

Implementing the New Teacher and Priest Activities

On May 11, 2017, the Church announced that it would withdraw from Varsity Scouting and Venture programs sponsored by the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), effective December 31, 2017. As stake presidencies, bishoprics, and stake and ward Young Men presidencies make this change, it is important for them to counsel together and make plans based on a thorough review of the activity principles and guidelines, available at ymactivities.lds.org. In addition, these leaders should review the following questions and answers.

General Implementation

1. Where do we find the materials describing the new teacher and priest activities?

The First Presidency letter, activity principles and guidelines, and activity ideas are available at ymactivities.lds.org.

2. Will teacher- and priest-age young men continue to participate in high-adventure activities?

Yes. High-adventure, overnight, and youth conference activities for teacher- and priest-age young men are planned and held at the discretion of local priesthood leaders. Such activities build strength and character. Young men need these activities, which will continue to be an essential part of activities for young men ages 14–18. Activities should be planned and approved as instructed in *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [2010], 13. Activity ideas can be found at ymactivities.lds.org.

3. How soon can we begin implementation?

Units may begin implementation of the new teacher and priest activities anytime after June 1, 2017, as directed by bishops.

4. How will the new teacher and priest activities affect the role of stake Young Men presidencies?

Stake Young Men presidencies should become very familiar with the activity principles and guidelines. They should also study the principles in the current Young Men auxiliary training, available at ymactivities.lds.org. Under the direction of bishops, they may instruct and support ward leaders in understanding and successfully implementing the new activities. Stake Young Men presidencies will still

be involved in supporting Scouting for young men ages 12–13 and those young men from ages 14–18 who choose to participate. (See *Handbook 2*, 15.4.1.)

5. Will leaders serving as Varsity Coaches or Venturing Advisors be released?

Yes. Leaders called as Varsity Coaches or Venturing Advisors should be released by December 31, 2017. In most cases these leaders will continue to serve as quorum advisers or assistant quorum advisers. After December 31, 2017, adult leaders assisting youth with rank advancement should be registered with the BSA as assistant Scoutmasters or merit badge counselors.

6. Will the Church still have access to BSA facilities for priesthood encampments and high-adventure activities?

As in the past, local units may work with BSA councils to rent or lease BSA facilities for priesthood encampments and other outdoor activities. Local councils may have additional insurance requirements to allow for this use.

Eagle Scout Progression and Registration

7. Can young men who are teachers or priests continue to earn their Eagle Scout Award?

Young men who have the personal desire to continue toward the rank of Eagle Scout should be registered with the BSA and should be supported and encouraged by parents and by quorum and Young Men leaders.

8. How will the new activities affect registration with the BSA?

All young men who were previously registered with the BSA will be included on the 2018 registration forms that come from the BSA. This will help ward leaders register 12- and 13-year-old boys with the BSA and make it easier for young men to choose to continue to pursue rank advancement. Young men can be removed from BSA registration if they will not be pursuing rank advancement and if leaders confirm that the young men and their parents desire this. If there is any question, young men should be registered. Adult leaders in teachers and priests quorums who are assisting young men with rank advancement should be registered with the BSA as assistant Scoutmasters or merit badge counselors.

NOTE: Leaders should not share stake or ward MLS or LCR lists of young men or adult leaders with any outside entity, including the BSA. However, a roster of the registered youth in a Scouting unit can still be used in rechartering, as directed in the *Scouting Handbook for Church Units in the United States* [2015], 8.3.

9. How will young men be able to fulfill the leadership and other requirements to continue advancement in Scouting?

When a young man is still involved in Scouting after age 14, leaders should ensure that leadership opportunities are provided within a patrol in the registered Scout troop.

Safety and Insurance

10. Are there safety requirements or guidelines for Church-sponsored activities?

The Church continues to teach principles of safety and encourage ward and stake priesthood, auxiliary, and activity leaders to apply these principles based on their local needs and conditions (see First Presidency letter, May 12, 2017, and safety.lds.org). Priesthood, auxiliary, and activity leaders need to use these principles to carefully assess and address potential risks before approving and carrying out activities (see *Handbook 2*, 13.6.20, 13.6.9).

11. How will high-adventure activities—such as climbing, rappelling, white-water rafting, and kayaking—be approved and managed in order to minimize risk?

Local units should counsel together and follow the safety guidelines for outdoor activities set forth in the First Presidency letter, May 12, 2017, and *Handbook 2*, 13.6.20. For example, “When activities require specific physical skills or experience, then additional planning, organization, and preparation are required. It may be necessary to obtain specialized training or use professional guides.” Leaders should also follow the guidelines at safety.lds.org.

12. Are Church activities required to have two-deep leadership?

Yes. “At least two adult supervisors should be present at every activity” (First Presidency letter, May 12, 2017). In order to protect youth and leaders, situations where a young person and an adult meet one-on-one should be avoided and discouraged.

13. Do adult leaders of teacher- and priest-age young men need to complete the Youth Protection certification every two years?

If leaders of teacher- and priest-age young men are registered with the BSA and are supporting young men as they pursue rank advancement, then these leaders must complete Youth Protection certification training.

14. When leaders plan local activities for youth, do they still file tour plans?

No. The BSA Tour and Activity Plan form was discontinued as of April 1, 2017. However, planning and preparation before an activity is essential for safe activities. The Activity Plan form (33809) is a helpful resource for leaders as they plan and get approval for activities.

15. Is there financial assistance available to participants in Church-sponsored activities who are injured or who incur medical expenses?

Where personal health and accident insurance is available, participants in Church-sponsored activities (including Scouting) are responsible to access all available benefits provided through such insurance

if they are injured during an activity. Participants are also eligible for Church Activity Medical Assistance (CAMA), which provides secondary financial assistance in case of an accident or injury during a Church-sponsored activity. (See *Handbook 2*, 13.6.9; *Scouting Handbook for Church Units in the United States*, 8.22.)

16. How should leaders report injuries or serious health issues that occur during Church-sponsored activities?

If the accident occurs during a Scouting activity, follow all of the instructions found in the *Scouting Handbook for Church Units in the United States*, 8.11.

If the accident occurs during a Church-sponsored activity, follow the instructions found in *Handbook 2*, 13.6.20.

17. Are there any changes in liability insurance coverage for leaders of Church-sponsored activities and Scouting activities?

The answer to this question depends on the leaders' circumstances. Individuals who are registered with the BSA as leaders of a Cub or Scout unit will continue to have access to primary liability insurance coverage through the BSA. However, when units begin using the new activities, leaders of teachers and priests will no longer have this insurance coverage unless an individual teacher or priest and his leader are registered with the BSA. The following policy on liability insurance applies to all Church-sponsored activities that are not connected with Scouting: "The Church does not typically purchase primary liability insurance but uses Church funds to defend and pay claims. On a case-by-case basis, the Church may assist those who are sued in connection with Church activities. The Church will attempt to exhaust all available coverage before using Church funds" (*Scouting Handbook for Church Units in the United States*, 8.21). This policy has been in place for all Young Women activities and combined youth activities for some time.