

Disability Awareness Interest Project

(For Cadette & Senior Girl Scouts)

Purpose: To increase girls' knowledge and understanding of disabilities and the people who experience them.



Complete at least nine (9) activities including #1 and #2, which are required.

*1. Explore the World of Disabilities

Learn about five physical and/or cognitive disabilities. Find out what service agencies in your community serve people with these disabilities. What causes these disabilities? Select a disability you would like to learn more about, then do the remaining requirements with that particular disability in mind.

*2. Life Styles

What are some of the ways society still discriminates toward people with disabilities? Discuss attitudes, language and physical barriers. Research what “people first” or “dignifying” language is and to use it all at times. Educate your family and friends on why the correct language is an important first step toward inclusion.

3. Community Resources Awareness

Find out about at least five of the organizations and facilities which serve people with disabilities in your community.

What services do they provide?

Whom do they serve?

Do they give financial aid?

Do they offer family assistance?

Do they help with job placement?

Are they a school, hospital, or referral agency?

4. Prevention

Many disabilities can be prevented. Find out what people can do to prevent the disability you selected to learn more about. How do service agencies help in the area of prevention? What is some of the research being done to learn more about the causes of this disability?

5. Make New Friends

Invite a person who experiences a disability to your meeting to learn more about them. How is their life different from yours? What things are the same? Do they require special training or assistance? Will you have to make special preparations for their visit?

Or Go to a facility serving people with disabilities. Plan a program to interact with people there. Call in advance and follow the advice of the people in charge. They can help you plan a program which will be fun for you and your new friends.

Or Listen to a speaker talk about the effects of a disability on a person's lifestyle. You could invite the speaker to your meeting or go to his or her place of work. Find out how the person living with a disability would eat, work, travel, go to school, and participate in social events. What special equipment would be needed? What would the cost be for items such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, seeing-eye dogs, van conversions, etc?

6. Join the Fun

Attend an event for people with disabilities like the Special Olympics or other community events.

Or Observe two smaller events, such as practice sessions at a recreation center.

7. Advocacy

Learn about four laws which help people with disabilities. Take a tour of a public place like a park, a shopping center, theater, government building, school, restaurant, or public transportation facility. List those things which have been built or changed to be accessible for people with disabilities. Do you see some problems which need to be remedied? Are doors wide enough for wheelchairs? Are accommodations made for the visually impaired?

Or What adaptive technologies exist for a person with the disability you selected?

Or How would a person with disabilities determine what agencies could help with educational, medical, or other personal needs? How could they travel to the appointment place? How are these services paid for?

8. Getting Involved

Many service agencies for people with disabilities need volunteer help. Working with people from all backgrounds is the best way to learn about them, their abilities and their disabilities. Contact one or more of the groups serving people with the disability you are studying. Find out what you can do to serve them. Are you old enough? Will you need training? Spend some time assisting one of these organizations.

Or Make something to assist or entertain children with disabilities in a hospital. Contact the hospital first and determine what toys, learning aids, etc., are needed before you begin.

Or Adaptive aquatics -- take the necessary training, then help people with disabilities in and around a pool.

Or Work as an aide at a Special Olympics event or a camp for people with disabilities. Take the necessary training.

Or Create a service project of your own.

9. Career Exploration

Interview at least three people who work with people who experience a disability, or related service agencies. What are their duties and responsibilities? How did they become interested in their area of work? How much education or training did they need? How long did that take? What do they like best about their work? What do they find most difficult?

10. Connect

Consider signing up your troop as a Ready Troop (a troop that has increased knowledge and understanding of disabilities and people who experience them.) Registration forms are available online at www.girlscoutssdi.org/forms/readytroop and in all council resource centers. Ready Troop segments may be purchased in the council stores and worn on the official uniform.