

# Citizenship in Society Merit Badge Counselor Guidelines

**Our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Vision:** To partner with all families and communities in raising young people of high moral character, developing their leadership skills, and preparing them to serve and thrive in a world of increasing diversity, complexity, and challenge.

**Our DEI Mission:** The Boy Scouts of America promotes a culture in which every youth, volunteer, and employee feels a sense of belonging and builds communities where every person feels respected and valued. Leading by example and encouraging each other to live by the values expressed by the Scout Oath and Scout Law, we welcome families of all backgrounds and help prepare young people to serve as successful members and leaders of our nation's increasingly diverse communities.

**Our Goal:** The goal of the Citizenship in Society merit badge is to help educate Scouts on what diversity, equity, and inclusion are; why they are important; and how to lead ethically and inclusively to contribute to the cultivation of an environment of belonging for all Scouts. This merit badge is one of the educational and awareness initiatives the BSA is implementing to ensure every youth feels welcomed and wholly included, to achieve a sense of belonging with the Scouts, and to prepare them for success in our ever-evolving world.

## **Counseling the Merit Badge:**

- Unlike other merit badges, there is no Citizenship in Society merit badge pamphlet.
- Counselors should be:
  - Skilled in listening and in guiding discussions.
  - Knowledgeable in the subject matter (as determined by their local council) before meeting with Scouts.
    - Completion of the DEI volunteer training is strongly recommended for all counselors; it includes integral information on key concepts the Scouts will be studying: [https://training.scouting.org/courses/SCO\\_1800](https://training.scouting.org/courses/SCO_1800)
    - Review of the Counselor facilitation guide is necessary as it includes important information to aid in your research and preparation: [https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/diversity\\_equity\\_and\\_inclusion/Citizenship-in-Society-Merit-Badge-Counselor-Guide-2021.pdf](https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/diversity_equity_and_inclusion/Citizenship-in-Society-Merit-Badge-Counselor-Guide-2021.pdf)
  - Available to openly communicate with the Scout's parent(s)/guardian(s) if questions or discussions require their assistance.
- There is a plethora of very important and sensitive topics included for Scouts to learn about and address; it is important to be open in listening and asking questions without imparting your own feelings or views.
  - Everyone has biases that can inform how people listen, so focusing on openness, objectivity, and inclusivity is paramount.
- We feel strongly that our Scouts' understanding of different identities and abilities is integral to empowering them to help make all Scouts feel welcomed. That is the intent of this merit badge, to help achieve our vision of partnering with all families and communities in raising young people of high moral character, developing their leadership skills, and preparing them to serve and thrive in a world of increasing complexity and challenge. Citizenship involves people working together to make positive differences in the society in which they live. These goals align with our Scout Oath and Scout Law.

### What's Involved for the Scout:

- Learning key terminology.
- Understanding how diversity, equity, and inclusion relate to the Scout Oath and Scout Law.
- Evaluating scenarios to understand how they make others feel and how each person can serve as a supportive and inclusive leader who values others' thoughts and opinions.
- Collaborating with a Scout or youth from a different background to exchange information and experiences.
- Brainstorming how to optimize the welcoming environment of their Scouting units and actions they personally commit to taking.
- Documenting key recommendations to share with their counselor.

### Key Considerations as the Citizenship in Society Merit Badge Counselor:

- This merit badge does not include a pamphlet. It will require a Scout to do their own research and to dig as deeply and as detailed as the Scout desires.
- The counselor is to serve as a facilitator who draws out from the Scout what they have discovered and learned, and how they plan to put it into action. The counselor is not to interject their own opinions and beliefs but instead should consider the Scout's experience and journey into these topics. The role of the counselor is that of a skilled listener and discussion leader, as well as someone informed on key concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion through BSA-provided training and self-guided exploration.
- A safe environment must be provided for the Scout to discuss these topics and their observations without judgment. The Scout Oath and Scout Law are the appropriate boundaries to use in these discussions, and your skills as the counselor should demonstrate inclusive leadership and how to value everyone's thoughts and opinions. In addition, review the Boy Scouts of America Scouter Code of Conduct (including Youth Protection Guidelines, with which all in-person and virtual interactions must comply): <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/bsa-scouters-code-of-conduct/>
- Due to the maturity and skill needed to serve as the counselor of this badge, it is recommended that this merit badge not be offered in a summer-camp setting. It is not intended to be added onto the existing duties of summer-camp staff members or included in a class setting like a merit badge college. The intent is for the true learning to be experienced through the Scout's own research. It will work most effectively in the Scout's discussions with their merit badge counselor or in a small group setting. The goal is to have openness and depth of conversation. (This can be offered in a small group setting or with the merit badge counselor following Youth Protection two-deep leadership requirements of two adults and one youth.)

### APPENDIX - Key Terms

- **Identities** are something everyone has many of, which include, but are not limited to:
  - Race - Ethnicity - Gender - Age
  - Financial background - Mental and/or physical health and abilities
  - Religious or ethical values system - National origin - Language group
- **Diversity** is the presence of the incredible range of individual identities.
- **Equality** is the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, and opportunities.
- **Equity** in Scouting means helping to provide individuals with the resources they need to ensure their ability to access the same opportunities as everyone else.
  - What people need may differ from person to person or from community to community.
  - Equity represents impartiality and fairness by offering even opportunities.

- **Inclusion** is the action or state of including or being included within a group or structure. Inclusion involves authentic participation and a genuine sense of belonging.
  - In Scouting, inclusion denotes sharing of power within the unit through concentrated efforts to bring traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision-making.
- **Discrimination** is the act of making unjustified distinctions between human beings based on their diversity, be it groups, classes, or other categories to which they are perceived to belong. People may be *discriminated against* on the basis of race, gender, age, religion, or sexual orientation, as well as other categories.
- **Ethical** means relating to moral principles or the branch of knowledge dealing with these terms.
- **Leadership** is a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others, toward the achievement of a goal.
- **Ethical Leadership** is leadership directed by respect for ethical beliefs and values and for the dignity and rights of all others. It is thus related to concepts such as trust, honesty, consideration, empathy, and fairness.
- **Upstander** is any person who does the right thing at the right time. In Scouting, upstanders stop bullying when they see it (this means speaking up and/or getting an adult to intervene; physical altercations are not condoned or tolerated), and they support their fellow Scouts. Upstanders support equal rights and equity for all people regardless of their identities.