

## Understanding Disabilities IP

Understanding Disabilities The Understanding Disabilities IP is an interest project from the Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles Council.

Timing: After completing the Participant Agreement Form found in this section. The award may be earned once and completed in the time required by the girls.

Purpose: To gain an understanding of the challenge that is faced by people with disabilities as they learn the skills and the demands of developing their potential.

Recognition: Complete the Participant Evaluation and Feedback Form found in this section and the award may be purchased in the council shop.

Placement: May be worn on the badge sash/vest along with other official badges.

Requirements: To earn this Council Interest Project, complete 7 of the 10 requirements, including the 4 starred. One of the starred requirements needs parent permission. If this permission has not been given, #9 shall not be considered starred.



### Activities

1. \*Talk to someone whose career involves working with people with disabilities. Find out how they prepared for their profession, where they attended school and what kind of classes they took. Discover if they are required to be licensed or certified by the state or by another agency, and if they have to continue to take classes or courses. Is an internship or volunteer work part of their training? Possible careers to explore are: Physical Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Recreational Therapist, Special Education Teacher, Speech Pathologist, Orthotist, Mobility Instructor, Rehabilitation Counselor, Social Worker, Psychologist, Rehabilitation Engineer, Nurse, Physician, etc.
2. \*There are several kinds of disabilities: physical, emotional, and mental. Each of these requires skilled professionals to help the person reach their potential. Have each person who is working on this project find out about a different disability. What are the characteristics of each disability? What kind of treatment do persons with this disability receive? Can a person with the disability overcome it through therapy, education, or by using medication? Does this disability involve a life threatening condition? What adaptive devices have been developed to assist people with this disability? Contact a support or advocacy group for persons with this disability. Obtain pamphlets and additional information about the services the group provides. Bring an activity to your troop meeting which will assist your troop members in simulating and better understanding your chosen disability.
3. Compile a list of 10 agencies in your community, county or state that provide services for persons with disabilities. Contact the agency to obtain a list of locations from which services are provided. Make contacts and gather information that describes the services provided by each agency.
4. Choose one agency from your list in #3. Visit the agency and find out if there is an age limit on their services, if they are funded by private sources, by United Way, or other community funding. Do they use volunteers in their services to their clients? Do they do long term, short term, or outpatient treatment for their clients? Do they network with other agencies for people with disabilities?

5. Many groups are active in Sacramento or Washington, D.C. to protect the rights of people with disabilities. Contact one of these organizations and find out about the laws that have been passed and what is being done to see that they are enforced. Ask about the impact of recent legislation regarding education for children with disabilities (PL 91-412) as well as anti-discrimination laws passed by the Federal Government, such as the Americans With Disabilities Act, Section 504.
6. Accidents cause many disabilities. Head trauma, severe muscle and/or structural damage may result from automobile, work, or sports accidents. People who have disabilities resulting from such accidents sometimes need to relearn how to do everyday activities. The professional who helps them relearn these skills may work in a therapy unit, a hospital, or a rehabilitation facility. Locate one of these facilities in your community and arrange a visit. Find out how your troop could help students better understand the importance of safe driving, pool safety, and the use of safety gear when skate boarding, bike riding, or while enjoying other sports. Plan and carry out an activity or information campaign based on the information you have learned.
7. \*Review ways volunteers assist agencies for persons with disabilities. Choose a service that you could give to someone with a disability. You might contact one of the agencies you have identified to help you locate an individual or small group that would benefit from your service. Report back to your troop about what you did and what you learned from your experience.
8. We humans often “clump” people together in groups or categories and assign them labels. Sometimes these labels cause us to jump to conclusions about an entire group based on poor or incomplete knowledge. Persons with disabilities are victims of this labeling or stereotyping. “Deaf and Dumb” is an example of a label that is often used in reference to persons with hearing loss who are nonverbal. With others, make a list of stereotyping labels you have heard and discuss how these are damaging and unfair to individuals. Make a list of feelings you have concerning persons with disabilities. Consider whether any of these feelings have been influenced by labels you may have heard. How could you correct friends or relatives when they use these terms? Make a personal commitment to change your feelings and not use these unfair descriptions of individuals and groups.
9. **The following two require parental consent. If this consent is not given, number 9 should not be considered starred.** \*Find out about some of the known and suspected causes of birth defects and other disabilities. Include in your search the viewing of the video, INNOCENT ADDICTS, available for checkout from the council service center. Make a list of some of the “do’s and don’ts” for expectant mothers that you have discovered in your search. With other girls in your troop, consider what you have learned about the effects of alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, and other substances on an unborn child. What are three reasons for anyone who suspects that she might be pregnant to see an obstetrician as soon as possible? Work together to make a list of questions that you might want to ask the doctor. What are some of the issues that anyone considering pregnancy should talk over with their mate? Find out about tests doctors schedule if they feel that an unborn child might be developing a pre-natal disability or have inherited a genetic defect? How are these tests done and what are the options that parents need to consider if they find that their child will have a disability?
10. Families who have children with disabilities must consider several difficult choices when they find that their child may require special treatment, continual medical care or even hospitalization. Invite someone with a disability or a family member of a disabled person to visit your troop. Find out how this disability has impacted the family as a whole. What kinds of choices did the family face, what decisions did they make? Talk with others in your troop about how you might deal with these or similar questions. Act out what might take place in a family discussion about some of these decisions. Think of some difficult situations that might result from a family member’s disability and decide on some good ways to deal with them. Are any of these solutions applicable to situations at school or other public places when you are with a disabled person?

**See also**

[Yes, I Can IP](#)

[List of Council's Own Interest Projects](#)

## **External Links**

[Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles: Patch Programs](#)



[Understanding Disabilities IP](#)

