

Scouts With Special Needs

Special consideration should be given to Scouts with physical or cognitive disabilities as they progress through the Scouting program. The Cub Scout motto is “Do Your Best,” and this applies to a boy’s completing requirements for rank advancement. We can read about Boy Scouts with Down Syndrome, who have worked hard to complete requirements for the Eagle Scout Award (albeit at a later age than is normally required). A lot has been written (and much is available online) about ways to work with Scouts with disabilities. Some resources are listed below.

Primary-age Boys With Disabilities

“When a child has a prolonged illness, a disability, or other special needs, Primary leaders consult with priesthood leaders and the child’s parents to determine ways to help. Children who have disabilities are normally included in their regular Primary classes. As needed, and where possible, a special teacher may be called to attend class with them or to teach them separately. If an illness or disability requires that a child stay at home, Primary teachers may help members of the child’s family teach Primary lessons to him or her. The child is enrolled in Primary with his or her age-group, and the teacher marks the child present when a lesson is given” (*Handbook 2: 11.8.6*),

Likewise, a boy with special needs may be registered in Scouting and participate with either chronological-age peers or intellectual-age peers. In many instances, Scouting might be one of the best activities in which boys with special challenges can be involved.

Teaching Children With Disabilities

On the Church’s website (www.lds.org), there is a web page titled “[Teaching Children With Disabilities](#).” There is a lot of material on this website that would be helpful to leaders and parents. One particularly poignant article addresses autism: “[Embracing Ethan, Accepting Autism](#)” by Ethan’s father, Jeff Kornegay.

- “We can receive inspired guidance as we minister to children with special challenges by offering hope, understanding, and support to parents and caregivers, who often have great needs as well.”
- “As we include and show compassion toward children with disabilities and special challenges, children will learn and teach others to follow the Savior’s example to love everyone.”

Young Men With Disabilities

“Young men who have disabilities are normally included in their regular quorums. Exceptions may be made with the approval of the parents and the bishopric. For information about understanding, including, and teaching young men who have disabilities, see [21.1.26](#) and disabilities.lds.org [[Disability Resources](#)]” (*Handbook 2: 8.17.4*).

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 www.scouting.org and from BSA local council offices. See also *Handbook 2, 21.1.26*” (LDS *Scouting Handbook* 8.18).

In addition to helping the individual Scout, it is important for Scout leaders to recognize that a program that is well planned to accommodate young men or boys with disabilities will undoubtedly benefit *all* the Scouts in the unit.

Advancement for BSA Youth With Special Needs

“Youth with physical disabilities and youth and adults with developmental or cognitive challenges are welcome in the Boy Scouts of America. As outlined in this section, various accommodations exist to facilitate advancement “[Individual Scout Advancement Plan](#)”. These youth do not need to join a special unit oriented to serving members with disabilities, although those exist and may be beneficial in some cases. The severity of disability will indicate how members should be registered. See “[Registering Qualified Members Beyond Age of Eligibility](#),” 10.1.0.0. “When knowledgeable parents or volunteers are able to provide assistance and oversight, most anyone can be a member. While leaders should be enthusiastic about helping those with special needs, they should also recognize the demands that will be placed on their patience, understanding, and skill in working on advancement” (“[Advancement for Members With Special Needs](#),” www.bsa.org).

BSA Age Requirements May Be Waived

As indicated above, details may be found at the Scouting.org website “[Registering Qualified Members Beyond the Age of Eligibility](#).”

Scouting for Youth With Disabilities

A number of online resources are available for leaders and parents of Scouts with disabilities. A good introduction for Scouting leaders is BSA publication #510-071, *Guide to Working With Scouts with Special Needs and disABILITIES*, [2013] which is a twelve-page document. A more comprehensive resource is the online 257-page manual *Scouting for Youth With Disabilities Manual*, [2007] BSA publication #34059.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

A number of challenges can occur in a den or patrol when there are one or more Scouts who are diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). It’s difficult for a leader to cope

with a distractible (and often distracting) boy while trying to teach a skill or lead a discussion with other Scouts. The online resources that can assist leaders as they work with Scouts with AHDD are too numerous to include here, but an Internet search for “Scouts with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder BSA” will provide access to many documents and resources available to help both leaders and parents.

Camping for Scouts With Disabilities

A question relating to Scouts with disabilities is found at LDS.org: “[Disability Resources FAQ: Doctrines and Policies](#)” (the question probably refers to the weeklong Scout camp, but similar adaptabilities can be made for Cub Scout day camp and the camp for eleven-year-old Scouts).

“Q: Under what conditions can a young man with a disability attend Scout camp?”

“A: Often youth can participate successfully in camp with minor program modifications. Individual needs and safety issues should be taken into account.

In general, every effort should be made to empower a boy to participate in camping and other outdoor activities. The one overriding exception is when it is not possible to keep the boy or others on the outing safe.