Physical Disability Leader Training

girl scouts greater los angeles

Consultant:
Marliese Delgado
United Ability

Created as part of "Girl Scouts for ALL Abilities" Gold Award Project by Alyssa Lee
Girl Scouts of North-Central Alabama

Training Guide Contents

This training guide is intended to support troop leaders in providing the best Girl Scout experience for girls of all abilities. If you have a scout in your troop or service unit with a physical disability, this training guide will:

- Define physical disability
- Explain difficulties your scout might encounter during meetings, outings, and overnight trips.
- Provide a list of strategies, techniques, or equipment that will assist you in providing the best Girl Scout experience for a scout with physical disabilities.
- Provide a list of other resources that might be helpful.

Create a Welcoming Girl Scout Troop

Every scout deserves the opportunity to participate, lead, and belong. By focusing on accessibility, flexibility, and inclusion, troop leaders can create an environment where scouts of all physical abilities feel confident and valued. You don't need to be an expert to create an inclusive environment. A genuine willingness to welcome and support each scout helps everyone feel comfortable and sets a positive tone that encourages others to be accepting, as well.

What is a Physical Disability?

A physical disability is a condition that affects a person's movement, strength, coordination, or physical functioning. This may impact mobility, balance, endurance, or the ability to use certain parts of the body.

Physical disabilities can be present at birth or acquired later and may vary widely from person to person. Some scouts may use mobility aids such as wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, or braces. Others may have medical or physical conditions that impact stamina, coordination, or fine motor skills.

Each scout's abilities and needs are unique, and many participate fully in activities with appropriate supports and adaptations.





Impacts of Physical Disabilities

A physical disability can affect participation in troop meetings, activities, outings, and overnight trips in a variety of ways.

A scout with a physical disability may:

- Need additional time or assistance to move between locations
- Experience fatigue more quickly during physical activities
- Have difficulty accessing certain environments (stairs, uneven terrain, tight spaces)
- Need support with fine motor tasks (cutting, writing, handling small objects)
- Require assistance with positioning, transfers, or personal care needs

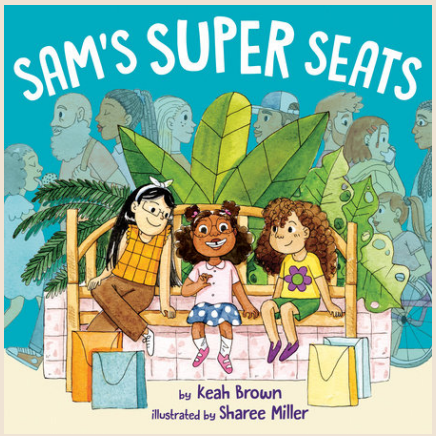
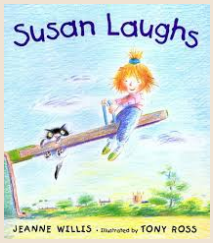
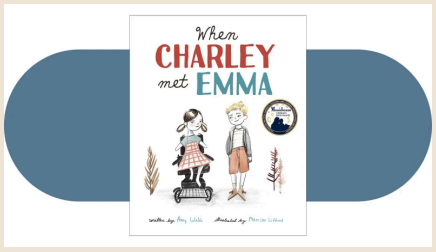
During outings and overnight trips, accessibility of the environment (paths, restrooms, sleeping arrangements) is especially important. With thoughtful planning and support, scouts with physical disabilities can actively participate and contribute in all activities.

How to Help Mitigate Challenges Realated to Physical Disabilities

In order to provide a scout with a physical disability equal access to being a Girl Scout, here are some helpful strategies:

1. **Communicate with the scout and her family** to understand her specific needs, abilities, and any medical or physical considerations.
2. **Plan for accessibility in advance** by calling or emailing the venue/ location to inquire about handicap accessible entrances, restrooms, pathways, seating, and activity setup. Be sure to inquire about the location of acessible bathrooms/ entrances to ensure the scout can remain with the group.
3. **Allow extra time for transitions** between activities and avoid rushing.
4. **Adapt activities as needed** so the focus is on participation and engagement rather than physical ability (e.g., seated options, modified equipment).
5. **Offer assistance respectfully**, and always ask before helping to support independence and dignity.
6. **Ensure materials are accessible**, such as placing items within reach or providing adapted tools.
7. **Encourage inclusion and peer support**, helping all scouts work together and value each other's strengths.

Additional Resources for Leading Scouts with Physical Disabilities

Books	Video Links	Websites
Sam's Super Seats by Keah Brown  (Children's book)	 What is a Disability? (Children's Resource)	 Adapted Games and Activities (Adult Resource)
Susan Laughs by: Jeanne Willis  (Children's Book)	 How to Treat People With Disabilities (Adult resource)	 Every Child Belongs: Welcoming a Child with a Physical Disability
When Charlie Met Emma by Amy Webb  (Children's Book)	 Disabilities and How to Cope With Them and Support Others. (Children's Resource)	Supporting children with disabilities in the outdoors

Conclusion

The Girl Scout experience should be accessible for girls of all abilities. If you need additional support to help with inclusion, please contact your local service unit or council.



Girl Scouts for ALL Abilities

Gold Award Project, 2026