

Amended Membership Standards Policy(s)

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:

It is imperative to clearly understand what this policy means along with what changes and what does not change.

What has not changed:

- 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.
- The BSA has stringent policies 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 has changed:

- 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.

Membership Policy Change - Frequently Asked Questions

Understandably, a change to the BSA policy raises many questions among parents and unit-serving volunteers. The following are FAQs 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 organization, 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"?

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." 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.

7. Will you review the policy again as it relates to adults?

The Executive Committee just completed a lengthy review process. There are no plans for further review.

8. Has or will the Boy Scouts review(ed) the "duty to God" standard?

No. 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. The values set forth in the Scout Oath and Law are fundamental to the BSA and central to teaching young people to make better choices over their lifetimes.

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](#)

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.

Based on growing input from within the Scouting family, the BSA leadership chose to conduct an additional review of the organization's long-standing membership policy and its impact on Scouting's mission. This review created an outpouring of feedback from the Scouting family and the American public, from both those who agree with the current policy and those who support a change.

Following this review, the most comprehensive listening exercise in Scouting's history, the approximate 1,400 voting members of the Boy Scouts of America's National Council approved a resolution to remove the restriction denying membership to youth on the basis of sexual orientation alone. The resolution also reinforces 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. A change to the current membership policy for adult leaders was not under consideration; thus, the policy for adults remains in place. The BSA thanks all the national voting members who participated in this process and vote.

This policy change is effective 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.

The Boy Scouts of America will not sacrifice its mission, or the youth served by the movement, by allowing the organization to be consumed by a single, divisive, and unresolved societal issue. As the National Executive Committee just completed a lengthy review process, there are no plans for further review on this matter.

While people have different opinions about this policy, we can all agree that kids are better off when they are in Scouting. Going forward, our Scouting family will continue to focus on reaching and serving youth in order to help them grow into good, strong citizens. America's youth need Scouting, and by focusing on the goals that unite us, we can continue to accomplish incredible things for young people and the communities we serve.

For more information on the Boy Scouts of America's membership standards, please visit www.bsamembershipstandards.org.