

Building Evidence in Scouting Together



BSA BEST Study Factsheet and FAQs

The National Office of Boy Scouts of America (BSA), the Institute for Research on Youth Thriving and Evaluation (RYTE) at Montclair State University (MSU), and the American Institutes for Research (AIR) are partnering to explore the Scouts BSA experience in a first-of-its-kind national study. The BSA Building Evidence in Scouting Together (BEST) study is being conducted between 2018 and 2020 and is generously funded by the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation.

The MSU and AIR research team seeks to understand how adult troop leader practices foster the development of Scouts. The following research questions are guiding this work:

1. What training and experiences help to develop adult volunteers who are most effective at fostering the positive development of Scouts?
2. How can adult trainings be enhanced to strengthen outcomes?
3. What variations exist in adult training implementation?

We selected Scouts BSA troops from across the country to participate. Scoutmasters (SMs) will be asked to help recruit and register Scouts and Assistant Scoutmasters (ASMs) in their troops to participate in the study.

Participants will be asked to take up to three separate online surveys through early 2020. For each survey, participating Scouts, SMs and ASMs will earn a piece of an exclusive three-part patch (image above). Troops receive a \$25 gift card to the national Scout Shop for registering the Scoutmaster and at least 5 Scouts. For each survey period, the troop will earn another \$25 gift card to the Scout Shop when 50% of registered participants complete a survey. So, the troop can earn up to **\$100 in gift cards to the Scout Shop** (online and national shop locations). A small subset of Scouts and Scouters who signed up in Spring 2019 have already been invited to participate in phone interviews to capture more detailed information about the Scouting experience.

This study has been approved by the Montclair State University Institutional Review Board #17-18-1105.



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Frequently Asked Questions

Why study development in Scouts BSA?

Adult volunteers are critical to the success of the BSA, and we know that adult volunteers follow unique paths of training and development. The results of this study will help the BSA to develop a strategic professional development plan for all adult troop leaders. This plan, in turn, will lead to more efficient and consistent program delivery that fosters youth development.

How is information being gathered?

Researchers from MSU and AIR are administering surveys, observing select BSA trainings, and conducting phone interviews with adult troop leaders and individual Scouts. No personally identifiable information will be shared. Only aggregated responses will be reported. Responses and personally identifiable information will remain confidential.

Can troops, leaders, Scouts, or parents of Scouts opt out of the study?

Yes, troops and the SMs, ASMs, and Scouts (or their parents) who do not wish to participate in the study can opt out and will no longer receive study-related communications.

Do I have to participate?

No Scout or leader is required to participate, but only those who are selected and actually participate may receive the BSA BEST Study patch.

Does the BSA National Council know about this study?

Yes. The BSA received a grant for this study which is being conducted by researchers from MSU and AIR.

Is the BSA National Council conducting this study?

No. While the BSA is advising on this study, researchers at MSU and AIR are conducting this study as an external research effort.

Can anyone participate in the study?

No one can request to be a part of the study. Only members of selected Troops may participate in the BSA BEST Study. Out of more than 33,000 Troops in the country, only a small percentage of Troops have been selected. Scouts, Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters from those troops are invited to participate in the study. Some Scouts and adult leaders will also be asked to participate in 3 phone interviews. Approximately 100 Scouts and 100 adult leaders have already been invited to participate in interviews.

Will survey or interview participation count toward rank requirements?

No. However, participants will receive a special three-part BSA Study patch, and study participation is one way Scouts and adult leaders may live the slogan, “Do a Good Turn Daily” or “help other people at all times” according to the Scout Oath. Participants are offering their time and experience to help make BSA programming better.

Does the research team follow two-deep communication policies and youth protection requirements?

Yes. Members of our research team who have direct contact with Scouts have successfully completed the BSA Youth Protection Training (YPT). When researchers speak with Scouts via phone for interviews, a second YPT-certified researcher is also present as a listener. If a researcher texts or emails an individual Scout (such as scheduling an interview or responding to a question), a second YPT-certified researcher or a parent/guardian is copied on the communication. Researchers never have direct one-on-one contact with youth without also including either a parent/guardian or a second YPT-certified member of the research team.