Council Advancement Committee
Potawatomi Area Council
Revised 3/2/26

# Merit Badge Counselor Application Process

Potawatomi Area Council would like to thank you for volunteering as a merit badge counselor and for sharing your time and talents with the scouts of our council. As a merit badge counselor, you have the opportunity to teach skills and introduce concepts that may change the course of a young man's life. Many scouts have been guided to their chosen careers or discovered lifelong hobbies through the Scouts BSA merit badge program. This opportunity would not exist without adult volunteers giving of their knowledge and time selflessly to help shape the leaders of tomorrow. Thank you for your support.

There are five basic steps required to be a merit badge counselor:

- Fill out a Scouts BSA Adult Application
- Take Youth Protection Training or be current within two years
- Fill out a Merit Badge Counselor Information form
- Complete merit badge counselor training
- Submit applications to the council service center for approval by the Council Advancement Committee

These steps are covered in detail below.

### Fill out a Scouts BSA Adult Application

Scouts BSA Adult Application form 524-501 is online https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/524-501.pdf and available at the council service center.

Fill the form out completely including the Position code **42**, Scouting position (description) **Merit badge counselor**, and social security number. There is a $25 annual registration fee associated with registering as a merit badge counselor unless you are already registered in another position. You must register with the Scouts BSA as a merit badge counselor even if you are already registered in another position such as assistant scoutmaster or committee member.

### Take Youth Protection Training

Youth protection training must be current. Youth Protection Training (Y01) course can be taken online through https://my.scouting.org. Please attach a copy of your Youth Protection training certificate.

**Fill out a Merit Badge Counselor Information form**

This is where you provide contact information for our council's merit badge counselor list and explain what experience you have that relates to the merit badge(s) you choose to counsel. The Merit Badge Counselor Information Form is available online at http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/34405.pdf

Please take the time to fill the form out completely. This will allow your approval to be processed in a timely manner:

- Fill out all required contact information
- Read the sections regarding qualifications and what you agree to.
- List the merit badges in the left column and note whether you are adding (A) or dropping (D) the merit badges.
- For each badge you must list qualifications to support your request. The electronic fillable form allows you to enter a limited explanation on the front. If you need more space use the back of the paper or additional paper. Providing more information will enable us to process your application in a timely manner. Failure to provide any explanation of qualifications may result in delays or return of the application.
- The Potawatomi Area Council does not recognize the classification of merit badge counselors to serve only one district or unit. Even if you check one of these options you will be listed on the merit badge counselor list as serving all units.
- If you are applying for any merit badges in the following section, be familiar with the additional qualifications and include copies of requested paperwork.

Merit badges with additional requirements or certifications are described briefly here. Reference *Guide to Advancement* 7.0.1.1:

- Rifle Shooting and Shotgun Shooting - All instruction involving any handling of firearms or live ammunition must be supervised by a certified Scouts BSA National Camp School shooting sports director, or NRA Rifle/Shotgun Shooting Instructor or Coach. Shooting must be supervised by an NRA-certified Range Safety Officer. Merit badge counselors who are not certified will not be able to handle firearms, live ammunition or conduct shooting without assistance from certified personnel. Reference *Guide to Safe Scouting* and *National Shooting Sports Manual* no. 30931.
- Archery - Archery activities must be supervised by a Scouts BSA National Camping School–trained shooting sports director or USA Archery or National Field Archery Association instructor, or by someone who has been trained by one of the three; or alternatively, the activities may be supervised by someone with at least Level 1 training in the operation of an archery range from USA Archery, NFAA, or an equivalent.
- Climbing - All climbing, belaying, and rappelling exercises and activities must be supervised by a rock-climbing instructor who is a mature and conscientious adult at least 21 years old, and who is trained in Scouts BSA Climb On Safely and understands the risks inherent to these activities. Training as a Scouts BSA climbing Level 2 Instructor is highly recommended. Someone with certification in First Aid/CPR/AED from the American Red Cross (or equivalent) must be present at these activities.
- Canoeing, Kayaking, Lifesaving, Rowing, Scuba Diving, Swimming, Water Sports, and Whitewater – Merit badge counselors must have current Safety Afloat and Safe Swim Defense training

(available online through my.scouting.org). Please attach a copy of your certifications to the application.

- Lifesaving – Instructors must have appropriate credentials such as current or previous certification as BSA Aquatics Instructor. Persons trained as instructors for Aquatics Supervision: Swimming & Water Rescue or as lifeguard instructors (e.g. BSA, American Red Cross, or YMCA) are also qualified provided they self-study and practice the material in the pamphlet.
- Scuba Diving - All phases of SCUBA instruction (classroom, pool, and open-water training) must be conducted by a recreational diving instructor in good standing with a scuba agency recognized by the Scouts BSA (PADI, NAUI, SSI, IDEA, PDIC, or SDI, or be a member of the WRSTC). Merit badge counselors who are not certified will not be able to conduct instruction. Reference Guide to Safe Scouting Scuba Policy Guide to Safe Scouting and Guide to Advancement 7.0.1.0 Guide to Advancement 2025

**Complete Merit Badge Counselor Training**

Merit badge counselor training is required for all new merit badge counselors to assure that counselors understand the Scouts BSA aims, methods, and mission. It is also important they know how Scouts can learn and grow through the merit badge process. The Merit Badge Counselor Training course can be taken on https://my.scouting.org. Do not submit any applications or paperwork prior to completing training.

**Submit applications to the council service center for approval by the Council Advancement Committee**

Submit copies of your applications and any necessary certifications to the council service center including the following:

- Scouts BSA Adult Application
- Youth Protection Training certificate current within two years
- Merit Badge Counselor Information form
- Any certifications required for specific merit badges

Merit badge counselor applications are approved by the Council Advancement Committee and typically require two to three weeks for approval. Confirmed merit badge counselors will be added to Scoutbook.com.

***Note**: If you have submitted all the required materials and have not received a reply form Scoutbook within one month call the scout service center and request contact information for council advancement committee chairman Tom Sisson.*