

Building Evidence in Scouting Together

Frequently Asked Questions

This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document provides an overview of questions related to the Building Evidence in Scouting Together (BEST) Study, which is being carried out by Montclair State University (MSU) and the American Institutes for Research (AIR) in partnership with the Boy Scouts of America (BSA). BSA, MSU, and AIR are partnering to explore the Scouting experience in a first-of-its-kind, national study.

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General Study Information

Why are you doing this study?

BSA is interested in learning more about how Scouts and adult leaders work together, and how they can help Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters better support all Scouts.

Who is conducting the study?

This study is being conducted by researchers at the Institute for Research on Youth Thriving and Evaluation (RYTE) at Montclair State University (MSU) and the American Institutes for Research (AIR).

Who is funding the study?

The S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation is funding this study through a generous grant to the Boy Scouts of America. BSA contracted with MSU to design and implement the study, with support from AIR.

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.

How long will the study last?

The study began with a planning phase in 2017. Data collection began in 2018 and will last through 2020.

How is the BSA national office involved?

The national office is providing input on the study, but the study is being conducted by external, independent researchers at MSU and AIR.

What are the benefits of participating in the BEST Study?

When each Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster shares his or her experiences in BSA – including their training, troop activities, and engagement with both youth and other adults – we can learn more about how those experiences affect youth development and outcomes. When each Scout shares his or her experiences in BSA – including their training, troop activities, and engagement with both adults and other youth – we can learn about their development and outcomes. Researchers can also identify how the experiences of both adult leaders and youth interact. By identifying these relationships, together we can help make Scouting better for all. That's what the BEST Study is designed to do.

Why are you collecting contact information for individual troop members?

We are collecting contact information mainly for communication purposes. We need the name and email address of each person who wants to participate in order to contact them about the surveys and interviews. The surveys are online, so we need the email address to send the link for the survey. We also ask for mailing addresses of Scoutmasters and phone numbers of individual participants to send information and reminders about the surveys. We ask for contact information for parents/guardians of Scouts so that we can email parents/guardians directly, confirm that their Scout has signed up, and give them the opportunity to withdraw their Scout from the study.

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 BSA's Youth Protection Training (YPT). When researchers speak with Scouts via phone, a second YPT-certified researcher is also present as a listener; on texts or emails to individual Scouts, 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.

Troop Participation

Who is participating in the BSA BEST Study?

With over 33,000 Scouts BSA troops in the U.S., we are only able to invite a small fraction of troops to participate in the BSA BEST study.

How did you select which troops could participate?

The research team used a sampling technique to be sure we have invited all different types of troops from across the country.

Even though my troop was not invited, can I still participate in the study?

Only members of selected troops may participate in the surveys and interviews. However, anyone can find out more about the study and share information about the study. The results will be shared widely so anyone who is interested can find out what we've learned.

Can our linked girls' troop participate in the study?

Yes! Please have the Scoutmaster of your linked girls' troop contact us at yourvoice@bsabeststudy.org or call us at 1-888-309-1556 option 1. We need to add them as a separate troop for the purposes of analysis. We will need to work with the Scoutmaster to get contact information. We will then provide registration materials and instructions so they can register their troop members for the study.

What are you asking us to do for this study?

Each person who signs up for the study will be invited to complete online surveys between early 2019 and spring 2020. A small group of people have already been invited to participate in three phone interviews between early 2019 and spring 2020.

Does everyone in the troop have to participate?

No, everyone in the troop does not have to participate in the study, though we hope they choose to participate. For your troop to be included in the study, we are asking for at least 5 Scouts and the Scoutmaster from each selected troop to sign up and participate.

Can committee members, parents and other volunteers participate in the study?

For the purposes of this study, adult volunteers need to be currently serving in the role of Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster to participate. Although we realize how important adult support is to the success of any troop, the BEST Study focuses on the role of Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmaster.

What if no one in my troop wants to participate?

Just let us know and we will remove your troop from the sample list so that you stop receiving communications from us. You can email us at yourvoice@bsabeststudy.org or call us at 1-888-309-1556 option 1 to speak to the study recruitment team.

Do I need an email address to participate?

It is strongly recommended that Scoutmasters, Assistant Scoutmasters, and Scouts provide email addresses so they can receive an individualized link to the survey. If Scouts do not have their own email address, a parent or guardian's email can be provided instead as long as the Scout will be able to access the email with the survey link.

We understand that not all troop members may have email addresses. For individuals who do not have email addresses, we will provide another method for accessing the survey using a unique code through a survey website. For individuals who do not have an email address, enter "No email" in the email field of the registration Excel file.

How do I sign up my troop at the next troop Meeting?

Scoutmasters can enter troop member information in the Excel registration file, which was sent by email attachment and is also available in the Registration Materials section of our website at bsabeststudy.org. For troop members, the information we ask for is: Role (Scoutmaster, Assistant Scoutmaster or Scout), email address, phone number, permission for us to call/text; and for Scouts, age and a parent/guardian's name and email address (so we can let them know their Scout is interested in participating in the study).

Detailed instructions for filling out the Excel file are also available in the [Registration Materials](#) section of our website.

What if I missed the Troop Meeting where we enrolled? Can I still participate in the BEST Study?

Yes, individuals may still enroll in the BEST Study after the initial Troop registration. Please let your Scoutmaster know that you are interested, and the Scoutmaster can send us another Excel registration file with information for new study participants.

What happens if new Scouts join the troop?

The final date for interested troop members to register for the study is **September 27th, 2019**. Troops can continue to add additional study participants until that date, but after September 27th, registration will be closed and no more study participants can be added.

Will study 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.

What happens if someone decides to participate and then changes their mind?

That’s okay. Any person can decide to stop participating at any time during the study. Participants who wish to withdraw from the study should visit bsabeststudy.org to opt out and we will remove them from the study.

What happens if someone decides not to participate and then changes their mind?

That’s okay; email us at yourvoice@bsabeststudy.org or call us at 1-888-309-1556 (option 1) **before September 27th 2019** and we will get that person registered for the study.

Survey Participation

How long will the surveys take?

Each survey is expected to last approximately 30 minutes.

How many surveys does each person take?

Each person will be asked to take up to three surveys. Surveys will be sent out between May 2019 and April 2020.

What kinds of questions are on the surveys?

Survey questions ask about the different types of experiences that Scouts, Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters have had during their time in BSA. For Scouts, we ask questions about their time and experiences in Scouting (attending meetings, camping and activities), their leadership positions and the Patrol Method, and working with Scouts and adult leaders in the troop. For Scouters, we ask about their time and experiences in Scouting, as well as the training they’ve received, and their experiences working with Scouts and other adult leaders in the troop and the larger BSA organization.

Can parents/guardians preview the surveys before their Scout completes them?

Yes. If you wish to preview the survey questions prior to your Scout taking the survey, please email us at yourvoice@bsabeststudy.org.

Is there any compensation for participating in the survey?

Each person who participates in the surveys will receive a special study patch! Each time an individual completes a survey, they will receive a piece of the three-part patch.

We are also offering gift cards to the Scout Shop (for use at www.scoutshop.com or at National Scout Shop locations) for troops that sign up and complete the surveys: \$25 for

signing up at least 5 Scouts and the Scoutmaster, and \$25 for each survey period if at least 50% of registered Scouts and the Scoutmaster complete the survey.

How do I earn a study patch?

Each person who participates in the surveys will receive an official study patch. The patch was designed by BSA specifically for the study. Each time a person completes a survey, they will receive a segment of the patch. The three segments together form the BEST patch. Because such a small percentage of troops have been selected to participate in the study, earning this patch is rather exclusive.

What does the patch look like?

Images of the patch are below.



Will the surveys be anonymous?

Because the study team needs to know who completed each survey for their analyses and to provide incentives, the survey is not anonymous. However, names will not be included in survey data; each person will be identified by a unique identification number that only the study team will know.

Interview Participation

How are you selecting people for the interviews?

Through the interviews, the study team seeks to understand the wide variety of perspectives in the BSA and hear from many different voices. The study team will examine information about the BSA and select individuals to participate based on several factors including their geographical region and length of time participating in BSA.

How many people will be invited to participate in interviews?

In Spring 2019, the study team identified 100 Scoutmasters or Assistant Scoutmasters and 100 Scouts to participate in interviews. The same people will be invited to participate in two additional interviews during the study.

How long will the interviews take?

Each interview is expected to last approximately 35 minutes for Scouts and one hour for adult leaders.

How many interviews does each person participate in?

Each selected person will be asked to participate in one interview at three different time points in the study, for a total of three interviews. The interviews are scheduled for Spring 2019, Fall 2019, and early 2020.

Will the interviews be recorded?

We will ask for permission to audio record the interviews. Recorded interviews will remain confidential within the study team. A Scout, parent, or troop leader can choose not to be recorded and opt out of the interview.

Who is conducting the interviews?

Trained and experienced researchers at Montclair State University are conducting the interviews.

What kinds of questions will be asked in the interviews?

Interview questions ask about the different types of experiences that Scouts, Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters have had during their time in BSA. For Scouts, we ask questions about their time and experiences in Scouting (attending meetings, camping and activities), their leadership positions and the Patrol Method, and working with Scouts and adult leaders in the troop. For Scouters, we ask about their time and experiences in Scouting, as well as the training they've received, and their experiences working with Scouts and other adult leaders in the troop and the larger BSA organization.

Do parents have to do anything?

Parents are essential to the success of the Scout interviews! We will ask parents to select the interview times that work best for their families. Additionally, parents must consent for their Scout to participate in the interviews. Anytime a member of the research team reaches out to Scouts for interviews, parents will be copied or notified.

Can parents listen in on the interviews?

Yes, parents can listen in on the interviews if they wish. However, we emphasize that some Scouts may feel more comfortable answering questions when parents are nearby, but not listening to the conversation.

Does the research team follow 2-deep communication policies and youth protection requirements?

Yes. Members of our research team who have direct contact with Scouts have successfully completed BSA's Youth Protection Training (YPT). When researchers speak with Scouts via

phone, a second YPT-certified researcher is also present as a listener; on texts or emails to individual Scouts, 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.

Can parents preview the interview or survey questions?

Yes. If you wish to preview the interview questions prior to the interview, please email us at yourvoice@bsabeststudy.org.

Is there any compensation for participating in the interviews?

We are offering a \$35 Scout Shop gift card to each Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster who gets selected and completes interviews at each wave, for a total of up to \$105 for each adult leader. We are also offering a \$20 Scout Shop gift card to each Scout who gets selected and completes interviews at each wave, for a total of up to \$60 for each Scout. Scout Shop gift cards can be used online at www.scoutshop.org or at National Scout Shop locations.

Results and Reporting

Will the findings from this study be shared with the National office?

Yes. Findings from the study will be aggregated, or combined with responses from many other individuals, and delivered to the BSA National office periodically. Additionally, aggregated responses may be shared with the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation (the funder), other researchers, and the public. However, no personally identifiable information will be shared. Your responses will not be tied to your identity, and the research team will make every effort to keep your information confidential.

Will I be able to see the data for my troop?

No, we are not providing troop level findings.

Will the local council be able to see the data?

No, we are not providing the data to the local council.

Will you be publishing anything from this study?

Yes, we anticipate publishing about the study in research journals and in reports and other documents shared with BSA and the field.

Will Scouts', Scoutmasters', or Assistant Scoutmasters' names be used?

No, we will not use participant names in our reports or our data.