

Articles to Help

How To Help "Special" Scouts....

Part 1 Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Definition: A condition which effects a child's learning and behavior due to difficulty concentrating and controlling impulses.

How To Help:

- Develop a routine during meeting and activities so that the Scout knows what to expect.
- Provide a calendar and ask parents to discuss the activity listed with the Scout before the meeting. Often giving advance notice of what will be taking place can help.
- Try to ignore negative behaviors and praise positive ones. If you pay attention to a positive behavior by verbally addressing it, you give the Scout attention and reinforcement for the conduct you expect.
- Structure activities with an ample amount of "moving around" time. Many times Scouts with ADHD cannot sit still for the same length of time as others of the same age.
- Develop a reward system for appropriate behavior or task completion. It can be as simple as a sticker or a stamp on a chart.
- Ask parents to stay and help during meetings. Parents do know the day to day methods that work with their Scout. If a new situation arises, it is always better to put your heads together rather than work to solve it on your own. Consistency is the key.
- When the meeting appears to be moving slowly or causing tension, develop a "reward" at the end. When we finish with our project, we can all play the bean bag game.

Remember that there is help out there. Parents and teachers can provide many suggestions as to what may work well with their Scout. There are also resources at your district and council. Publications such as Understanding Cub Scouts With Disabilities and A Scoutmaster's Guide to Working with Scouts With DISABILITIES are available through the council office. The Special Needs Advisory Committee has been formed in order to answer more specific questions. Please contact your district representative:

Part 2 Mental Retardation/Cognitive Disability

Definition: A condition which presents itself with a limitation of the individual's learning capability. Persons with mental retardation are usually also socially immature. People with a Mental Retardation have the same ability to show emotions and hope for their futures as people without this disability. This condition may be:

MILD -- Approximately 90% of persons with mental retardation are in this category. They are capable of independent living and working in their communities.

MODERATE -- Persons with moderate retardation can learn to care for themselves and work in supervised settings such as sheltered workshops.

PROFOUND -- Persons with profound retardation are usually also physically impaired and require assistance with most daily living tasks.

Mental Retardation effects approximately three percent of the population. It can be caused by any condition which impairs development before birth, during birth or in the childhood years. The three major known causes

of mental retardation are Down's Syndrome, Fetal alcohol Syndrome and Fragile X Syndrome. In about one third of the people with mental retardation, the cause remains unknown.

HOW TO HELP:

Be clear and concise with directions. Often concrete descriptions will help.

Provide usual examples of the task you want completed. Don't take advantage. Never ask an individual with mental retardation to perform a task you wouldn't ask of a friend.

Be patient and understanding. Remember that frustration and disappointment are feelings which are felt by all Scouts at times. If speech is not easily understood, calmly ask for the Scout to repeat himself. Recognize the Scout's efforts. A little praise goes a long way to encourage. Ask parents the level of their Scout's understanding. Be aware of reading ability and make adaptations for nonreaders such as photos to describe the procedure.

If you need help with a specific problem, parents and teachers can provide many suggestions as to what may work. Don't forget publications such as *Understanding Cub Scouts with Disabilities*, *A Scoutmaster's Guide to Working with Scouts with Disabilities*, and *Scouting for Youth with Mental Retardation* are available through the council office.

The Special Needs Advisory Committee has been formed in order to answer more specific questions. Please contact your district representative.

Part 3 Physical Disabilities

Definition: An impairment that hampers physical, vocational or community activities. Some conditions which may cause physical disability are:

Cerebral Palsy - A group of disorders resulting in brain damage usually before or during the birth process. Any range of physical and mental ability is possible. Symptoms can range from slight awkwardness in gait to more uncontrolled movements and an inability to wee, speak or learn. Cerebral Palsy ins not always associated with cognitive disabilities.

Muscular Dystrophy - A general description for a group of chronic diseases; the most prominent characteristic in the progressive degeneration of muscles.

Spina Bifida - A condition in which there is damage to the spinal cord from birth usually with a varying degree of paralysis and inability to feel touch, pain or temperature.

Spinal Cord Injury - Paralysis of parts of the body usually a result of a trauma or accident.

Traumatic Brain Injury - An injury to the brain by an external physical force resulting in the impairment of one or more of the following areas: speech, memory, attention, reasoning, judgment, problem solving, motor skills and/or behavior. Impairments may be temporary or permanent.

How to help:

Remember, a youth with physical disabilities is more like other youth than different.

Disability does not change a child's interest but often it keeps them form participating. Encourage joining in. The disabled youth's psychological needs and desires parallel those of a non-disabled youth. Because of society's reaction to his physical disability, he may have found different ways to satisfy needs for recognition. Try to recognize positive attempts to complete a part of a task.

The best way to overcome negative reactions to a Scout with a physical disability is for the scout leader to treat him like every other Scout. If the leader can show that he considers the Scout with a disability like any other Scout, then the other Scouts are more likely to react in the same way.

A leader should be aware of the condition, any restrictions, any equipment the Scout may use, and whether or not the Scout needs help with personal needs, like dressing, eating, or grooming. This information should be

requested of the parents and the Scout preferably at an interview prior to the first meeting.

Many youth with disabilities will struggle against great odds to perform a task and do not want help. Some Scout leaders recommend that when a youth with a disability joins, the other Scouts should be briefed about the disability while the new Scout is not present. Other families are comfortable having a briefing in which the Scout and his parents explain the disability to the other Scouts. In either case, the level of reaction and help should be decided so that all Scouts and leaders involved have a realistic picture of the Scout's abilities.

Part 4 Learning Disabilities

Definition: A term used to describe any disorders that can affect a person's ability to listen, write, speak, read, reason or perform mathematical tasks. Other areas which may be involved include coordination, self-regulatory behavior, social perception and social understanding.

No two people are affected in the same way by these disabilities. Specific learning disabilities are present in 15 to 20 percent of the population. There is no "cure," but with accommodations and support can be overcome. Difficulty may be present in acquiring, remembering, organizing, recalling or expressing information. Individuals with learning disabilities are of average or above average intelligence.

How To Help

Give Scouts specific tasks

Keep instructions clear and simple Break tasks into smaller steps

Create lists for more involved tasks

Use pictures or photos of steps coupled with written instructions, or demonstrate each step

Discuss the expected outcome of the task

Establish consistent routines Structured environments often work best

Minimize distractions

Be patient! Forgetfulness is not intentional

Give frequent, specific, positive feedback "You did a great job with..."

Set realistic goals

Help the entire group to understand the need for patience and encouragement Don't come to the rescue with a "quick fix." Allowing youth to experience some frustration may be critical for learning. Instead, provide support and help to explore options for completion of the task.

Be consistent Establish clear rules and be sure that everyone in the group understands these rules

Look for areas of strength Boost enthusiasm and pride by capitalizing on interests and talents

Try and anticipate areas of difficulty Think of alternative ways to explain tasks and breakdown activities into smaller steps

Provide support during activities by example

Remember that a Scout with a learning disability is best discovered through his parents. Ask for help.

If you need help with a specific problem, parents and teachers can provide many suggestions as to what may work. Don't forget publications such as *Understanding Cub Scouts with Disabilities*, *A Scoutmaster's Guide to*

working with Scouts with Disabilities and Scouting for Youth with Physical Disabilities are available at the council office

Thoughts for Leaders

There are many different types and forms of disabilities and special needs. You need to understand the disabilities and special needs of your Scouts

Talk to them and their parents

Find out the particulars

Find out their limits

Find out what things make it worse or better

Request the parents to be involved and make them feel welcome.

Understand these young men are boys first, Scouts second, and third happen to have a disability. As much as possible and practical they want to be treated like all other Scouts.

You will more often run into Scouts with mental/emotional disabilities, i.e., ADHD, Bi-polar, etc. Frequently they will not have any obvious physical signs of a disability, in fact sometimes it is referred to as the invisible disability. What becomes obvious is their behavior, or misbehavior. Take time to understand their disease. The brain for these boys does not function the way it does for a 'normal' child. For instance they may not be able to think through the logical consequences of an action, before execution.

You need to avoid seeing these Scouts as being 'bad' boys. Rather you need to see them as Scouts, with a problem, who are being inappropriate.

You do not need to, nor should you accept their inappropriate behavior. However you need to turn your emotion down, not get mad, and redirect them.

You also need to know with many of these Scouts they are not able to reliably interpret hints or social cues. You need to be more direct, not loud or mean, just clear and direct.

All Scouts, including those with disabilities need to know what you expect of them, and there needs to be fair consequences which are administered consistently.

You will find many of these Scouts do much better in an environment that is well planned out and structured. A loose unstructured meeting sometimes sets them up for problems. Many have enough trouble with maintaining their focus, and an unstructured free for all generates over stimulation for them.

For many of these boys early evening may be a difficult time from them, so having meetings then could be more problematic. Find out from their parents if there are certain times which are worse than others during the day, and try to avoid them.

Keep Cub Den meetings well planned out and highly structured. You may find limiting how much time you spend on any one item may work better. You may also find managing transitions will help, i.e., "in 5 minutes we are going to put this aside and ('state the next task you are going to do')". Managing transitions is good for the older Scouts too.

You need to know what medications they are on, and what the side effects are. Some can be on medications that have serious implications in really hot weather. Others tend to cause worse behavior as their dose wears off, frequently called rebounding.

Bottom line the more informed you are the better prepared you can be. It also allows you to know better where you need more education and help. A Scout with severe ADHD may not be able to control his impulsiveness, or be able to focus his attention. But he still must accept the natural consequences of his inappropriate behavior.

Advancement for Boy Scouts with Disabilities

All current requirements for an advancement award (ranks, merit badges, Eagle Scout, and palms) must be met by the candidate who has a disability. No substitutions or alternatives are permitted except those which are specifically stated in the current official literature of the Boy Scouts of America. The Scout is expected to meet the requirements as stated - no more, and no less. If the requirement says "show or demonstrate", that is what the Scout must do. The same holds true for "make", "list", etc. Requests can be made for alternate rank requirements for Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class if a Scout meets the following criteria:

- The Scout has a physical or mental disability which is of a permanent nature.
- A medical statement concerning the Scout's disability is provided by the Scout's physician. It should state the physician's opinion that the Scout is unable to complete the requirement(s) because of his permanent disability.
- The Scout, his parents, or leaders must submit to the Council Advancement Committee a written request that the Scout be allowed to complete alternate requirements
- The request must explain what the alternate requirements will be in such detail that the committee has sufficient information to make a decision.
- The written request to the council must include the medical statement from the Scout's physician.
- The request must be submitted to and approved by the Council Advancement Committee before the alternative requirements are completed.
- A Scout must complete as many of the regular requirements as his ability permits before applying for alternative requirements.
- The alternative requirements must be as demanding of effort as the regular requirements.
- When alternative requirements require physical activity, they must be approved by the Scout's physician.
- The unit leader and board of review must stress to the Scout that he is expected to do his best in order to attain the ranks of Tenderfoot, Second Class, or First Class.
- The written request must be approved by the Council Advancement Committee, utilizing the expertise of professional persons involved in Scouting for disabled youth.
- The decision of the Council Advancement Committee should be recorded and delivered to the Scout and his leader.

For more information, publications available at the council service center include: Advancement Committee Policies and Procedures, section on Advancement for Youth Members with Special Needs and My Scout Advancement Trail, Tenderfoot to First Class or contact your Special Needs Advisory Committee member.