

The Handicapped Scout

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Can a boy with a handicap be a Scout? Can he advance? Can a Scout on crutches go hiking, or in a wheelchair go camping? Can a deaf or blind Scout lead a patrol? Can a handicapped Scout earn a merit badge? The answer to these questions is—YES!

Since Scouting's birth, handicapped boys have shown that Scouting works for them! They may have to try a little harder, and it may take a little longer, but they will find themselves doing things they never thought they could do and going farther than they ever thought they could. Many trails, camps, and activities are now handicap accessible.

My wife has a cousin who is confined to a wheelchair due to polio. He became an Eagle Scout. He went camping and hiking right along with everyone else in his troop. When he received his Eagle, almost the whole community turned out to help him celebrate the special occasion.

Scouting can play an important role in helping boys with a handicap develop both skills and self-esteem. This will aid in their social, personal, and spiritual development. Scouting can help other Scouts develop empathy toward a person with disabilities through activities found in the Handicap Awareness Merit Badge.

As for advancement, the handicapped Scout is generally asked to meet the same requirements as other Scouts. If a Scout's handicap prevents him from completing a required merit badge, he may be allowed to choose an alternative badge of equal difficulty.

The Boy Scouts of America has always been in the forefront in making literature available (also to non-scouting groups) to assist in working with handicapped individuals. The following additional information is available:

“Scouting and the Learning Disabled”

“Scouting for the Emotionally Disturbed”

“Scouting for the Handicapped Resource Handbook”

“Scouting for the Hearing Impaired”

“Scouting for Mentally Retarded Boys”

“Scouting for the Visually Handicapped”