



Adult Leadership Standards Update and Resources

July 2015

July 13, 2015

To: National Council Employees

Re: Adult Leadership Standards Update and Resources

The national Key 3 and others consulted with major religious organizations following the National Annual Meeting in May on the subject of adult leadership standards. Scout executives from across the country urged national leadership to swiftly act on this matter in order to enhance recruitment prospects for new Scouts beginning this fall.

As a result, the Executive Committee met on Friday, July 10, to review a resolution amending the adult leadership standards policy. That resolution was unanimously adopted by those present and voting. This week, we are sharing this resolution with the National Executive Board and asking them to ratify this resolution on Monday, July 27.

We understand these actions will generate questions, and we have developed the following materials and counsel to assist you with communicating these updates to both internal and external audiences:

- [Resolution](#)
- [Media statement](#)
- [Key messages and talking points](#)
- [Frequently asked questions](#)

Please know that we will share an update with you following the vote, as well as resources to help guide your communications. If you have additional questions or require additional communications assistance, please contact the national communications team at PR@scouting.org.

Thank you,



Dr. Robert M. Gates
National President



Tico Perez
National Commissioner



Wayne Brock
Chief Scout Executive

RESOLUTION ON ADULT LEADERSHIP STANDARDS

WHEREAS, it is the mission of the Boy Scouts of America to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law:

Scout Oath

On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

Scout Law

A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.

WHEREAS, the vision of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare every eligible youth in America to become a responsible, participating citizen and leader who is guided by the Scout Oath and Scout Law;

WHEREAS, the values set forth in the Scout Oath and Scout Law are fundamental to the Boy Scouts of America and central to teaching young people to make better choices over their lifetimes;

WHEREAS, duty to God and duty to country are core values and immutable tenets of the Boy Scouts of America;

WHEREAS, the Scout Oath begins with the duty to God and the Scout Law ends with a Scout's obligation to be reverent, and Scouting respects and defends the rights of others to practice their own religious beliefs without criticism;

WHEREAS, the duty to country recognizes that America is made up of countless families and communities, and that we should all work hard to be good family members and good citizens by striving to make our country better, obeying its laws, and serving our communities;

WHEREAS, the Boy Scouts of America teaches youth members to be helpful, friendly, courteous, and kind to all and to respect those whose beliefs—in particular religious beliefs—differ from their own;

WHEREAS, for more than 105 years, programs of the Boy Scouts of America have been delivered to youth members through cooperation with chartered organizations that select adult volunteer leaders who meet the chartered organization's standards as well as the leadership standards of the Boy Scouts of America;

WHEREAS, the Boy Scouts of America believes it should allow members and parents to choose a Scouting unit, chartered to an organization with similar beliefs, that best meets the needs of their families;

WHEREAS, the Boy Scouts of America recognizes the sincere religious beliefs and freedoms of religious chartered organizations and will not require any religious chartered organization to act in ways inconsistent with that organization's mission, principles, or religious beliefs;

WHEREAS, Scouting is a youth program, and any sexual conduct, whether heterosexual or homosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting;

WHEREAS, the Boy Scouts of America has adopted membership standards to ensure that youth have the opportunity to join Scouting and to be served by qualified volunteer adult leaders selected by the chartered organization, all of whom are subject to the provisions of the Boy Scouts of America's Youth Protection requirements;

WHEREAS, notwithstanding any other provision of the Boy Scouts of America's Bylaws, no Scouting unit may deny a youth membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone;

WHEREAS, the current adult leadership standard of the Boy Scouts of America states:

The applicant must possess the moral, educational, and emotional qualities that the Boy Scouts of America deems necessary to afford positive leadership to youth. The applicant must also be the correct age, subscribe to the precepts of the Declaration of Religious Principle (duty to God), and abide by the Scout Oath and the Scout Law.

WHEREAS, the Boy Scouts of America's Declaration of Religious Principle states:

The Boy Scouts of America maintains that no member can grow into the best kind of citizen without recognizing an obligation to God. In the first part of the Scout Oath or Promise the member declares, "On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law." The recognition of God as the ruling and leading power in the universe and the grateful acknowledgment of His favors and blessings are necessary to the best type of citizenship and are wholesome precepts in the education of the growing members. No matter what the religious faith of the members may be, this fundamental need of good citizenship should be kept before them. The Boy Scouts of America, therefore, recognizes the religious element in the training of the member, but it is absolutely nonsectarian in its attitude toward that religious training. Its policy is that the home and the organization or group with which the member is connected shall give definite attention to religious life.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The standards for selecting adult leaders of the Boy Scouts of America are as follows:

Adult leadership positions in the Boy Scouts of America are open to adults who meet the requirements set forth in the Bylaws, the Rules and Regulations, and the policies of the Boy Scouts of America.

Adult leaders in the programs of the Boy Scouts of America must (a) subscribe to and abide by the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Scout Law, (b) subscribe to and abide by the precepts of the Declaration of Religious Principle, and (c) demonstrate at all times behavior that exemplifies the highest level of good conduct and respect for others and that is consistent with Scouting's values and codes of conduct.

No adult applicant for registration as an employee or non-unit-serving volunteer, who otherwise meets the requirements of the Boy Scouts of America, may be denied registration on the basis of sexual orientation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:

The Boy Scouts of America hereby adopts the following statement on sexuality and adult leaders:

Matters of marriage, family, and sexuality raise profound social, moral, and theological questions. The Boy Scouts of America has always been deeply respectful of the religious and moral beliefs of its chartering organizations, including religious organizations.

The Boy Scouts of America affirms that sexual relations between adults should be moral, honorable, committed, and respectful. Adult Scout leaders should reflect these values in their personal and public lives so as to be proper role models for youth. The Boy Scouts of America affirms the right of each chartering organization to reach its own religious and moral conclusions about the specific meaning and application of these values. The Boy Scouts of America further affirms the right of each chartering organization to select adult leaders who support those conclusions in word and deed and who will best inculcate the organization's values through the Scouting program.

The Boy Scouts of America rejects any interference with or condemnation of the diverse beliefs of chartering organizations on matters of marriage, family, and sexuality. The message of Scouting is one of toleration and respect for different religious and moral conclusions in this matter, acknowledging that reasonable minds may honorably differ. Any effort to exclude or penalize chartering organizations based on their beliefs or policies regarding marriage, family, or sexuality is contrary to the Boy Scouts of America's commitment to religious freedom and respect for the beliefs and convictions of its chartered organizations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:

No local council may refuse to process or approve a charter application or in any way limit the participation of a Scouting unit based upon the chartered organization's exercise of its right to select adult leaders as provided in this resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:

The Boy Scouts of America will defend and indemnify to the fullest extent allowed by law any bona fide religious chartered organization against any claim or action contending that the chartered organization's good faith refusal to select a unit leader based upon the religious principles of the chartered organization is in violation of the law.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:

This resolution shall be effective from the date of ratification by the National Executive Board.

MEDIA RELATIONS

Please direct all media inquiries to PR@scouting.org where the national communications team is monitoring and responding to media inquiries in this interim period with the following statement. We ask that you do not proactively engage with media about this matter.

National Media Statement

“During the 2015 Boy Scouts of America National Annual Meeting in May, Dr. Gates encouraged the Scouting family to reflect on the challenges, primarily regarding adult leadership standards, facing the BSA and potential alternatives for addressing them.

“As a result of the rapid changes in society and increasing legal challenges at the federal, state, and local levels, on Friday, July 10, the Boy Scouts of America Executive Committee adopted a resolution amending the adult leadership standards policy. The resolution was unanimously adopted by those present and voting.

“This resolution will allow chartered organizations to select adult leaders without regard to sexual orientation, continuing Scouting’s longstanding policy of chartered organizations selecting their leaders. The National Executive Board will meet to ratify this resolution on Monday, July 27.

“This change allows Scouting’s members and parents to select local units, chartered to organizations with similar beliefs, that best meet the needs of their families. This change would also respect the right of religious chartered organizations to continue to choose adult leaders whose beliefs are consistent with their own. The 2013 youth membership policy will not be affected and remains unchanged.

“Scouting will continue to focus on reaching and serving youth to help them grow into good, strong citizens. By focusing on the goals that unite us, we are able to accomplish incredible things for young people and the communities we serve.”

KEY MESSAGES AND TALKING POINTS

The following key messages serve as the foundation for all communications—written and spoken. They are not intended for external use in their current form below. For any questions about how to customize these messages for different audiences, please contact the national communications team at PR@scouting.org.

Why We Must Change:

- During the 2015 Boy Scouts of America National Annual Meeting in May, Dr. Gates encouraged the Scouting family to reflect on the challenges, primarily regarding adult leadership standards, facing the BSA and potential alternatives for addressing them. Dr. Gates’ remarks can be found on [Scouting Newsroom](#).

- The BSA faces the prospect of litigation in multiple states in the very near future. Legal counsel has advised national leadership that the likelihood of being able to defend the policy going forward is very low. Due to the social, political, and legal changes taking place in our country and in our movement, the current adult leadership policy cannot be sustained.
- The best way to allow the BSA to continue to focus on its mission and preserve its core values is to address the issue and set its own course to ensure it continues to provide life-changing experiences to youth they cannot get anywhere else.

Why This Resolution Is Right for Scouting:

- Based on Dr. Gates' remarks in May, the Executive Committee held a special meeting on Friday, July 10, to review a resolution amending the adult leadership standards policy. This resolution was unanimously adopted by those present and voting. On Monday, July 13, it was shared with the National Executive Board, which will meet to ratify this resolution on Monday, July 27.
- This resolution allows chartered organizations to select adult volunteer leaders without regard to sexual orientation, continuing Scouting's longstanding policy of chartered organizations selecting their leaders. This change allows Scouting's members and parents to select local units, chartered to organizations with similar beliefs, that best meet the needs of their families. This change also respects the right of religious chartered organizations to choose adult volunteer leaders whose beliefs are consistent with their own. It is important to note that the 2013 youth membership policy is not affected by this resolution and remains unchanged.
- It remains the position of the Boy Scouts of America that the ideals and principles of "duty to God" and "a Scout is reverent" set forth in the Scout Oath and Law are central to teaching young people to make better choices over their lifetimes.

Focusing on Scouting's Mission:

- Scouting is not an appropriate environment to discuss sexual conduct, and the BSA will continue to have a strict behavioral standard for its youth members and adult leaders.
- Since 1910, the Boy Scouts of America has relied on chartered organizations to oversee and deliver the Scouting program in local communities. Nationally, Scouting represents approximately 2.4 million youth members and nearly 1 million adult leaders with diverse beliefs. Scouting teaches its youth members and adult leaders to be tolerant and respectful of different religious and moral beliefs, acknowledging that reasonable minds may honorably differ.
- Scouting will continue to focus on reaching and serving youth to help them grow into good, strong citizens. By focusing on the goals that unite us, we are able to accomplish incredible things for young people and the communities we serve.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The following represent the most frequently asked questions local councils are likely to receive, as well as recommended responses. These, in their current form, are intended for internal use only, but individual answers can be used with external audiences as needed.

1. Did the BSA policy on sexual orientation change?

In 2013 the Boy Scouts of America voted to allow all youth to experience Scouting regardless of sexual orientation or preference. The Executive Committee held a special meeting on Friday, July 10, to review a resolution amending the adult leadership standards policy. This resolution was unanimously adopted by those present and voting. On Monday, July 13, it was shared with the National Executive Board, which will meet to ratify this resolution on Monday, July 27.

2. Why is the BSA considering this change now?

The BSA faces the prospect of litigation in multiple states in the very near future. Legal counsel has advised national leadership that the likelihood of being able to defend the policy going forward is very low. Due to the social, political, and legal changes taking place in our country and in our movement, the current adult leadership policy cannot be sustained. The best way to allow the BSA to continue to focus on its mission and preserve its core values is to address the issue and set its own course to ensure it continues to provide life-changing experiences to youth they cannot get anywhere else.

3. How and when will the vote take place?

Based on Dr. Gates' remarks in May, the Executive Committee held a special meeting on Friday, July 10, to review a resolution amending the adult leadership standards policy. This resolution was unanimously adopted by those present and voting. On Monday, July 13, it was shared with the National Executive Board, which will meet to ratify this resolution on Monday, July 27.

4. Why doesn't the entire membership get to vote?

Under the BSA national bylaws, decisions of this nature are the responsibility of the National Executive Committee and Executive Board. This action is in full accordance with the bylaws of the BSA. As the governing body of the BSA, the National Executive Committee and Executive Board will act in the best interest of our organization.

5. If passed, when will the resolution be put into effect?

If ratified by the National Executive Board, the new adult leadership standards policy will become effective immediately.

6. What are the next steps if the National Executive Board votes against the resolution?

The National Executive Board will vote on the resolution on Monday, July 27. It would be inappropriate to speculate, but I can tell you that the National Executive Board will act in the best interest of our organization.

7. How did you reach this decision? What was the process?

Based on Dr. Gates' remarks in May, where he advised the entire national council membership that the decision would be made by the National Executive Board, the Executive Committee held a special meeting on Friday, July 10, to review a resolution amending the adult leadership standards policy. This resolution was unanimously adopted by those present and voting. On Monday, July 13,

it was shared with the National Executive Board, which will meet to ratify this resolution on Monday, July 27.

8. Is this resolution a result of the recent decision by the U.S. Supreme Court on equal marriage and states' rights?

Due to the social, political, and legal changes taking place in our country and in our movement, the current adult leadership policy cannot be sustained. The best way to allow the BSA to continue to focus on its mission and preserve its core values is to address the issue and set its own course to ensure it continues to provide life-changing experiences to youth they cannot get anywhere else.

9. Why does this make sense for the organization?

This resolution allows chartered organizations to select adult volunteer leaders without regard to sexual orientation, continuing Scouting's longstanding policy of chartered organizations selecting their leaders. This change allows Scouting's members and parents to select local units, chartered to organizations with similar beliefs, that best meet the needs of their families. This change also respects the right of religious chartered organizations to choose adult volunteer leaders whose beliefs are consistent with their own.

10. If passed, does my religious organization have to allow gay leaders?

As has always been the case, religious institutions select their leaders. Religious organizations may do so according to their faith-based beliefs, regardless of this policy change.

11. Will parents, youth members, or adult volunteer leaders be informed if a leader in their unit is gay?

The BSA has a code of conduct that prohibits the discussion of sexual issues. Scouts will be directed to their religious leaders or parents to seek guidance on these matters. Leaders who violate the code of conduct by discussing these issues can be removed from Scouting.

12. Will non-religious chartered organizations have an option in this matter?

No, but as they always have, all chartered organizations will select their leaders and can require adult leaders to demonstrate behavior that exemplifies the highest level of good conduct and respect for others. For example, units chartered by the American Legion may allow only veterans to serve as Scoutmasters.

13. Is this the result of recent lawsuits or pressure from activists and sponsors?

Due to the social, political, and legal changes taking place in our country and in our movement, the current adult leadership policy cannot be sustained.

14. Does the BSA now admit its policies discriminate against those of same-sex orientation?

Nationally, Scouting represents approximately 2.4 million youth members and nearly 1 million adult leaders with diverse beliefs. Scouting teaches its youth members and adult leaders to be tolerant and respectful of different religious and moral beliefs, acknowledging that reasonable minds may honorably differ.

15. Will the Boy Scouts of America indemnify both religiously affiliated chartered organizations and civic-based chartered organizations?

The BSA will continue to legally defend—or indemnify—the rights of its religious chartered organizations to choose leaders whose beliefs are consistent with their own.

16. What about gay leaders who were removed from Scouting before this policy change was made? Or activists who acted on their behalf?

If ratified, adult leaders who were previously unable to serve in Scouting may apply for volunteer leadership positions and will be eligible for selection if otherwise qualified, regardless of sexual orientation or preference.

17. Does this resolution apply to BSA employees, in addition to adult volunteer leaders?

BSA employees may not be discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation, and we will continue to follow all local, state and federal employment laws. For all staff positions that require BSA membership, we will consider all qualified and eligible persons for hire without regard to their sexual orientation.

18. What will happen to local councils that have passed non-discrimination policies that do not align with this new national policy?

This resolution prohibits local councils from denying a charter to a unit that is following the beliefs of its religious chartering organization. The National Council will take action on a council that violates this provision.

19. If the BSA lifts the restriction regarding same-sex orientation for adult leaders, will it also consider eliminating the “duty to God” standard?

Duty to God and duty to country, as expressed in the Scout Oath and the Scout Law, are the fundamental tenets of Scouting and always have been. It remains the position of the BSA that these ideals and principles are central to teaching young people to make better choices over their lifetimes.

20. Can a gay adult be a Scoutmaster or unit leader?

Yes. If selected by the chartered organization, an otherwise qualified and eligible gay adult is eligible to serve as a unit leader.

21. Do you anticipate reviewing the policy yet again to mandate for civic-based chartered organizations?

No. This change allows Scouting’s members and parents to select local units, chartered to organizations with similar beliefs, that best meet the needs of their families. This change also respects the right of religious chartered organizations to choose adult volunteer leaders whose beliefs are consistent with their own.

22. What if an adult volunteer leader or a unit doesn’t agree with this proposed change?

As a voluntary, private organization, the BSA sets policies that are best for the organization. All adult leaders and local units agree to follow the BSA’s national policies and comply with the code of conduct.

23. Whom do I contact for clarification or additional questions?

If you are a Scout executive or a local council communications or marketing professional, please contact PR@scouting.org with additional questions or needs. If you would like to share your perspective on this matter, you may send an email to key3@scouting.org. We cannot promise a response, but all messages will be read.

24. Where should I send members of our Scouting family who wish to express their opinions?
If you would like to share your perspective on this matter, you may send an email to key3@scouting.org. We cannot promise a response, but all messages will be read.

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