Supporting Scouts With Disabilities
Physical

Is any impairment which limits the physical function of one or more limbs or fine or gross motor ability.
Mental / Emotional disorders are generally defined by a combination of how a person feels, acts, thinks or perceives that is different than most others.
ADHD, Autism or Asperger syndrome
The three types:
• Attention deficit disorder
• Hyperactive disorder
• Combined type
Autism

- Social Awkwardness
- Communication difficulties
- Repetitive behaviors and restricted interests
- Possible cognitive delays.

Since autism encompasses a wider variety of “domains”
- children may excel in one area but not another
- very intelligent but may have trouble verbalizing
ADHD/ Autism

• Possible learning disabilities
• Sensitive to competing stimuli
• Low frustration tolerance
• Impulsivity
• Impaired sense of time
• Poor attention span
• Not learning easily from rewards and punishment
• May think very concretely
Signs of a disorder

- Unable to stay on task
- Interested in what is occurring around him—not the task at hand
- Multi-tasking when single task is appropriate
- “Forgets” constantly
- Loses his place when doing something
- Constantly needs instructions repeated
Tips for dealing with the disabled Scout:

• Try to let the Scout know ahead of time what is expected

• Repeat directions one-on-one when necessary, or assign a more mature buddy to help him get organized.

• Compliment the Scout whenever you find a genuine opportunity. (Ignore minor inappropriate behavior if it is not dangerous or disruptive.)

• Provide frequent breaks and opportunities for the Scout to move around actively but purposefully.

• Redirect when you must
When you must redirect a Scout:

• Do so in private, in a calm voice, unless safety is a risk (but remember Youth Protection guidelines when you do).
• Avoid yelling.
• Never publicly humiliate a Scout.
• Whenever possible, “sandwich” correction between two positive comments.
Be aware of early warning signs, such as fidgety behavior, that may indicate the Scout is losing impulse control.

When this happens, try a:

• Private, nonverbal signal

• Proximity control
  (move close to the Scout)

• Calming touch
  (hand gently on shoulder)
  to alert him that he needs to focus
Don’t take challenges personally.

Scouts want to be successful, but they need support, positive feedback, and clear limits.
Scouts with disabilities are generally energetic, enthusiastic, and bright.

Help them use their strengths to become leaders in your troop.
Belt Loop

Complete these three requirements:

• Visit with a friend, family member, classmate, or other person with disabilities. Find out what this person enjoys and what this person finds difficult.

• Attend a disabilities event such as an Easter Seals event, Special Olympics, a performance with sign language interpretation, an activity with Guiding Eyes dogs, or a wheelchair race. Tell your adult leader what you thought about the experience.

• Make a display about one or more disabilities. It can include physical, learning, or mental challenges. Share the display at a pack meeting.
Academics Pin

Earn the Disabilities Awareness belt loop and complete five of the following requirements:

• People with disabilities move around in different ways such as crutches, scooters, and wheelchairs. Explain the differences. With an adult’s supervision and permission, try to safely use one.
• Using sign language, demonstrate the Cub Scout Promise and motto.
• Read a book about a person with a disability.
• Explain how your school helps students with disabilities (elevators, ramps, small classes, special tools and equipment, specialized teachers).
• Describe one of the following and its purpose: occupational therapy, speech therapy, or physical therapy. Visit with a person who works in one of these fields and learn about his or her position.
• Read about a famous person who has been physically or mentally challenged. Report what you learned to your den or family.
• For two one-hour periods, and with adult supervision, go about your normal routine doing chores, watching television, studying, etc. Change your abilities by using one of these experiences, then share what you learned with your den.
  • Hearing impairment—Muffle your ears with earmuffs or bandages.
  • Sight impairment—Blindfold one or both eyes.
  • Physical impairment—Bind an arm or leg so that it cannot be used
Requirements
1. Discuss with your counselor proper disability etiquette and person-first language. Explain why these are important.
2. Visit an agency that works with people with physical, mental, emotional, or educational disabilities. Collect and read information about the agency’s activities. Learn about opportunities its members have for training, employment, and education.
3. Do TWO of the following:
   1. Talk to a Scout who has a disability and learn about his experiences taking part in Scouting activities and earning different merit badges.
   2. Talk to an individual who has a disability and learn about this person's experiences and the activities in which this person likes to participate.
   3. Learn how people with disabilities take part in a particular adaptive sport or recreational activity. Discuss what you have learned with your counselor.
   4. Learn about independent living aids such as service animals, canes, and teletypewriters (TTYs). Discuss with your counselor how people use such aids.
4. Visit TWO of the following locations and take notes about the accessibility to people with disabilities. In your notes, give examples of five things that could be done to improve upon the site and five things about the site that make it friendly to people with disabilities. Discuss your observations with your counselor.
   1. Your school
   2. Your place of worship
   3. Your Scout camping site
   4. A public exhibit or attraction (such as a theater, museum, or park)
5. Explain what advocacy is. Do ONE of the following advocacy activities:
   1. Present a counselor-approved disabilities awareness program to a Cub Scout pack or other group. During your presentation, explain and use person first language.
   2. Find out about disability awareness education programs in your school or school system, or contact a disability advocacy agency. Volunteer with a program or agency for eight hours.
   3. Using resources such as disability advocacy agencies, government agencies, the Internet (with your parent’s permission), and news magazines, learn about myths and misconceptions that influence the general public’s understanding of people with disabilities. List 10 myths and misconceptions about people with disabilities and learn the facts about each myth. Share your list with your counselor, then use it to make a presentation to a Cub Scout pack or other group.
6. Make a commitment to your merit badge counselor describing what you will do to show a positive attitude about people with disabilities and to encourage positive attitudes among others. Discuss how your awareness has changed as a result of what you have learned.
7. Name five professions that provide services to people with disabilities. Pick one that interests you and find out the education, training, and experience required for this profession. Discuss what you learn with your counselor, and tell why this profession interests you.
Other Resources

Scouting for Youth with Disabilities Manual