

# ABILITIES DIGEST

Prepared. For Life.® Vol. 9, No. 2

Spring 2022  BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

## Adapting Events: Caregivers for Scouts with Disabilities

*“We want especially to help the weaker not to feel their weakness, and to gain hope and strength.”*

--Robert Baden-Powell

We have youth members in BSA with medical conditions, disabilities, or special needs where they are not able to care for themselves in certain ways while they are alone in a private space. For example, they may be unable to bathe themselves, dress themselves, use the toilet, etc. They require adult caregivers. Under the general BSA Youth Protection policies, only a parent or legal guardian is allowed to do these things for their own child. However, a parent/legal guardian is not always available when a Scout activity takes place. To allow full participation in the program, a caregiver is an acceptable alternative when approved by the local council and charter organization.



A caregiver in Scouting (CIS) is an adult, other than a parent or legal guardian, who has been delegated

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responsibility by the parents/guardians to provide personal assistance for an individual Scout, where that assistance requires touching, one-on-one contact, or presence in private spaces (sleeping quarters, bathing quarters, etc.) that would not ordinarily be allowed to a non-parent by standard BSA youth protection rules. A CIS does not need to have professional qualifications or licenses for caregiving as long as they are trusted by the family.

Here are some examples of needs or situations where a disability could require a CIS:

- Bathroom use (toileting)
- Bathe/Shower
- Get dressed/change clothes
- Eat/Drink/Receive nutrition & fluids



- Address Incontinence
- Clean Teeth/Groom Hair (personal hygiene)
- Move (transfer) between bed, chair, wheel chair, transport vehicles, etc.
- Move from place to place
- Receive required medications/treatments during outings
- Receive care/supervision for behavior management
- Sleep in a room/tent with a caregiver for medical monitoring through the night
- Sleep apart from other Scouts to limit exposure to pathogens

The local council and charter organization approve a plan for certain individual(s) to provide care for a Scout. Within the parameters of that plan, the caregiver is given the same status under youth protection policies as a parent would have at a Scout activity. Further, the plan can allow for deviations from restrictions that would ordinarily prevent parents from sharing a tent or sleeping quarters with their child.



# Sign Language at a World Jamboree

In the United States, there are different ways to communicate in sign language: ASL, (American Sign Language), SEE-II (Signed Exact English II) and PSE (Pidgin Signed English). These three communication venues are complex, but here is a brief comparison:

- ASL is the only one considered an actual language with many facial expressions, fewer conjunctions, and more interjections. Its hand movements are less visually cluttered. It is an actual language with its own unique grammatical system.
- SEE-II is the exact representation of each word through signs of grammatical structure in English, such as word order, tenses, and word endings. It is not considered a language at all!

PSE can be thought of as a combination of ASL and SEE-II, using ASL hand signs and a lot more finger-spelling than is typical for ASL. PSE oftentimes bridges the gap between a person who is deaf with those who may have been deafened later in life and continue to use the grammatical way of speaking within the hand signs of ASL.

## Exploring ASL

At the 2019 World Jamboree, while on staff for Inclusion-Communication & Media, Charlie Hulse, a National SND Committee member, gave presentations for ASL, and the differences between English,

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*Abilities Digest* is designed for any leader who would offer a Scouting program to youth who have special needs. Any Scouting volunteer or professional may subscribe.

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French, and Spanish signs. The 2019 World Jamboree had three sponsors: U.S.A, Canada, and Mexico. These languages were representative of those used frequently in each country. “It was a great experience meeting Scouters from all over the world and visitors

from the sponsoring countries,” Hulse noted. “What stood out about sign language were the differences between countries and regions for words and letters. I met people from several different countries that could sign. I was asked over and over, why sign hasn’t been standardized throughout the world. My explanation was to ask the questions as to why there isn’t just one language for the entire world, and which language would it be if so? My answer was simply that no nation really wants to give up the uniqueness of their language for conformity.”

Within regions of various countries, there are different accents and words that are not in other regions. One example is “soda.” Some parts of the U.S. say coke, pop, soft drink, tonic, Pepsi, Dew, and so on.

Between countries there are differences in the alphabet. One example is Spanish and English. The /ch/ sound, the double /ll/ sound, the /n/ and the rolling double /r/ sounds, all have unique signs in Spanish but don’t exist in English sign.

The French use different hand signs for the letters g, h, t, x, and z.

Great Britain uses two hands for their alphabet letter signs.

Some sign words don’t exist in some countries. The sign for turtle does not exist in Sweden because there are no land turtles. However, there are sea turtles, which does have an existing sign. In some South American countries, there are no foxes so there is no sign for fox there.

A combo sign that is different between nations is “toilet”. If a country uses that word this is usually the sign for it; the alphabet symbol for “T” and twisting the fist.



In Asian countries they use the term “water closet”. That sign is a combo of the alphabet signs for W and C.

“Growing up,” Hulse commented, “I learned to sign “I love you” as three separate words for that sentence.” Currently, at least in the US, the most recognized sign is on one hand combining the three words with letter representations. The little finger represents I, the index finger and thumb represent the letter sign L for



“love,” and the little finger and thumb as the “Y” ....I – L – Y means “I Love You.” Use two hands and you have “Double Love You”. Cross the index finger and the middle finger (sign for R), keeping the ring finger down, and you have “I Really Love You.” Signing “shorthand” is fun and there are many of these short cuts in ASL.

Another interesting difference are the signs between ASL and Spanish countries for girl/mother and boy/father. Go online and check them out!

Hulse relayed a story he had heard of a hearing child of parents who were deaf. “This young man was immersed in a world of ASL. His first language was probably ASL. He could hear, but he understood and communicated in sign. His parents belonged to a bowling league in Ohio, with members who were deaf. One time they had a get together with a bowling league from Kentucky whose members were also deaf. He said at first, the two groups could not understand each other because the Kentucky group had an accent, but after about a half hour of showing each other their signs, they were able to communicate with each other. I was shocked to think that ASL would have a different accent between states, but several people have confirmed that there are regional accents when using sign.”

Most schools and colleges in the US offer ASL as a foreign language course. Different teachers show differences in gestures and facial expressions when tutoring ASL.

Sign is a beautiful way to communicate. Many parents teach their babies to sign so that they can understand the needs of the child. This method of communication, probably decreases the screaming and crying in order to be understood. As the child grows, signing is often dropped as the child begins speaking. However, one could continue to teach vocabulary and language structure. The internet offers several websites that can educate us, just as you can learn any foreign language online these days.

Watch this video comparing ASL and Spanish signs [on YouTube](#) (note that YouTube will probably play targeted ads). Now watch [this YouTube video](#) which shows us additional signs for Spanish words and phrases. Are there similarities to ASL?

Now YOU do some searches and have some fun! Pretty soon you’ll be able to answer the question, “What did you say?” in ASL or Spanish or French!



## Adapting Events

### Upcoming: Zia Experience

When: July 24-30, 2022



The Zia Experience is a Philmont adventure for Scouts with special needs or disabilities. Our team of Philmont staff and highly trained volunteers will work with a wide range of functioning and abilities to provide an awesome Philmont experience for Scouts and their family members.

For more information and registration, visit the [Philmont Training Center web site](#).



## National Order of the Arrow Conference 2022



The BSA and NOAC promote a culture where everyone feels a sense of belonging. At NOAC 2022, the [Admonition](#) Team of trained volunteers is building affinity spaces where every Scout and Scouter feels respected and valued and has an awesome

NOAC 2022 experience. There will be four affinity spaces – Scouts with Disabilities, Women in Scouts, ArrowPride, and Scouts of Color. The affinity spaces will be conveniently located. The Scouts with Disabilities space is an area for Scouts and Scouters who are in need of some down time and/or regrouping time when experiencing sensory overload (Tranquility Base). After deescalating, they can resume and enjoy the rest of the NOAC program. There will also be opportunities for Scouters to ask questions and get information so everyone can have a great experience.

## SeaBase Keys Experience Family Adventure 2023

Mid-March in the Florida Keys - when the weather is a balmy 75° and the breezes are blowing to keep the heat away; the sun rises and sets over the horizon with a beauty that eternally astounds us...

This was only part of the experience our families had at Camp Jackson Sawyer, Sea Base in the Florida Keys, March 21 – April 1.

Add some kids, and some family members, minus the dog, couple that with excited giggles and expectant faces, regardless of how big or small. “I want to swim with the dolphins!” was Katelyn’s mantra even before she actually got to do it at the Dolphin

Research Center. “I like science and fishing. I make my own lures!” noted Gabriel, a perfect combination for where he’s at. The sunrises are always superb, and the fish are jumpin’ there in the tide pools (well, sort of). Some families came all the way from the northern part of the country where the temps were freezing. Never mind that this experience was their very first ride on an airplane. They arrived to temperatures in the 70s,



sunny and much warmer than where they came from. And the ocean! They had never seen the ocean, and there it was in all its splendor in front of them, every morning when they woke up and every evening when they settled in for the night. Life changing experiences for these folks. Oh...did I mention special needs and disabilities? Right, you figured right. Most of the youth had one issue or another, but it never stopped their exploring, learning, growing, and enjoying the sea/camping life. With tents pitched or glamping tents occupied, the participants at the Family Adventure Camp were ready and willing to have... well, adventures!

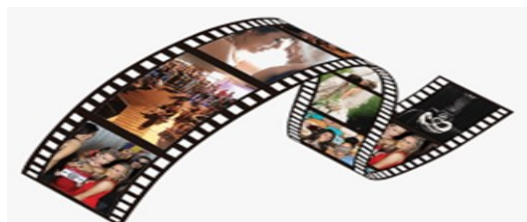
There was slow growing star and brain coral to look at and learn about at the Brinton Environmental Center (BEC) Coral Nursery. There were kayaks to fill and tide pool life to discover, new foods (real Florida Key Lime pie), new sights (dolphins swimming alongside the cruise boat), the beauty of synchronized fishing by three pelicans, a fort on a tiny island, a luau with music and dancing. The night sky was on view when the Southern Cross Astronomical Society joined the Keys Experience families to share their time and love of the universe. Looking through the optic eyepiece of one of three telescopes, one could view the inky black sky dappled with soft white lights; streaks of colors amongst shades of gray. It was so inspiring, it left one with brain freeze from the sheer vastness of the cosmos! It was overheard from one Scout that he never felt so very small.

The Keys Family Adventure Camp at Camp Jackson Sawyer, the Florida Keys, 2023 is coming! Be there! are in need of some down time and/or regrouping time when experiencing sensory overload (Tranquility Base). After deescalating, they can resume and enjoy the rest of the NOAC program. There will also be opportunities for Scouters to ask questions and get information so everyone can have a great experience.

## Awareness Events

### Special Needs Video Awards

*Move over, Oscar, Emmy, Grammy, and Tony*

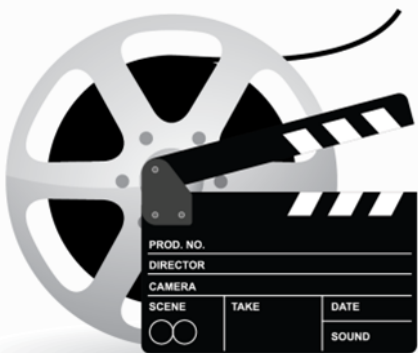


The National SND Committee is launching an annual video contest to support special needs training across the country. Thanks to the McFall/Young Trusts, we are presenting **monetary awards to councils** that produce training videos that are worthy of national distribution. There will be two categories, National Curriculum and Freestyle, with first and second place awards given in each category (four awards total). A first place award is a \$300 grant for special needs projects to the winning council, and a second place award is \$200. The winners will be announced at the 2022 Fall Special Needs National Roundtable (Sept/Oct). Winning entries and other worthy entries will be posted on Scouting.org and AbleScouts.org for access to all of the BSA community.

## National Curriculum Category

An entry for the national curriculum category must be based on one of the 11 numbered SND Training Modules available at [scouting.org/resources/disabilities-awareness/](https://scouting.org/resources/disabilities-awareness/). The total running length of the video needs to be between 45 and 60 minutes.

Deviations in slide sequence and modifications of the slides are allowed, provided that no significant points are omitted from the presentation. Presenters may expand upon points in the curriculum that take advantage of the presenter's expertise



## Freestyle Category

An entry in the freestyle category can be on any Scouting-related special needs/disability topic. Entries can be a single continuous video or a series of short subjects with a common theme. The total running time for one freestyle entry needs to be between 15 minutes and 60 minutes.



### How to Enter

There is no limit on the number of entries a council may submit. Upload your video (s) to whatever cloud-based service you like. Send the link to view the video to [SpecialNeedsChair@Scouting.org](mailto:SpecialNeedsChair@Scouting.org) before the 2022 Summer Special Needs National

Roundtable. The Roundtable date has not yet been announced, but will be in the July or August time frame. In the subject line of the email use "Video Award Contest – National Curriculum" or "Video Award Contest – Freestyle". The submission email needs to identify which local council the video represents and give a list of credits for the presenters and producers. Information on where/how the video has been used in your council is optional, but it would help the judges understand the intended use or context for the video, like roundtables or youth leader training.

## Judging Guidance

Since this is our first year, we are avoiding rules that would automatically disqualify entries. We are not restricting how old the video is. However, dated terminology and wording will influence judging. Videos that discuss topics with a Scouting context in mind are preferred over general information. Videos that are aimed at a general Scouting volunteer audience are preferred over ones with medical, educational, or therapeutic jargon. Scouting volunteers shouldn't try to diagnose a disability, but rather try to adapt the Scouting pro-







limitations and behaviors that present themselves. Unnecessarily specific information about symptoms, medical causes, and incidence rates is a concern.

A video series that runs longer than an hour will be treated as multiple entries. Videos that have conflicts with current BSA policy documents like the Guide to Safe Scouting, Youth Protection, or Guide to Advancement will still be judged for the contest, but it may not be possible to post them for a national audience without further editing.

## Neurodiversity Conference in October

The National SND Committee is organizing an in-person conference on neurodiversity October 28-30, 2022. It will be hosted by Patriots' Path Council in Cedar Knolls, NJ. The conference will run from 12 noon 10/28 through 8:30 pm 10/29, with 10/30 set aside for sightseeing or return travel. Topics include autism, ADHD, executive functioning, self-removal strategies, obsessive compulsive disorder, and oppositional defiant disorder. Stay tuned



## Adapting Advancement Registering Beyond the Age of Eligibility

Sometimes a Scout with special needs or disabilities intellectually falls below the norm, yet enjoys Scouting, voicing his/her desires to stay in Scouting or Cub Scouting even though the age to move on has been reached. Consider the youth's abilities, mental and physical maturity, and social awareness, and then think in terms of registering the Scout beyond the age of eligibility.

Youth and adults who are developmentally disabled or cognitively impaired, or youth with severe physical challenges, may be considered for registration beyond the ages of eligibility: age 11 or older for a Cub Scout, 18 or older for a Scouts BSA member, or 21 or older as a Venturer or Sea Scout. It is not necessary for Scouts to wait until reaching the end of the age eligibility for their program to submit the request. An adult of any age who has developmental disabilities, for example, may be considered for youth membership and join Scouting if a qualified medical professional is able to correlate cognitive abilities to less than the upper limit of an eligibility age.

A disability must be permanent and so severe that it precludes advancement even at a rate significantly slower than considered typical. If ranks can be achieved under accommodations already provided in official literature

with modifications as outlined in the Guide to Advancement, then the disability probably does not rise to the level required to qualify an individual for Registration Beyond the Age of Eligibility (RBAE).

In considering RBAE, members with conditions such as those listed below *may* meet the severity requirement, but every case must be considered individually. If members are able to take advantage of the flexibility already built into Scouting advancement and participate in essentially the same way as typical youth, then they must not be registered beyond the age of eligibility.

Some examples of conditions that, if severe, may be criteria that qualify a youth for RBAE include the following: *autism spectrum disorder, blind or low vision, deaf or hard of hearing, intellectual disability, developmental disorder, Down syndrome, emotional or behavioral disorder, physical disability, traumatic brain injury, multiple coexisting disabilities*

***Note that the above list is limited in nature and is not inclusive of the many disabilities you may encounter.***

“Multiple coexisting disabilities” refers to a diagnosis of two or more disabilities, none of which alone may be significant enough to warrant registration beyond the age of eligibility but when considered in combination may qualify. For example, a youth with a moderate learning disorder or ADHD -- each on its own – may be insufficient for qualification. It is possible, however, when considered in combination with other disabilities, including medications involved, that the cumulative impact may rise to the level of the severity requirement.

When considering Registration Beyond the Age of Eligibility, leadership needs to provide the council the documents that help the committee understand the youth being considered. Parental letters, Scout leadership letters, letters from physicians and other licensed persons need to be descriptive in terms of explanation. For example, the physician’s letter simply may be a statement regarding the issues at hand and why the Scout may not be able to participate, especially due to safety issues. A parent, on the other hand, needs to be more descriptive, painting a picture of what the youth is like at home, school, and in the community. The leadership may include descriptions of the youth’s strengths and challenges that may impact the youth’s ability to advance. Statements of how the Scouting program has benefited the Scout and why the Scout should stay in Scouting should be considered.

Registering Beyond the Age of Eligibility should not be substituted for time extensions. Note that RBAE is intended as a permanent arrangement to allow ongoing participation as a youth member. This is different from a “time extension,” which is available to allow a Scout working toward Eagle rank additional time, should certain circumstances arise that preclude timely achievement. Extensions of time are available only for the

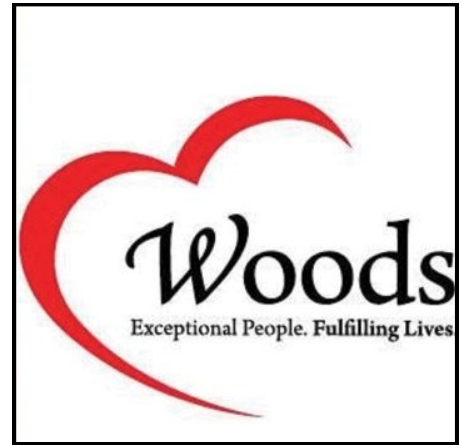


Eagle Scout, Summit, and Quartermaster ranks. Extensions have specific end dates, and they may or may not involve disabilities. See “Time Extensions,” in the Guide to Advancement, section 9.0.4.0.

## Recognizing Abilities

### Woods Services Awards for 2022

The National Special Needs and Disabilities (SND) Committee is pleased to announce the two Woods Services Awards for 2022: Rick Smith and Maribel Medino Marrero. Both Rick and Maribel have made, and are still making, a difference in the lives of many, many, special needs youth. They are most deserving of the Woods Services Award. Congratulations to both.



The **Woods Services** is a national award for exceptional service and leadership to Scouts with Special Needs and Disabilities. The nominee should have served Scouts with disabilities, strictly as a volunteer, for at least 3 years in several capacities at the unit, district, council, and/or national levels of the Boy Scouts of America. This award is sponsored by the Woods Services Foundation in Langhorne, Pennsylvania, and administered by the BSA National SND Committee. The recipient receives a beautiful recognition from the Woods Foundation and may wear the BSA community service square knot with the special needs device.

### Maribel Medino Marrero, Puerto Rico Council, Puerto Rico ng Abilities



Maribel has been an active volunteer working for the benefit of special needs Scouts for many years. Some of her positions include founder and Cubmaster of a special needs pack, troop committee chair, council special needs committee chair, Disabilities Awareness merit badge counselor, district committee chair, district membership chair, council executive board member, and council VP and membership committee chair. Maribel has been a trainer of special needs for unit commissioners and camp staffs. Her awards include Pack Disabilities Award Leader of the Year, Scouts with Special Needs Recruiter Award, Special Needs Scouting Service Award, and Torch of Gold. Outside of Scouting, she has received both local and state Teacher of the Year for Special Needs



## Rick Smith, Northern Star Council, Minnesota

Rick has been an active volunteer working for the benefit of special needs Scouts since 2005. He is currently on the national Special Needs and Disabilities Committee which he joined in 2014 and, among other positions, has been instrumental in developing, writing, publishing, and distributing, the quarterly Abilities Digest. Previously, he has served his council as Polaris (Special Needs) Committee Chair, Commissioner, and University of Scouting trainer for special needs. He has worked the Disabilities Awareness Challenge at three National Jamborees and the 2019 World Jamboree. A few of Rick's recognitions and awards include the Torch of Gold, Special Needs Scouters Service Award, Silver Beaver, Doctor of Commissioner Service knot, and District Committee Key.



## Helpful Links

Scouting with Disabilities landing page: [scouting.org/resources/disabilities-awareness/](https://scouting.org/resources/disabilities-awareness/)

AbleScouts: *Abilities Digest* articles posted online: [ablescouts.org](https://ablescouts.org)

## Links in Articles

Philmont Training Center: [philmontscoutranch.org/ptc/ptc-conferences/](https://philmontscoutranch.org/ptc/ptc-conferences/)

Spanish vs. American signs: [youtube.com/watch?v=FMsZCzEVzS4](https://youtube.com/watch?v=FMsZCzEVzS4)

Spanish signs for caregivers: [youtube.com/watch?v=9NpI5B8YZaU](https://youtube.com/watch?v=9NpI5B8YZaU)

SND national training modules: [scouting.org/resources/disabilities-awareness/](https://scouting.org/resources/disabilities-awareness/)

Woods Services Award: [scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-258.pdf](https://scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-258.pdf)

## Social Media



Twitter: @AbilitiesDigest



Facebook *Abilities Digest*: [www.facebook.com/pages/Abilities-Digest/824105334298165](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Abilities-Digest/824105334298165)

Facebook *No Scout Left Behind*: [www.facebook.com/groups/1967878213431320](http://www.facebook.com/groups/1967878213431320)

Email your comments and questions to [specialneedschair@scouting.org](mailto:specialneedschair@scouting.org)

### ***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](mailto:disabilities.awareness@scouting.org).