

Welcoming New Scouts BSA Members to Camp

When/Who: The camp director will deliver to Scouts BSA camp staff during staff training.

Timeframe: 20 minutes

Note: This session should be instructed after the Understanding and Preventing Youth-on-Youth Abuse Training for Camp Staff and NYLT Staff, No. 430-149. This training discussion focuses on welcoming all new Scouts to camp and ensuring everyone is prepared for a successful camp experience.

Learning Objectives: At the end of this session the participants will:

- Understand the organization of Scouts BSA troops
- Define and discuss inclusion
- Understand strategies to ensure all new Scouts feel welcome at camp
- How camp traditions fit into the overall camp experience

Resources and Equipment:

- Flip chart and markers

Set the Stage

You were offered a chance to visit a new planet and told that you would be there for a week. You were told that you would have a great time and make friends for life. You accept the offer and now...You just stepped out of a spaceship on a faraway planet. What are your first thoughts? What are the first things you need to find? *(Seek responses, but look for some of the following)*

- How did I get here? (was this a good idea)
- Where do I go? (is there a sign at your camp for check in? is it easy to find?)
- Where is the bathroom? (you have been on a ship for some time)
 - Is it clean when I go in?
 - Is it well marked?
- Is anybody new here besides me? (am I the only one who doesn't know what to expect?)
- What are all these people wearing? (will people look at me funny for wearing the wrong thing?)
- When does the fun begin? (do you have an opportunity for Scouts to get involved immediately?)

Say “As you can guess, this may be the thoughts of our new Scouts coming to camp for the first time this summer.”

It is so important that we help all our new Scouts have a successful summer camp experience. For the next few minutes, we are going to talk about the Scouts BSA program and how each of us plays a key role in creating a welcoming and inclusive environment.

How is a Scouts BSA troop organized?

Just a few reminders about the Scouts BSA program:

- All troops are single gender. Scouts BSA is a single gender program. It is not coed. There are no coed patrols.
- Linked troop – this is a girl troop who the same charter partner as a boy troop.
 - This troop may share some adults on the committee but must have a unique Scoutmaster.
 - We may have some “linked troops” in camp but each troop must attend under their OWN leadership and follow the BSA Guide to Safe Scouting and Youth Protection standards.
 - Linked troops may wish to share a campsite, but we need to ensure they are set up in the way that meets the YPT Barriers to Abuse, including ensuring the privacy and separate accommodations for each gender and age group (over 18 vs under 18). *Again, each troop must have its own troop leadership.*
 - Review any questions your staff may have about the YPT Barriers to Abuse.
- Boy and girl troops have the same structure with Scoutmaster, committee, and youth leadership.
- All girl troops coming to camp must have at least one over 21-year-old female with them who is a registered member of the BSA.

Discuss Inclusion

Definition of Inclusion: Inclusion is appreciating and valuing human differences by creating an atmosphere that promotes a sense of belonging where everyone feels respected and valued for their uniqueness. In an inclusive environment each person is recognized and developed, and their skills are routinely utilized.

Discuss how your camp promotes ways for all your Scout campers to feel included?

Welcoming New Scouts

Ask “How do we as camp staff make sure that we put our best foot forward and make ALL campers feel welcome and included?”. (Seek responses, but look for some of the following)

- Scout Oath and Law: As you reflect on the Scout Oath and Law – which words stand out to you about welcoming Scout to camp (friendly, courteous, helpful)
- Be welcoming (Ask for specific examples of how they can be welcoming
 - Engage the site guide – is it a new troop? New troop to us? Who are the new Scouts? First time adult leadership? First time youth leadership?
- Be inviting.
- Give encouragement/motivational support
- Be watchful for Scouts who may be experiencing homesickness.
- Use gender neutral language – referring to Scouts as Scouts can be a simple solution.
- Modeling the activity – many experiences at camp are brand new to new campers
- Understand new Scouts and new troops will not understand the culture of the camp and “how things work”. Proper care should be taken to over-communicate the processes (i.e. what to do in the dining hall? What is a waiter? How do I fill out a blue card? Why do I need one?)
- Refer to Understanding and Preventing Youth-on-Youth Abuse Training for Camp Staff.
- Camp Traditions – do our camp traditions make Scouts feel welcome?
 - How do they reflect the BSA mission and our core program?
 - Welcome staff and Scouts to start a new tradition.
- Do we have proper signage?
- Help Troops understand program areas and what happens:
 - Leverage the camp tour.
 - Have we explained what happens at the COPE course?
 - Dining hall procedures
 - What are others that are unique to our camp? (Discuss with staff)
- Be careful not to overuse BSA terminology and jargon that “everybody knows” as many of our new youth and adults did not grow up in Scouting. (ex. We are having at PLC meeting at the OA ring, and need all the SPL, and SM to attend).

Preventing Bullying and Hazing

Refer to the Understanding and Preventing Youth-on-Youth Abuse Training for Camp Staff:

- Why might new Scouts be more prone to bullying at camp?
- How can we help all our returning campers make our new campers feel welcome?
- What should you do if you think someone at camp is being bullied?

Conclusion

One of our primary roles as camp staff members is to make sure all our campers feel included and prepared to have an incredible experience. As camp staff members, we should be mindful of all our campers but especially our new campers each week.