

NEWS RELEASE

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Questions and Answers about Changes to the Young Men Program

Beginning in 2018, the Church will no longer participate in BSA Varsity and Venturing programs

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on May 11, 2017, announced significant changes to the activity program for young men ages 14–18. Listed below are several questions and responses media and others may have regarding this change. The change affects young men in the United States and Canada. Though the answers below are specific to the Boy Scouts of America, the same principles apply to our association with Scouts Canada. (See [the First Presidency Letter announcing these changes](#).)

What exactly is changing?

- Beginning January 1, 2018, young men from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will no longer participate in the Varsity and Venturing programs offered by the Boy Scouts of America.
- Instead, Young Men activities will focus on spiritual, social, physical and intellectual goals outlined by the Church. These activities are designed to be fun and meaningful and provide opportunities for personal growth and development.

Why is this change occurring?

- In most congregations in the United States and Canada, young men ages 14–18 are not being served well by the Varsity or Venturing programs, which have historically been difficult to implement within the Church. This change will allow youth and leaders to implement a simplified program that meets local needs while providing activities that balance spiritual, social, physical and intellectual development goals for young men.

Does this mean the Church is completely separating from the BSA?

- The Church continues to look for ways to meet the spiritual, physical, emotional and intellectual needs of young men around the world. The current decision is consistent with those efforts. The Church will continue to use the Cub Scout and Boy Scout programs for boys and young men ages 8 through 13.

Previous statements have indicated that the Church wants a program that serves all young men around the world. Is this it?

- No, this is not the global program, but an important step that addresses an immediate need. Varsity and Venturing programs have been difficult to run effectively on a local level. The Church continues to work toward developing a program for young men and young women globally.

Why is the Church remaining with the Cub Scout and Boy Scout program?

- These programs currently meet the development program needs of boys from ages 8 through 13.

Why is this change only for the United States and Canada?

- Varsity and Venturing programs are used only in Church congregations in the United States and Canada.

What has been the reaction of the BSA leadership to this decision?

- In every discussion with the Boy Scouts of America, they have expressed a shared desire to do what is best for young men. We are grateful for their continued support with this new change and look forward to continuing our strong relationship in the Cub Scout and Boy Scout programs.

How does this impact the financial and property connections of the Church to the BSA?

- Though important, financial and property obligations are not the primary concern. Instead, we are driven by our desire to serve the spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual needs of young men.
- Most of these legal associations are in connection with the Cub Scout and Boy Scout programs.
- The Church will continue to make the same payment to the BSA for registration of its young men through 2018, so there should be a minimal financial impact to Scouting.

What is the schedule for this announcement and rollout?

- The announcement was shared on May 11, 2017. However, the discontinuation of the Varsity and Venturing programs will not occur until January 1, 2018. We encourage local units to continue with their planned activities as they review and determine how they will implement the new activity guidelines.

Can young men in these age groups continue to earn the Eagle Scout award?

- Yes. Young men who desire to continue toward the rank of Eagle will be registered, supported and encouraged. It is important to remember that only those young men who are properly registered are eligible to be awarded merit badges and rank advancements.

What would you say to Church members about participation in the Friends of Scouting fundraising drive?

- The Church will continue to be involved in Friends of Scouting as part of its relationship with the BSA and the Scouting programs for boys and young men ages 8 through 13.

Is this due to changes in Scout policy in the past few years to allow gay and transgender Scouts and leaders?

- The BSA has always allowed the Church to operate its programs in ways that are consistent with our standards and beliefs, and they have been very supportive. This change is to address the needs of young men ages 14 to 18. The Church is always evaluating what is best for our youth and families, and will continue to do so.
- The activities referenced on lds.org/youth/activities and ymactivities.lds.org have been in place since 2013 as a resource for youth and their leaders around the world. When followed, these activities can provide better opportunities for spiritual, physical, emotional and intellectual growth.

Is the guideline that Young Men aren't required to meet weekly a new directive?

- No. This guideline (for both Young Men and Young Women) has existed in the Church's handbook for many years.

Will the disparity of funding and activities that exists between the Church's Young Men and Young Women programs be addressed as part of this change?

- Church leaders have long been aware of this concern. This new program brings the spending into balance for youth ages 14 through 18. This will continue to be a factor in the ongoing exploration and creation of a worldwide youth program.
- In each congregation, the [ward council](#) is encouraged to consider equally the needs of Young Women and Young Men and their families when planning activities and determining budgets.

Is this a reaction to the news that the Boy Scouts of America is considering the inclusion of girls and young women in its programs?

- Church leaders learned just recently about the BSA's intent to consider including girls and young women in Scouting. Our decision to end our participation in the Varsity and Venturing programs was made independent of this possibility and before that time. We anticipate our Cub Scout and Boy Scout units will continue as they are at present. For additional information go to: [Aaronic Priesthood 14-18 Activities](#).

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