

BURDA ON HEALTHCARE

It's Time to Earn Your Healthcare DEI Merit Badge

By David Burda
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Let's say you work in healthcare as an executive, administrator, clinician, technician, finance, IT or whatever. And you find yourself in the middle of one of the following scenarios:

- A staff member accidentally spills food on another staff member. The staff member who gets spilled on gets angry and says something offensive about the disabled. Other staff members present laugh. What could or should you do?
- A coworker confides in you that other staff members are making insulting comments about one of their identities and they created a phony social media account to impersonate your coworker online and posted inappropriate messages. What could or should you do?
- A new staff member immigrated to the U.S. from another country. Other staff members make offensive comments to the new staff member, making fun of their speech or clothes, and tell them to go back to where they came from. What could or should you do?

You know what you could and should do in each case. You're an adult. You're a professional. You're in a position of authority. You set an example for others. You



establish workplace culture. You're responsible for your work environment.

How did you know what you could and should do?

At some point, when you were young and/or impressionable, someone taught you either directly or by example. The people who have learned these lessons are the people that we want to work in healthcare. We know healthcare has a health disparities problem and a health equity problem. The way to deal with both is by hiring more people who know what to do in those three scenarios I described.

BE A BOY SCOUT

Where did I get those three scenarios? I got them from the Boy Scouts.

Knowing what to do in those situations was one requirement of earning a Citizenship in Society merit badge, if you're a Boy Scout who wants to become an Eagle Scout, according to the [guide](#) for Citizenship in Society merit badge counselors. Eagle Scout is the highest rank scouts can achieve in Boy Scouts of America, which changed its name to [Scouting America](#) about a year ago.

The Citizenship in Society merit badge was one of 14 required merit badges to become an Eagle Scout along with seven elective merit badges. I say "was" because Scouting America eliminated the badge to comply with [Executive Order 13985](#) issued by the Trump regime on Jan. 20, 2025. The order, with the Trumpian title of "Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing," basically ends federal financial support to organizations with diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs.

Scouting America launched its DEI program in 2021 when it created the Citizenship in Society badge. The organization did so to give scouts "information on diversity, equity, inclusion and ethical leadership" and show them why "these qualities are important in society" with the goal of "building communities where every person feels respected and valued." (Sounds an awful lot like a health system mission statement.) The badge became an Eagle requirement in 2022.



ANTI-DEI COMES TO SCOUTING

Scouting America said last month that it was dropping the merit badge all together, not just as an Eagle requirement: "Citizenship in Society merit badge will be discontinued effective Friday, Feb. 27, 2026. Beginning on Feb. 27, 2026, Scouts will no longer be able to start requirements on the Citizenship in Society merit badge."

As a result, there are now 13 mandatory and eight elective badges required for the rank of Eagle Scout.



The announcement came the same day U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth said his department will continue to support Scouting America because of the change. Hegseth threatened to end its support of Scouting America if it didn't drop its DEI program and the Citizenship in Society merit badge.

"The Boy Scouts lost their way, and a once-great organization became gravely wounded. DEI crept in, the name was changed to 'Scouting America,' girls were accepted and the focus on God as the ruler of the universe was watered down to include openness to humanism and Earth-centered pagan religions," Hegseth said as quoted in this [story](#) by the Pentagon News.

That's not Hegseth played by Colin Jost on Saturday Night Live. That's Hegseth in his own words. You can listen to his MAGA-inspired videotaped message on YouTube [here](#).

I came up with the phrase "baby-eating devil dogs" for a column I wrote for another publication decades ago, after I certainly was above the legal limit for something. I recall the phrase but not the column. I may have stolen it from my grad school roommate, now that I think of it. I'll find the column and get back to you. My inspiration could also explain Hegseth's phrasing.



WHO DO YOU WANT CARING FOR YOU?

If you worked in healthcare, and you were confronted with one of the three scenarios I described above, would you rather work with people trained by Pete “not girls” Hegseth or with people who earned their Citizenship in Society merit badge? If you or a family member were sick or injured, would you rather be cared for by someone trained by Pete “anti-humanism” Hegseth or someone who got their Citizenship in Society merit badge?

I’ll take the Citizenship in Society merit badgers every time. You would, too. Other merit badges that Eagle Scouts earn include those for communication, first aid, emergency preparedness and lifesaving.

Now, I don’t know how many Boy Scouts go on to careers in healthcare. But it’s more than you’d think. I was an adult leader

for my youngest son’s Scout troop. There were a lot of STEM kids in his troop. One scout parent was a school nurse. Another was a cardiac ICU nurse. A few others were doctors. Many of the scouts had peanut allergies, which meant a lot of people had to know their way around an EpiPen.

Why anyone in healthcare, whether on the business side or the clinical side, voted for this regime and its anti-DEI agenda, I’ll never understand. If you did, I hope you or a loved one never gets sick in the future. You could have had a former Boy Scout. Now you’ll get a Hegseth.

Want to build a better healthcare system? Earn your healthcare DEI merit badge.

AUTHOR



David Burda began covering healthcare in 1983 and hasn't stopped since. Dave writes this monthly column "Burda on Healthcare," contributes weekly blog posts, manages our weekly newsletter 4sight Friday, and hosts our weekly Roundup podcast. Dave believes that healthcare is a business like any other business, and customers — patients — are king. If you do what's right for patients, good business results will follow.

Dave's personal experiences with the healthcare system both as a patient and family caregiver have shaped his point of view. It's also been shaped by covering the industry for 40 years as a reporter and editor. He worked at Modern Healthcare for 25 years, the last 11 as editor.

Prior to Modern Healthcare, he did stints at the American Medical Record Association (now AHIMA) and the American Hospital Association. After Modern Healthcare, he wrote a monthly column for Twin Cities Business explaining healthcare trends to a business audience, and he developed and executed content marketing plans for leading healthcare corporations as the editorial director for healthcare strategies at MSP Communications.

When he's not reading and writing about healthcare, Dave spends his time riding the trails of DuPage County, IL, on his bike, tending his vegetable garden and daydreaming about being a lobster fisherman in Maine. He lives in Wheaton, IL, with his lovely wife of 40 years and his three children, none of whom want to be journalists or lobster fishermen.

Visit 4sight.com/insights to read more from David Burda.