Scouting for Special Needs Scouts

- All boys have "special needs"

- SOME boy's special needs are what we call "disabled"

> **EVERY boy who wishes to participate in Boy Scouts of America programs should be given the same opportunities as their non-disabled peers.**

- Participate fully

meetings
outdoor activities (camping, hiking,etc.)
Troop/Pack activities
Patrol/Den activities

- Be respected and treated like others in troop

learn basic Scout skills
leadership opportunities (Patrol Leader, etc)
advancement

In practice this means some changes in how things are done/handled.

- PARENTS should be your best allies

#1 source of information on their son's ABILITIES
#1 source of information on their son's disabilities
#1 source of information about their son's disability (by default most parent's become an expert on their own children's diagnosis.)

- UNDERSTANDING, Patience and Common Sense for ALL are important:

Scout Leaders
Troop/Pack Members
OTHER Adults that work with the Troop/Pack
Scout
Scout's Parent

Working with Individual Special Needs Boys

- Parent Meeting (sometimes Scout could/should be present)

Purpose is for ALL (Leaders, Parent's, Scout) to understand the boy and his needs and abilities, what he may need help with, AND for everyone to understand what is expected of the Scout, parents and Troop. (So it is as much for the new-to-Scouting parent as it is for the Leader)

- **What IS the boy's specific diagnosis – what does this mean for:**
  - **Meetings**
  - **Campouts (special diet needs?)**
  - **Field Trips**

- **What are the boy's strengths and weaknesses (both related to his diagnosis and in general)**

- **Physical and/or Mental Limitations AND Capabilities**

- **Behavior/Disciplinary Issues – how will these be handled and by whom, is this consistent with general Troop/Pack discipline infractions/expectations?**

- **MEDICATIONS – Council/Troop Policies: Council policy is that Scout Leaders are NOT responsible for making sure a Scout gets his medication BUT the leader can remind the Scout. Medications MUST be kept by an adult in a locked box so that others can not get to them (including over the counter medication).**

- **If indicated Individual Scout Achievement Plan (for more on this be sure to come to University of Scouting!)**

- Troop/Pack Leaders

- Everyone who will be working with the Troop or Pack should be aware of the boy's disability. This knowledge will allow them to work with the boy appropriately AND allow the boy the best experience he can have in Scouting.

- General Guidelines for Working with Boy Scouts with Disabilities (p. 7). These are just good general guidelines for working with ALL Boy Scouts! KNOW THEM, TEACH THEM, PRACTICE THEM!!!

- Advancement/Alternative Requirements

-BSA Supported

-The substitute should provide a similar learning experience to the original requirement. For example:

-Cubs – completely up to Cubmaster/Den Leaders

-Boy Scouts:

Our Council Policy is:

Scout, Tenderfoot, 2nd Class, 1st Class:

Up to Scoutmasters/Troop Committee – no higher level approval necessary

MERIT BADGES for Eagle:

Alternates must be approved by council via application

Pack and Troop Adaptations

- Structured schedules are very helpful in guiding the boy and more importantly, preparing the boy for the changes he will shortly encounter. Give the Scout a copy of the schedule. POST a large copy prominently for all the boys to see as well. Be sure there is a clock they can see as well.

- Give a "5 minute warning" before an activity ends so the Scout has time to wrap up what he is doing.

- Directions, especially multi-step ones, are difficult for many boys to process. Be sure to give clear, concise directions, be willing to patiently repeat them as necessary.

- Send directions for Troop activities/games to the parents via email ahead of time. Often they can explain the activity to their son so when he shows up at the meeting/campout he already understands.

- Make a poster showing the steps to a multi-step task such as knots, lashings, dishwashing or food preparation, laminate it and post it for all the boys to use.

- Give them appropriate things to do. There will be activities that frustrate these Scouts, help them to step back and try it a different way – or skip it if needed. A Scout with fine motor delays will not be able to do knots the first time – or even the 2nd, 3rd or 4th necessarily. Keep practices short!

- Monitor them so they do not get too tired, provide short rest times and snacks where they can recharge the batteries and concentrate anew.

Specific Adaptations

The opportunities to develop alternative requirements is limited only by the imagination. To meet requirements a Scout must: "Know"; "Identify"; "Demonstrate"; "Light"; "Show"; "Take"; "Use"; "Explain"; "Tell"; "Discuss"; "Participate"; and, "Assist". How does you do that?

The simplest advice is to break down the stated requirements into increments and decide whether there are alternative approaches to achievement besides a frontal attack. The last three verbs noted above mean that the attainment of the skill is not solitary, the other Den or Patrol members should be helpers in goal attainment.

In addition, the solution may vary based on the Scout's condition. It is best to adapt the activities as needed to meet the needs and ability range of all the Cub and Boy Scouts. Use the least amount of change necessary to make the activity successful for ALL boys – but don't be afraid to make a change for only one boy, the others will understand!

Further adaptations in advancement requirements may be necessary for boys who have special needs. Making changes in Scout activities requires skill along with knowledge of the boys. Parents can help you determine the need for adaptations and what kinds of adaptations would be the most useful. Areas of adaptation can include:

-materials used - for example instead of whittling a stick can the Scout demonstrate on a piece of soap?

- "rules" – for archery could this Scout stand closer to the target (AFTER or BEFORE everyone else has shot their arrows!)

- buddy system – give the special Scout a buddy he can work with to complete requirements.

- schedule changes – remember a Scout with Special Needs may need to stop and rest more frequently, have a snack at different times than others (especially with conditions like Juvenile Diabetes) and may need to skip an activity now and then. Often these kids just want to be like everyone else – they will keep on going until they can't go on – it is YOUR responsibility as an adult leader to be sure this does not happen!

Let's talk about what you need – what are YOU dealing with in your Pack or Troop that I can try to help with?

MOST OF ALL, GIVE THEM LOTS OF PRAISE AND ENCOURAGEMENT, CHAMPION THE GOOD BEHAVIORS overlook some of the less desirable things, and see what mountains can be climbed. Stand back and be amazed at what these boys can do.

Watch this video for a great example of what a boy with a autism can do:
http://www.scouting.org/Media/vos.aspx

Special Needs Resources

- BSA Fact Sheet "Scouts with Disablities and Special Needs"

- BSA Pamplet "A Guide to Working with Boy Scouts With DisABILIITIES"

- PARENTS

- Working with Scouts with disabilities website: http://wwswd.org

-Websites specific to the boy's diagnosis. For example:
Asperger's Syndrome (form of autism):
http://www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger/
NonVerbal Learning Disablity: http://www.nldontheweb.org/
ADHD: www.chadd.org, www.add.org

-Scouter.com page has links to MANY specific sites:
http://www.scouter.com/compass/Medical%5FIssues%5FLibrary/

- Internet - any good search engine and you will come up with more than you will ever need to know!

If you have ANY questions please feel free to email me at:
SpecialScouts2@yahoo.com
I will try to answer or point you in the right direction!