

## **GOOSE CREEK DISTRICT GUIDANCE MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Scout and Venturer Unit Leaders  
District Advancement Committee

**SUBJECT:** Minimum Qualifications for Selected Merit Badge Counselors

**References:**

- (1) *Advancement Committee Policies and Procedures*, BSA Publication Number 33088D.
- (2) *Guide to Safe Scouting*, BSA Publication Number 34416D.
- (3) *The District: How the District Carries Out the Operational Mission of the Council*, BSA Publication Number 33070B.

### ***BACKGROUND***

The only stated requirement specifically for merit badge counselors is that “They 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” (Reference 1, page 13). However, Reference 2 states very specific requirements for many Scout activities reflected in the merit badge program. Merit Badge instruction is considered a Scout activity and, therefore, is covered by the policies in Reference 2. The District Committee is responsible for interpreting and carrying out the advancement policies of the council (Reference 3, page 9). The Goose Creek District Committee is establishing these guidelines to make clear the minimum acceptable qualifications of merit badge counselors for selected merit badges.

### ***SCOPE***

This guidance applies to counselors for 17 different merit badges:

- (1) Aquatics related badges: Canoeing, Lifesaving, Motorboating, Rowing, Small-boat Sailing, Swimming, Waterskiing, and Whitewater;
- (2) Shooting skills related badges: Rifle Shooting and Shotgun Shooting;
- (3) Sports related merit badges: Climbing, Skating, and Snow Sports;
- (4) Health related merit badges: Dentistry, First Aid, Medicine, and Public Health.

## GUIDANCE

***Aquatics Related Badges.*** The approval of an individual to serve as a merit badge counselor assumes that there will be instruction with two or more Scouts with no other adult leaders present. Therefore, Reference 2 policy on Aquatics Safety must be met by the individual counselor. **Counselors for any of the eight aquatics related merit badges must meet the following basic requirements:**

“All swimming activity must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult **age 21 or older** who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of youth members in his or her care, who is experienced in the water and confident of his or her ability to respond in the event of an emergency, and who is **trained in** and committed to compliance with the eight points of **BSA Safe Swim Defense.**” (Emphasis added; Reference 2, page 8)

“This specialized skill [cardiopulmonary resuscitation, CPR] to endeavor to revive victims of cardiac arrest (no breathing-no pulse) may be taught to Boy Scouts and Venturers by an instructor currently trained by the American Red Cross or American Heart Association.” (Reference 2, page 32)

Evidence of meeting these qualifications will be shown on the NCAC modification to National Form 34405 (03/00), Merit Badge Counselor Information form:

- their age on page 1 (must be 21 or older);
- and a statement on page 2 that the individual has completed Safe Swim Defense Training; and,
- a statement on page 2 that he or she is currently certified for CPR by the American Red Cross or the American Heart Association.

Following are **additional requirements** for specific aquatics related merit badges.

[Canoeing, Motorboating, Rowing, Small-boat Sailing, Waterskiing, and Whitewater merit badges.](#) Counselors for any of these six merit badges must meet the policy stated as follows:

“All activity afloat must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult **age 21 or older** who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of the children in his or her care, who is experienced and **qualified in the particular watercraft skills and equipment involved** in the activity, and who is committed to compliance with the nine points of BSA Safety Afloat. One such supervisor is required for each 10 people, with a minimum of two adults for any one group. At least one supervisor must be age 21 or older, and the remaining supervisors must be age 18 or older. All supervisors **must complete BSA Safety Afloat and Safe Swim Defense training** and rescue training for the type of watercraft to be used in the activity, and at least one **must be trained in CPR.**” (emphasis added; Reference 2, page 11)

Page 2 of the Merit Badge Counselor Information form shall show additional evidence of qualifications by showing the individual

- has completed the BSA Safety Afloat training;
- the counselor should show the types and sizes of watercraft he or she has had sufficient experience by which to instruct Scouts.

**Lifesaving.** It is the strong belief of the District Committee that to ensure Scouts are instructed in safe and approved methods of aquatics lifesaving, instructors should be formally trained. Therefore, to be approved to instruct this merit badge, counselors must state on page 2 of the Merit Badge Counselor Information form that they possess a current certification as a Scout Lifeguard or a Red Cross Lifeguard.

**Swimming.** In addition to the basic requirement stated for all aquatics related merit badges, the counselor must abide by Reference 2 policy to instruct merit badge requirement 8.a.:

“At a minimum, the supervisor must possess skills and knowledge matching the Snorkeling, BSA award....” (Reference 2, page 16)

This qualification shall be stated on page 2 of the Merit Badge Counselor Information form.

**Waterskiing.** Counselors for Waterskiing merit badge must state on their Merit Badge Counselor Information form, page 2, that they have read and will follow this policy from Reference 2:

“The Water-Skier's Safety Code and Boat Driver's Safety Code are found in the Waterskiing merit badge pamphlet. These are guidelines to be followed by all those involved in the sport of waterskiing.” (Reference 2, page 19)

**Shooting Skills Related Badges.** Basic BSA policy regarding shooting skills is this:

“Boy Scouts are permitted to fire .22-caliber bolt-action, single-shot rifles, air rifles, shotguns, and muzzleloading long guns **under the direction of a certified instructor, 21 years of age or older**, within the standards outlined in current Scouting literature and bulletins. BSA policy does not permit the use of handguns in the Boy Scouting program.” (emphasis added; Reference 2, page 35)

Qualifications specifically for each badge follow.

**Rifle Shooting Merit Badge.** In addition to the age requirement, a counselor must be a currently NRA-certified rifle instructor or coach. Furthermore, if requirement 2, Option C, Muzzle-loading Rifle Shooting, is to be taught, the counselor must be a currently certified NRA/NMLRA muzzleloading rifle instructor (Reference 2, page 36).

[Shotgun Shooting Merit Badge](#). In addition to the age requirement, a counselor must be a currently NRA-certified shotgun instructor or coach Reference 2, page 36).

A counselor for either Rifle Shooting or Shotgun Shooting Merit Badge must show his or her qualifications by

- Stating their age (21 or older) on page 1 of the Merit Badge Counselor Information form; and,
- Identify on page 2 of the information form their certification as an instructor appropriate to the badge, as described above.

### *Sports Related Merit Badges*

[Climbing Merit Badge](#). Following is the BSA policy for climbing and rappelling activities:

“A qualified rock climbing instructor who is **at least 21 years of age** must supervise all BSA climbing/rappelling activities. A currently trained BSA climbing director or instructor is highly recommended. Contact your local council or regional service center to locate a qualified individual. **The climbing instructor has successfully completed a minimum of 10 hours of instructor training for climbing/rappelling from a nationally or regionally recognized organization, a climbing school, a college-level climbing/rappelling course, or is a qualified BSA climbing instructor.**” (emphasis added; Reference 2, page 40)

”Every instructor **must have prior experiences in teaching climbing/rappelling to youth and must agree to adhere to Climb On Safely and the guidelines set in Topping Out.**” (emphasis added; Reference 2, page 41)

A counselor for Climbing Merit Badge must show his or her qualifications by

- Stating their age (21 or older) on page 1 of the Merit Badge Counselor Information form;
- Identify on page 2 of the information form their successful completion of training as required;
- Identify on page 2 of the form their prior experience teaching climbing to youth; and,
- State they have read and agree to Climb on Safely and the guidelines set in Topping Out.

[Cycling](#). Following is BSA policy regarding cycling activities:

“All unit, district, council, and national event activities must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult **at least age 21** who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the safety of children in his or her care, **who is experienced with the skills and equipment involved in the activity**, and who is **committed to compliance with these BSA safety guidelines.**” (emphasis added; Reference 2, page 45)

A counselor for Cycling Merit Badge must show his or her qualifications by

- Stating their age (21 or older) on page 1 of the Merit Badge Counselor Information form;
- Describing on page 2 of the form their previous experience with bicycles and bicycling as a sport; and
- Stating on page 2 of the information form that they have read, understand, and will comply with the BSA safety guidelines as listed in Reference 2.

Skating Merit Badge. Following is BSA policy regarding skating activities:

“BSA skating at any level shall be supervised by an adult **at least 21 years of age, experienced in the use of skates and skateboards,**” (emphasis added; Reference 2, page 46)

A counselor for Skating Merit Badge must show his or her qualifications by

- Stating their age (21 or older) on page 1 of the Merit Badge Counselor Information form; and,
- Describing on page 2 of the form their previous experience with skates and skateboards.

Snow Sports Merit Badge. Following is BSA policy regarding winter sports safety:

“All winter activities must be supervised by mature and conscientious adults (at least one of whom must be **age 21 or older**) who understand and knowingly accept responsibility for the well-being and safety of the youth in their care, who are **experienced and qualified in the particular skills and equipment involved in the activity,** and who are committed to **compliance with the seven points of BSA Winter Sports Safety.**” (emphasis added; Reference 2, page 55)

A counselor for Snow Sports Merit Badge must show his or her qualifications by

- Stating their age (21 or older) on page 1 of the Merit Badge Counselor Information form;
- Describing on page 2 of the form their specific experience in the skills required by the merit badge; and,
- Stating on page 2 of the information form that they have read, understand, and will comply with the seven points of BSA Winter Sports Safety as listed in Reference 2.

### ***Health Related Merit Badges***

**Dentistry Merit Badge.** The District Committee strongly believes that proper instruction for Dentistry Merit Badge must be performed by a person trained in a dental profession. Therefore, a counselor for this merit badge must identify on page 2 of the Merit Badge Counselor Information form that he or she is a licensed dentist, a dental assistant, or a dental hygienist.

**First Aid Merit Badge.** The District Committee strongly believes that proper instruction for First Aid Merit Badge must be performed by a person trained in a medical profession or as a First Responder Life Saver. Therefore, a counselor for this merit badge must identify on page 2 of the Merit Badge Counselor Information form that he or she is a licensed physician, a licensed physician’s assistant, a nurse practitioner, a registered nurse, a certified Emergency Medical Technician, or has passed and is currently certified by the American Red Cross for its Adult CPR/AED with First Aid course (8 hours).

**Medicine Merit Badge.** The District Committee strongly believes that proper instruction for Medicine Merit Badge must be performed by a person trained in a medical profession. Therefore, a counselor for this merit badge must identify on page 2 of the Merit Badge Counselor Information form that he or she is a licensed physician, a licensed physician’s assistant, a nurse practitioner, or a registered nurse.

**Public Health Merit Badge.** The District Committee strongly believes that proper instruction for Public Health Merit Badge must be performed by a person trained in a medical profession. Therefore, a counselor for this merit badge must identify on page 2 of the Merit Badge Counselor Information form that he or she is a licensed physician, a licensed physician’s assistant, a nurse practitioner, or a registered nurse.

### ***APPLICABILITY***

The guidance contained herein applies to all merit badge counselors for the badges stated for those counselors to be approved by Goose Creek District. Unit leaders recruiting counselors for the merit badges listed under “Scope” are to follow these guidelines prior to submitting applications to the District and the NCAC. The District Advancement Committee is the final authority for approving the qualifications of a merit badge counselor (Reference 1, page 14). The Advancement Committee shall follow these guidelines.

***EFFECTIVE DATE***

This guidance is effective immediately for all new merit badge counselors for one of the badges listed herein (including any existing counselor who is adding one of these badges to their portfolio). Counselors for these badges already on the list of approved district merit badge counselors, or whose paperwork has been submitted for approval, are not affected for the remainder of this annual term ending May 31, 2005. Present counselors for these badges must meet these guidelines upon renewal of their district certification effective June 1, 2005, and must submit a new Merit Badge Information form for the badges concerned.

/tbs/  
David R. Parker  
District Committee Chairman  
Goose Creek District, NCAC - BSA

[ insert date ]

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