
Scouting Handbook

for Church Units in
the United States

Revised May 2014

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

1.0 Introduction

This handbook outlines guidelines and policies relating to Scouting programs in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Bishops and Young Men, Primary, and Scouting leaders should be familiar with this information as they administer Scouting programs in the ward. Details about each Scouting program are available from the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and are not included in this handbook. Differences between Church policy and BSA policy are noted in this handbook as needed. Unless otherwise noted, the term *Scouting* includes Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, Varsity Scouting, and Venturing. This edition of the handbook includes revisions to policies in sections 3 and 8.

1.1 Purpose of Scouting in the Aaronic Priesthood and Primary

Scouting can help young men and boys enhance close relationships with their families and the Church while developing strong and desirable traits of character, citizenship, and physical and mental fitness. Under priesthood leadership, Scouting can complement the efforts of Aaronic Priesthood quorums and Primary classes in building testimonies in young men and boys. Scouting under Church sponsorship should become an extension of the home, Primary classes, and Aaronic Priesthood quorums. Scouting functions as part of the Church's activity program for boys and young men.

2.0 Training and Development

Young Men and Primary leaders who are called to Scouting responsibilities should receive training in Scouting principles, policies, and procedures as used by the Church. Trained Scout leaders who understand and live the gospel, understand priesthood governance, and understand the Scouting program are better able to serve young men and boys involved in Scouting activities. Accordingly, adult leaders are considered trained when they complete the following training:

- Youth Protection training (available online, to be completed before service with youth begins and repeated every two years).
- Leader position-specific training for Cub Scout, Boy Scout, Varsity, and Venturing leaders, or Troop Committee Challenge for troop committee members.

- Introduction to Outdoor Leader Skills for Boy Scout, Varsity, and Venturing leaders (offered by BSA local districts and councils).

2.1 Ongoing Training

Stake Young Men and Primary presidencies also provide ongoing training and support for ward Young Men, Primary, and Scouting leaders. In addition, the BSA provides monthly roundtables to help leaders learn Scouting methods and skills; it also offers a variety of optional training courses such as Wood Badge, the Trainer's EDGE, and others. Stake and ward budget allowance funds may be used for adult Scouting training.

Training courses that require overnight activities should not be attended by mixed groups of adult men and women unless both genders have appropriate sleeping and personal care arrangements that are not in immediate proximity to each other. Where possible, leaders should attend training offered on days other than Sunday.

2.2 Priesthood Leadership Conference on Scouting

In cooperation with the Boy Scouts of America, the Church holds an optional Priesthood Leadership Conference on Scouting at the Philmont Scout Ranch in Cimarron, New Mexico. This weeklong course for stake presidency members emphasizes the priesthood basis for Scouting in Church units and teaches how Scouting can be used to reinforce priesthood purposes and gospel principles.

2.3 The Partnership Relationship

Priesthood leaders and other Church members may participate as volunteers in district, council, and national Scouting committees and activities to solidify relationships between Scouting and the Church and to improve the Scouting program. Leaders should do everything possible within Church policies to create good will, mutual understanding, and cooperation between the two partners.

2.4 LDS-BSA Relationships Committee

An LDS-BSA Relationships committee should be organized in each BSA local council to help maintain and strengthen working relationships between the Church and the BSA local council. An assigned Area Seventy chairs or designates a stake president to chair this committee, which includes a member of each stake presidency within the BSA local council. If designated, the stake president

provides the Area Seventy with regular reports at coordinating council meetings or at other times. The BSA council Scout executive or his designee serves as an adviser to this committee.

3.0 Stake Leaders' Responsibilities for Scouting

3.1 Stake Presidency

The stake presidency sees that Scouting is organized and functioning in each ward in the stake; that young men, boys, and leaders are registered; and that all Scouting units are chartered. They also develop a positive working relationship with the BSA local council and district executive. A member of the stake presidency serves as a member of the LDS-BSA Relationships committee and registers as a member-at-large for the BSA local council.

3.2 Stake Aaronic Priesthood Committee

The stake presidency may assign high councilors with assignments relating to the Aaronic Priesthood and Primary to meet as an Aaronic Priesthood committee to discuss Scouting-related matters (see *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [2010], 15.3.2).

3.3 Stake Young Men Presidency

The stake Young Men presidency, under the direction of the stake presidency, conducts training and coordinates support for the individual Aaronic Priesthood Scouting programs in each ward. They orient newly called ward Young Men presidencies and provide ongoing instruction and encouragement. They register with BSA as unit commissioners serving as liaisons to the individual Scouting units (troops, teams, crews) within the stake. The stake presidency may designate other members of the stake to serve with the stake Young Men presidency as unit commissioners (see 3.5).

The stake Young Men presidency receives appropriate Scout leader training and participates in district committee meetings and roundtables. They also meet regularly and create close relationships with unit leaders; inform them of BSA district and council activities, training opportunities, policies, and health and safety issues; and assist with rechartering.

3.4 Stake Primary Presidency

The stake Primary presidency, under the direction of the stake presidency, coordinates support

for the individual Scouting programs in each ward Primary organization. They orient newly called ward Primary presidencies and provide ongoing instruction and encouragement. They help ward Primary presidencies understand Church Scouting policies and how Scouting and the Faith in God program work together. They help plan day camps, when needed. See *Handbook 2*, 11.5.3, for additional information.

The stake Primary presidency may register with BSA as unit commissioners, or the stake presidency may designate other members of the stake to serve as unit commissioners under the direction of the stake Primary presidency. In making this assignment, the stake presidency should be careful not to overburden members who have other obligations. Unit commissioners function as liaisons to the Cub Scout program and the eleven-year-old Scouting program in each ward (see 3.5).

The high councilor assigned to the Primary informs the stake Primary presidency of training opportunities and helps them provide support and assistance to the ward Primary organizations.

3.5 Unit Commissioners

Unit commissioners serve as resources to help Scout units succeed throughout the stake. Each Cub pack, Scout troop, Varsity team, and Venturing crew should be served by a unit commissioner. Members of the stake Young Men presidency serve as unit commissioners. The stake presidency may also designate members of the stake Primary presidency or other stake members as unit commissioners, as long as this assignment will not overburden these members. Unit commissioners have the following responsibilities:

1. Register with BSA and receive required training.
2. Learn about Scout policies, procedures, and opportunities.
3. Establish a close relationship with adult Scout leaders in wards and interact with them regularly.
4. Provide initial orientation, ongoing support, and instruction for all Scout units in the stake.
5. Inform Scout units of training opportunities, health and safety issues, and activities in the stake and in the BSA local district and council.
6. Provide meaningful communication between Scout units and the stake and between Scout units and the BSA local district. This can be done at roundtable meetings, stake leadership meetings, or any other time.

4.0 Ward Leaders' Responsibilities for Scouting

4.1 Bishop

The bishop provides general direction for Scouting in the ward and ensures that it is properly organized and functioning as outlined in this publication and in *Handbook 2* (8.13.4, 11.5.3). He is registered and serves as the executive officer for Scouting units chartered by the ward.

4.2 Bishop's Counselors

The bishop's counselors help the bishop by overseeing the Scouting programs for boys ages 8 through 11 and Aaronic Priesthood quorums.

The bishop assigns a counselor to serve as the ward's representative to the local Scouting district and council. This counselor registers as the chartered organization representative (COR) and works with other leaders to:

1. Charter all Scouting units in the ward annually.
2. Register boys ages 8 through 11, young men ages 12 through 15, and their adult leaders. Young men ages 16 and 17 and their leaders should be registered when the ward sponsors a Venturing crew or when rank advancements are being pursued.
3. See that tour and activity plans are completed; signed by the bishop, the COR, or the committee chair; and submitted.
4. Attend the district committee meetings and the annual council business meeting.
5. Attend Scout leader training.
6. Encourage all adults involved in Scouting to become properly trained soon after their call.
7. Help organize a functioning Scouting committee.
8. Conduct the annual Friends of Scouting campaign.
9. Help provide recognition for boys, young men, and their leaders.

4.3 Scouting Committees

The bishopric organizes ward Scouting committees to ensure that Scouting functions properly as a supporting activity for Aaronic Priesthood quorums and boys ages 8 through 11. The bishopric calls several capable adults (including fathers and mothers of boys and young men) to serve as committee members. One of the committee

members is called to serve as the chair. Qualified adults, whether members of the Church or not, may serve on these committees. Each committee should include a member of the bishopric.

A Scouting committee can be as large as needed to carry out its responsibilities to the individual Scouting units. Where leadership or the number of young men or boys is limited, one committee could represent all young men of Aaronic Priesthood age and another committee could represent Cub Scouting.

When more than one Scouting committee exists in the ward, members of the Primary presidency should be assigned as follows: (1) the member responsible for the 11-year-old boys serves on the Boy Scout troop committee, and (2) the member responsible for boys ages 8 to 10 serves on the Cub Scout pack committee.

All committee members, whether members of the Church or not, should understand and be willing to maintain Church standards.

Scouting committees should (1) meet as needed to discuss Scouting in the ward and receive assignments from the committee chair, (2) support and assist Scouting activities by providing needed services, and (3) see that the Scouting units operate in accordance with Church and BSA policies and standards.

5.0 Scouting in the Aaronic Priesthood

5.1 Aaronic Priesthood Quorum Advisers (Ward Young Men Presidency)

Generally, Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers serve as the adult leaders of the Scouting units in the ward. Both the adviser and the assistant adviser(s) attend all meetings of the quorum and the Scouting unit and must be registered with the Boy Scouts of America.

5.2 Youth Leadership

Scouting is part of the responsibilities of deacons and teachers quorum presidencies and assistants to the bishop in the priests quorum. Planning for Scouting activities should be done at presidency meetings and in the Scouting unit leadership meetings. Sunday quorum meetings should not become Scout planning sessions.

Each Scouting unit should be led by a young man who is nominated by the bishopric and sustained by the quorum members. For Scouting purposes this constitutes an election. This leader is usually the quorum president or an assistant in

the priests quorum but may be another worthy young man, whether a member of the Church or not. Other youth leaders of the Scouting units are nominated by the quorum presidency, approved by the bishopric, and sustained by the quorum members.

The quorum presidency, with help from their quorum adviser(s), meets to correlate each Scouting activity with other quorum activities. The president presides at and conducts the meeting. If another young man is called to be the youth Scouting leader, the president should invite him to conduct the Scouting portion of the meeting and show support for his leadership. Quorum advisers attend this meeting to provide adult support and direction to those who preside over the meeting.

All Scouting meetings should open and close with prayer and may include an inspirational message by the adult unit leader (such as a Scoutmaster's Minute).

6.0 Scouting in Primary

In Primary, the Faith in God program should be coordinated with Scouting to lay a foundation that prepares a boy to keep his baptismal covenants, better serve his family, and receive the priesthood. Scouting supports boys and their families by giving them an additional opportunity to put into practice the gospel principles they learn at home and in Primary. Parental involvement and help is a key to success in this program. Scouting also provides boys with leadership opportunities and helps them develop habits and attitudes of good citizenship.

Scouting activities and meetings for Primary-age boys are preferably held in the daytime. Scouting meetings may be held at the meeting-house, in a home, or in an outdoor setting and should open and close with prayer.

6.1 Cub Scouting for Boys Ages 8 to 10

When properly carried out, Cub Scouting is a fun, home-centered activity program. No Scout-sponsored overnight camping should be planned for boys under age 11. Details for Cub Scout programs are published by the Boy Scouts of America and are available through BSA local council offices.

6.2 Scouting for Eleven-Year-Olds

LDS boys become Boy Scouts when they turn eleven years old. Although they are part of the

ward Scout troop, they function in their own patrol and operate under the direction of the ward Primary presidency. They can participate with the ward Boy Scout troop in occasional daytime activities as well as boards of review and courts of honor.

Scouting prepares eleven-year-old boys to receive the Aaronic Priesthood and transition into the deacons quorum and Young Men program. Scouting can help them increase in confidence, testimony, brotherhood, and understanding of Aaronic Priesthood duties. The eleven-year-old boy will need to establish good relationships with his peers, the deacons quorum presidency, and his leaders.

Eleven-year-old boys meet separately from the Aaronic Priesthood-age Scouts because they are not yet part of a quorum. They preferably meet in the daytime, but if evening meetings are necessary, the boys should not be away from their homes late at night and must be carefully supervised until they return home.

Eleven-year-old Scouts participate in rank advancement. They are encouraged to achieve the rank of First Class before turning twelve years old.

Eleven-year-old Scouts may participate in three one-night camps a year, which meets the camping requirements for advancement to First Class rank. As desired, these overnight camp experiences may be held with the ward's Boy Scout troop. The eleven-year-old Scout leader plans the overnight camps in consultation with the ward Primary presidency, the bishopric adviser to the Primary, and the ward Scouting committee. No other Scout-sponsored overnight camping should be planned for eleven-year-old Scouts.

The bishopric adviser to the Primary or another qualified male adult should be invited to supervise the overnight camping experience when the leader of the eleven-year-old Scouts is a woman. Female leaders do not participate in overnight camping with these boys. Fathers are invited and encouraged to participate in the overnight camping experiences with their sons and with boys whose fathers cannot attend.

In consultation with the ward Primary presidency and the leader of the eleven-year-old Scouts, the bishopric appoints one of the boys to serve as the patrol leader. He may meet occasionally with the older troop leaders when they plan events that will include the eleven-year-old patrol. The patrol leader should, with adult leader

assistance, choose assistant patrol leaders and assign other duties in the patrol as needed.

If a ward or branch has only one or two eleven-year-old boys, the objective for them is the same—to prepare them to receive the Aaronic Priesthood and help them advance through the Boy Scout program. Possible approaches to administering the program under this circumstance include, but are not limited to, the following: increase the size of the patrol through activation and missionary efforts; use the Lone Scout Program from the BSA; or combine with neighboring wards or branches after considering distance, expense, and time demands that this option might impose on the families involved. If this last option is chosen, the Primary president and bishopric adviser continue to track the progress of each boy from their ward or branch.

At age twelve, boys join the deacons quorum and the Boy Scout troop.

6.3 Day Camps

Day camps offer opportunities for boys to have fun outdoors and complete outdoor requirements. If the BSA local council does not provide day camps or if they are not held within a reasonable travel distance for Church members, a member of the ward or stake Primary presidency directs the organization of day camps. For example, a member of the ward Primary presidency and the leader of eleven-year-old Scouts, with the help of the ward Scouting committee, could organize a ward day camp for eleven-year-old Scouts. *A Day Camp Guide for Eleven-Year-Old Scouts* (31374) is available at Church distribution centers.

6.4 Leader of the Patrol of Eleven-Year-Old Scouts

Either the Primary teacher of eleven-year-old boys or another capable adult may serve as the group's Scout leader. This leader should:

1. Work under the direction of a member of the Primary presidency and meet with her regularly to discuss the Scouting program and each boy's progress.
2. Register as the leader of the eleven-year-old Scouts, and attend the ward Scouting committee meetings.
3. Attend Scout training as applicable.
4. Attend other Primary meetings as invited.
5. Encourage and help each boy achieve the Faith in God Award and advance in Scouting.

6. See that the boys participate in a day camp and help plan it if requested.

For additional information, see LDS.org.

6.5 Ward Primary Presidency

The ward Primary presidency, under the direction of a counselor in the bishopric, has responsibility for Scouting for boys ages 8 through 11. The Church does not participate in Scouting programs for boys younger than eight years old. A member of the presidency is responsible to see that Scouting is organized appropriately.

The presidency member should:

1. Register with Boy Scouts of America, receive BSA training, serve on the appropriate ward Scouting committees, and ensure that Church policies are followed.
2. Coordinate Scouting with the Faith in God program.
3. Encourage leaders to attend Scout leader training and help them understand how Scouting can strengthen the family and accomplish the purposes of Primary.
4. Visit Scout meetings and activities to support and evaluate the quality of the boys' experiences in Scouting. Review each boy's progress and participation in presidency meetings and in the regular meetings with the bishopric adviser.
5. Help plan day camps and ensure that boys have an opportunity to participate in day camps.

7.0 Awards and Recognition

The Church makes the following Scouting awards and recognitions available to boys, young men, and adult leaders:

On My Honor Award. This is the Latter-day Saint religious award for young men in Boy Scouting, Varsity Scouting, or Venturing. Scouts who are members of other faiths may also earn the award.

On My Honor Adult Recognition. This recognition may be given to adult Scout leaders. Requirements for earning the award and suggestions for presenting it are outlined on the application card.

Faith in God Award. Cub Scouts and Webelos Scouts can earn the Faith in God Award by completing the requirements contained in the *Faith in God for Boys* guidebook. Boys of other faiths

may also earn the award by completing the requirements.

Additional awards, including the BSA religious square knot, are described in the online BSA *Guide to Awards and Insignia*. Contact your BSA local council office for information on training awards and requirements.

8.0 Church Policies

8.1 Standards

Church standards should be upheld at all Scout-sponsored activities. All Scouts and their leaders registered in LDS Scouting units are expected to live the standards of the Church as outlined in *For the Strength of Youth*.

8.2 Registration of Youth and Adults

Throughout the year, each ward ensures that all youth and adults who participate in BSA are properly registered. Any youth who joins BSA for the first time must complete a BSA youth application. If a registered youth joins a Scout unit in the ward after being a member of another Scout unit, the ward notifies the BSA local council by sending the youth's name, birthdate, and mailing address, along with a phone number for a parent or guardian. This notification must be signed by a member of the bishopric.

Each adult leader must complete a BSA adult application. All adult Scouting leaders must be properly registered and complete Youth Protection training before beginning their service (see 8.6 and 8.8).

All registration fees for youth and adults, including those of other faiths who join Latter-day Saint units, are paid directly from Church headquarters to the BSA National Council.

8.3 Rechartering

Rechartering is the annual process by which each Scout unit renews its charter as an official part of BSA. As part of rechartering, each ward sends the BSA local council an updated roster of the Scout unit, including the names, birthdates, and contact information of the registered youth in the unit. The roster lists all young men ages 8 through 15. Young men ages 16 and 17 are listed only if they are pursuing rank advancements or if the ward sponsors a Venturing crew. The roster must be signed by a member of the bishopric.

All fees for rechartering, unit liability insurance, and annual registration, including fees for those of other faiths who join Latter-day Saint units, are paid directly from Church headquarters to the BSA National Council. No additional fees should be paid to local councils for accident and health insurance coverage. For information on Church activity insurance programs, see *Handbook 2*, 13.6.9.

The Church does not sponsor Scouting for girls or young women. The Primary and Young Women programs of the Church are designed to meet the needs and interests of girls and young women.

8.4 Combining Scouting Units

Combining activities for small units during the week may be authorized by the stake president, so long as each ward maintains a properly registered unit; each is staffed with adult leaders; and retention, recruitment, and activation efforts are maintained by each ward or quorum.

8.5 Calling Adult Scouting Leaders

Worthy adults, whether members of the Church or not, may be called to serve as Scouting leaders. A current membership record of each member called to serve in Scouting should be in the local unit. All adult Scouting leaders must be properly registered and must complete Youth Protection training before beginning their service.

Members of the Church serving in Scouting assignments should be sustained and set apart. Others who request it may receive a blessing from a member of the bishopric to help them in their assignment.

The bishopric may appropriately call men or women to serve as Scouting leaders for Primary-age Scouts. Women do not serve as leaders for young men of Aaronic Priesthood age but may chair or serve on Scouting committees.

When possible, leaders should be allowed to serve in Aaronic Priesthood and Scouting callings long enough to become fully trained, establish strong activity programs, and effectively touch the lives of boys and young men.

8.6 Youth Protection Program

The Boy Scouts of America requires all Scouting leaders to take Youth Protection training, available online or through the BSA local district or council.

8.7 Two-Deep Leadership

Two registered adult leaders or one registered adult leader and a parent of a participant (one of whom must be 21 years of age or older) are required on all Scouting trips, outings, classes, and meetings. In situations that require personal conferences, such as a Scoutmaster's conference or merit badge counseling, the meeting should be conducted in view of other adults or youth. When camping, no youth is permitted to sleep in the tent of an adult other than his own parent or guardian.

Adult leaders must respect the privacy of youth in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers at camp, and they should intrude only when health and safety require doing so. Adults should also protect their own privacy in similar situations.

8.8 Background Screening for BSA Adult Leaders

The Boy Scouts of America will complete a criminal background check on all new adult leaders as part of the registration approval process. This will include the screening of Social Security numbers. Priesthood leaders should cooperate with BSA officials to resolve any issues that arise and complete this process before sustaining and setting apart each Scout leader.

8.9 Safety

Priesthood and Scouting leaders should refer regularly to *Handbook 2*, chapter 13, for policies and guidelines regarding activities and safety. Leaders should also comply with guidelines found in the *Guide to Safe Scouting*, published by the Boy Scouts of America. This publication is available online at scouting.org and at BSA local council service centers. Additional safety guidelines can be found on LDS.org.

Leaders should also use the BSA Activity Consent Form and Approval by Parents or Legal Guardian and tour and activity plans, as required, when planning activities and outings.

8.10 Camping and Sabbath Day Observance

Keeping the Sabbath day holy is a commandment of the Lord and the practice of the Church. The Church does not approve of hiking and camping trips on Sunday. Scout groups should not travel to or from camps on Sunday. Plans for outings should ensure that Aaronic Priesthood

brethren and other members can attend to their regular Church assignments.

As an exception, priesthood leaders may approve attendance at some BSA-sponsored national and regional jamborees that occur over the Sabbath. Attendance at such events may only occur with prior priesthood approval and with supervision by authorized priesthood leaders. Members attending such events are not to participate in activities that are inappropriate for the Sabbath. Scout uniforms may be worn during sacrament services at these events.

Sacrament meetings are not to be held—and the sacrament is not to be administered—outside the boundaries of the ward or stake where the priesthood leaders preside. Any exceptions must be approved by a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Scouting events (except approved long-term camps) are not held on Monday evening, the night designated for family home evening.

8.11 Scouting Month

February has traditionally been designated as Scouting Month in the United States. Leaders of Scouting units chartered by the Church may plan and carry out approved activities during the week to recognize this tradition. However, in keeping with the purposes of Sabbath observance, boys and leaders do not wear their uniforms to regular Sunday meetings or while administering and passing the sacrament.

8.12 Travel

Leaders should follow the travel policies outlined in *Handbook 2* (13.6.24). In addition, members who travel in Church-sponsored Scouting groups should prepare tour and activity plans and receive approval from appropriate priesthood leaders. Church Scouting units may not own or acquire automobiles or buses for travel.

8.13 Funding Scouting

Leaders should follow the budget allowance guidelines in *Handbook 2* to fund Scouting (see 8.13.7, 11.8.7, 13.2.8, 13.2.9, 13.5, and 13.6.8). Ward budgets should be used to purchase Scouting awards and materials, as determined by local leaders. Commercially produced or packaged goods or services should not be sold.

Scouting units may participate in Scouting shows, camporees, and other BSA activities

involving the sale of tickets by boys or young men, as long as all other budget allowance guidelines are met.

The Church supports the BSA's annual Friends of Scouting drive. These funds provide financial support for the BSA local council. Stake presidents and bishops oversee the drive in their units.

8.14 Uniforms

Young men registered in a Scouting unit are encouraged to wear the appropriate uniform. No young man or boy should be excluded from Scouting if he is unable to purchase a uniform. Units may wish to maintain a supply of used uniforms to make them available for boys. Abbreviated or simple uniforms and insignia, which have been approved by the BSA, are appropriate and encouraged. Adult leaders are also encouraged to wear appropriate Scouting uniforms, where feasible.

8.15 Young Men and Boys of Other Faiths

Young men and boys of other faiths who agree to abide by Church standards should be welcomed and encouraged to participate in Scouting

activities. Expenses for their participation are paid in the same manner as for other youth. Voluntary contributions from their families may be accepted and handled in accordance with Church policy.

8.16 Scouting for Those with Disabilities

As much as possible, programs and activities should be planned to include Scouts with disabilities. Young men or boys with mental, physical, or emotional disabilities should be encouraged to participate in Scouting to the extent their abilities will allow. They may complete as many of the program requirements as possible. More information about Scouting experiences for those with disabilities is available at scouting.org and from BSA local council offices. See also *Handbook 2*, 21.1.26.

8.17 Specialty Programs and Stake Camps

Latter-day Saint Scouting units do not organize "specialty" or similar programs that focus exclusively on a particular skill, hobby, or career. Also, camps organized by stakes should not be advertised as "Scout" camps and are not covered by BSA liability insurance.