



Dear Chartered Organization Representative –

For 103 years, the Boy Scouts of America has been a part of the fabric of this nation, with a focus on working together to deliver the nation's foremost youth program of character development and values-based leadership training.

In February, the Boy Scouts of America embarked on the most comprehensive listening exercise in its history. The goal was to consider the impact on the organization of potential changes to its membership standards and to gather perspectives from inside and outside of the Scouting family.

At the BSA's National Annual Meeting in May, the voting members of the National Council approved a resolution to remove the restriction denying membership to youth on the basis of sexual orientation alone. The resolution passed with 61 percent of the vote.

Some have taken this action to mean the BSA has made a fundamental shift in values. We understand the new policy has generated a great many questions requiring a response. The following is meant to clearly articulate the new policy and the anticipated impact it will have on local units and members.

The BSA's Membership Standards Policy

The adult membership standards policy was not under consideration and remains unchanged, as follows:

"While the BSA does not proactively inquire about the sexual orientation of employees, volunteers, or members, we do not grant membership to individuals who are open or avowed homosexuals or who engage in behavior that would become a distraction to the mission of the BSA."

Effective Jan, 1, 2014, the youth membership policy will be:

"Membership in any program of the Boy Scouts of America requires the youth member to (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 (duty to God), and (c) demonstrate behavior that exemplifies the highest level of good conduct and respect for others and is consistent at all times with the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Scout Law. No youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone."

What This Means

Because you represent a valued chartered organization, we want to clearly explain what this policy means, along with what changes and what does not change.





What is staying the same?

- The mission of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law.
- Scouting’s vision is to serve every eligible youth in America, and this policy would allow it to serve more kids and focus on their development.
- The Scout Oath begins with duty to God, and the Scout Law ends with a Scout’s obligation to be reverent, and that will always remain a core value of the Boy Scouts of America.
- Any sexual conduct, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting.
- The BSA handbook defines morally straight as, “Scouts should be clean in speech and actions and faithful in religious beliefs,” and a clean Scout as “someone who keeps his body and mind fit, chooses friends who also live by high standards, and helps keep his home and community clean.”
- Members must demonstrate behavior that exemplifies the highest level of good conduct and respect for others and is consistent at all times with the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Scout Law. Scouting’s chartered organizations have the right to uphold their own moral standards within the units they sponsor.
- The BSA has stringent polices that protect the safety and privacy of youth and adult members and has always worked to ensure that it is a supportive and safe environment for young people (www.bsayouthprotection.org).
- The organization will maintain its current membership policy for all adult leaders and within the framework of this policy chartering organizations have the right and responsibility to choose their own unit leaders. The Boy Scouts of America fully supports our chartered organizations.

What is changing?

- Youth are still developing, learning about themselves and who they are, developing their sense of right and wrong, and understanding their duty to God to live a moral life. Accordingly, a youth member simply stating he or she is attracted to the same sex, but not engaging in sexual activity, does not make them ineligible for membership.





Frequently Asked Questions

Understandably, a change to this BSA policy raises many questions among parents and unit-serving volunteers. The following are frequently asked questions and answers.

1. Is the BSA endorsing homosexuality and forcing its chartered organizations to do the same?

No. That is not the role of the organizations, and Scouting is not the place to resolve divergent viewpoints in society. By reinforcing that 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, and that no member may use Scouting to promote or advance any social or political position or agenda, this policy rightly recognizes there is a difference between kids and adults while remaining true to the long-standing virtues of Scouting.

2. If a chartered organization does not agree with allowing gay members, can it deny them membership or defer them to another unit?

No. Effective Jan. 1, 2014, no youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone. However, any sexual conduct, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting. As they always have, chartered organizations can require members to demonstrate behavior that exemplifies the highest level of good conduct and respect for others and is consistent at all times with the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

3. How does the BSA define “morally straight”?

As it has, the BSA handbook still defines morally straight as, “Scouts should be clean in speech and actions and faithful in religious beliefs,” and a clean Scout as “someone who keeps his body and mind fit, chooses friends who also live by high standards, and helps keep his home and community clean.” Any sexual conduct, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting.

4. Why was the policy amended only to include youth and not adults?

The review confirmed that this remains among the most complex and challenging issues facing the BSA and society today. Even with the wide range of input, it was extremely difficult to accurately quantify the potential impact of maintaining or changing the current policy. While perspectives and opinions vary significantly, parents, adults in the Scouting community, and teens alike tend to agree that youth should not be denied the benefits of Scouting.





5. What will you do when a youth member becomes an adult?

When a member is no longer a youth participant, he or she must meet the requirements of our adult standards.

6. What are the next steps?

The policy change will be effective on Jan. 1, 2014, allowing the Boy Scouts of America the transition time needed to communicate and implement this policy to its approximately 116,000 Scouting units. As the National Executive Committee just completed a lengthy review process, there are no plans for further review on this matter.

Additional Resources

The BSA has been and remains committed to engaging in discussion with its members about this policy. To learn more about the policy, please visit www.bsamembershipstandards.org. Also, following are additional helpful resources.

- *The Baptist Standard*: [An Open Letter to Southern Baptists](#)
- *The Washington Post*: [Catholic Church sees 'hopeful future' in the Boy Scouts, even if openly gay scouts allowed](#)
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints *Newsroom*: [Church Responds to Boy Scouts Policy Vote](#)
- *The Deseret News*: [What the Boy Scouts of America decision means for your son](#)

We believe our organization is bigger than this single issue. We are finding that when people read the new policy, they see it reflects the beliefs of most of Scouting's major religious chartered organizations. Our local council professionals and volunteers are available to review this policy and answer any questions you may have.

While people have different opinions about this policy, we can all agree that kids are better off when they are in Scouting. Thank you for all you do for Scouting and for the youth in your community. Together, we can accomplish great things.

Sincerely,

Wayne Brock
Chief Scout Executive
Boy Scouts of America

