PROGRAM PHILOSOPHIES**Equal Opportunities**

Every Child, Every Family, Everywhere guides the inclusive, fully non-discriminatory nature of the Scout Programs of Adventure Scouts USA.

Every activity and element of the Scout Programs of Adventure Scouts USA are guided by the spirit of inclusion and not merely the strict application of policies and practices.

Everyone shall receive equal treatment. There shall be no exceptions. It is the behavior of an individual that must be evaluated, rather than their identity. The only standard for determining whether a member cannot participate on a particular team is whether the team cannot function because of that individual's participation or their behavior presents a potential threat to the health and safety of others. Care should be undertaken to ensure there are strong and compelling reasons to refuse participation on a particular team because often a challenging situation when handled properly can benefit the Scout and the team.

Equal opportunity and equal participation are the core of the Scout Promise, Scout Code, Scout Motto, and Scout Spirit of the Scout Programs of Adventure Scouts USA. In an effort to bridge all communities, we shall actively encourage the inclusion of all.

It is important that each person is seen as an individual, and that they are regarded equally, whatever their differences.

With a respect that there are differences between individuals, every effort shall be made to encourage each person to realize their full potential.

Extra resources or equipment shall be sought for persons requiring them for their participation.

Family Participation

Family members, including grandparents and extended family, are encouraged to attend all activities and participate when appropriate.

Siblings of members who are present, particularly those who are younger, are encouraged to participate.

We promote strong families and strengthen family values.

We welcome families regardless of how they are comprised.

The Scout Programs of Adventure Scouts USA are family oriented.

Adventure Scouts USA Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion

The Scout Programs of Adventure Scouts USA recognize freedom of thought, conscience, and religion and enables our Scouts to learn more about their religious or worldview convictions and fulfill their responsibilities and supports our Scouts in their effort to develop a spiritual approach to life, and to gain knowledge about their religious or worldview convictions. Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion includes the right to manifest religious or worldview convictions in practice and observance, in private or in a community.

Our Scout Programs respect that one's faith or worldview, heritage and ethics are a primary source of inner strength and contribute to the values that shape one's character.

The Scout Programs of Adventure Scouts USA are Scout Programs dedicated to inclusion and welcoming everyone regardless of religious or worldview convictions.

Every member of the Scout Programs of Adventure Scouts USA shall show tolerance and respect for the religious convictions or worldview of others which meet our standards of mutual respect.

The Scout Programs of Adventure Scouts USA respect that an individual's religion or worldview and its manner of expression is a deeply personal experience and recognizes their importance to its membership.

The Scout Programs of Adventure Scouts USA respect the character and religions convictions or worldview instilled in our Scouts by their parents.

While any religious practice which meets our standards of mutual respect is welcome in Adventure Scouts USA, no religious or worldview practice may become an official part of our Scout Programs unless everyone present is of the same faith or worldview and participates in their faith or worldview at the same level. Alternatively, teams break up into smaller groups to pray. Those holding a worldview do the same. Those who do not wish to participate can form a group of their own.**Mutual Respect**

Adventure Scouts USA welcomes the participation of individuals of all spiritual practices who:

Respect the religion or worldview of members and others,

Respect that people might have differing spiritual insights and practices,

Respect and obey the law,

Live peacefully with all others.

Adventure Scouts USA respects the religious convictions or worldview of all, and does not intrude into the deeply personal experience of an individual's religious convictions or worldview, we do not advocate or promote, or permit the advocacy or promotion, of any particular religion or worldview. Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion does not permit free speech to become harassment. When an invitation to discuss a topic or join a group has been issued and the answer is "no", that is the end of it.

Religious Practices

Individual religious practices, like group prayers or the sharing of religious readings, may be practiced at the option of individuals so long as:

The practice can be an official part of our Scout Programs, but shall not isolate, make someone feel isolated or awkward, or otherwise discriminate against a member on the basis of his/her religious practice or lack thereof.

The practice does not otherwise violate Adventure Scouts USA Scout Program policies including Scout Program Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion.

If an individual is or would otherwise feel isolated by a practice, the practice shall be broadened to encourage participation and avoid isolation.

For example, if an individual is one faith and the others present are all of another, then the prayers chosen shall be inclusive.

In another example, if there is uncertainty regarding whether an individual practices a faith, then care must be undertaken to ensure the individual is not isolated.

Under any and all circumstances all participation or form of participation is always at the discretion of the individual.

When a team is composed of members of one particular form of religion, the Team Counselor shall consult with religious leadership to arrange religious observance as may be considered best.

Any form of prayer or worship should be of the simplest character; attendance being voluntary and it being understood that those not attending will spend the time according to their own beliefs or thoughts.

Non-religious inspirational and motivational gatherings are acceptable and may be an official part of programs.

Where it is not permissible under a rule of religion for any Scout to attend religious observances other than those of his or her own form of religion, Counselors must see that this rule is strictly observed while a youth-aged Scout is under their control.

Chaplains

Where the structure of a religious body allows, a Senior Chaplain may be appointed to perform the following functions:

Supervision and coordination of religious training in Scout teams sponsored by that particular religious body,

Arrangement of appointments of Team Chaplains,

Arrangement, where possible, for the religious training of Scouts of the Chaplain’s denomination in teams.

Where the structure of a religious body allows, Regional and Area Chaplains may be appointed to carry out the functions of a Senior Chaplain under that person’s direction in a defined area.

Where the structure of a religious body allows, Team Chaplains may be appointed to carry out the functions of the Religious Principles.

The position of Chaplain, at any level, may be conferred on any minister of religion including lay preachers and other authorized lay workers, on the recommendation of the controlling authority of the religious body concerned.

Before appointment, Chaplains are expected to familiarize themselves with:

The policies and guidelines of the Scout Programs of Adventure Scouts USA

The Program Philosophies of Adventure Scouts USA

Chaplains may wear the uniform of Scouters if they so desire.

Under no circumstances may a Counselor urge Scouts to attend places of worship other than those of their own form of religion except with permission from parents and the religious bodies concerned.

Politics

The Scout Programs of Adventure Scouts USA are not connected with any political party or body and are non-partisan.

Every member shall have individual freedom of thought and action in political matters, provided that the aims of any political party to which he or she may give allegiance shall not conflict with those expressed in the policies and guidelines of Adventure Scouts USA. Election to political office does not alter the right to membership in our Scout Programs.

No member of Adventure Scouts USA shall influence or involve the Scout Movement in any question of political nature. Nor shall they appear in uniform at any meeting, gathering, or other occasion of a political nature, unless the activity directly encourages responsible citizenship.

Nothing in this section shall be interpreted to prevent Adventure Scouts USA from exercising its lawful opinion relating to governmental policy.

Awards and Commendations

No one shall be given preferential treatment nor denied awards or commendations nor asked to leave Adventure Scouts USA or any of its programs because of his/her religion or worldview or lack thereof, so long as the practice of that belief or worldview does not violate Adventure Scouts USA Scout Program Religious Principles.

Adventure Scouts USA shall offer on a voluntary basis, opportunities for a Scout to earn awards in recognition of their pursuit of knowledge regarding their faith or worldview.

Adult Participation With Youth-Aged Scouts

Our Scouts choose, organize, and lead their own meetings, programs and activities, as per the philosophy of Adventure Scouts USA.

Therefore, the participation by all team counselors and counselors shall counsel, only when appropriate, intervening only for the protection of health and safety. Consequently, all team counselors and counselors shall shadow the Scouts and their activities.

Appreciation of Scout Participation

The goal is for Scouts to have fun, and to grow as individuals. Scouts should be encouraged to meaningful participate in all activities and parts of the Scout Program.

Their participation permits growth via personal achievement, learning by doing or by holding a leadership position; however, they are not required to do more than meaningfully participate, and must not be pressured to do more than they desire to do.

Meaningful participation by and in itself is okay.

Not every Scout in the Scout Programs of Adventure Scouts USA needs to hold a leadership position.

Not every Scout must aspire to earn the highest award of the Scout Program they are a member of.

While it is desirable to suggest a Scout’s participation in the Personal Achievement Program or holding a leadership position, and to fully discuss their advantages, it is unacceptable to pressure the Scout when they have already decided they don’t want to. Ultimately, the decision rests with the Scout.**Fair Play**

Every person’s participation must be valued. Ideally, every person should meaningfully participate in each activity. For example, if there are ten people, then every person should be involved. No one should ever hear the phrase “You cannot participate.”

National Standard

All Teams and units of the Adventure Scouts USA Scout Program shall operate using the same National Standards.