National Capital Area Advancement and Recognition Committee Guidance on Advancement During COVID-19
Revision 3
(Updated with BSA guidance as of May 14, 2020)
(https://www.scouting.org/coronavirus/covid-19-faq/)

This guidance provides districts and units within the National Capital Area Council guidance and answers too many of the questions being asked during the COVID-19 crisis. This revision aligns, as best we can, with Virginia, Maryland, and District of Columbia executive orders, BSA and NCAC guidance, and many of your questions. This information will be posted on the NCAC website under Advancement and distributed widely to districts and unit leaders. If you have a question or need clarification, your district leaders should be your primary source for answers.

Any of the following items preceded by an * have been updated in Revision 3. All other text remains the same.

Scout / Adult Meetings (see Guidelines for Virtual Meetings - https://weownadventure.com/ncac-guidance-on-virtual-meetings-with-youth/)

- Merit Badges, Unit Leader Conferences, Boards of Review for Tenderfoot through Life
    - o * All in-person meetings for rank advancement, merit badges, unit leader conferences, or boards of review should follow local (State, County and/or Municipality) guidance and should conform to Chartered Organization standards and practices. Before scheduling an event, review the latest government and chartered organization requirements for your location
    - o * Any meetings in support of these activities may be conducted via video-conferencing, telephone, or other electronic means if in-person contact is not possible; units and counselors may elect to hold virtual sessions, even if in-person contact is allowed, in order to include individuals that might benefit from virtual sessions or to reduce risk
    - o Ensure youth protection policies and guidance are observed at all times
    - o Of the carriers we surveyed, currently only Zoom complies with our age requirements; check with your carriers for compliance before choosing
        - ▪ Zoom - https://zoom.us/ allows for users under 13, is in use for K-12 programs and is broadly approved for use in schools
            - The free Zoom account is limited to 40-minutes
            - A unit can create one plan with a single host for its activities, provided that only one meeting at a time is scheduled
        - ▪ Avoid sharing usernames and passwords, especially for individual meetings; consider using a new email account tied to the troop committee or leader that is not used for other accounts
    - o Meeting Guidelines and Rules
        - ▪ Meeting Password – Require meeting password so the meeting is secure

- Audio – Use of computer audio is best, so you can clearly understand who is speaking and listening as they are required to login
- Meeting Options - Disable the Join Before Host feature so early callers cannot access before required adult supervision is present
- The moderator can control muting for all participants; the moderator can designate a co-host to provide administrative support
- Enable waiting room to keep early arrivals in a queue. You can then add everyone when the adult supervision requirement is met
- IMPORTANT - Session recording
  - If the meeting consists only of adults (e.g., teaching a skill, event planning, etc.) then the session may be recorded for future use
  - If youth appear on camera in any capacity do not record the session/meeting
  - See https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/se-packet/2020-03-30/Digital-Safety-Advisory-for-local-councils-FINAL-3-27-2020.pdfhttps://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/se-packet/2020-03-30/Digital-Safety-Advisory-for-local-councils-FINAL-3-27-2020.pdf for the BSA's Amended Recording Policy
- * Breakout Rooms - All breakout rooms for youth must have at least one registered adult and either another registered adult or a parent/legal guardian of a participating Scout

o Additional ZOOM Settings - adjust the settings here – https://zoom.us/profile/setting
- Host video — ENABLE
- Participants video — ENABLE
- Join before host — DISABLE
- Embed password in meeting link for one-click join — ENABLE
- Require password for participants joining by phone — ENABLE
- Mute participants upon entry — ENABLE
- Chat — ENABLE
- Prevent participants from saving chat — DISABLE
- Private chat — DISABLE
- Autosaving chats — ENABLE
- Automatically save all in-meeting chats so that hosts do not need to manually save the text file — ENABLE
- Allow host to put attendee on hold — ENABLE
- Allow hosts to temporarily remove an attendee from the meeting. — ENABLE
- Screen sharing — ENABLE
- Remote control — DISABLE
- Breakout room – ENABLE if enough adults present for patrol or den meetings (or set up separate online meetings for this)
- Far end camera control — DISABLE

- Identify guest participants in the meeting/webinar
- Waiting room — ENABLE
- Show a "Join from your browser" link — ENABLE
- Mask phone number in the participant list — ENABLE
- Guidelines for other platforms
  - Check the terms and conditions for the online service to make sure that the service allows for users under the age of 13
  - Online meetings require the presence of adults to be in compliance with BSA Policy. Be sure to review the Guide to Safe Scouting for adult Supervision requirements — https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/gss01/

Rank Advancement

- The BSA implemented temporary changes, detailed here, to allow Scouts to complete some rank requirements through First Class by video conferencing through September 1, 2020 and will be re-evaluated as needed
- The goal when using video conferencing must be to preserve the ideals and intent of each requirement as best possible
- Scoutmasters or their designee(s) should remain mindful of the Methods of Scouting, such as the Patrol Method, before implementing the modified requirements
- All virtual campouts and activities should consist of as many elements found on a normal outdoor campout or activity as possible; the most significant difference is that patrol or troop members are not all in the same location
- Parents or guardians may send advancement work on behalf of their child

Merit Badge Requirements and Virtual Visits / Campouts

- It is important to remember that leaders and merit badge counselors must not make additions or deletions to requirements
- Merit badge counselors and leaders must follow the published guidelines found in the Guide to Advancement, Section 7.0 (The Merit Badges Program)
- The Scout is expected to meet the requirements as stated; however, in some cases, virtual "visits" may fulfill the intent of a requirement
- * When the requirement's intent cannot be reached virtually, the requirements cannot be completed, and the Scout must seek an opportunity to complete the badge in the presence of a counselor.
  - The use of virtual is going to vary from unit to unit, so NCAC recommends a counselor work closely with the unit to determine if an event should count towards a merit badge
  - The counselor should look at what is going to be or was accomplished and whether it meets the intent of the requirement (e.g., did the Scout demonstrate the intended outcome, etc.)

Merit Badge Group Instruction Guidelines

- Approvals - refer to the NCAC Policy on Merit Badge Group Instruction summarized here
    - o A troop or crew can use group instruction of merit badges within their unit without seeking approval from the council or district
    - o If a unit decides to offer a merit badge opportunity to Scouts outside their unit (does not apply to a pair of Family Scouting troops), an individual counselor can solicit Scouts, or the district may sponsor the event; in either case, the counselor must get district advancement committee approval to conduct the event
    - o The district advancement committee needs the opportunity to ensure compliance with the GTA guidance on group instruction, including a review of the material for the course
- Blue Cards
    - o An e-mail from the unit leader will suffice as the first signature for the Scout on a blue card – it is simply an acknowledgement that the unit leader has discussed the merit badge with the Scout and he has recommended at least one counselor
    - o * For NCAC sponsored merit badge classes, a letter of completion or partial completion will be provided through Basecamp for the Scout to download
    - o For unit merit badges, blue cards can be exchanged once unit meetings restart
- Group Size
    - o Each counselor is responsible for determining the best class size for their badge
        - ▪ Set the size to ensure each Scout receives high-quality, personal instruction and benefits from the counselor's unique knowledge
        - ▪ Don't focus on the number of Scouts who can take a class or complete a badge
    - o Regardless of group size, each Scout must still "actually and personally" fulfill each requirement
    - o For larger groups, multiple qualified instructors may be necessary to assist the primary merit badge counselor in order to ensure Scouts receive individual attention
        - ▪ Additional instructors should be knowledgeable about the merit badge subject, but they do not necessarily need to be registered as merit badge counselors
- Completing Requirements
    - o Make certain each Scout personally completes each requirement; some ideas to accomplish this are:
        - ▪ Create a Gmail address for Scouts to send written work
        - ▪ Use Zoom (see below) to view each Scout completing a task
        - ▪ Use Zoom (see below) with conversation muting to listen to each Scout provide the answer to a requirement
    - o Group instruction does not mean group testing
    - o Each Scout must complete each requirement as written, without exception
- Worksheets
    - o Counselors can use worksheets to assign work on some types of requirements to Scouts
    - o Scout may also use worksheets to refresh their memory during testing on requirements
    - o Completing an entire worksheet does not constitute completing a merit badge

Merit Badges On-Line (see Guidelines for Virtual Meetings - https://weownadventure.com/ncac-guidance-on-virtual-meetings-with-youth/)

- Merit badge counselors should follow the guidelines in the Guide to Advancement (GTA) Section 7, Guide to Safe Scouting, and BSA's social media guidelines
- Cyber Chip – not required to participate in an on-line merit badge course, just a good idea
  - For Grades 6 – 8 - Complete requirements 1 - 3 at home with a parent
    - https://www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection/cyber-chip/grades-6-8/
    - Requirement 4 can be done in a small group
    - Requirement 5 is done with the unit leader
  - For Grades 9 – 12 – Complete requirements 1 - 4 at home with a parent
    - https://www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection/cyber-chip/grades-9-12/
    - Requirement 5 can be done in a small group
    - Requirement 6 is done with the unit leader
  - * Youth should earn or renew their Cyber Chip prior to participating
  - Instruct Scouts to use public communication methods or to include a parent/guardian for all communication with adults

Lone Scouts

- Requests to re-designate Scouts as Lone Scouts will not be approved for the purposes of effecting advancement requirements during COVID-19

Registration Beyond the Age of Eligibility

- No change to the process

Active Participation

- Time missed due to canceled unit meetings still counts
- Be sure Scout is registered and in good standing
- The Covid-19 virus is considered a "noteworthy circumstance" - GTA Topic 4.2.3.1

Positions of Responsibility

- Units may need to waive normal responsibilities or rethink expectations.
  - Units must credit the Scout with time served
  - Lack of unit activity because of COVID-19 cannot be held against the Scout
- Youth must not be held to unestablished expectations or expectations impossible to fulfill
- See GTA Topic 4.2.3.4, "Positions of Responsibility," with its six subtopics

* Service Projects

- * The following comments regarding Eagle Scout service projects, requirements, and boards of review also apply to the Summit (Venturing) award and the Quartermaster (Sea Scout) rank

- The planning and development of an Eagle Scout Service Project can continue consistent with the previously mentioned Executive Orders
- Project proposals and reports may be approved using electronic means
- * The conduct of almost every Eagle Scout Service Project should comply with local (State, County and/or Municipality) directives and the requirements of the Chartered Organization; given the fluctuating nature of the current situation, units and Scouts should carefully review the latest requirements before executing a project
- * Units are reminded that Eagle projects are unit activities; while the Scout should plan for a safe project, unit adults are responsible for safety and should follow YPT and local directives
- * While the pandemic and social distancing may change logistics and decrease the number of people who can participate in a project at one time and place, Scouts should continue to propose projects that challenge them
- * Scouts can demonstrate leadership while social distancing by planning projects that have more small groups, take place at multiple locations or times or include more complex activities

Request for Extension of Time to Earn Eagle Scout / Quartermaster / Summit Rank

- COVID-19 Exclusive
  - * NCAC Approval by ARC Chair or Program Director is required when Scouts need additional time past their 18th birthday (or 21st (as appropriate)) to complete rank requirements
    - Effective now through September 30, 2020
    - Complete and submit the Request for Extension per the instructions on the form
  - Duration
    - For Eagle, the extension will be for 3 months from the Scout's 18th birthday
    - For Summit/Quartermaster, the extension will be for 3 months from the youth's 21st birthday
  - Limitations
    - COVID-19 disruptions are the only circumstances that delayed work on advancement requirements, such as the service project or merit badges
    - Extensions shall only be granted to youth in Scouts BSA who have already achieved Life rank
    - Upon receipt, the council will review the request and approve, if appropriate
      - A written response stating the outcome of the extension request will go to the youth and unit leader identified on the request
      - If approved, the notification must be attached to the youth's Eagle/Summit/Quartermaster rank application
    - Upon turning 18, the Scout must submit a completed adult application and successfully complete YPT; their participant code will now be UP for Scouts BSA or VP for Venturing and Sea Scouting

- - * This registration is required by the BSA whenever a Scout is working on requirements over the age of 18; this is not required when only a board of review (or bridge of review, as appropriate)) needs to be done
    - * Extension requests for more than 3 months beyond the youth's 18th /21st birthday must be sent to NCAC ARC Appeals and Extensions Coordinator (Brad Scales, msva_tenor@yahoo.com) for processing and consideration by the National Service Center (see Non-COVID-19 Related or Mixed Explanation)
  - Request for Extension Content
    - Scout's Registered Name, E-Mail, Contact Number, BSA ID, DoB
    - Troop, District
    - Life Scout Board of Review Date
    - Description of Eagle Project
    - Reason for Delay
    - Adult's Name, E-Mail, Contact Number
- Non-COVID-19 Related or Mixed Explanation
  - Only for the Eagle Scout rank (see GTA Topic 9.0.4.0) or for Venturing Summit or Sea Scout Quartermaster (see GTA Topic 4.3.3.0)
  - The five tests still apply under 9.0.4.0
  - Contact NCAC ARC Appeals and Extensions Coordinator (Brad Scales, msva_tenor@yahoo.com), reference the Eagle Scout Procedures Guide, or NCAC website under Eagle Scout Information for additional details
  - If youth have already received an extension they can request additional time due to COVID-19 through the NCAC ARC

Eagle Scout / Summit / Quartermaster Rank Application Verification

- NCAC is still verifying rank applications prior to the board (bridge) of review
- Please be patient as council resources are limited

* Eagle Scout / Summit / Quartermaster Reviews

- An in-person review provides the Scout with an opportunity to learn, grow and celebrate achievements; it provides the youth with an experience typically superior to a videoconference board of review
- NCAC can approve extensions to conduct Eagle/Summit/Quartermaster reviews up to six months after the youth's 18th /21st birthday, reducing the need for a VTC review

* Eagle Scout / Summit / Quartermaster Review Extensions

- NCAC will grant extensions to conduct Eagle/Summit/Quartermaster reviews up to six months after the youth's 18th/21st birthday (see GTA Topic 8.0.3.1 (Eagle Scout Board of Review Beyond the 18th Birthday))

- To receive permission to hold a review between 3 months and 6 months following the Scout's 18th (21st) birthday, the Scout, parent, unit, or district should send a request to the NCAC ARC (alandeter@verizon.net), and indicate the following:
  - o Scout's Name, BSA ID, Date of Birth
  - o Troop, District
  - o Reason for Request
- Please ensure the following is done prior to making the request:
  - o The Service Project Report is complete and signed
  - o The Statement of Ambitions and Life Purpose and List of Leadership Positions, Honors, and Awards are done
  - o The rank application is done, signed, and verified through NCAC
  - o The information for the reference letters has been provided to the unit and the unit has made the requests

* Request for a Board (Bridge) of Review via Videoconferencing

- If a board (bridge) of review must be convened using videoconferencing, make a request to the NCAC ARC (mailto:alandeter@verizon.net), and indicate the following:
  - o Scout's Name, BSA ID, Date of Birth
  - o Troop, District
  - o Reason for Request including the urgency that argues against holding an in-person board of review when conditions will allow in-person meetings in the near future
- The recommended platform for conducting the review is Zoom
  - o Use the settings under Merit Badges On-line
  - o Do NOT record the board of review
- A videoconference review needs to comply with the Guide to Advancement (see 8.0.1.6) which basically says:
  - o The NCAC is the authority for granting permission to hold a videoconference reviews
  - o All equipment should be tested ahead of time to provide the best audiovisual experience possible
  - o All members of the board of review must be visible to the Scout, and any observers with the Scout must be visible to the members of the review
  - o No one within hearing range on either side shall be off camera
  - o Observers should be minimized
  - o For Scouts under the age of 18, a parent or guardian of the Scout, or two registered adult leaders as required by the Guide to Safe Scouting (www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/gss01) who are familiar with these requirements for videoconference reviews, must be directly present with the Scout at the beginning of the conference
    - ▪ The Scouters may be from the nearest council, district, or unit
    - ▪ Their role is to verify the Scout is in a safe environment and the review appears to be in compliance with the requirements

- Once all the members of the board of review are present on their end of the call and introductions are completed, and the review is about to begin, anyone present with the Scout must leave the room or move out of hearing distance unless they have specifically been approved to remain as observers
  - Once the review process has been concluded, if the Scout is under age 18, the Scout's parent or guardian, or two registered adult leaders must rejoin the Scout; their purpose is to:
    - Be available to answer any questions that may arise
    - Join in the celebration of the Scout's accomplishment, or
    - Be party to any instructions or arrangements regarding the appeals process or the reconvening of an incomplete review

Eagle Scout / Quartermaster / Summit Packages

- Electronic or digital signatures are acceptable for Eagle/Summit/Quartermaster packets/applications through September 30, 2020
- * After a successful Eagle Scout Board of Review, the unit or family should hold onto completed packages until the Marriott Scout Center reopens and they can be dropped off at NCAC for processing