

Merit Badge Policies and Procedures



**Cherokee/Pickens District
Atlanta Area Council, BSA**

Revised 6/28/2009

Counselors

Merit badge counselors must be men and women of good character, age 18 or older, and recognized as having the skills and education in the subjects for which they are to serve as merit badge counselors, as well as having the ability to work with Scout-age boys. Those interested in becoming merit badge counselors must apply and be approved for an annual term by the District Advancement Committee. This process is required of all potential district merit badge counselors - including those who counsel at the unit level as well as at the district and council levels.

The application process requires two forms. The first form is the Merit Badge Counselor Information sheet (BSA publication #34405). The second form is the Adult Application (BSA publication #28-501F), which should be filled out using the position code "42." Both forms are required of all potential counselors, including those who are already registered with the BSA. Simply being registered with the BSA does not mean that a merit badge counselor is approved. There is no fee associated with becoming an approved merit badge counselor. The Adult Application will be submitted to the council once it has been processed by the district. Approval is required from the District Advancement Committee for each merit badge being counseled. The District Advancement Committee will consider merit badge counselor applications at each monthly meeting as part of normal monthly District Advancement Committee business. Once their application is reviewed, merit badge counselors will be notified by the District Advancement Committee of the approval decision. Merit badge counselors are expected to complete Youth Protection Training prior to counseling any merit badges.

A current list of approved merit badge counselors will be maintained by the District Advancement Committee and will be made publicly available. This list will be updated monthly. It is imperative that merit badge counselors are approved by the District Advancement Committee. Per the BSA National Committee, merit badges can be taken away from Scouts if the counselor is not an approved counselor.

Registration as a merit badge counselor is valid for one year. Each year, the District Advancement Committee will contact each unit in the district to determine which counselors in that unit should have their registration renewed for another year. Counselors not registered with a unit will be contacted directly by the District Advancement Committee regarding their registration renewal.

The District Advancement Committee will follow through to ensure that merit badge counselors are working effectively and that Scouts seeking merit badges are finding the help they need. The District Advancement Committee will give on-the-job coaching if a counselor is not doing well, and will be alert for signs of difficulty that might be mentioned by commissioners, unit leaders, and unit committee members. The District Advancement Committee reserves the right to revoke a merit badge counselor's approval if the counselor is not abiding by merit badge policies.

Requirements

The District Advancement Committee notes that there are recommendations, but there are no age restrictions nor are there rank restrictions dictating when a Scout may earn a particular merit badge. Merit badge and rank requirements may not be modified by merit badge counselors, units, or other individuals except as provided by current BSA rules related to Scouts with disabilities. Age and/or rank prerequisites may be placed on merit badges only for reasons of limited staffing, such as at merit badge clinics. All Scouts must be individually reviewed by the approved merit badge counselor before the merit badge requirements are signed off. The approved merit badge counselor, not a unit leader, is the sole and final authority for signing off the requirements for a merit badge.

When a Scout is interested in earning a particular merit badge, he contacts his unit leader. The unit leader will give a signed Merit Badge Application (i.e. blue card) to the Scout, along with the contact information for a merit badge counselor. This merit badge counselor must be approved by the District Advancement Committee. The unit leader may choose any approved merit badge counselor to work with the Scout. For example, if a unit leader only wants certain merit badge counselors to work with Scouts on First Aid merit badge, this is perfectly acceptable as long as the counselor is approved by the District Advancement Committee.

Scouts cannot be required to earn merit badges other than those listed in the current rank requirements. While the merit badge program is designed to be a counselor-Scout relationship, under certain circumstances a great deal of benefit can be gained by utilizing expert personnel in a group instruction setting. This does not remove the requirement, however, that credit for the badge cannot take place without individual review of the Scout by the approved counselor to ensure understanding of the concepts and completion of the badge's requirements. Merely attending a class should not result in the awarding of a merit badge. The expert personnel need to be approved by the District Advancement Committee prior to counseling the merit badge. Scouts may earn merit badges at clinics or summer camps outside of the Cherokee/Pickens District. In this case, counselors must be approved by their local District Advancement Committee. Additionally, these counselors must be presented with a Merit Badge Application signed by the Scout's unit leader prior to working on the merit badge. The counselor must also be approved by the unit leader.

Merit badges started at a clinic or at summer camp may be incomplete at the end of the session. The Scout may continue working on the merit badge, but it must be with a registered merit badge counselor. Unit leaders are not permitted to serve as counselor for the remainder of the merit badge unless approved as a merit badge counselor for that particular merit badge by the District Advancement Committee.