



Troop 48 – Medford Lakes, NJ

Diversity and Inclusion Guide

Diversity and Inclusion Guide Overview

Troop 48 uses this guide to prepare our Scouts to grow into the best kind of citizens and effective leaders. This guide addresses general leadership policy, principles, structures, and methods, serving as a review document and teaching tool. Thus, it touches on physical, mental, and spiritual preparedness.

Diversity Generally

Diversity comes in many forms, including, but not limited to, socioeconomic, religious, ethnicity, family makeup, sexual orientation, personal history, age, physical abilities, mental abilities, etc. Most of these differences are subtle, if not invisible. Some differences are extreme. Others are mere variations of the “norm.”

BSA Diversity & Inclusion Statement (2020)

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) promotes a culture where each youth, volunteer, and employee feels a sense of belonging and builds communities where every person feels respected and valued.

Leading by example and encouraging each other to live by the values expressed by the Scout Oath and Scout Law, we welcome families of all backgrounds to help prepare young people to serve as successful members and leaders of our nation’s increasingly diverse communities.

Troop 48 Diversity and Inclusion Commitment

Scouts come from all walks of life and all types of family structures, faiths, and racial and ethnic groups. Troop 48 respects the rights of all people and groups, and allows youth to live and learn and enjoy Scouting without immersing them in the politics of the day.

Troop 48 seeks to provide an open, clearly structured environment within which a diverse group of Scouts can grow collectively and individually toward self-reliance without harming one another. Conduct, not status, governs our troop. Troop 48 is committed to this goal. Our committee, Scouters, and troop leadership all subscribe to making it happen on a constant basis.

Our troop remains firmly rooted in the core values of Scouting. We understand that diversity does not threaten these values, but only strengthens our character and common worth.

Our troop seeks to include a diverse community of Scouts and Scout families. Of course, we remain governed by the guidelines set by our chartered organization, council, and the Boy Scouts of America. We seek to provide an open, clearly structured environment where a diverse group of Scouts can grow collectively and individually toward self-reliance without harming one another.

Challenges & Opportunities

Scouts come from all walks of life and are exposed to diversity in Scouting that they may not otherwise experience. At the same time, modern communication permits an ever unprecedented and increasingly interchange of ideas and norms. This constant and accelerating evolution challenges our Scouting community.

With challenges come opportunities. Diversity provides new and sometimes challenging perspectives that ultimately enrich our program, strengthen our patrols, and enlighten our Scouters, parents, and (most of all) Scouts. Diverse relationships may take time to foster and may require extra work on everyone's part, but the payoff can be rich.

Exposure to people from other cultures, religions, ethnic groups, generations, physical norms, etc. can be invaluable. Few lessons open a Scout's eyes like those offered by peers with vastly different life experiences.

So, link diversity-related challenges to opportunities. Tackle the obstacles knowing that success will yield greater experience, education, and fulfillment for all.

Diversity Awareness

Understanding begets inclusion. It all starts with awareness. Recognizing diversity requires an acknowledgement of differences in others. This entails an understanding of how people perceive themselves, how they perceive others, and how those perceptions affect their interactions and their community.

Diversity in Scouting comes in countless forms. While all Scouts are unique and require individual attention, we also look at Scouts in a broader categorical way. This allows us to better identify their challenges and ways to help them work within the troop.

Socioeconomic Diversity

Socioeconomic diversity deals with differences in people's income, and social status.

Such diversity may challenge scheduling, activity planning, gear acquisition, fund raising, etc. At the same time, it exposes Scouts to a host of healthy experiences.

Ethnic Diversity

Ethnic diversity deals with differences in culture and cultural groups. Our United States is home to countless different ethnic communities. We can draw great strength from them.

Scouting, of course, is an international youth movement. It transcends national and cultural boundaries. Founded by an Englishman, Lord Baden Powell, it was infused with many forms and norms borne from Zulu culture. Our BSA is similarly an amalgam of European and Native American forms and norms. BSA troops contain Scouts from all sorts of ethnic backgrounds.

Ethnic diversity presents broad challenges, especially with respect to different norms. Some cultures, for instance, encourage loud, collective celebration. Others promote introspection and individualism. Dealing with these normative differences helps Scouts think and act outside their comfort zone. It can open their eyes and hearts to see life and culture from many angles, ultimately making them stronger in their means of valuation and better decision makers.

Language may be the biggest barrier. Most Scouts in the BSA speak English as their first, and generally sole, language. Even when they encounter English speaking kids from ethnic groups with a different mother language, they may struggle with basic communication. Conflict may rise from frequent misconception. Still, this creates an opportunity for Scouts to hone their skills in language, empathy, and diplomacy at an age when such exposure and education is especially valuable.

Age & Generational Diversity

Change is constant and accelerating. This is true of youth aging from 11 to 17. It's even truer of the evolution of the broader society from generation to generation. What is important and valuable to an 11-year-old differs greatly from an older peer, and what a 17-year-old might find dear might be foreign to his 48-year-old Scoutmaster... and vice versa.

Age diversity creates special interest and communication challenges. It also offers ways for Scouts, Scouters, and families to explore and share history, traditions, current events, fads, and innovation. It's good and fun to discover what once was cool, what is cool, and what will be cool, for it helps you understand what is truly cool.

Physical Diversity

Physical diversity deals with all forms of physical (including the brain) variation. This includes differences in size, coloration, strength, coordination and motor skills, cognitive ability, memory, temperament, etc.

This is a broad category, even by diversity standards. It includes all forms of physical variation and all degrees of ability and disability—too many to specifically address here. Fortunately, the BSA publishes a host of materials pertaining to issues of physical diversity. For instance, the BSA offers a “Guide to Working with Scouts with Special Needs and Disabilities.”

(See <https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/specialneedsinformationsheet.pdf>)

Every Scout who conducts himself properly and wants to participate as a full member of our troop should be accorded equal respect, hope, and opportunity. This goal challenges us to constantly reflect on, and balance, the individual and collective needs within our community. It affects everything from meal plans to monthly themes.

Physical diversity challenges us to address our entire program in a diverse, “layered” fashion. Our Scouts and Scouters thus have an ongoing opportunity to create flexible advancement, adventuring, and entertainment activities.

This permits us to bring a physically diverse group together wherever possible, and create purposeful subgroups wherever prudent. Most importantly, it allows us to buddy Scouts of like ability or differing ability according to need... all the while giving our Scouts the opportunity to see how kids of a diverse nature see and live life.

Religious Diversity

Religious diversity deals with differences in faith. It is a fundamental challenge. Scouts are reverent and our troop is an interfaith program. Yet faith is abstract in nature and is filtered through each individual's prism. Our troop embraces Scouts with diverse religious beliefs.

Religious diversity presents philosophical challenges, that could spark wonderful informal campfire debates. It presents scheduling challenges, but this teaches our Scouts that there are many ways to revere God. It presents challenges in interfaith program content and delivery, but our Scouts have found strength by creating genuinely inclusive opportunities for common prayer. It lets them explore different ways of looking at what's important about the nature and balance of things.

Personal Needs

We remain aware that some Scouts have other personal needs and requirements, such as specialized dietary preferences, family circumstances, school scenarios, etc. These diverse needs challenge our troop to be flexible and creative.

Diversity Preparedness

Diversity preparedness starts with awareness. Being aware starts us on the way to being prepared. A good attitude, solid core practices (method), personal care, and constant education (e.g., about bullying & cyber-bullying) enhance such preparedness.

Attitude

We embrace diversity. Our troop understands that we are diminished when we exclude others. We're especially diminished if we discriminate or abuse others. By stopping intolerance, especially bullying, we all win.

By recognizing diversity, we change. We help others and ourselves in the process. By doing the right thing, we set an example and transform others.

Core Practices

Attitude begins with core practices. In this context, a Scout or Scouter should offer the following...

Non-Judgmental Respect

Rather than judging, practice mutual respect for qualities and experiences that are different from your own.

Patient, Empathetic Communication

Diversity includes different ways of being and different ways of knowing and relating to the world. So, remain patient and empathetic when communicating.

Clarity

Ensure that your messages are received clearly and completely, even if you need to employ repetition or additional means of clarification.

Acknowledgement

Acknowledge receipt of others' messages.

Cheerful Reinforcement

Cheerfully reinforce the things that work. Make them routine or normative.

Reward Consistently

Offer consistent rewards for good conduct and/or performance.

Hard Work

Work hard. Always remain attentive. Stay engaged. Recognize the extra demands placed on your patience, understanding, and skill, in working on advancement with those with acute needs.

Religious Tolerance

It is incumbent on all Scouts and adults within the Troop 48 community to exercise tolerance and invite inclusion. This doesn't mean that a group of wholly Catholic Scouts cannot worship according to their

specific faith. It means that, should a Scout of another denomination or faith participate, they all employ an inclusive, interfaith program.

Outside of worship, our Scouts should understand that personal faith touches us in some way at every moment. Tolerance is an important constant. We should practice it at all times. Everyone in our community deserves to be judged by their conduct, not their status—which includes their religious affiliations and beliefs. This is in keeping with the Scout Oath and Law.

Worship at Scouting Activities

Lord Baden Powell believed that a Scout's religion is not in how he behaves. It is in what he believes. This is where the Scout Law intersects with spirituality.

Our troop takes time to give thanks for all we've received and otherwise address the spiritual needs of our troop. Our chaplain's aide, or another Scout designated by our Senior Patrol Leader, typically leads us when we gather. That Scout puts his specific religious views in a broad, inclusive context, respecting the spiritual diversity of our community. At the same time, he does need to dilute the essential core message. We thus promote diversity.

Scouts Own Service

A Scouts Own Service service is a brief interfaith worship or meditation, specifically designed for Scouting events where there may be members of more than one faith group. The intention of a Scouts Own Service is to provide a spiritual focus during a camping experience that does not reflect the views of a particular denomination or faith. A Scouts Own Service can be defined as a gathering of Scouts held to contribute to the development of their spirituality and to promote a fuller understanding of the Scout Oath and Law, with emphasis on one's Duty to God.

Personal Care

Ultimately, all members of our troop have very individual needs. Their association with a different group is only part of their story. So, we address their specific personal needs and requirements—such as specialized dietary preferences, family circumstances, school scenarios, etc.—on a case by case basis.

Education

True diversity preparedness requires constant education. Take the time to learn about current and evolving developments in understanding other cultures, religions, ethnic groups, generations, physical norms, special needs groups, etc.

Begin your journey by visiting BSA's online "Training" page (see <https://www.scouting.org/training/>) and their "Research" page (see <https://www.scouting.org/about/research/>).