Lacking agreement, the Scout must be allowed to work with the registered and approved counselor of their choice.

To ensure they understand what needs to be done, Scouts may benefit from reviewing requirements with a merit badge counselor before getting to work, a Scout may begin the effort on any badge at any time after registering in Scouts BSA or becoming a qualified Venturer or Sea Scout. Scouts may work on any merit badge at any time, regardless of how many other merit badges they are working on, rank, age, or other circumstances. It is the counselor's decision whether to accept prior work. Common sense should prevail, however. For example, nights already camped as a Scout in Scouts BSA or as a qualified Venturer or Sea Scout, or coins or stamps already collected, would count toward their respective badges, but work that did not meet the requirement as written must not be accepted. The Scout should be gently informed as to why the requirement was not met, and how they can rectify the issue (up to and including repeating the activity, if necessary).

The National Council does not limit the number of merit badges a youth may earn from one counselor, though a unit leader may do so as long as the same limit applies to all Scouts in the unit. Ideally, Scouts should work with a variety of adults so they can gain insight and learn from examples offered from a variety of perspectives and approaches to life.

> *It is acceptable for a registered counselor to approve merit badges for Scouts in any council. This is important in areas where counselors are scarce, when Scouts are away from home and want to continue advancing, or when merit badge experiences include high-quality online components provided in another council. However, they must still follow all procedures, including the conversation between Scout and unit leader prior to working with a counselor.*

Earning a large number of merit badges from a small number of counselors, or only from counselors known to the Scout, robs the Scout of the opportunity to learn and grow.

Counselors may work with and pass any member, including their own children, wards, or relatives. However, association with adults is one of the methods of Scouting, and working with family members and known adults can deprive Scouts of the opportunity to learn and grow. Scouts meeting with counselors beyond their families and beyond own units will benefit from the perspectives of many "teachers" and will learn more as a result. Scouts should be encouraged to reach out if at all possible.

All camps, events, or other merit badge opportunities, and all advancement recording systems are expected to promptly document merit badge partials and completions in a format that is easy for Scouts, adult volunteers, and merit badge counselors to use and understand.

7.0.1.0 Merit Badge Counseling Risk Management and Quality Control

7.0.1.1 Supervisory Qualifications and Certifications

Several badges involve activities for which Scouting America has implemented strategies to improve safety, enhance the Scouts' experiences, and manage risk. These activities often require supervision with specialized qualifications and certifications. Merit badge counselors who do not meet the specific safety requirements may use the services of helpers who do. Details can be found below, in the *Guide to Safe Scouting,* and in merit badge pamphlets.

General Supervision Requirements

- All merit badge activities must be conducted in accordance with Scouting America safety strategies, and be supervised by mature and conscientious adults at least 21 years old and trained in the applicable program. For example, Safe Swim Defense for swimming, Safety Afloat for watercraft, and Winter Activities (www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/gss12/#b) for snow sports. Counselors must be so trained, or use helpers who are.
- All physical activities presented in any Scouting program must be conducted in accordance with the "SAFE Checklist." These four points, embodying good judgment and common sense, can be found at www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/safe.
- CPR instruction, wherever it is required, must be taught by people currently trained as CPR instructors by a nationally certified provider, such as the American Red Cross, the Emergency Care and Safety Institute, or the American Heart Association.

The following merit badges have special qualifications or certifications for either the merit badge counselor or the supervisor of certain activities. Counselors and advancement administrators should consult the merit badge pamphlets for details and to maintain awareness of changes and updates as pamphlets are revised.

Citizenship in Society. Completion of the DEI volunteer training is strongly recommended for all counselors; it includes integral information on key concepts the Scouts will be studying: training.scouting.org/courses/SCO_1800/.

Climbing. All climbing, belaying, and rappelling exercises and activities must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult rock-climbing instructor, age 21 or older, who has completed Climb On Safely training and who understands the risks inherent to these activities. Training as a Scouting America climbing Level 2 Instructor is highly recommended. Someone with certification in First Aid/ CPR/AED from the American Red Cross (or

equivalent) must be present at these activities. Current policies are found in the *Guide to Safe Scouting* at www.scouting.org/ health-and-safety/gss/gss08/#a and supersede any other publications or literature.

Snow Sports. Activities in the field must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult 21 years or older who is committed to compliance with Winter Sports Safety. Current policies are found in the *Guide to Safe Scouting* at www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/gss12/#b/.

The qualifications below for aquatics-related merit badge counseling and supervision not only assist in managing risk, but also give counselors credibility. All counselors should have formal training in the knowledge and skills indicated by the requirements, experience in teaching such skills to youth, and experience in identifying and managing risks associated with the activities involved. Current policies are found at www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/gss02 and supersede any other publications or literature.

Canoeing. Appropriate credentials include: current or previous certification as Scouting America Aquatics Instructor, designation as an instructor or successful completion of council sponsored or council approved training courses in canoeing such as the Scouting America Paddlecraft Safety course or current or previous certification as an instructor in canoeing by the American Canoe Association Level One. The council advancement committee may approve counselors with similar experience and training in knowledge, skill, safety, and instruction.

Kayaking. Appropriate credentials include: current or previous certification as Scouting America Aquatics Instructor, designation as an instructor or successful completion of council sponsored or council approved training courses in kayaking such as the Scouting America Paddlecraft Safety, current American Canoe Association Level One Kayak Instructor Certification or a higher level of ACA Kayak Instructor Certification. The council advancement committee may approve counselors with similar experience and training in knowledge, skill, safety, and instruction.

Lifesaving. An appropriate credential is current or previous certification as BSA Aquatics Instructor. Persons trained as instructors for Aquatics Supervision: Swimming & Water Rescue or as lifeguard instructors (e.g. BSA, American Red Cross, or YMCA) are also qualified provided they self-study and practice the material in the pamphlet. The council advancement committee may approve counselors with similar experience and training in knowledge, skill, safety, and instruction.

Motor Boating. Appropriate credentials include: current or previous certification by an organization (such as the National Safe Boating Council, the U.S. Power Squadrons, the US Coast Guard Auxiliary or the U.S. Powerboating component of U.S. Sailing) that meets the voluntary National On-Water Standards for Powerboating or the NASBLA National Boating Education Standards for Powerboating. The council advancement committee may approve counselors with similar experience and training in knowledge, skill, safety, and instruction.

Rowing. Appropriate credentials include: current or previous certification as Aquatics Instructor, Scouting America or U.S. Rowing provided they self-study and practice material in the pamphlet. The council advancement committee may approve counselors with similar experience and training in knowledge, skill, safety, and instruction.

Scuba Diving. Appropriate credentials include an Open Water Scuba Certification (or higher rating) for all requirements except Requirement #4. Requirement #4 must be accomplished by a Scuba Instructor from a certification agency recognized by Scouting America and verified by the counselor. The council advancement committee may approve counselors with similar experience and training in knowledge, skill, safety, and instruction.

Small Boat Sailing. Appropriate credentials include instructor certification with a recognized sailing agency or school, U.S. Sailing, American Sailing Association for sailing experience with different hull types including the rig being used for instruction. Counselors should also be familiar with the requirements for the Small Boat Sailing Merit Badge and be able to perform the skills associated with each requirement. The council advancement committee may approve counselors with similar experience and training in knowledge, skill, safety, and instruction.

Swimming. At a minimum, current or previous certification as Aquatics Instructor, Scouting America or instructors from the American Red Cross or YMCA. The council advancement committee may approve counselors with similar experience and training in knowledge, skill, safety, and instruction.

Water Sports. Appropriate credentials include: current or previous certification by an organization (such as the National Safe Boating Council, the U.S. Power Squadrons, the US Coast Guard Auxiliary, BoatUS or the U.S. Powerboating component of US Sailing that meets the voluntary National On-Water Standards for Powerboating or the NASBLA National Boating Education Standards for Powerboating. The council advancement committee may approve counselors with similar experience and training in knowledge, skill, safety, and instruction.

Whitewater. Appropriate credentials include American Canoe Association Level Three River Kayak or River Canoe Instructor Certification, or a higher level of ACA River Kayak or River Canoe Instructor Certification. The council advancement committee may approve counselors with similar experience and training in knowledge, skill, safety, and instruction.

The qualifications for range and target activities merit badge counseling and supervision not only assist in managing risk but also give counselors credibility. Current policies are found at www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/gss08/#a and supersede any other publications or literature. See the *Guide to Safe Scouting* and the *National Range & Target Activities Manual* for further details.

Archery. Archery activities must be supervised by a National Camping School-trained Range & Target Activities Director, a USA Archery Instructor, a National Field Archery Association instructor, or an Archery Rangemaster. To qualify as an Archery Rangemaster, the individual must be at least 18 and trained by a National Camping School-trained Range & Target Activities Director or a USA Archery/NFAA Instructor using the syllabus found in the National Range & Target Activities Manual.

Rifle Shooting. The merit badge counselor is responsible for ensuring all instruction or other activities involving the handling of firearms or live ammunition is consistent with state and federal law and supervised by a certified National Camping School (NCS) Range & Target Activities Director, or National Rifle Association (NRA) Rifle Shooting Instructor. Instruction or other activities involving handling muzzleloaders must be supervised by an NCS Range & Target Activities Director or NRA/National Muzzleloader Rifle Association (NMLRA)-certified Muzzleloader Firearms Instructor. Live fire must be supervised by an NRA-certified Range Safety Officer (RSO) and an NRA/NMLRA-certified Instructor in the discipline of the firearm being shot. The Instructor and the RSO may not be the same person. Note: commercial shooting ranges may provide properly certified RSOs Please reference the National Range & Target Activities Manual for required range supervision ratios.

Shotgun Shooting. The merit badge counselor is responsible for ensuring all instruction or other activities involving any handling of firearms or live ammunition is consistent with state and federal law and supervised by a certified NCS Range & Target Activities Director or NRA Shotgun Instructor or Coach. Instruction or other activities involving handling muzzle-loading shotguns must be supervised by an NCS Range & Target Activities Director or NRA/NMLRA-certified Muzzleloading Shotgun Instructor. Live fire must be supervised by an NRA-certified Range Safety Officer (RSO) and an NRA-certified Instructor in the discipline of the firearm being shot. The Instructor and the RSO may not be the same person. Commercial shooting ranges may provide properly certified RSOs. Please reference the National Range & Target Activities Manual for required range supervision ratios.

All certifications listed above must be current.

7.0.1.2 Merit Badge Counselor Registration

There are two aspects to merit badge counselor registration: approval for registration in the position of merit badge counselor and approval for the badges to be counseled. Both functions are the responsibility of the council advancement committee, though how they are carried out is left to council determination. That said, the council advancement committee must assure the provisions below in topics 7.0.1.3, and 7.0.1.4 are met. Processes used should not be rushed to the point where unqualified counselors are allowed to serve. The Merit Badge Counselor Information sheet (filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/34405.pdf) is an excellent tool to use in these efforts.

Note that both aspects of merit badge counselor approval apply also to those serving as counselors at summer camp or in any virtual or group instruction setting.

7.0.1.3 Qualifying and Registering as a Merit Badge Counselor

To function as a merit badge counselor one must be registered as such. Only adults of good character, age 18 or older, are permitted to register as merit badge counselors. It is important too, that potential counselors have a good rapport with unit leaders and Scout youth. Counselors register using Scouting America's standard adult registration form with position code 42, and they must reregister annually.

Council advancement committees determine who at the council or district level approves a counselor's adult application form. Note that counselors must reregister annually to continue serving. See "Counselor Reregistration," 7.0.1.5.

7.0.1.4 Approving Badges To Be Counseled

Council advancement committees have the responsibility to implement an approval procedure that assures merit badge counselors have the necessary skills, education, and training to offer safe, quality experiences in the badges they counsel. The intent is for Scouts to learn from those with an appropriate level of expertise and enthusiasm for the subject matter. Counselors are approved for specific merit badges, and may only sign off on those for which they have been approved by the Council Advancement Committee or their designee.

A well-qualified and enthusiastic counselor can extend a young person's attention span: more will be heard and understood, discussions will be more productive, and true interest will be developed. The conversations can lead to a relationship of mutual respect where the Scout is confident enough to offer thoughts and opinions and to value those