



CONNECTION GUIDE

RETENTION

PURPOSE OF A CONNECTION GUIDE

To aid in facilitating conversations between commissioners and unit Scouters, fostering a deeper understanding of unit dynamics and operations, enabling commissioners to better serve and support the unit. This involves identifying and leveraging successes, supporting the unit as they identify areas of improvement, collaborating with the unit on their goals, and providing necessary resources in support of those goals.

WHY IS THIS UNIT METRIC IMPORTANT?

The success of membership hinges on both recruitment and retention; one cannot thrive without the other. Retention rates also serve as indicators of the quality of programming a unit offers and its ability to effectively engage families.

STEP 1: COMMISSIONERS REVIEW UNIT KEY METRICS

A threshold has not been established and data is currently being collected but this will take some time. At this time keep a close watch on retention for your unit and use this guide to aid in improving retention.

STEP 2: UNIT CONVERSATIONS

Celebrate Success for Achievement or Improvement:

- Effective recognition is essential to effective unit service.
- Just say it. A straightforward, face-to-face "well done" is a simple but effective way to celebrate achievement.

Things to Consider:

- Retention can be a symptom of a wide range of challenges, including programming, quality of leadership, unit size, and finances.
- Consult other Connection Guides, including Membership Growth, Adult Training, Outdoor Activities, and Advancement.
- The age distribution of Scouts within a unit can give clues about retention issues.
- Do "holes" at certain ages or stages of membership correlate with changes in the unit?
- Retention of membership often reflects leadership, and especially adult leadership.
- Veteran leaders can struggle to connect with families, too: they may be more likely to use jargon and gloss over basic information that they take for granted.
- Seeing the next "stage" of Scouting can keep families interested.
- Cub Scouts want to see Scouts BSA troops, and young Scouts want to see Sea Scout ships and Venturing crews.
- Retention may reflect larger issues within a district or council. Don't assume a unit's poor retention is their fault alone – consider the retention rates of neighboring units to identify larger trends.

Questions to Ask During a Unit Conversation:

- How is the age distribution within the unit? Is it balanced? Lacking older Scouts?
- What is the range of experience levels among leaders? Are the leaders trained?
- Do families who have left the unit reveal a pattern that can be addressed?
- Examples include programming, communication, and relationships with leaders.
- Does the unit interact with a unit at a "later stage" of Scouting?
- Does a pack interact with a troop, whether via den chiefs, campouts, or other activities?

- Does a troop interact with a crew or ship, including joint programming?
- How does the unit ensure that new families are immediately welcomed and engaged?

Resources to provide:

- [BSA Recruiting & Marketing Tools](#)
- Contact Information for District/Council Membership
- School talks, BeAScout, Peer to Peer Recruitment, etc.
- [Scouting Wire Marketing – Invite New Friends](#)
- Membership Hub [Website](#)
- [Brand Center for Recruitment Materials](#)
- [Past Marketing and Recruitment Webinars](#)
- New Member Coordinator [Resources](#)
- Sign-up Night [Playbook](#)
- Program ideas for [Cub Scouting](#) and [Scouts BSA](#)
- Scouting.org’s [Outdoor Programs](#)
- BSA Learn Center within [my.Scouting.org](#)
- Opportunities for Position-Specific Training
- District- or Council-wide in-person training events
- Position-Specific Training scheduled for a unit, often with District Training Staff

STEP 3: HELPING THE UNIT SET GOALS

The unit can decide its own goals, whether they want detailed, simple, or no goals at all. A commissioner should be available to support them throughout this process.

- Develop a plan to engage new and existing members with advancement and outdoor programming immediately upon joining the unit.
- Establish a New Member Coordinator within the unit.
- Establish seasoned, talented adults to oversee new dens/patrols to ensure quality programming and prompt communication with families.
- Develop a protocol for communicating with all Scouts and their families, including a published program calendar.
- Consistent calendar planning, frequent communication, and regular committee meetings help to keep families informed and engaged.
- Encourage youth and families to help plan and execute events.
- Increase the number of adult leaders within 90 days.
- Increase the training rate of adult leaders within 90 days.

STEP 4: COMMISSIONERS PROVIDING UNIT SUPPORT

- Follow up with the unit regularly to check in on the status of their goals and provide them with upcoming opportunities within the district, council, or nation to learn more about growing youth membership.
- Connect unit Scouters with the district membership chair or a volunteer who is experienced in improving youth membership to discuss best practices.
- Meet with the District/Council Membership Chair or District Executive (DE) to discuss unit recruiting or membership growth opportunities.