

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)  
REGARDING BSA's YOUTH MEMBERSHIP STANDARD**

**BSA's Youth Membership Standard**

**1. What was actually approved by the Boy Scouts of America (BSA)?**

The membership standard for youth members of the Boy Scouts of America is as follows, effective January 1, 2014:

Youth membership in the Boy Scouts of America is open to all youth who meet the specific membership requirements to join the Cub Scout, Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout and Venturing programs. Membership in any program of the Boy Scouts of America requires the youth member to (a) subscribe to and abide by the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Law, (b) subscribe to and abide by the precepts of the Declaration of Religious Principles (duty to God), and (c) demonstrate behavior that exemplifies the highest level of good conduct and respect for others and is consistent at all times with the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Law. No youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone. [From *Membership Standards Implementation—Frequently Asked Questions for Unit Leaders*, August 2013 (See FAQ 10, Item 2)]

**2. How does the BSA define “morally straight”?**

The *Boy Scout Handbook* continues to define "morally straight" as "Your relationships with others should be honest and open. Respect and defend the rights of all people. Be clean in your speech and actions and faithful in your religious beliefs. Values you practice as a Scout will help you shape a life of virtue and self-reliance." [From *Membership Standards Implementation—Frequently Asked Questions for Unit Leaders*, August 2013 (See FAQ 10, Item 2)]

**3. What comprises “sexual conduct”?**

BSA defines sexual conduct as follows:

Scouting is a youth program, and any sexual conduct, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting. Leaders have the responsibility and authority to set boundaries and address them with youth members. The *Boy Scout Handbook* tells boys that “Your religious leaders can give you guidance for making ethical choices. Youth parents, guardian, or a sex-education teacher can provide the basic facts about sex.” [From *Membership Standards Implementation—Frequently Asked Questions for Unit Leaders*, August 2013 (See FAQ 10, Item 2)]

**4. Is the BSA endorsing homosexuality and forcing its chartered organizations to do the same?**

No. The BSA is reinforcing that Scouting is a youth program, and any sexual conduct, whether heterosexual or homosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting. Scouting is not the place to resolve divergent viewpoints in society, and no member may use Scouting to promote or advance any social or political agenda. This policy rightly recognizes there is a difference between youth and adults while remaining true to the long-standing virtues of Scouting. [From *Fact vs. Fiction*, August 2013 (See FAQ 10, Item 3)]

**5. Is this merely the first step in a process that will fundamentally change the BSA?**

No. This policy change was the result of an internal Scouting discussion, not because of pressure from external groups. The adult membership standard remains unchanged, and within the framework of this policy, chartered organizations continue to have the right and responsibility to choose their own unit leaders according to their own values and Scouting values. The Boy Scouts of America fully supports its

chartered organizations. As the BSA just completed a lengthy review process, there are no plans for further review on this matter. The youth membership standard was not intended to be, or to be seen as, a "first step". [From *Fact vs. Fiction*, August 2013 (See FAQ 10, Item 3)]

#### **6. Why was the policy amended to include only youth and not adults?**

The resolution adopted by the members of the BSA national council was the result of the most intensive listening exercise ever conducted within the Boy Scouts of America. The exercise involved all facets of the organization, the different chartered organization constituencies, volunteers, and all aspects of the program. Based on the feedback received during the exercise, the BSA National Executive Board determined that this policy change would be the most beneficial and acceptable to the organization, if adopted by the members of the national council. As a national organization, the BSA needs to consider the impact of any policy change across the organization, and not within a single demographic segment or within a single area in the country. While there were segments of the BSA's constituencies that felt the policy change went too far, other segments felt it did not go far enough.

See also <http://www.scouting.org/sitecore/content/MembershipStandards/Resolution/FAQ.aspx>.

#### **7. Why is it not considered "just discrimination" to deny membership in programs of the BSA to youth who disclose same sex attraction?**

As a private membership organization, as affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Dale v. Boy Scouts of America*, the Boy Scouts have the right to establish its own membership policies and standards. While the Boy Scouts could have excluded youth members who expressed a same sex attraction (by reaffirming the former policy), the members of the national council adopted a resolution which changed these policies. As a private organization, it would not have been unlawful to continue to exclude youth with same sex attraction. Based on the concerns expressed within their various constituencies, the members of the national council voted for a change.

#### **8. What will the BSA do when a youth member becomes an adult?**

As in the case with every member, when individuals are no longer youth participants, they must reapply as, and meet the requirements of, adult leaders. [From *Membership Standards Implementation—Frequently Asked Questions for Unit Leaders*, August 2013 (See FAQ 10, Item 2)]

#### **9. Will the new policy result in greater risk of liability for chartered organizations? Does BSA provide legal support for any chartered organization or individual sued based on perceived discrimination arising from implementation of the BSA youth membership standard?**

BSA members are not required to be members of a chartered organization, and the chartered organization cannot deny BSA membership solely on the basis of sexual preference.

As a result, the BSA has and will continue to be the responsible organization for establishing and defending its membership standards. The BSA has and will continue to assert its constitutional right as a private organization to define the moral standards embraced by its members. Duty to God, duty to Country, duty to others, and duty to self, as expressed in the Scout Oath, and the Scout Law are the fundamental tenets of Scouting and always have been. The BSA respects the rights of other organizations to disagree or to have their own moral standards, which may be different from the BSA's. However, the BSA has and will continue to oppose any action that threatens the BSA's right to define its own moral standards for membership.

In addition to taking the lead in opposing any effort to force the BSA to surrender its core values, the BSA remains committed to defending its chartered organizations threatened by litigation solely because of their support of the Scouting program. Membership standards are determined by the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America. The BSA will continue as it has in the past, to bear the cost of the defense of

BSA membership standards, even if the claims are asserted against chartered organizations. [From *Fact vs. Fiction*, August 2013 (See FAQ 10, Item 3)]

It was clarified that there will be no change in BSA's defense and indemnification of claims arising out of any claim related to a denial of membership or participation in Scouting activities because of a failure to meet the BSA's membership standards. [Voting Member Information Packet found at [http://www.scouting.org/filestore/MembershipStandards/310-561\\_WB.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/MembershipStandards/310-561_WB.pdf) (Page 11) and at <http://www.scouting.org/sitecore/content/MembershipStandards/Resolution.aspx> (See FAQ 10, Item 1)]

#### **10. Where can I find more information on BSA's change in youth membership standard?**

- 1) <http://www.scouting.org/sitecore/content/MembershipStandards.aspx>
- 2) [http://www.scouting.org/Training/Membership\\_Standards.aspx](http://www.scouting.org/Training/Membership_Standards.aspx)
- 3) [http://nccs-bsa.org/comment/Fact\\_vs.\\_Fiction.81513.pdf](http://nccs-bsa.org/comment/Fact_vs._Fiction.81513.pdf)

### **The Response of the National Catholic Committee on Scouting (NCCS)**

#### **11. What is the relevant teaching of the Catholic Church?**

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) teaches that individuals who disclose a same-sex attraction are to be treated with the same dignity due all human beings created by God (CCC 2358). This teaching is followed in enrollment policies for Catholic schools, for Catholic sports programs, and for all programs of Catholic youth ministry. Scouting, as Catholic youth ministry, allows us to provide a safe environment in which the Catholic faith can be taught, practiced and nurtured. Scouting, as a program for all youth, gives us, as Catholics, the opportunity to meet youth in an activity they enjoy and evangelize them in faith.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church also teaches that engaging in sexual activity outside of marriage is always immoral (CCC 2396).

In particular, see the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) document, *Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care* (2006), available at: <http://www.usccb.org/about/doctrine/publications/upload/ministry-to-persons-of-homosexual-inclination.pdf>.

#### **12. What were the situations the resolution was intended to resolve?**

The NCCS understood the situations to be the following:

- A youth will not be prevented from receiving a rank award or religious emblem simply for having a same-sex attraction.
- A youth will not need to hide the fact that he or she has or experiences this attraction, but a youth also will not be encouraged or pressured to disclose publicly the experience of such attraction.
- A youth, thinking or knowing he or she has a same-sex attraction, should not be afraid that he or she will be bullied or expelled by the Scouting community should it be disclosed.

#### **13. In the USCCB document, *Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination* (<http://www.usccb.org/about/doctrine/publications/upload/ministry-to-persons-of-homosexual-inclination.pdf>), is the statement: "The Church cannot support organizations or individuals whose work contradicts, is ambiguous about, or neglects her teaching on sexuality." Does BSA's change in youth membership standard conflict with this statement?**

The new membership standard states that "No youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone." Accordingly, a youth stating an attraction to the same sex, but not engaging in sexual activity or advocating for a homosexual lifestyle, does not

make the youth ineligible for membership. Further, the new BSA policy states that “Any sexual conduct, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting”. It also states that “The Boy Scouts of America does not have an agenda on the matter of sexual orientation, and resolving this complex issue is not the role of the organization, nor may any member use Scouting to promote or advance any social or political position or agenda”.

These public statements by the BSA would indicate that the organization's work neither contradicts, is ambiguous about, nor neglects Catholic teaching on sexuality. The NCCS accepts these statements by the BSA at face value.

**14. Is the NCCS confident that the BSA National Office will enforce the policy that was just voted on? What about recent reports that a BSA troop marched in a Gay Pride parade or that a council in New York State has said it allows openly homosexual leaders?**

Under the BSA's rules and regulations, a youth member may appear in uniform at a nonpartisan and nonpolitical gathering in a way that gives the youth the opportunity to render service in harmony with his or her training in the Scouting program. However, the BSA is required to avoid involving the Scouting movement in any activity of a political character, and Scouts and their leaders may not participate in single-issue or social advocacy events or activities outside of the Scouting program in a way that suggests the BSA endorses that activity or event. Each youth member is free as an individual to express his or her thoughts or take action on political or social issues but must not use Scouting's official uniforms and insignia when doing so.

BSA has reported that it wasn't a "troop" that marched in a Gay Pride parade on the West Coast; there were certain adults – including former, unregistered adults – who participated in the Gay Pride parade in uniform. They were reprimanded and it was made clear that such activity was and is inappropriate in Scout uniforms.

The NCCS has also been informed that the website for the council in New York State does not indicate that it is welcoming “openly homosexual leaders”; what it says is that they have never denied membership to a youth or adult because of their sexual orientation, and that they do not unlawfully discriminate. All local councils adhere to BSA's membership policies, and that includes the membership policy for adults that BSA does not grant membership to "open or avowed" homosexual adults. Scouting represents millions of youth and adult members in diverse communities across the nation, each with a variety of beliefs on this topic. All local councils and chartered organizations agree to follow BSA national policies. Any time BSA is aware of an inconsistency in the administration of a Scouting policy, it works with the local council to reiterate the policy and ensure compliance.

**15. Does BSA's change in its youth membership standard encourage the promotion of a so-called gay “identity” among youth?**

No. The NCCS does not see this change in membership policy as promoting an acceptance of “gay identity” among youth in Scouting. Catholic teaching presumes an important distinction between person, inclination, and action. Persons are always to be affirmed and respected—everyone has inviolable dignity. A homosexual inclination, while not sinful in itself, is not ordered to the true good of the person and thus cannot be affirmed as something good or neutral. Lastly, all people are called to live chastely, and all sexual conduct outside of marriage is always wrong.

Youth in Scouting who experience same-sex attraction or a homosexual inclination need support, guidance, and formation that will help them live a happy, healthy, and holy life and not feel alienated from the community. This support includes helping them to recognize their identity as a beloved child of God and to avoid reducing their identity to an inclination, no matter how strong it might be. Certainly, any promotion of a homosexual lifestyle or sexual conduct outside of the conjugal life of marriage cannot be approved. If a youth discloses the experience of same-sex attraction to a leader or peer, care should be taken to ensure that the disclosure is met with compassion and appropriate support that upholds the

intrinsic dignity of the young person, fosters an environment where the youth is accepted and respected, and avoids celebrating or affirming the inclination as something good or neutral in itself.

BSA states that, “while a youth member may acknowledge his or her sexual preference, that acknowledgment may not reach the level of distraction, which may include advocacy, promotion, or the distribution of information of a sexual nature.” [From *Fact vs. Fiction*, August 2013 (See FAQ 10, Item 3)]

**16. How is the new policy consistent with the need to “avoid the near occasion of sin”?**

The new youth membership policy of the Boy Scouts of America does not present a “near occasion of sin” because youth members are expected to conduct themselves in a chaste and celibate manner in accordance with the BSA Membership policy and Catholic teaching. The content of discussions or conversations, as well as youth activities, necessitate youth conduct to be in compliance with the Scout Oath and Law.

**17. What role has the NCCS played in the decision to change the BSA youth membership standard?**

The NCCS exercises its advisory capacity as a member of the BSA Religious Relationships Task Force. The NCCS is not a voting member of the BSA. During the listening period, we expressed our concerns and provided references on Catholic teaching to BSA. The resolution appeared to respect those teachings and BSA's responses to our concerns were satisfactory. We felt that the Catholic Scouters who were selected as voters could, in good conscience, vote either for or against the Resolution.

**18. What amount of influence did the bishops have in the development of Mr. Martin’s (NCCS National Chairman) letter of May 29?**

Mr. Martin consulted the NCCS Episcopal Liaison from the USCCB, Bishop Robert Guglielmone, who contributed to the overall review and to the clarification and use of terminology.

**19. There have been a few reported incidents where pastors have chosen not to recharter units due to the new membership standard. What are the rights of pastors in such cases? What role does the local bishop play in the decision?**

The bishop has ultimate authority in these matters and all decisions are made within the diocese. Bishops and pastors have the responsibility to determine how best to minister to the youth of their parish(es). The relationship between a pastor and his bishop is not the purview of the NCCS.

**20. If the membership standard itself is not against Catholic teaching, why would a bishop decide to forego utilizing Scouting in his diocese?**

Acceptance or lack of acceptance of Church teaching is not the sole criterion by which a bishop judges whether or not to allow a program. A bishop may have many reasons for allowing or disallowing various youth programs. A bishop is free to minister to youth in the ways that he deems appropriate.

**21. Will there be efforts to standardize the response of each individual diocese to supporting the resolution and current teaching as referenced in the NCCS National Chairman’s letter?**

The NCCS is always ready to offer its support to provide information to each diocese and to seek support for the value of the programs of the BSA. Bishop Robert Guglielmone, the NCCS Bishop Liaison from the USCCB, has written to every bishop in the United States concerning the issue and has made himself available to assist them in doing what is best for our young people. Remember, each diocesan bishop is free to minister to youth in the ways that he deems appropriate in his diocese.

**22. Given the stated agenda of some organizations to promote a homosexual lifestyle and the acceptance of adults who are “open and avowed homosexuals” within Scouting, what are the Church and the NCCS doing in response?**

The Church’s teaching and pastoral outreach, faithful to Christ and the freedom of the Gospel, remain steady and clear. At this time, the NCCS sees it as most prudent to view Scouting as it is now, to continue to infuse Catholic teaching and values into it, and to avoid speculation as to what may or may not be in the future.

**23. Would a similar change to the BSA adult membership standard be in conflict with Catholic teaching?**

The USCCB, in its document *Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care* (<http://www.usccb.org/about/doctrine/publications/upload/ministry-to-persons-of-homosexual-inclination.pdf>), has the following statements which should be applied to adults serving as leaders in Catholic-chartered units:

- Persons who experience same-sex attraction and yet are living in accord with Church teaching should be encouraged to take an active role in the life of the faith community. However, the Church has a right to deny roles of service to those whose behavior violates her teaching. Such service may seem to condone an immoral lifestyle and may even be an occasion of scandal.
- Special care ought to be taken to ensure that those carrying out the ministry of the Church not use their position of leadership to advocate positions or behaviors not in keeping with the teachings of the Church. They must not belong to groups that oppose Church teaching. It is not sufficient for those involved in this ministry to adopt a position of distant neutrality with regard to Church teaching.
- For some persons, revealing their homosexual tendencies to certain close friends, family members, a spiritual director, confessor, or members of a Church support group may provide some spiritual and emotional help and aid them in their growth in the Christian life. In the context of parish life, however, general public self-disclosures are not helpful and should not be encouraged.

Any changes to the BSA adult membership standard would need to avoid being in conflict with these guidelines if BSA wants to retain the support of the Catholic Church for its programs.

**The Mission of the National Catholic Committee on Scouting (NCCS)**

**24. What purpose does the NCCS serve for the Catholic Church?**

The purpose or mission of the NCCS is to utilize and ensure the constructive use of the program of the BSA as a viable form of youth ministry with the Catholic youth of our nation. To do this, we cooperate with the bishops of the United States, relating to the USCCB through a Bishop Liaison. Each diocesan bishop must decide how Scouting will be used in his diocese.

**25. What is the relationship of the NCCS to the USCCB?**

The National Catholic Committee on Scouting (NCCS) is a Church committee of concerned Catholic laity and clergy which is advisory to the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and relates to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) through its Bishop Liaison with the NCCS. The NCCS seeks to sustain and strengthen the relationship between the BSA and the Catholic Church and to work cooperatively with the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM) and various other groups involved in youth ministry in the United States.

**26. Are the leaders of the NCCS affiliated or compensated by the BSA in any way? Are the leaders of the NCCS strictly voluntary positions? Are the leaders of the NCCS solely focused on BSA activities or do they have other duties within the Catholic Church for which they are compensated?**

Members of the NCCS Executive Board, of which there are about 50, are all required to be registered members of the BSA. They all serve voluntarily without compensation; some in elected positions. NCCS members consist of laity, clergy and vowed religious. (See also <http://www.nccs-bsa.org/national/Bylaws.php> for more details.) There are the following exceptions, all of whom are non-voting members:

1. The NCCS Episcopal Liaison from the USCCB
2. The NCCS employs a Program Assistant that works out of the BSA National Office.
3. A liaison from BSA's Community Alliances Division
4. The NCCS Legal Counsel

**27. What assistance might an alternative youth-serving organization receive from the NCCS for its Catholic members?**

The mission or purpose of the National Catholic Committee on Scouting (NCCS) is to utilize and ensure the constructive use of the programs of the BSA as a viable form of youth ministry with the Catholic youth of our nation. This mission is authorized by a Plan of Cooperation between the BSA and the Catholic Bishops of the United States (now USCCB) in 1934. We have no intention of extending this liaison role to other youth serving institutions at this time. As such, training and religious emblem programs (see links 1 and 2 below) developed by the NCCS are specifically for, and made available only to, programs of the BSA. The NCCS materials are protected by copyright. However, our religious activity programs (see link 3 below) are such that anyone may participate in them. Diocesan Catholic committees on Scouting use the programs of the NCCS with Catholics registered in the BSA.

- 1) NCCS Training Programs: <http://www.nccs-bsa.org/training/DiocesanTraining.php>
- 2) NCCS Religious Emblem Programs: <http://www.nccs-bsa.org/emblems/index.php>
- 3) NCCS Religious Activity Programs: <http://www.nccs-bsa.org/activities/index.php>

**28. What assistance might an alternative youth-serving organization receive from a diocesan Catholic committee on Scouting for its Catholic members?**

In some dioceses, the chaplain appointed by the bishop to work with the Catholic Committee on Scouting may also work with Catholic Girl Scout committees and other diocesan Catholic representatives of youth-serving organizations. These organizations, as members of the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry, have access to programs developed by the NFCYM.

**29. Is it appropriate for Catholics to use Scouting to evangelize youth in the faith?**

When an organization chooses to charter a unit, it does so because its values match those of Scouting and it wants to take advantage of the youth-serving programs the BSA offers. The Scouting program, when chartered to a Catholic organization, should take on the values of the Catholic faith. Scouting fulfills all the characteristics of a program of Catholic youth ministry (see [http://www.scouting.org/filestore/membership/pdf/522-451/522-451\\_low\\_english.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/membership/pdf/522-451/522-451_low_english.pdf)). While the program may be open to youth of other faiths, the experience should be similar to that of someone attending a Catholic school or participating in a Catholic sports program where the Catholic faith is practiced. It's our calling as Catholics to practice our faith and thereby evangelize all those with whom we come into contact. This isn't the same as encouraging someone to convert. The NCCS offers the program *Scouter Development: Lay Apostolate Formation for Scouting* to prepare Catholic Scouters to better offer their talents and charisms in the service of the Church.

### **30. How is Scouting a program of Catholic youth ministry?**

See the document *Scouting is Youth Ministry* ([http://www.scouting.org/filestore/membership/pdf/522-451/522-451\\_low\\_english.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/membership/pdf/522-451/522-451_low_english.pdf))

### **31. What have been the responses of bishops to-date to BSA's new youth membership standard?**

From the conference of Catholic bishops in the state of Washington (written by the Most Reverend Joseph J. Tyson, Bishop of Yakima): <http://www.yakimadiocese.org/index.php/618-washington-bishops-issue-scout-statement>

From the Archdiocese of Atlanta (The Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory, Archbishop of Atlanta): <http://www.nccs-bsa.org/comment/Memo-9-23-13.pdf>

From the Archdiocese of Denver (The Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila, Archbishop of Denver): <http://www.archden.org/index.cfm/ID/10186>

From the Archdiocese of Miami (The Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski, Archbishop of Miami): [http://www.miamiarch.org/ip.asp?op=Article\\_1310902431597](http://www.miamiarch.org/ip.asp?op=Article_1310902431597)

From the Archdiocese of Washington (His Eminence Donald Cardinal Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington): <http://www.cathstan.org/main.asp?SectionID=2&SubSectionID=2&ArticleID=5699>

From the Diocese of Duluth (The Most Reverend Paul D. Sirba, Bishop of Duluth): <http://www.dioceseduluth.org/index.php?PageID=1215>

From the Diocese of Richmond (The Most Reverend Francis X. DiLorenzo, Bishop of Richmond): <http://hovc.org/articles/2013/05/catholic-diocese-of-richmond-statement-on-the-boy-scouts-of-america-may-2013/>

From the Most Reverend Dennis M. Schnurr, Archbishop of Cincinnati: <http://www.thecatholictelegraph.com/archbishop-schnurr-statement-scouting-is-compatible-with-church-teaching/14916>

From the Most Reverend Paul S. Loverde, Bishop of Arlington: <http://arlingtondiocese.org/newsdetails.aspx?Pageid=422&id=5304>

From the Most Reverend Richard J. Malone, Bishop of Buffalo: <http://www.dobyouth.org/Portals/11/PDF/Catholic%20Scouting/BSA%20Statement%206%201%2013.pdf>

From the Most Reverend Robert E. Guglielmo, Bishop of Charleston and Bishop Liaison to NCCS: <http://www.themiscellany.org/index.php/news/4505-bishop-responds-to-decision-to-allow-gay-youth-in-boy-scouts>

From the Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades, Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend: <http://www.todaycatholicnews.org/2013/06/boy-scouts/>

From the Most Reverend Michael Jarrell, Bishop of Lafayette: <http://www.theind.com/news/indreporter/14015-bishop-jarrell-new-policy-not-an-obstacle-to-support-of-boy-scouts>

From the Most Reverend David J. Malloy, Bishop of Rockford: <http://www.rockforddiocese.org/BSA>

## **Dealing with Disclosure**

### **32. How should Scout leaders react when a youth discloses a same-sex attraction?**

BSA provides the following guidance, which the NCCS comments upon below: “It is an individual’s choice how public they wish to be about their sexual orientation. As always, Scouting teaches respect and courtesy for all people. It is the Scout leader’s responsibility to address the issue with concern and sensitivity, while ensuring the member understands the boundaries. The leader should emphasize that there is no place in Scouting for any sexual conduct by youth of Scouting age.” [From *Membership Standards Implementation—Frequently Asked Questions for Unit Leaders*, August 2013 (See FAQ 10, Item 2)]

First and foremost, a Scout leader should treat the disclosure situation with utmost concern, respect, charity and confidence. There should be nothing in any leader’s response that would give rise to any evidence of perception of unjust discrimination. Also, care must be taken that any communication used in these situations would not give accord to any moral justification of acting upon this attraction. In a Scout unit chartered by a Catholic parish or Catholic institution, it is the responsibility of the unit’s adult leaders to supervise and to insist that the conduct of youth members comply with Catholic moral teaching and the Boy Scouts of America membership policy.

Secondly, we must remember and respect that it is the parents who have the primary moral responsibility of education, formation, and nurturing in matters of human sexuality, and any role that Scout leaders fill is done only with a parent’s consent. Should Scout leaders be uncomfortable with the situation, they should consider consulting with their pastors.

Lastly, it must be noted that the first sentence in the above excerpt from the BSA document, *Membership Standards Implementation—Frequently Asked Questions for Unit Leaders*, gives cause for some concern and needs to be modified. It states, “It is an individual’s choice how public they wish to be about their sexual orientation.” Because human sexuality per se is usually not an issue at a Scout activity, there should not be any reason or motivation deriving from Scouting that would encourage or necessitate an individual to express the experience of a homosexual inclination publicly within the context of Scouting. . As the USCCB document *Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination* (2006) rightly cautions, “general public self-disclosures are not helpful and should not be encouraged.”

### **33. Why would a youth feel the need to disclose a same-sex attraction?**

Youth disclose all kinds of personal information to those with whom they have developed a relationship or see often. These individuals include friends, teachers, coaches, religious and Scout leaders. Youth are still developing their ability to be discreet and, sometimes, there are things on their minds about which they need to talk to someone. An experience of same-sex attraction—given the deeply personal nature of such an experience, the questions it brings, and the cultural climate—could motivate a youth to communicate with someone seen to be safe and trusted. As individuals who have regular contact, who have developed a trusting relationship, and who are serving in leadership roles, Scout leaders are prime individuals to whom these youth might make personal disclosures.

### **34. If a chartered organization does not agree with allowing youth members who disclose a same-sex attraction, can it deny them membership or refer them to another unit?**

No. As the BSA indicates, effective January 1, 2014, “no youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone.” However, as the BSA also indicates, “any sexual conduct, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting.” As they always have, chartered organizations can require members to demonstrate behavior that exemplifies the highest level of good conduct and respect for others and is consistent at all times with the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

**35. Under the new BSA youth membership policy, is the approach to dealing with a youth who discloses a same-sex attraction different if the youth is not a member of the Catholic faith but is registered with a unit chartered to a Catholic institution?**

No. The Catholic Church recognizes moral principles as universally beneficial and applicable to all people. The demands of the natural moral law are the same for all. In order to foster consistent communication and understanding in Catholic units with non-Catholic members, the NCCS encourages all Catholic units to have written policies on acceptable and unacceptable conduct, and to have each youth member and the custodial parents acknowledge that they have read and understand the guidelines on acceptable and unacceptable conduct for youth.

According to the Membership Policy change, the BSA will not “grant membership to individuals who are open or avowed homosexuals or who engage in behavior that would become a distraction to the mission of the BSA.” This membership requirement applies to all Scouts no matter the religious creed or denominational affiliation.

**36. Can a Catholic chartered organization remove a youth who is known to be sexually active from that particular unit? Can a chartered organization set moral standards by which they expect their members to abide as criteria for membership?**

The BSA policy change approved in May states that sexual activity among Scout-aged youth is contrary to Scouting virtues. Under the new policy, Scouting’s chartered organizations continue to have the right to establish and discuss behavioral expectations regarding all forms of sexual abstinence as a condition of membership within the units they sponsor. Moreover, a Scout may be removed from a local unit due to behavior inconsistent with those rules. [From *Fact vs. Fiction*, August 2013 (See FAQ 10, Item 3)]

Removal from a unit may or may not be the basis for revocation of BSA membership – that will have to be addressed on a case by case basis by the Scout Executive, as has always been the case.

**37. How does one deal with an individual who disrupts a unit program with speech and conduct that is at odds with Catholic teaching and not appropriate for a parish youth ministry?**

Scouting teaches respect and courtesy for all people. The leader’s responsibility is to address the issue with concern and sensitivity, while ensuring the member understands the boundaries and potential consequences. [From *Membership Standards Implementation—Frequently Asked Questions for Unit Leaders*, August 2013 (See FAQ 10, Item 2)]

**38. What are Catholic units to do when a Scout has same-sex “parents”?**

Youth and adult members of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) are expected to conduct themselves according to the principles set forth in the Scout Oath and Law. Youth and adults who belong to Scout units chartered by Catholic churches and Catholic institutions are also called to follow Catholic teaching. Catholic teaching says that youth and adults who experience a homosexual inclination or a same sex attraction are to be treated with respect recognizing the dignity of all persons. Catholic teaching is also clear that engaging in sexual activity outside of marriage is immoral. Youth and adults who are open and avowed homosexuals promoting and engaging in homosexual conduct are not living lives consistent with Catholic teaching.

Scouting activities are open to observation by parents, whether they are registered members of the BSA or not. A Scout with same-sex parents is not prohibited from membership and the parents are not prohibited from observing Scouting activities. However, unit leaders are responsible for ensuring that the Scouting environment is appropriately maintained. Should the conduct of a parent become disruptive or inappropriate, the parent may be asked to modify the behavior or refrain from attending Scouting events. In the rare instance that a parent refuses to comply with reasonable limits placed on observation of Scouting activities, then the parent may be prohibited from attending. It would then be the parent's decision as to whether the son or daughter is allowed to attend without the parent in attendance.

### **Dealing with Outdoor Activities**

#### **39. Should there be special arrangements made for showering, swimming, lifeguarding and change areas?**

Personal activity involving bathrooms, showers, hygiene, and dressing are respected as private. A general move toward individual toilet and shower facilities is already underway and individuals needing additional privacy can take appropriate actions on their own or request others to be respectful of their needs. As always, the adult leaders have the discretion to arrange private showering times and locations, as needed. The privacy and security of our youth members is among our top priorities. [From *Membership Standards Implementation—Frequently Asked Questions for Unit Leaders*, August 2013 (See FAQ 10, Item 2)]

#### **40. Will there be any changes to current policies regarding sleeping arrangements on Scout activities? We know that separate accommodations must be provided for members of the opposite sex in the Venturing program.**

Current practices allow for unit leaders, in consultation with parents, to use their discretion to ensure the safety and comfort of the youth members in their charge. In the past, there have been a variety of issues that required these conversations and this will follow that process. The training materials will reflect this direction. [From *Membership Standards Implementation—Frequently Asked Questions for Unit Leaders*, August 2013 (See FAQ 10, Item 2)]