Mainstreaming vs. Self-Contained Units

Information leaders must consider when debating between mainstreaming special needs Scouts or creating a self-contained unit.

Mainstreaming vs. Self-Contained Units

<u>Mainstreaming</u>

Advantages

- The disabled Scout learns "normal" behaviors
- Teaches acceptance and tolerance to "normal" Scouts, exposes them to a wider variety of people than they might have known, gives them a chance to teach the disabled Scout
- There are more regular units, so more opportunities to be in Scouting
  Stay with peers from school, often parents have the expectation of mainstreaming in all areas of their child's life if it is present at school
- Chance to be with "normal" peers if not mainstreamed at school
- Simply good technique—it's more like real life

Concerns

- Leaders may have no training
- Possible negative impact on membership—resentment of the special Scout
- Parents of the special needs scout may be accused of "bad parenting" by others who don't understand
- Possible problem if the disabled scout is over the age of 21
- Medication issues
- Scout may be physically larger than others his mental age
- Some Scouts with disabilities for behavioral reasons may not fit in (e.g. the boy who needs less stimulation or strict structure

<u>Self Contained Units</u>

Advantages

- Safe haven
- May be only opportunity to be in Scouting
- Scout may be more comfortable around youth with similar disabilities
- Depends on the severity of the disability
- Chance to be with similar aged peers if over 21
- May be only opportunity to be in Scouts, especially if in institution

Concerns

- How do you define a "disabled Scout?"
- Not like real life
- Can pick up inappropriate behaviors from peers if no positive models are present
  Depends on the severity of the disability
- Do they benefit from the program as much as if they were with others?
- Problems finding leadership
- Trouble integrating into regular district
- Transportation to/from meetings and outings
- Funding
- Location for meetings