

## Information for Merit Badge Counselor Applicants



The merit badge counselor is a key player in the Boy Scout advancement program. Whatever your area of expertise or interest—whether it is a special craft or hobby (basketry, leatherwork, coin collecting), a profession (veterinary medicine, aviation, engineering), or perhaps a life skill (cooking, personal management, communications)—as a merit badge counselor, you can play a vital role in stirring a young man's curiosity about that particular topic. By serving as a merit badge counselor, you offer your time, knowledge, and other resources so that Scouts can explore a topic of interest.

In order to meet the basic requirements to serve as a Merit Badge counselor, you must be **at least 18 years of age**; be of **good moral character**; have some **education, background, expertise, or experience** in the subject or subjects you choose to counsel; and have the **ability and desire to work with boys** of Scouting age.

***As a merit badge counselor, your mission is to join fun with learning. You are both a teacher and mentor to the Scout as he works on a merit badge and learns by doing.***

There are five basic steps to becoming a Merit Badge Counselor (MBC):

**1. Review the materials for Merit Badge Counselors found at these links:**

[Merit Badges - basic information](#) – with a current list of merit badges and their requirements

[A Guide for Merit Badge Counseling](#)

Read all of the requirements for any badge that may interest you, or that you feel you would qualify to teach through your own education, experience, or knowledge. Choose the ones that you would like to counsel. Talk to Scout leaders to ascertain which badges their boys may need or want.

**2. Complete a [BSA Adult Application](#) to register with the Boy Scouts of America (also available in [Spanish](#)).**

A separate application form is required for each BSA leadership position, so one is required to become a Merit Badge Counselor, even though you may be currently registered in another position. The application can be either obtained from the Five Rivers Council Scout Shop/Service Center in the Arnot Mall in Horseheads, NY, from a troop, or by downloading the form using the colored link above. You may print the blank form, or type in the information online and then print the completed form. All Merit Badge counselors are registered at the district level, whether the individual counsels all Scouts or Scouts in one troop only. The position is “42 – Merit Badge Counselor.”

The application must include your signature twice, once on the Disclosure/Authorization Form (page 4, giving permission for a criminal background check) and once on the bottom of page 5. All information must be complete, including the personal history and contact information for three reference people. This form does not require any signatures by troop leaders, as MBC is a district position. This application cannot be submitted directly online, but it can be scanned (pages 4 & 5), and emailed to the Advancement Chair, as listed on the next page.

Note that individuals must submit verification of BSA Youth Protection Training (step #3, below) with any leadership application. Also note that every applicant is screened to insure adherence to BSA Membership Standards.

**2. Complete BSA Youth Protection Training at <https://www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection/>**

The Boy Scouts of America seeks to create a safe environment for young people and adult leaders to enjoy the program and related activities. BSA Youth Protection Training helps preserve that environment. YPT training is usually taken online at the colored link above but can be completed through a local training session as needed (through your District Training Chairman).

After completing the training, be sure to print/scan a copy of your BSA Youth Protection Training completion certificate to include with items in steps 2 & 4. You must have completed Youth Protection training within the past two years at the time of application.

If you reside in Pennsylvania or work with a unit based in PA, you will need the Act 153 clearances as noted on our council page under the [“Youth Protection”](#) tab. Copies of the clearances must be filed with your application.

#### 4. Complete a [BSA Merit Badge Counselor Information Form](#) to apply to be a counselor for specific merit badges.

To download this file, please use the colored link above. You may print the blank form, or type in the information online and then print the completed form. This application cannot be submitted directly online, but it can be scanned and emailed to the Advancement Chair.

The Five Rivers Council (FRC) strongly recommends a person select no more than eight (8) Merit Badge subjects, up to three (3) of which may be Eagle-required badges. Badges in excess of these numbers require Council Advancement Committee consideration and/or approval at its next quarterly meeting.

You have the option of counseling boys in a specific troop or boys from any/all troops. The FRC desires and encourages you to counsel Scouts from all troops, as the best experience for a Scout is exposure to a variety of merit badge counselors for diversity in adult contacts. Again, the spirit of the program is to expose the Scout to a wide circle of adults to help broaden his perspectives. ONLY check the third box on the lower portion of the form ("I agree to work only with Scouts in these units") if you are strongly opposed to counseling all Scouts who request your services.

#### 5. Submit a completed BSA Adult Application (step 2) with your certificate of completion of Youth Protection Training (step 3) and a completed Merit Badge Counselor Application (step 4) to your district advancement committee.

There are specific requirements for counselors who desire to counsel merit badges for shooting sports (Archery, Rifle Shooting, Shotgun Shooting), waterfront sports (Canoeing, Kayaking, Lifesaving, Rowing, Scuba Diving, Swimming, Whitewater), Climbing, or Snow Sports. Applicants for these badges should attach copies of their licenses or certifications to support their knowledge in the subject. Details on general and specific qualifications can be found in the [2017 Guide to Advancement](#), Section 7.0.1.1.

Once the above items have been completed, they should be addressed to one of the names below and either (a) scanned/emailed directly to one of the following District Advancement representatives [the most expedient method]; (b) given to your District Executive for delivery; or (c) turned in or mailed to the Five Rivers Council Service Center at the Arnot Mall in Horseheads. Questions about the Merit Badge program may be addressed to these representatives as well.

Andaste District – Linda Neiley, [andastembc@outlook.com](mailto:andastembc@outlook.com); 570-746-1865

Indian Waters District – Debbie Rohde, [rohdedf@aol.com](mailto:rohdedf@aol.com); 607-562-3704

Thunderbird District – Nancy Potter, [npotter50@stny.rr.com](mailto:npotter50@stny.rr.com); 607-698-4038

Williamson Road District – Connie Cummings, [irrdesign@verizon.net](mailto:irrdesign@verizon.net), 814-367-8093

Once the Advancement representative has received a merit badge application, it will be reviewed to assure it is complete. A common error is the failure to **list the applicant's qualifications to counsel each particular merit badge**; this is a critical factor in the application. Please take time to list your detailed qualifications on this form or an additional sheet, as the form has very limited space. You will be contacted directly should there be any questions or missing data.

New Merit Badge counselors may not begin working with Scouts until approval is received from the District Advancement representative. You may begin counseling after you have been notified that your application has been processed and accepted.

Each counselor's name and contact information will be printed in the district's Merit Badge Counselor List, which is distributed to each Troop and Crew at least annually. This is a semi-confidential list and is used only for the purpose of assisting Scouts in locating Merit Badge Counselors with whom to work. You may contact your district representative anytime to update your contact information.

Counselors are free to work with as many Scouts as they feel they can handle, and may turn down any request they receive. It is expected that all MBCs will become familiar with the MBC role prior to instructing any merit badges in one of these three ways: (1) attend a local training session of "**The Essentials of Merit Badge Counseling**," (2) follow the [Online Merit Badge Counselor Training Instructions](#) or (3) take the online training at [my.scouting.org](http://my.scouting.org) (if experienced with BSA online trainings). These courses are the official training courses for the MBC position and so will be recorded on your training record; they have no expiration date.

To assure that you are counseling with the most updated materials and requirements, please check [Introduction to Merit Badges \(Includes Current Merit Badge List & Requirements\)](#) regularly for such updates. Pamphlets for each merit badge are sold through the council Service Center at the Arnot Mall.

Your position of Merit Badge Counselor is renewed each year during the district's re-chartering process. A district representative will contact you to assure that you wish to continue in this role. Your Youth Protection Training certification must be renewed every two years to remain current and allow you to continue counseling boys.