

**Mount Baker Council, BSA**  
**Council Advancement Committee**  
**Policy and Procedures**  
**Merit Badges**

*The following are official policies and procedures of the Mount Baker Council, Boy Scouts of America and shall apply to all registered members and units of the Council.*

- I. Procedures for Boy Scouts
  - a. Any registered Boy Scout, Varsity Scout or qualified Venturer may earn merit badges until his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.
    - i. It is the responsibility of a scout's unit leader to assess a scout's physical, educational or emotional readiness to complete the requirements of a given merit badge.
    - ii. There is no maximum time limit, other than a scout's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, for completion of the requirements for any merit badge.
  - b. The scout must obtain an "Application for Merit Badge" (Blue Card), signed by his unit leader prior to beginning work on any merit badge.
    - i. Summer Camps and sanctioned merit badge clinics may elect to use an alternate form to facilitate group instruction.
    - ii. Alternate forms shall be approved by the Council Advancement Committee.
  - c. The scout obtains a referral to a registered Merit Badge Counselor.
    - i. Registered Merit Badge Counselor lists are maintained by each District and disseminated regularly to units in the District.
    - ii. It is the responsibility of the Unit leader or Unit Committee to assure that the scout is referred to a *properly registered* Merit Badge counselor.
    - iii. Unit leaders should strive to have scouts work with a variety of different merit badge counselors during their scouting career.
    - iv. A scout may be counseled by his parent as long as the parent is a registered merit badge counselor for that merit badge, and subject to subsection iii above.
  - d. The scout makes an appointment to meet with the merit badge counselor.
    - i. Meetings between merit badge counselors and youth shall follow all Youth Protection and Guide to Safe Scouting guidelines.
  - e. When all requirements for the merit badge are completed:
    - i. The Merit Badge Counselor completes the Application for Merit Badge (Blue Card) indicating that all requirements have been completed.
    - ii. The completed blue card is returned to the scout.
    - iii. The scout presents the blue card to his unit advancement chair.

## II. Procedures for Units

- a. Unit Leaders and Unit Advancement Committees shall maintain a current list of registered Merit Badge Counselors.
  - i. This list shall be obtained through the District Advancement Committee.
  - ii. Merit Badge Counselors not properly registered as a Merit Badge Counselor shall not be used. This includes adult volunteers registered in other scouting positions but not registered for the specific Merit Badge the scout is seeking.
- b. Unit Leaders must sign a scout's application for merit badge (Blue Card) prior to the scout being referred to a merit badge counselor.
- c. Units may conduct group merit badge sessions so long as a properly registered merit badge counselor for that merit badge leads the group session.
  - i. Each participating scout must be approved by the unit leader and possess a signed blue card.
- d. Units shall not conduct boards of review or additional testing for merit badges.
  - i. It may be appropriate, during a board of review for rank advancement, for a unit to inquire as to a scout's experiences or growth associated with merit badges earned, however this shall not constitute additional testing, nor shall the unit withhold a merit badge or require additional work in order to receive it.
- e. When a scout submits a completed Blue Card, the Unit Advancement Committee shall complete an advancement report, either a paper copy or the online report. They must then bring a copy of the report with blue cards attached (or a quality photocopy thereof), a copied page of the current merit badge counselor list with the counselor's name highlighted, and submit the package to the council service center to obtain the merit badge award.
  - i. After Sept 1, 2010 the Council Service Centers will not accept advancement reports that are not accompanied by completed blue cards (or approved alternatives as in section I. B (i) above).
  - ii. After May 1, 2011 the Council Service Centers will not accept blue cards signed by unregistered merit badge counselors.
  - iii. Scouts are encouraged to keep a copy of each completed blue card for their records. This is especially critical if a scout transfers from unit to unit or Council to Council.

### III. Procedures for the District Committee

a. Merit Badge Counselor is a function of and reports to either the District or Council Advancement Committee.

i. The District Advancement Committee is responsible for the following:

1. Assessment of the District's need for merit badge counselors

a. Districts should avoid simply registering every person who applies as a merit badge counselor.

b. District need for counselors in any given merit badge should take into consideration:

i. District size (number of boys and units)

ii. District geography (how far a boy might need to travel to meet with a counselor)

iii. The demand for the merit badge

iv. The number of active, qualified counselors already available for that merit badge

2. Recruiting and maintaining an adequate amount of trained Merit Badge Counselors

a. Districts should strive to have a minimum of 2-3 qualified, registered counselors for each merit badge.

3. Merit Badge Counselor Application and Approval Process (see attached matrix Registration, Re-Registration and Approval of Merit Badge Counselors)

a. All Merit Badge Counselor applicants shall complete the Merit Badge Counselor Information Form #34405

b. Standard Adult Applications (BSA form 28-501) must be completed on all initial merit badge counselor applications if the applicant is not already a registered scouting volunteer in another position.

i. All forms shall be turned in to the Council Service Center and forwarded to the Council Registrar and Scout Executive or designee for approval of the adult application.

ii. Volunteers who submit an application to become a merit badge counselor shall be given an acknowledgement communication from the council registrar that includes:

1. A "thank-you" for their interest and application;

2. An explanation of the approval process;

3. Notification of the training requirements for the position;

4. Notification that they may not begin counseling youth until their approval, as communicated by the district advancement chair or designee, and training process has been completed.
- c. No merit badge counselor may work with youth until their application has been fully processed, approved (including the adult application and background check), and the counselor has completed Merit Badge Counselor training and Youth Protection Training.
  - d. Upon completion of the adult application approval process the Scout Executive or designee shall sign the Adult Application. All materials pertaining to the Merit Badge Counselor Application will be scanned and e-mailed to the District Advancement Committee for processing of the Merit Badge Counselor Application form.
    - i. As the Merit Badge Counselor is a District-level position.
    - ii. The District review process should assure that Merit Badge Counselor applicants are vocationally or avocationally qualified for every merit badge applied for.
    - iii. If the applicant has not completed Youth Protection training and Merit Badge Counselor training the District Committee shall notify him/her of the requirement to complete those courses before being approved to work with youth.
      1. The applicant should provide relevant proof of training to the District Advancement Committee.
  - e. Upon approval of the merit badge information form by the District Advancement Committee, the Committee shall notify the Council Registrar which badges they have been approved for and to input them into Scoutnet, and the volunteer shall be contacted, by the District Advancement Committee, to insure that they have taken all required training. At which point the District Advancement Committee should notify the Merit Badge Counselor that their application has been approved and that they may start counseling youth in the assigned merit badge(s).

4. Maintaining and disseminating a current list of registered Merit Badge Counselors.
  - a. The Council Registrar shall develop a Scoutnet Report listing all registered Merit Badge Counselors by District and Merit Badge.
  - b. District Advancement Committees shall obtain updated merit badge counselor lists from the registrar at least quarterly. These lists shall be disseminated to the Unit Leader and/or Unit Advancement Committee of every registered Boy Scout troop, Varsity Team and Venturing Crew in the District.
  - c. Merit Badge Counselor lists shall not be posted on Council, District or Unit web sites.
  - d. The District Advancement Committee shall follow up on complaints of inaccurate information contained in the merit badge counselor list.
5. Renewal of Merit Badge Counselor Registrations
  - a. Merit Badge Counselor is an annual District level position and renews or expires on the District registration cycle (May-April).
  - b. Prior to April 1 of each year the District Advancement Committee shall contact each registered merit badge counselor to determine:
    - i. If the Counselor is still active;
    - ii. If the Counselor wishes to renew his/her registration for the upcoming year;
    - iii. If there have been any changes to the Counselor's contact information (address, phone, email);
    - iv. If the Counselor wishes to add or delete merit badges from the list they are approved to counsel.
  - c. Merit Badge counselors who are not re-registered shall be notified in writing by the District Advancement Committee that their registration has lapsed and that they are not to counsel youth unless they are properly re-registered.
  - d. The District Advancement Committee shall update the merit badge counselor list with the above information and submit it to the District Chairman for inclusion in the District recharter.
    - i. This shall happen no later than April 1 of each year.

Processes for approval of Merit Badge Counselor:

Adult & Merit Badge Applications filled out by Counselor

Forms get turned into District Executive/Council Offices.

A Standardized e-mail (III 3 B ii) sent by the Council Registrar/District Executive (if Skagit or Island) to applicant.

Adult Application is reviewed/signed by the District Executive.

Merit Badge Application & supporting documents scanned & E-mailed to the District Advancement Committee.

District Advancement Committee approves/denies each merit badge on the application.

District Advancement Committee communicates with registrar as to their decisions.

Registrar posts them, or doesn't, to scoutnet.

District Advancement Committee communicates with applicant about decision & insures training completed.

If training is not completed instruct them to get training before they get approval to council.

Merit Badge Counselor is ready to meet with kids.

Merit Badge Process:

Scout gets card.

Scout talks with Scoutmaster.

Scout gets name from Scoutmaster/Advancement Chair in unit

Scout contacts Merit Badge Counselor.

Scout Meets with Merit Badge Counselor.

Scout completes requirements for the badge.

Merit Badge Counselor signs card.

Cards go to Scout, Unit, and the Merit Badge Counselor.

Unit when given copy makes an Advancement Report.

Unit brings in Advancement Report, blue cards, and page with the Merit Badge Counselor's name highlighted

If Units is using the paper form, bring in original, if the unit is using the online form print off copy to sign and bring in.

Office collects blue cards to be held in the office.

A monthly random audit will be preformed by the District Advancement Team.

All cards will be placed back into the Unit mail boxes.