2026 Washington D.C. District Merit Badge University **Counselor Handbook**

Hosted by the Washington DC District, Scouting America National Capitol Area Council
&
The Catholic University of America

December 12th & 13th | 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. both days

Introduction

Thank you for volunteering to be a Merit Badge Counselor and lead a session at the Washington D.C. District Merit Badge University! Your skills and your presence will inspire a group of excited Scouts to prepare for their futures and to become better people.

This guide provides all the information you will need to prepare for your session and deliver a program that helps fulfill the promise of the Scouts BSA Program.

For any questions or clarifications about these materials, please feel free to contact the Washington D.C. District Merit Badge Dean, Zachary White, at meritbadgedean@scoutingindc.org at any time. Additional points of contact are listed at the end of this document (Part 5).

This is an approved event of the Scouting America National Capitol Area Council administered by the Washington, DC District. The Scouts BSA advancement program is administered in compliance with the requirements in the Guide to Advancement 2025 and the January 2026 updates as well as applicable Scouting America National Capitol Area Council large Merit Badge event policies.

Related Documents:

- **2026 Washington D.C. District Merit Badge University – Participant Handbook**
- **2026 Washington D.C. District Merit Badge University – Pre-Requisites and Outside Work**

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Part 1 - Registration for Merit Badge Counselors

As a prerequisite for the event, all counselors must be properly registered and trained as “Position 42” Merit Badge Counselors.

Please carefully follow the guidance of Scouting America National Capitol Area Council staff and volunteers to ensure you are registered as a counselor before the start of the event.

Part 2 - Event Code of Conduct

The following code of conduct has been written to ensure the safety and enjoyment of all involved at the CUA Merit Badge University. Please review this document carefully before attending CUA Merit Badge University.

Follow the Scout Oath, Scout Law, & Outdoor Code: All attendees are expected to uphold the values in the Scout Oath and Scout Law. Scouts are expected to be trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent throughout the entirety of Merit Badge University.

Treat all members of volunteers, counselors, university staff, participants, and other personnel with respect: We expect that all participants treat each other with respect, as they have volunteered their time to make this Merit Badge University happen. This includes, and is not limited to, respecting participants’ race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, family responsibilities, genetic information, disability, matriculation, or political affiliation.

Respect the property and materials of The Catholic University of America: This Merit Badge University is hosted at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. We expect that you will respect the spaces and materials provided to you for MBU. This includes but is not limited to: only using materials provided to you, not using CUA technology unless explicitly instructed by your counselor, and not being in any CUA rooms unless a volunteer or counselor is present.

Vandalism: There was an issue with some of last year's Merit Badge University participants trashing the restrooms and deliberately clogging toilets to the point that some were damaged and overflowed. In order to not experience a repeat of 2025: Counselors will not allow more than two (2) youth to go to the restroom at a time, and Counselors will keep a log of the name of the youth(s) that go to the restroom, what time they leave the classroom and what time they return to the classroom. Roving adults will be checking the restrooms for damage and vandalism through-out the day. Maintain control of your session.

Personal responsibility for breakage or loss of personal property: The CUA and the Merit Badge University staff are not responsible for any breakage or loss of personal property. It is the personal responsibility of attendees to keep track of their belongings throughout the Merit Badge University.

No drugs, alcohol, firearms, vaping, or tobacco: We want Merit Badge University to be a fun and safe time for all involved. As such, absolutely no drugs, alcohol, firearms, vaping or tobacco products are permitted during Merit Badge University.

By attending Merit Badge University, you are agreeing to abide by the rules and regulations outlined in this code of conduct. As event staff reserves the right to remove any event participant in violation of this code of conduct.

Part 3 - Merit Badge University Expectations & Standards

Scouts for this event have been provided with a Participant Event Guide detailing the steps they should take to get the most out of the event. That document is available on the first page.

Preparing for your Session

Please keep these items in mind as you plan your program sessions and follow up with participating Scouts:

- **Fill all your time with content** – Please make every effort to use all the time for your session and not dismiss Scouts early. If need be, dazzle the Scouts with stories, experiences, collections, and facts which will encourage and inspire them to explore the topic on their own. Share your love of the topic for all available hours.
- **Merit badge requirements may not be waived or changed for any Scout.** Counselors and event staff may not add, subtract, or modify requirements from Merit Badges, they must be completed as written.
- **Each Scout must "actually and personally" complete their own requirements.** Attending the session alone is not sufficient to earn a badge. Completion is an individual effort for each Scout.
- **Scouts must provide some evidence documenting prior or prerequisite work.** A standardized form for attestation of completed pre-requisities has been provided to the Scout. The form must be signed by their Scoutmaster, or the Counselor they previously worked with. Other evidence may be accepted at your discretion. Scouts have been instructed to bring the standardized form and any other evidence with them to the event.
- **Only registered counselors may sign off requirements.** - Guest experts or speakers are welcome to assist you, but they may not accept the responsibilities of, or behave as, Merit Badge Counselors during or after this event.
- **Partial Merit Badge completions are a common and acceptable outcome.** Please do not give credit for work that has not been completed.
- **If possible, assist Scouts with partial completions after the event** – Merit Badge Counselors are encouraged to share their contact information with Scouts attending sessions and follow up with Scouts after the event to help with partially completed Merit Badges. Following up is strictly at your own convenience. If you do choose to meet Scouts outside of the event, ensure that you have their parent(s) or

a unit leader present. NEVER meet with Scouts 1-on-1. When e-mailing a Scout, carbon copy (CC:) another adult or meritbadgedean@scoutingindc.org. If you are not able to meet with Scouts after the event, advise them to contact their unit leader and locate another registered counselor.

Pre-requisite / Outside Work Requirements & Supplies

It's very rare that Merit Badges can be completed in one session, especially those that are offered during our morning and afternoon 4-hour blocks. That said, there is an expectation that, whenever possible, attendees will be able to complete the merit badge they signed up for at the event. Merit Badge University best practices include informing Scouts of any outside work for their badges so that they may prepare for their sessions and have the best chance of completing the badge on that day.

Scouts will be provided with a list of pre-requisite requirements and are expected to review, and complete them before attending. Counselors are responsible for communicating and confirming a list of "outside work" requirements with event staff in advance of the event.

Counselors are responsible for coordinating and purchasing their own supplies for their session(s).

Event Day

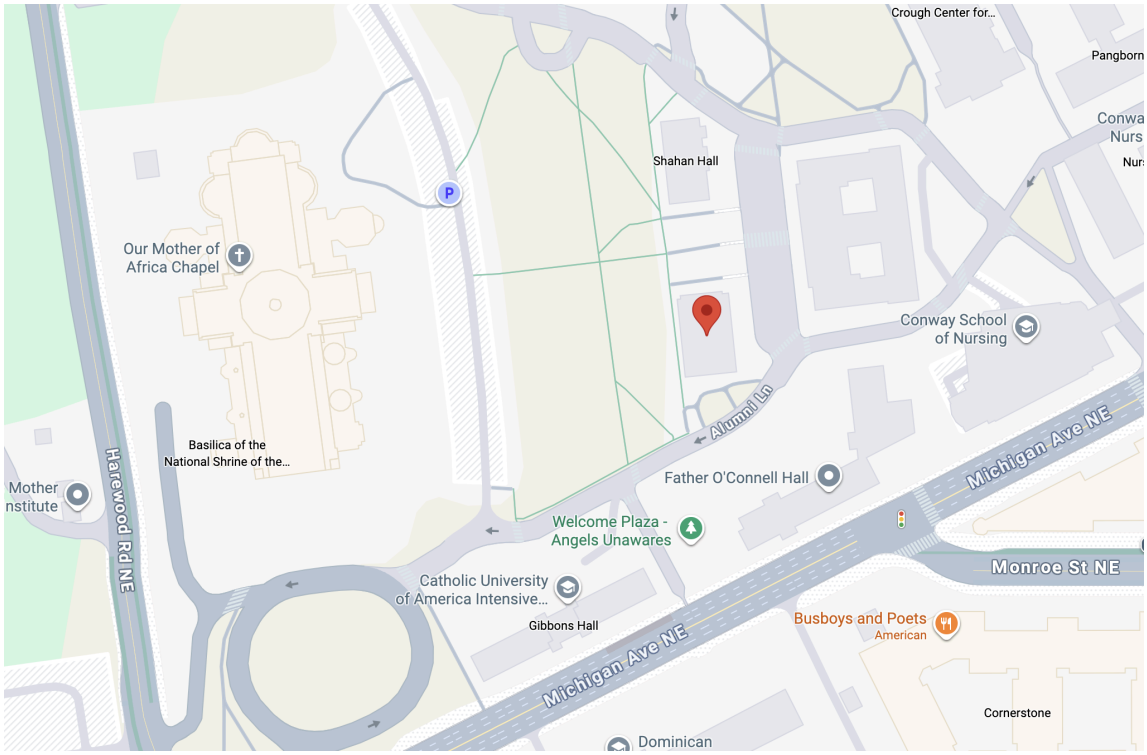
Please arrive at the event before your session begins to check in with staff, receive your room assignment, and receive your finalized attendee list. Check-in opens at 7:30 AM for Counselors and 8:00 AM for participants. Afternoon session check in opens at 12:30 PM for Counselors and 1:00 PM participants.

Check-in closes for all at 8:45 AM and 1:45 PM.

For 2026, check-in will occur at:

McGivney Hall.

552 Alumni Lane, NE, Washington, DC 20064



We anticipate that parking will be available in the McMahon Parking lot and throughout campus.

In the interest of fairness, please honor the list of registered attendees and do not admit additional Scouts to your session without notifying event staff.

During the event, please contact staff if any assistance is needed. Should a Scout or adult attending your session become disruptive to the group, please contact event staff immediately. Session coordinators may dismiss Scouts or adults at their discretion.

Budget permitting, event staff will provide pizza for Merit Badge Counselors and volunteers. Advance notice will be provided.

Participant Resources:

- **2026 Washington D.C. District Merit Badge University – Participant Handbook**
- **2026 Washington D.C. District Merit Badge University – Pre-Requisites and Outside Work**

It is recommended that counselors review this participant guide to understand how the Scouts have been instructed to prepare for this event.

Staff will also have contact information for all Scouts at your session available shortly after registration closes on November 30th 2026. Reach out to meritbadgedean@scoutingindc.org if you need a copy of that list. You will be provided with a full class roster, including contact information, during check-in.

Part 4 – Documenting Scout Progress with Blue Cards

Each Scout tracks their Merit Badge requirements with an individual Application for Merit Badge (**BLUE CARD**). Counselors are expected to document the progress of each Scout on their individual blue cards clearly and accurately and to give blue cards back to the Scouts at the end of the session.

For those counselors who are familiar with **Scoutbook Plus**, you are welcome to manage your blue cards through this system if you have prior familiarity. For those who are not well versed in Scoutbook, please know that a **BLUE CARD** can still be accepted by a unit as proof of badge completion.

IMPORTANT: Do not hold on to individual Scout blue cards at the end of your session. Give them back to the Scouts.

Scouts are responsible for tracking their progress and reporting back to their unit after completing badges. Holding on to blue cards prevents Scouts from continuing their badges and advancing.

Scouts will arrive at your session with their own Blue Cards. Before the Scout departs, the counselor must record all completed requirements in the chart segment of the card by entering the requirement number, the date completed, and their initials. You may have the Scouts write out the requirement numbers, but the date and signature must come from the counselor after requirement completion.

If a Scout does not complete a Merit Badge, record their progress by listing and signing off only the requirements that they have completed. Leave the contact information sections on the blue card blank. Leave the counselor signature on the applicants record blank, and give the card back to the Scout.

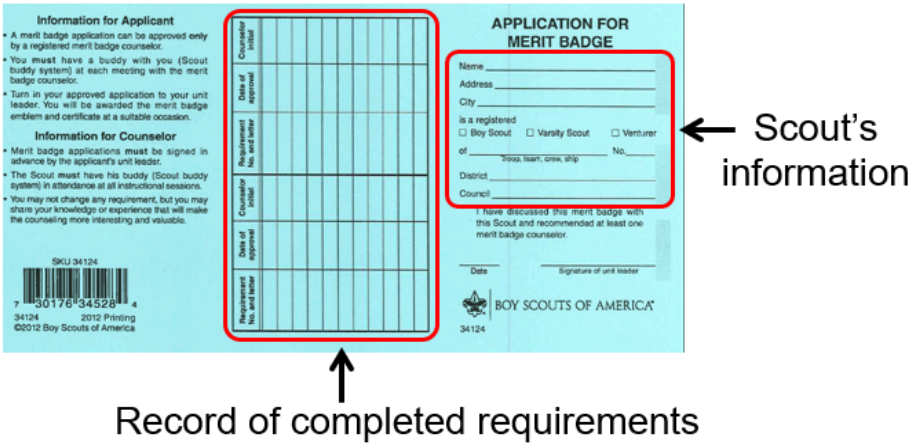
Do not write your contact information in the counselor section, only the "closing" counselor fills that part out at the completion of the merit badge.

It is also strongly recommended that counselors list out the numbers of requirements that the Scout did not finish and to intentionally leave those initial and date boxes blank so that there is absolute clarity on what the Scout needs to finish to complete the badge.

If a Scout finishes all requirements of a Merit Badge, proceed to add your contact information to the back of the card, sign the Counselor's information section of the card, sign the Applicant's Record, and then tear off and keep the "Counselor's Record" third of the document for your own records. Give the remaining 2/3 back to the Scout.

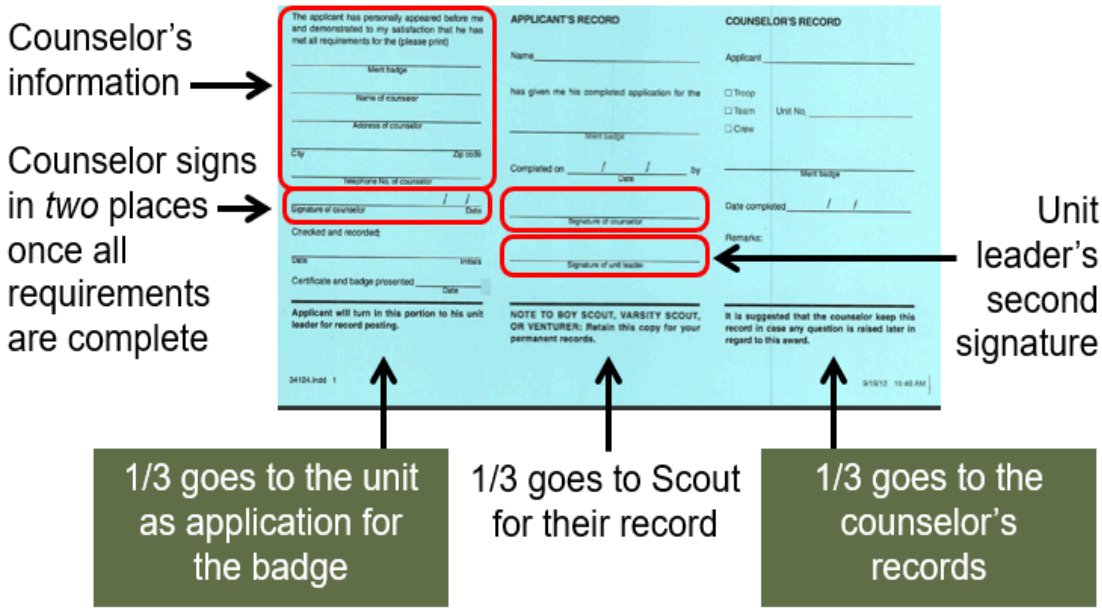
SEE NEXT PAGE FOR DIAGRAMS

Application for Merit Badge
The Blue Card



Guide to Advancement topic 7.0.0.2

Application for Merit Badge
The Blue Card – Reverse Side



Guide to Advancement topic 7.0.0.2

Part 5 – Scouting America National Capitol Area Council Contact Information:

If you have any questions about this document, suspect unfair treatment at the event, or suspect that Scouting America procedures have not been followed during or after this event, then please contact the following individuals:

For general event questions, please contact:

- Zachary White, Washington, DC District Merit Badge Dean & Merit Badge University Event Lead
- meritbadgedean@scoutingindc.org

For registration questions, please contact:

- Christa Waterwiese, Washington DC Senior District Executive
  Christa.Waterwiese@scouting.org

For counselor feedback or Scouts BSA advancement related questions, please contact:

- Zachary White, Washington, DC District Merit Badge Dean & Merit Badge University Event Lead
- meritbadgedean@scoutingindc.org
- David Astle, Merit Badge Lead, National Capital Area Council
  dave.sonia@verizon.net

To report abuse in the Scouting America program, contact 1-844-SCOUTS1 (1-844-726-8871) directly.

Appendix 1 - Campus Map

Link to view and download a campus map: HERE

Parking - Please use Flowbird app Google Play OR Apple Store

Appendix 2 – Scouts BSA Merit Badge Counselor Standards

Counselors are expected to know the most current requirements for their Merit Badges and be familiar with Merit Badge Counselor essentials. Please download review the most recent requirements for your badges and review the linked PowerPoint presentation prior to the event:

Current Merit Badge Requirements:

(SCROLL DOWN ON THE WEBSITE TO FIND YOUR BADGE)

Guide to Advancement:

Guide to Advancement 2026 Updates:

(This document outlines the rules for the BSA advancement program. The merit badge section begins at Chapter 7.0.0.0 – Scouts BSA and event policies are derived from this guide)

Counselor Handbook Changes

- ~~September 25, 2025 – Second Edition~~
- October 11, 2026 - Third Edition