



---

# MEMBERSHIP STANDARDS IMPLEMENTATION

Frequently Asked Questions for Unit Leaders

---



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

---

August 2013

Upon approval of the membership standards resolution in May of 2013, the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America began reviewing its policies and guidelines to help ensure a smooth transition to the new policy.

With the combined leadership of volunteers and professionals, seven task forces have reviewed every aspect of the Scouting movement, including unit operations, finance and fundraising, camping and outdoor, youth and adult audiences, chartered and community organizations, and human resources. The good news from this process is that after a thorough review, it has been determined that no major changes are required.

Scouting's greatest strength is its volunteers. Their strong, committed leadership and good judgment in working with youth is the key to our current and future success, as it has been for more than 100 years. With their experience and wisdom, Scouting will continue to be the iconic symbol of strength, character, leadership, and faith.

This fall, the BSA will release training materials designed to assist councils in communicating policies and guidelines related to the new membership standards.

In this communication you will find key points about the implementation of the new membership standards policy as well as answers to a broad range of frequently asked questions related to:

- District and unit operations
- Camping and programs

Of course, there is no way the BSA can answer every possible question that may arise. Ultimately, people in leadership positions must exercise good judgment, all the time asking the key question they have always asked: "What is in the best interest of the youth we serve?"

Thank you for all you do for Scouting.

Sincerely,



Gary Butler  
Assistant Chief Scout Executive - Operations

---

## Table of Contents

<b>Membership Standards Resolution</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Key Points About the Membership Standards Resolution</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Youth Privacy and Accommodations</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Frequently Asked Questions</b>	<b>8</b>

## Membership Standards Resolution

Passed by Voting Delegates of the National Council, Boy Scouts of America, May 2013

**WHEREAS**, it is the mission of the Boy Scouts of America to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law:

### Scout Oath

On my honor I will do my best  
To do my duty to God and my country  
And to obey the Scout Law;  
To help other people at all times;  
To keep myself physically strong,  
Mentally awake, and morally straight.

### Scout Law

#### A Scout is:

Trustworthy	Obedient
Loyal	Cheerful
Helpful	Thrifty
Friendly	Brave
Courteous	Clean
Kind	Reverent

**AND WHEREAS**, duty to God, duty to country, duty to others, and duty to oneself are each a core value and immutable tenet of the Boy Scouts of America; and

**WHEREAS**, the Scout Oath begins with duty to God and the Scout Law ends with a Scout's obligation to be reverent, and that will always remain a core value of the Boy Scouts of America, and the values set forth in the Scout Oath and Law are fundamental to the BSA and central to teaching young people to make better choices over their lifetimes; and

**WHEREAS**, the vision of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare every eligible youth in America to become a responsible, participating citizen and leader who is guided by the Scout Oath and Scout Law; and

**WHEREAS**, for more than 103 years, programs of the Boy Scouts of America have been delivered to youth members through cooperation with chartered organizations that select adult leaders who meet the organization's standards as well as the leadership standards of the Boy Scouts of America; and

**WHEREAS**, numerous independent experts have recognized that the programs protecting Scouts today, which include effective screening, education and training, and clear policies to protect youth and provide for their privacy, are among the best in the youth-serving community; and

**WHEREAS**, the current adult leadership standard of the Boy Scouts of America states:

*The applicant must possess the moral, educational, and emotional qualities that the Boy Scouts of America deems necessary to afford positive leadership to youth. The applicant must also be the correct age, subscribe to the precepts of the Declaration of Religious Principle (duty to God), and abide by the Scout Oath and the Scout Law.*

---

*While the BSA does not proactively inquire about sexual orientation of employees, volunteers, or members, we do not grant membership to individuals who are open or avowed homosexuals or who engage in behavior that would become a distraction to the mission of the BSA.*

**AND WHEREAS**, Scouting is a youth program, and any sexual conduct, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting; and

**WHEREAS**, the Boy Scouts of America does not have an agenda on the matter of sexual orientation, and resolving this complex issue is not the role of the organization, nor may any member use Scouting to promote or advance any social or political position or agenda; and

**WHEREAS**, youth are still developing, learning about themselves and who they are, developing their sense of right and wrong, and understanding their duty to God to live a moral life; and

**WHEREAS**, America needs Scouting, and the organization's policies must be based on what is in the best interest of its young people, and the organization will work to stay focused on that which unites us, and

**WHEREAS**, the Boy Scouts of America will maintain the current membership policy for all adult leaders of the Boy Scouts of America, and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:**

The following membership standard for youth members of the Boy Scouts of America is hereby adopted and approved, effective Jan. 1, 2014:

*Youth membership in the Boy Scouts of America is open to all youth who meet the specific membership requirements to join the Cub Scout, Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, and Venturing programs. Membership in any program of the Boy Scouts of America requires the youth member to (a) subscribe to and abide by the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Scout Law, (b) subscribe to and abide by the precepts of the Declaration of Religious Principle (duty to God), and (c) demonstrate behavior that exemplifies the highest level of good conduct and respect for others and is consistent at all times with the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Scout Law. No youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone.*

---

## Key Points About the Membership Standards Resolution

With the combined leadership of volunteers and professionals, the BSA has conducted a thorough review of the Scouting movement and has determined that the BSA is equipped to address this issue and the change in membership standards for youth. The following points are important as we move ahead:

- On May 23, 2013, a total of 1,232 voting members of the Boy Scouts of America voted on a resolution that maintains its current membership policy for all adult leaders and states that youth may not be denied membership in the BSA on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone. The resolution passed with 757 votes, a 61 percent majority. Through the process, the BSA conducted the most comprehensive listening exercise in its history, gathering perspectives from inside and outside of the Scouting family. There are no plans for further review of this matter.
- Upon approval of the membership standards resolution in May 2013, the National Council began an in-depth review of its policies and guidelines to help ensure a smooth transition to the new policy.
- The resolution reinforces that Scouting is a youth program, and any sexual conduct, whether heterosexual or homosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting. Also, it states that no member may use Scouting to promote or advance any social or political position or agenda, including on the matter of sexual orientation.
- Scouting's greatest strength is its volunteers whose strong, committed leadership and good judgment in making decisions that are in the best interest of youth are key for implementation of this policy.
- This policy allows kids who sincerely want to be a part of Scouting to experience this life-changing program while remaining true to the long-standing virtues of Scouting. While people have different opinions about this policy, kids are better off when they are in Scouting.
- Our Scouting family will continue to focus on reaching and serving youth in order to help them grow into good, strong citizens. America's youth need Scouting, and by focusing on the goals that unite us, we can continue to accomplish incredible things for young people and the communities we serve.
- The Scout Oath begins with duty to God, and the Scout Law ends with a Scout's obligation to be reverent, and that will always remain a core value of the Boy Scouts of America. The values set forth in the Scout Oath and Law are fundamental to the BSA and central to teaching young people to make better choices over their lifetimes.

---

## Youth Privacy and Accommodations

The BSA has stringent policies that protect the safety and privacy of youth and adult members. Scouting has always worked to ensure that it is a supportive and safe environment for all young people, both physically and emotionally. The following points are important as we move forward:

- This change in membership standards is not a youth protection issue. To consider it a youth protection issue would lead one to believe that sexual abuse and victimization is considered inherent to sexual orientation. This is not the case.
- The change in policy concerns healthy child and adolescent development and should be addressed as such. As always, our leaders are key to ensuring that the BSA always acts in the best interest of our youth members.
- No youth should be singled out as a result of this change. If that were to happen, it would likely set up those youth to be bullied or ostracized.

Additional information on the BSA's Youth Protection programs can be found at [www.scouting.org/BSAYouthProtection](http://www.scouting.org/BSAYouthProtection).

---

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is the BSA's new membership standards policy?**

The membership standard for youth members of the Boy Scouts of America is as follows, effective January 1, 2014:

Youth membership in the Boy Scouts of America is open to all youth who meet the specific membership requirements to join the Cub Scout, Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, and Venturing programs. Membership in any program of the Boy Scouts of America requires the youth member to (a) subscribe to and abide by the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Scout Law, (b) subscribe to and abide by the precepts of the Declaration of Religious Principle (duty to God), and (c) demonstrate behavior that exemplifies the highest level of good conduct and respect for others and is consistent at all times with the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Scout Law. No youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone.

### **Will local units be able to deny membership to youth based on sexual orientation?**

No youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone.

### **How does the BSA define "morally straight"?**

The *Boy Scout Handbook* continues to define "morally straight" as "Your relationships with others should be honest and open. Respect and defend the rights of all people. Be clean in your speech and actions and faithful in your religious beliefs. Values you practice as a Scout will help you shape a life of virtue and self-reliance."

### **How does the BSA define sexual conduct?**

Scouting is a youth program, and any sexual conduct, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting. Leaders have the responsibility and authority to set boundaries and address them with youth members. The *Boy Scout Handbook* tells boys that "Your religious leaders can give you guidance for making ethical choices. Your parents, guardian, or a sex-education teacher can provide the basic facts about sex."

---

**What happens when a youth member with a same-sex attraction becomes an adult and wants to serve as a leader?**

As is the case with every member, when individuals are no longer youth participants, they must reapply as, and meet the requirements of, adult leaders.

**What will happen if a youth member openly criticizes, teases, or bullies another person for any of their beliefs or actions?**

As always, Scouting teaches respect and courtesy for all people. Unit leaders must address any mistreatment of others that may occur. The leader's responsibility is to address the issue with concern and sensitivity, while ensuring the member understands the boundaries and potential consequences.

**Can a Scout participate in a social or political cause that calls attention to his sexual orientation or preference?**

Under the BSA's rules and regulations, a Scout may appear in uniform at a nonpartisan and nonpolitical gathering in a way that gives him the opportunity to render service in harmony with his training in the Scouting program. However, the BSA is required to avoid involving the Scouting movement in any question of a political character. Each youth member is free as an individual to express his thoughts or take action on political or social questions, but he must not use Scouting's official uniforms and insignia when doing so.

**What should a Scout or Scout leader do if a youth with same-sex attraction asks whether they can join Scouting?**

Invite them to join and explain the joining requirements. No youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone.

**What should a Scout or leader do if a youth member lets them know that he or she is gay?**

It is an individual's choice how public they wish to be about their sexual orientation. As always, Scouting teaches respect and courtesy for all people. It is the Scout leader's responsibility to address the issue with concern and sensitivity, while ensuring the member understands the boundaries. The leader should emphasize that there is no place in Scouting for any sexual conduct by youth of Scouting age.

---

**Should there be special arrangements made for showering, swimming, lifeguarding, and changing areas?**

Personal activity involving bathrooms, showers, hygiene, and dressing are respected as private. A general move toward individual toilet and shower facilities is already underway and individuals needing additional privacy can take appropriate actions on their own or request others to be respectful of their needs. As always, the adult leaders have the discretion to arrange private showering times and locations, as needed. The privacy and security of our youth members is among our top priorities.

**Should special arrangements be made to accommodate youth in camp, on trips, or during events based on sexual orientation?**

Requests by units for special accommodation to camp/participate with others, or to be exclusive from others, is discouraged. We are all Scouts and are accepting of all members of the Scouting family.

**Will there be any changes to current policies regarding sleeping arrangements on Scout activities? We know that separate accommodations must be provided for members of the opposite sex in the Venturing program.**

Each unit's leadership along with their committee will be responsible for working with their parents to determine appropriate sleeping arrangements. This is consistent with current practices that allow for unit leaders, in consultation with parents, to use their discretion to ensure the safety and comfort of the youth members in their charge. In the past, there have been a variety of issues that required these conversations and this will follow that process. The training materials will reflect this direction.

**What should the age difference be between youth tenting together?**

It is recommended that there be no more than a three-year age separation between Scouts tenting together. If a Scout or parent of a Scout makes a request to not tent with another Scout, their wishes should be honored.