

# How to Register as a Merit Badge or STEM Nova Awards Counselor

Thank you for considering serving our youth as a Merit Badge or Nova awards counselor. We are very glad that you want to help us in this way. Adult volunteers can play an important role in the advancement of Scouts, whether or not they have any youth of their own in the program. By serving as a merit badge or Nova award counselor, you share your professional experiences and personal interests with Scouts and not only assist them with their advancement journey but may also inspire them to pursue a career or take up a hobby in that field. You can give them experiences that they would not otherwise have.

## Merit Badge Counselor - Scouts BSA program

There are over [138 merit badges](#) in the Scouts BSA program that cover all manner of skills, careers and interests. Of these, 18 are identified as Eagle-required, and a Scout needs to earn 14 of these as well as 7 other badges on their way to their Eagle Scout rank for a total of 21.

## STEM Nova Awards Counselor– all BSA programs

Adult volunteers with a particular interest or professional experience in the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) may also be interested in signing up as Nova Counselors for the [BSA’s STEM Nova Awards program](#). These awards combine existing Scouting program awards with additional activities to earn special awards in STEM fields. If you desire to serve as a Supernova Mentor, please send an email to [meritbadge@pacificabsa.org](mailto:meritbadge@pacificabsa.org).

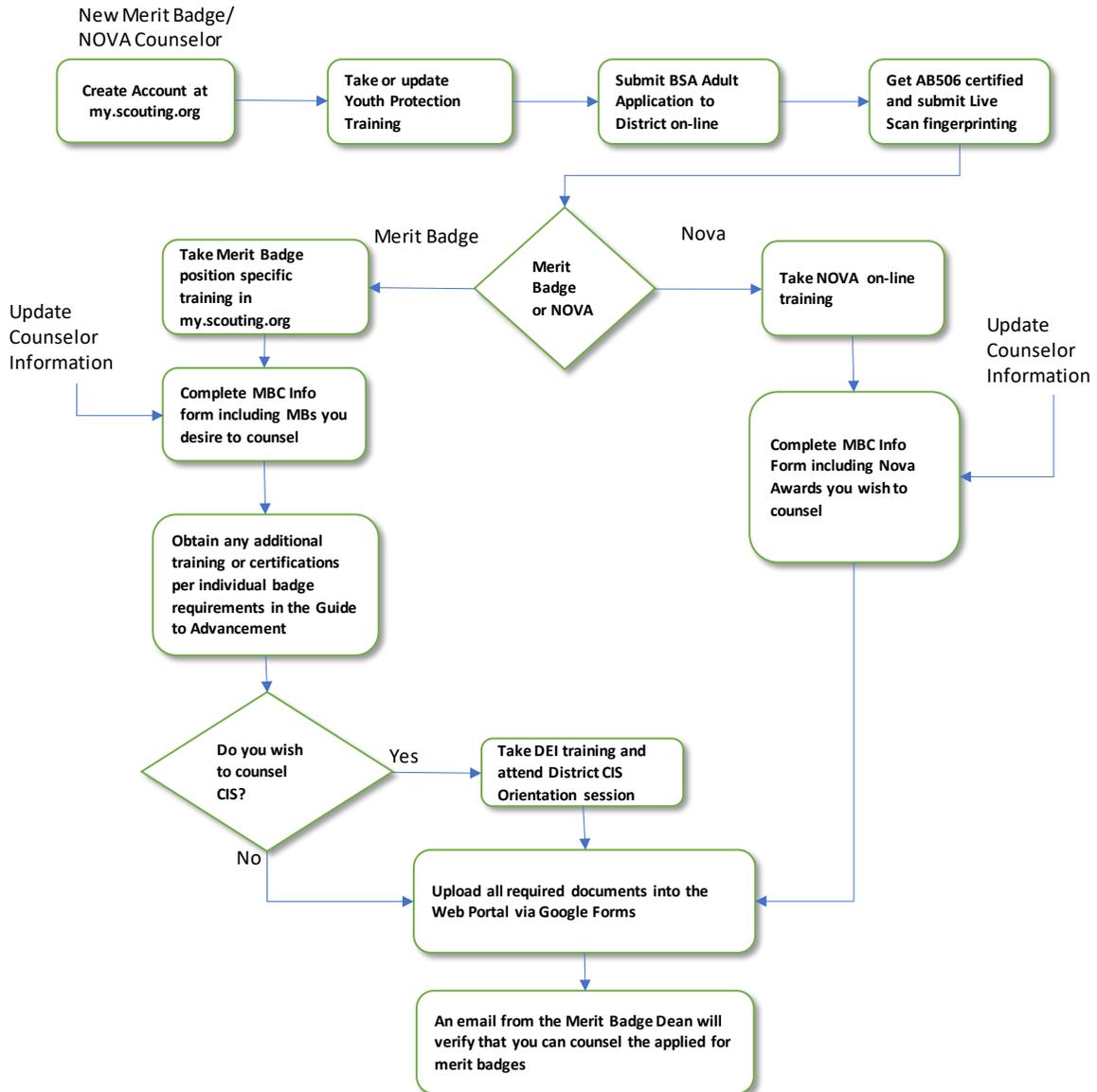
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# Application Process Summary

The process to become a Counselor is designed to ensure that the applicant clearly knows the responsibilities of the position, is fully trained in the merit badge process, has the necessary background in the merit badge subject so they can be an asset to the Scout, and knows how to get answers to any questions they may have.

Graphically, here is a summary of the Merit Badge Counselor application process:



Your approval notification will be emailed to you and to your unit's Merit Badge Counselor Co-ordinator, or Advancement Chair. Please note that it may take about a week to review your application, and longer if any paperwork is incomplete.

Please wait for approval before counseling any Scouts for a particular merit badge or Nova award. After you get your approval email from the Merit Badge Dean, your name and the badge(s) you applied to counsel should be seen in Scoutbook in about a week's time.

An updated list of merit badge counselors operating within Pacifica District is sent monthly to unit Scoutmasters, Committee Chairs, Advancement Chairs and Merit Badge Counselor Co-ordinators.

Each year in the August-September timeframe, each Merit Badge or Nova counselor will be required to explicitly notify the Merit Badge Dean of their desire to continue as counselors. This can be done by responding to an email sent by the Merit Badge Dean in the affirmative. YPT status and the status of any further certifications required for the merit badges that are counseled will be verified at that time. Counselors who do not respond to the email or who do not otherwise inform the Merit Badge Dean of their desire to continue as Merit Badge or Nova counselors will be dropped from the active list and will have to re-apply. If the counselor's YPT certification expires at any time, the counselor will be dropped from the list and have to re-apply.

## New Merit Badge Counselor Application

To those who have never done this before, it's not really that bad. Our Merit Badge Dean is available to help you, but everything you need to know is in this section. To register as a new Merit Badge Counselor within Pacifica District, you must complete the following steps. Please make sure each of these steps has been completed, and that you have electronic proof of completion (e.g., downloads, scans or photos of forms, certificates, etc.), BEFORE you submit your application as described below.

- 1) Something every adult in Scouting is required to do: Complete the BSA's Youth Protection Training (YPT). This training may be completed online by logging into <https://my.scouting.org/> and clicking on the YPT logo. For more information about YPT, please visit: <https://www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection/>  
If you have already completed YPT, your certificate **MUST be valid for the remainder of the current calendar year.** If your current YPT certificate expires before Dec 31 of the current year, you must retake YPT. If you don't have a my.scouting account, now is good time to create one.
- 2) Complete the BSA's Adult Application Form. This is REQUIRED even for existing BSA members because you are applying for a new Scouting position. Even though you may be registered with your unit, the Merit Badge Counselor is a District position (position code 42) and therefore an application is required. The PREFERRED, and most secure, method is to submit an online application form but if you are unable to do so, you may complete the paper form instead.
  - EITHER: (PREFERRED) Submit an online application form as follows:
    - i. Go to: <https://my.scouting.org/VES/OnlineReg/1.0.0/?tu=UF-MB-033p217>
    - ii. Sign in with your my.scouting account (or create one if you don't already have one.)
    - iii. If you are already a registered member, select 'Continue' to dual-register with Pacifica District.
    - iv. Follow the remaining instructions to the end.
  - OR, if you are unable to register online, please download and complete the latest version of the BSA Adult Application form 524-501, available here <https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/524-501.pdf>
    - i. On page 3 near the bottom, please use "42" for the position code and "Merit Badge Counselor" for the Scouting position.
    - ii. Your SSN is REQUIRED in order to complete your application.
    - iii. On page 3, the lower portion MUST be completed (references and background information).
    - iv. This form does NOT need to be signed by a unit leader or COR, only by the applicant.
    - v. Complete and sign the Background Check Authorization on page 6. This is REQUIRED.
- 3) Complete the California required child abuse and neglect reporting training and certification per AB506. This is done only one time and does not get "renewed" each year. This requires an on-line training session and in-person electronic fingerprinting known as Live Scan. The information to obtain this certification can be found here: <https://californiascouting.org/>. When registering for the training, be sure that you register yourself as a "Volunteer".

Upon completing the on-line training you will be able to retrieve your certificate from their website. Follow the instructions on the californiascouting website for instructions on how to upload that certificate to the Council. You will also include this certificate with your Merit Badge Counselor application. The instructions also show you how to find a Live Scan facility near your home and what to take with you. The live scan electronic fingerprinting will have a cost from \$20 to \$40 for the facility and an FBI background check fee of \$17. Again this fee is only paid one time and is not a yearly or periodic fee.

- 4) Complete all the required modules of the Scouts BSA Merit Badge Counselor Position Specific Training plan and print out the completion certificate. This training may be completed online by logging into <https://my.scouting.org/> and clicking on “My Training”. Then go to the Program “Scouts BSA” training course. Then click on the “Catalog” link at the top and search for the “Scouts BSA - Merit Badge Counselor Position Specific Training” training plan. The current modules that make up the plan (as of May 2023) are:

- Scouts BSA - Merit Badge Counselors - Before the First Meeting
  - o Aims & Methods of Scouts BSA
  - o What is a Merit Badge Counselor
  - o Introduction to Merit Badges
- Scouts BSA - Merit Badge Counselors - Position Trained
  - o Advancement

Scouters who have completed older versions of some of these classes do not have to retake the new versions, as the old versions never expire. However, if you have not completed any of the classes listed here, please complete those training courses and submit the individual completion certificates for those training courses.

From the my.scouting website, be sure to download a PDF listing of all of your training. Do this by selecting “My Training” from the home page, select “Completions”, then click “Member Training Report” and then “Export to PDF”. A PDF report will be downloaded to your computer. This training report will be part of the documentation submitted as described below.

- 5) Complete the BSA’s Merit Badge Counselor Information Form 34405 to specify which badge(s) you intend to counsel. Please download, complete and save the latest version, available here: <https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/34405.pdf>

- You may apply to add (“A”) up to 8 badges on one form
- Use additional forms if necessary (complete and sign each one).
- Please provide a short (one line) justification to show why you are qualified to counsel each merit badge.
- Scouters are strongly encouraged to offer to counsel other Scouts in the district, not just within their own unit.
- Make sure to include your BSA ID from your account on my.scouting.org
- Please SIGN the form at the bottom.

- 6) Some merit badges may require evidence of additional training or certification before you can be approved as a counselor, e.g., badges involving aquatics, shooting or other potentially hazardous activities. Please refer to the requirements listed in section 7.0.1.1 “Supervisory Qualifications and

Certifications” of the BSA’s Guide to Advancement, here:

<https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/33088.pdf> and submit any additional required proof of certification. Examples of merit badges that require further training or certifications are: Archery, Climbing, Snow Sports, Canoeing, Kayaking, Lifesaving, Motor Boating, Rowing, Scuba Diving, Small Boat Sailing, Swimming, Water Sports, Whitewater, Rifle Shooting, and Shotgun Shooting. All certifications must be kept current. All activities working on merit badges with counselors must follow the Guide to Safe Scouting found here: <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/>.

If you wish to counsel the Citizenship in Society merit badge you will also need to complete the “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Scouting” training in my.scouting. You can find it by logging into my.scouting and scrolling down until you see the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Scouting panel on the right side of the screen. There is also an additional orientation session that you will be required to attend. This orientation session is given periodically. You will be put on the list to be informed of the next orientation session when you list Citizenship in Society on the Merit Badge Counselor Information form. You will not be approved to counsel that merit badge until the orientation session has been successfully completed.

### Summary Required Document Checklist - New Merit Badge Counselor

All Done? Please confirm that you have completed the following requirements to be a counselor before submitting your application.

- YPT and Merit Badge Counselor Position-Specific Training verification from my.scouting
- EITHER:
  - BSA Adult Application – ONLINE via <https://my.scouting.org/VES/OnlineReg/1.0.0/?tu=UF-MB-033p217>
  - OR: BSA Adult Application - BSA form 524-501
- AB506 certificate uploaded to the Greater Los Angeles Area Council (and included here)
- Merit Badge Counselor Information form (BSA form 34405)
- Badge-specific additional training/certification (if required)
- Live Scan electronic fingerprinting must be done to comply fully with AB506, but confirmation does not have to be included in this package of information.

### Document Submission

Complete your application by submitting electronic copies of the above documentation\* here.

#### [GLAAC Pacifica District Merit Badge/Nova Counselor Application](#)

(\* Except for the BSA online adult application, which is submitted automatically.)

The link above is Google form that accepts file uploads. You must have a Google account to submit an application this way. If you need assistance, please contact your unit’s Advancement Chair or Merit Badge Counselor Coordinator, or contact Richard Brehove, Pacifica Merit Badge Counselor Dean, at [meritbadge@pacificabsa.org](mailto:meritbadge@pacificabsa.org).

## Update Merit Badge Counselor Status

Current Merit Badge Counselors within Pacifica District can change their status (e.g., adding or removing existing merit badges, changing contact information, which unit(s) they counsel, or resigning from the position) by completing the following steps. Please make sure each of these steps has been completed, and that you have electronic proof of completion (e.g., downloads, scans or photos of forms, certificates, etc.), BEFORE you submit your application below.

- 1) Complete the BSA's Merit Badge Counselor Information Form to specify which changes you wish to make. Please download, complete and save the latest version, available here:

<https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/34405.pdf>

- You may apply to add ("A") or drop ("D") up to 8 badges on one form.
- Use additional forms if necessary (complete and sign each one).
- You do not need to list your existing badges that you are going to keep counseling.
- Please provide a short (one line) justification to show why you are qualified to counsel each newly added merit badge.
- Scouters are strongly encouraged to offer to counsel other Scouts in the district, not just within their own unit.
- Make sure to include your BSA ID from your account on my.scouting.org
- Please SIGN the form at the bottom.

- 2) Some merit badges may require evidence of additional training or certification before you can be approved as a counselor, e.g., badges involving aquatics, shooting or other potentially hazardous activities. Please refer to the requirements listed in section 7.0.1.1 "Supervisory Qualifications and Certifications" of the BSA's Guide to Advancement, here:

<https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/33088.pdf> and submit any additional required proof of certification. Examples of merit badges that require further certifications are:

Archery, Climbing, Snow Sports, Canoeing, Kayaking, Lifesaving, Motor Boating, Rowing, Scuba Diving, Small Boat Sailing, Swimming, Water Sports, Whitewater, Rifle Shooting, and Shotgun Shooting. All certifications must be kept current. All activities working on merit badges with counselors must follow the Guide to Safe Scouting found here:

<https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/>.

If you are adding the Citizenship in Society merit badge you will also need to complete the "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Scouting" training in my.scouting. You can find it by logging into my.scouting and scrolling down until you see the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Scouting panel on the right side of the screen. There is also an additional orientation session that you will be required to attend. This orientation session is given periodically. You will be put on the list to be informed of the next orientation session when you list Citizenship in Society on the Merit Badge Counselor Information form. You will not be approved to counsel that merit badge until the orientation session has been successfully completed.

From the my.scouting website, be sure to download a PDF listing of all of your training. Do this by selecting "My Training" from the home page, select "Completions", then click "Member Training Report" and then "Export to PDF". A PDF report will be downloaded to your computer. This

training report will be part of the documentation submitted as described below.

### **Summary Required Document Checklist - Current Merit Badge Counselor**

Please confirm that you have completed the following requirements before submitting your application to change your counselor status.

- Merit Badge Counselor Information form (BSA form 34405)
- Badge-specific additional training/certification. Include my.scouting training report. (if required).

### **Document Submission**

Complete your application by submitting electronic copies of the above documentation here:

**[GLAAC Pacifica District Merit Badge/Nova Counselor Application](#)**

The link above is Google form that accepts file uploads. You must have a Google account to submit an application this way. If you need assistance, please contact your unit's Advancement Chair or Merit Badge Counselor Coordinator, or contact Richard Brehove, Pacifica Merit Badge Counselor Dean, at [meritbadge@pacificabsa.org](mailto:meritbadge@pacificabsa.org).

## New Nova Counselor Application

To register as a new STEM Nova Awards Counselor within Pacifica District, you must complete the following steps. Please make sure each of these steps has been completed, and that you have electronic proof of completion (e.g., downloads, scans or photos of forms, certificates, etc.), BEFORE you submit your application below.

- 1) Something every adult in Scouting is required to do: Complete the BSA's Youth Protection Training (YPT). This training may be completed online by logging into <https://my.scouting.org/> and clicking on the YPT logo. For more information about YPT, please visit: <https://www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection/>.  
If you have already completed YPT, your certificate **MUST be valid for the remainder of the current calendar year**. If your current YPT certificate expires before Dec 31 of the current year, you must retake YPT. If you don't have a my.scouting account, now is good time to create one.
- 2) Complete the BSA's Adult Application Form. This is REQUIRED even for existing BSA members because you are applying for a new Scouting position. Even though you may be registered with your unit, the Nova Counselor is a District position (position code 58) and therefore an application is required. The PREFERRED, and most secure, method is to submit an online application form but if you are unable to do so, you may complete the paper form instead.
  - EITHER: (PREFERRED) Submit an online application form as follows:
    - i. Go to: <https://my.scouting.org/VES/OnlineReg/1.0.0/?tu=UF-MB-033p217>
    - ii. Sign in with your my.scouting account (or create one if you don't already have one.)
    - iii. If you are already a registered member, select 'Continue' to dual-register with Pacifica District.
    - iv. Follow the remaining instructions to the end.
  - OR, if you are unable to register online, please download and complete the latest version of the BSA Adult Application form 524-501, available here <https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/524-501.pdf>
    - i. On page 3 near the bottom, please use "58" for the position code and "Nova Counselor" for the Scouting position.
    - ii. Your SSN is REQUIRED in order to complete your application.
    - iii. On page 3, the lower portion MUST be completed (references and background information).
    - iv. This form does NOT need to be signed by a unit leader or COR, only by the applicant.
    - v. Complete and sign the Background Check Authorization on page 6. This is REQUIRED.
- 3) Complete the California required child abuse and neglect reporting training and certification per AB506. This is done only one time and does not get "renewed" each year. This requires an on-line training session and in-person electronic fingerprinting known as Live Scan. The information to obtain this certification can be found here: <https://californiascouting.org/>. When registering for the training, be sure that you register yourself as a "Volunteer".

Upon completing the on-line training you will be able to retrieve your certificate from their website. Follow the instructions on the californiascouting website for instructions on how to upload that certificate to the Council. You will also include this certificate with your Merit Badge Counselor application. The instructions also show you how to find a Live Scan facility near your home and what to take with you. The live scan electronic fingerprinting will have a cost from \$20 to \$40 for the facility and an FBI background check fee of \$17. Again this fee is only paid one time and is not a yearly or periodic fee.

- 4) Complete all the required learning modules of the STEM Nova Counselor. This is delivered as Self Training as a series of four presentation slides. These slides are found on the scouting.org website at <https://www.scouting.org/stem-nova-awards/volunteer-support/> For Nova Counselors, the modules to review are:
  - a. What is STEM
  - b. STEM Nova and Supernova
  - c. How to Teach a Nova Award Part 1
  - d. How to Teach a Nova Award Part 2
  
- 5) There is no official Nova Counselor information form so please complete the BSA's Merit Badge Counselor Information Form 34405 to specify which Nova award(s) you intend to counsel. Please download, complete and save the latest version, available here: <https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/34405.pdf>
  - You may apply to add ("A") up to 8 Nova awards on one form.
  - Use additional forms if necessary (complete and sign each one).
  - Please provide a short (one line) justification to show why you are qualified to counsel each award.
  - Scouters are strongly encouraged to offer to counsel other Scouts in the district, not just within their own unit.
  - Make sure to include your BSA ID from your account on my.scouting.org
  - Please include on the form the fact that you viewed and read the presentation slides for each of the four modules noted above.
  - Please SIGN the form at the bottom.

## Required Document Checklist - New Nova Counselor

Please confirm that you have completed the following requirements to be a counselor before submitting your application.

- Youth Protection Training certificate
- EITHER:
  - BSA Adult Application - ONLINE via <https://my.scouting.org/VES/OnlineReg/1.0.0/?tu=UF-MB-033p217>
  - OR: BSA Adult Application - BSA form 524-501
- AB506 certificate uploaded to the Greater Los Angeles Area Council (and included here)

- Merit Badge Counselor Information form (BSA form 34405). Be sure to note on that form that you viewed the presentation slides required above.
- Live Scan electronic fingerprinting must be done to comply fully with AB506, but confirmation does not have to be included in this package of information.

## **Document Submission**

Complete your application by submitting electronic copies of the above documentation\* here

### **[GLAAC Pacifica District Merit Badge/Nova Counselor Application](#)**

(\* Except for the BSA online adult application, which is submitted automatically.)

The link above is Google form that accepts file uploads. You must have a Google account to submit an application this way. If you need assistance, please contact your unit's Advancement Chair or Merit Badge Counselor Coordinator, or contact Richard Brehove, Pacifica Merit Badge Counselor Dean, at [meritbadge@pacificabsa.org](mailto:meritbadge@pacificabsa.org).

## Update Nova Counselor Status

Current Nova Counselors within Pacifica District can change their status (e.g., adding or removing existing Nova awards, changing contact information, which unit(s) they counsel, or resigning from the position) by completing the following steps. Please make sure each of these steps has been completed, and that you have electronic proof of completion (e.g., downloads, scans or photos of forms, certificates, etc.), BEFORE you submit your application below.

There is no official Nova Counselor information form so please complete the BSA's Merit Badge Counselor Information Form 34405 to specify which Nova award(s) you intend to counsel. Please download, complete and save the latest version, available here:

<https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/34405.pdf>

- You may apply to add ("A") or drop ("D") up to 8 Nova awards on one form
- Use additional forms if necessary (complete and sign each one).
- You do not need to list your existing awards that you are going to keep counseling
- Please provide a short (one line) justification to show why you are qualified to counsel each award.
- Scouters are strongly encouraged to offer to counsel other Scouts in the district, not just within their own unit.
- Make sure to include your BSA ID from your account on my.scouting.org
- Please SIGN the form at the bottom.

### Required Document Checklist - Current Nova Counselor

Please confirm that you have completed the following requirements before submitting your application to change your counselor status.

- Merit Badge Counselor Information form (BSA form 34405)

### Document Submission

Complete your application by submitting electronic copies of the above documentation here:

**[GLAAC Pacifica District Merit Badge/Nova Counselor Application](#)**

The link above is Google form that accepts file uploads. You must have a Google account to submit an application this way. If you need assistance, please contact your unit's Advancement Chair or Merit Badge Counselor Coordinator, or contact Richard Brehove, Pacifica Merit Badge Counselor Dean, at [meritbadge@pacificabsa.org](mailto:meritbadge@pacificabsa.org).

## Further Information for Counselors

### Merit Badge Counselor Resources

The BSA provides a wealth of resources for merit badge counselors in Section 7, “The Merit Badge Program”, of the BSA’s Guide to Advancement, here:

<https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/33088.pdf>

Please review the *Guide for Merit Badge Counseling* before counseling youth:

<https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-065.pdf>

The latest merit badge requirements may be found online at:

<https://www.scouting.org/programs/scouts-bsa/advancement-and-awards/merit-badges/>

Please also consult the BSA’s *Guide to Safe Scouting* for any particular requirements relating to your field of expertise: <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/>

### BSA STEM Nova Awards Resources

The BSA provides a wealth of resources for Nova award counselors online at:

<https://www.scouting.org/stem-nova-awards/>

There are specific Nova awards for Scouts of all BSA programs (Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, Venturing), so please be clear about which program level you intend to support.

### Annual Renewal of Counselor Status

You will need to renew your Counselor status and your Youth Protection Training every year. You will receive an email from the Merit Badge Dean requesting that you acknowledge your desire to continue your current service. If your Youth Protection Training expires before the end of the current year, please plan to retake it as soon as you can. All this will allow us to keep your name on the list of active counselors.

Counselors who do not renew before the deadline will be dropped from the approved list. If you no longer wish to serve as a Counselor, please indicate your desire when you respond to the email.

### Questions? Comments?

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Richard Brehove, Pacifica Merit Badge Counselor Dean, at [meritbadge@pacificabsa.org](mailto:meritbadge@pacificabsa.org).

***THANK YOU for offering this valuable service to our Scouts!***