

Registration of Merit Badge Counselors

The registration process for merit badge counselors continues to be confusing. The purpose here is to define the process and provide some answers to “frequently asked questions” (FAQ).

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1. Background:

The merit badge program is defined in “Advancement Committee Policies and Procedures”, #33088B. “...the district advancement committee has a challenging task in recruiting, approving, and training merit badge counselors, and in helping units to do the same.” Mustang District has over 300 merit badge counselors and it would be impossible to accomplish this task without help from the units. Therefore, the district relies upon the units to recruit, register and train merit badge counselors. All counselors have the choice to counsel for their unit only or for other units as well. Counselors are encouraged to share their skills with other units.

The district has responsibility for preparing and distributing a list of counselors to all units and updating the lists at least annually. Mustang District publishes the official directory once a year, normally distributed at the Program Preview. The same information is provided on the District online Database and updated frequently during the year.

“All merit badge counselors, even those who serve only one unit, must be approved by the council and district advancement committee.” Approval by the district advancement committee in the Mustang District is not practical. We rely upon unit committees to check references of applicants and recommend them to the District Director with an adult application signed by the unit committee chairman.

Merit badge counselors must be registered as a “merit badge counselor” with the Boy Scouts of America. They must be men or women of good character, age 18 or older, recognized as having the skills and education in the subjects they serve as merit badge counselors. Mustang District recommends that the number of subjects any one counselor teaches be limited to ten merit badges. Even though national policy does not limit merit badges it does recommend that scouts gain experiences from as many different instructors as possible. By limiting the number of subjects to ten, the scouts are prevented from getting all the merit badges from a single individual and thereby missing out on the full experiences of the merit badge program. This recommendation should be followed by all troops except where specific situations would provide unique opportunities for the scouts.

2. What forms do I need to register?

Two forms are required. Complete the Adult Application form 28-501C. Although this is a District/Council registration, write your Troop number at the top. Write "Mustang" upper right, District name. Complete all boxes including date of birth. In the Position box, write "Merit Badge Counselor" or "MBC". Answer all questions and provide references. This is not a unit position so signatures are not required by the COR or the CC. The applicant and the District Executive sign the form. However, Mustang District has so many counselors that it is difficult for the DE to know them personally and asks that the CC recommend counselors by signing the application.

The other form is the Merit Badge Counselor Application form listing the merit badge subjects. Staple the two forms together and mail to:

Sam Houston Area Council, BSA
Mustang District Director
P.O. Box 924528
Houston, TX 77292-4528

The Merit Badge Counselor Application form may be downloaded from:

http://www.mustangadmin.org/documents/unit_locator_map/MBC_Application.pdf

Please add your email address and Troop number at the bottom. This information helps us to identify and contact you during the annual recharter process.

3. I'm already registered with a troop as a Scoutmaster. Do I need another application?

Yes. Merit badge counselors are registered with the District. Your unit registration is a separate registration.

4. Must I register with a troop?

No. If you are not affiliated with any unit, you may register with the Mustang District as a merit badge counselor. Omit the Troop number at the top, write "Mustang" upper right, District name. No signatures are required by a unit committee chairman. The District Director will review your qualifications and approve.

5. What is the fee?

Merit badge counselors never pay any fee. If you register with a unit as a committee member or unit leader, you will pay a fee including insurance, and receive the Scouter Magazine. If registered only as a merit badge counselor, you are not covered by Council medical and accident insurance.

6. Do I register each year?

Your registration continues as long as you are active. You are registered with the district as a “non-unit registrant”. The district reviews your registration and re-charters in December each year. You will be contacted during each year, probably through the unit where you are registered, to determine if you will continue. During this review, your address and phone information is updated and the merit badge subjects for which you are approved may be changed. You may request to be dropped at any time.

7. If I want to add new merit badge subjects at a later time, do I submit both forms again?

No. You are already registered as a merit badge counselor. The Adult Application is not needed. To add merit badge subjects, submit a new Merit Badge Counselor Application form. Or make a copy of the old form and add the new merit badges. Mustang District policy recommends a maximum of ten merit badge subjects per counselor unless there are special circumstances. If you list more than ten merit badges on your application, only the first ten will be accepted until you advise specifically which ten you choose. During the annual review, Troops are asked to update information on their counselors. During this review, merit badge subjects may be added or deleted without submitting the MBC Application.

8. Do Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters register like everyone else to be a merit badge counselor?

- 1) Yes, except that Mustang policy gives blanket approval for Scoutmasters and Assistants to counsel Camping, Cooking, Hiking and Pioneering merit badges. These do not count as part of the maximum of ten merit badges.
- 2) During 2010 Scouts may earn four Historical Merit Badges. Mustang District is giving “blanket approval” for merit badge counselors as follows:
 - a) All SM/ASM approved for “Pathfinding”
 - b) All “Home Repairs” MBC’s approved for “Carpentry”
 - c) All “Nature” MBC’s approved for “Tracking”
 - d) All “Communication” MBC’s approved for “Signaling”
- 3) To find requirements for these merit badges: Google “Pathfinding”, etc.
- 4) New merit badge counselors should register for “Home Repairs” to do “Carpentry”, etc.

9. Can a new adult register for a unit position and merit badge counselor on the same Adult Application?

Yes. In the Position box, write the unit position and “MBC”. Since this represents both a Unit Position and a Non-Unit Position, include a copy of the application for Council files.

10. May I use a copy of an old Adult Application and write in a new position “MBC”?

In most cases, no. Most of the old applications did not include a Social Security Number. But most importantly, they did not include your signature authorizing a criminal background check. Whenever you change your position, a new Adult Application is required. This will trigger a background check unless one has already been made.

11. Will I be notified when my registration is approved?

Not directly. There is a time delay for approval by the District Director and data entry into the Scoutnet database. The District Director sends the Merit Badge Counselor Application to the District Database administrator. Your name is not entered in the District Database until confirmation is received that you are registered in Scoutnet as a merit badge counselor.

You can search the District Online Database at any time for your name and current list of merit badge subjects. The record of your merit badge subjects is kept in the District Database only. Council keeps no record.

12. How long must I wait before my registration is complete?

We plan to get downloaded confirmation from Scoutnet about every two months. If more than two months have elapsed after your application reaches the Scout Center and your name is not online, send an email to marv4kiel@earthlink.net.

13. What do I do if my application is lost?

First, check with the Advancement Chairman of your troop. They may have dropped your name and neglected to tell you. Make sure that your application was sent to the Mustang District Director. If it still appears to be lost, send an email note to the Mustang District Director and ask for a registration check on Scoutnet. Council files can be searched for your application but try to find a copy of your application if you can. Regrettably, if that fails you will need to submit another application. (Always keep a copy of applications.)

14. Are there other reasons that my registration can be delayed?

Yes! If you neglected to provide your Social Security Number and/or date of birth and it is not already in the Scoutnet database, your registration cannot be completed. You may call the Service Center Registration desk and provide the information or submit a new application.

15. When a unit re-charters, do they include names of merit badge counselors?

No. They will not see merit badge counselor positions on the unit re-charter list because it is a separate “non-unit registration”. All adult names appearing on the unit re-charter list are registered as unit leaders, assistants, or members of the committee. Deleting an adult from your committee has no impact whatever on their merit badge counselor registration. Non-unit re-chartering is a district function, not a unit function.

16. What happened to Code 42?

Code 42 was used in the old system to identify merit badge counselors. It is still recognized but not necessary. Just write "Merit Badge Counselor" in the position box.

17. May we send an application to the Service Center by FAX?

No. They need an original signed application.

18. May we turn in applications at the registration counter?

Yes. Be sure to staple the Adult Application to the Merit Badge Counselor application and remember to indicate your Troop number on the MBC application. Your registration will be delayed if not complete. But it is preferred that you leave your application with the District Director or at the reception desk for delivery to the District Director. Reason: the District Director must sign the application before Registration can process it.