Plan” worksheet available from the Council.
4. Submit the “Achievement Plan” to the Council Process and Review Committee for consideration.
5. AFTER council approval, the Scout may work on the modified requirements.

For Eagle Scout Rank:

1. Complete as many of the required badges as the Scout’s ability permits.
2. Obtain a medical statement as described above.

3. Complete the “Application for Alternative Eagle Scout Rank Merit Badges” (form 58-730, available from the council).
4. Submit the application to the Council Process and Review Committee for consideration.
5. AFTER council approval, the Scout may work on the alternative badges.

For Cub Scouts and Webelos:

Modifications can be made at the unit level. As with all scouts of this age, the same standard should be applied: Has the Scout done his best? Parents and the unit committee should work together to determine appropriate substitutes for requirements that the boy is not able to complete as written. It is not necessary to contact the Council for review or approval.

Age requirements

According to the official regulations of the Boy Scouts of America, youth who are “either mentally retarded or severely physically handicapped, including the blind, deaf, and emotionally disturbed” may be registered as Cub Scouts over the age of 11, as Boy Scouts or Varsity Scouts over the age of 18, and as Venturers over the age of 21.

Recommended resources

Advancement Extravaganza

This Council training event is held in late winter each year. Participants may take up to five classes each year covering topics related to advancement for all levels of Scouting. Scout leaders in any position are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity. “Scouts with Special Needs” is one of the many classes offered.

Official Scout publications

These are all available at the Scout Shop.

Scouting for Youth with Physical Disabilities

Scouting for Youth with Mental Retardation

Scouting for Youth who are Deaf

Scouting for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Scouting for Youth with Learning Disabilities