

Family Troop Decision Guide

Decision-Making

Scouts BSA offers chartered organizations three models when organizing a troop:

- Girl troops, serving eligible female Scouts
- Boy troops, serving eligible male Scouts
- Family troops, called combined troops during the pilot phase, serving any eligible Scout

If you are considering the family troop option, this guide is designed to help you facilitate important discussions on this topic with your chartering organization(s), Scouts, their families, and your troop adult volunteers.

On average, boys and girls tend to have different rates of physical, emotional, and cognitive maturity during adolescence. These developmental differences may make separate troops for boys and troops for girls a more effective option for many families, providing a setting where youth can grow, lead, and challenge themselves alongside their peers developing at a similar pace. These environments can also help young people build confidence, take on responsibility, and try new things without additional social pressures.

We also recognize there's substantial variability in maturity rate and temperament among individuals, and some families may prefer a troop model where boys and girls learn to collaborate with and understand one another as they develop. In all troops, adult volunteers and youth should be mindful that all Scouts have meaningful opportunities to practice leadership skills, hold positions of responsibility, and gain confidence.

Ultimately, each young person is unique, and our local councils, chartering organizations, and troop leadership are best able to determine which of the approved Scouts BSA delivery models best meets their needs. Parents are encouraged to carefully consider their adolescent's individual readiness, temperament, and comfort level when choosing whether a troop for boys, a troop for girls, or a family troop will best support their growth and help them thrive as developing leaders and responsible citizens.

A Scouts BSA troop, with the support of their chartering organization(s), may choose the option that best meets their local needs. This decision should involve all stakeholders:

- **Chartered Organization — The chartered organization(s) MUST be a part of the discussion and MUST approve the decision to change the model.**

- Adult Volunteers — All Scouts BSA troops depend upon our adult volunteers to operate successfully. Adult volunteers, including the Scoutmaster(s), committee chair(s), and committee members, should broadly support a change.
- Parents — The parents of the Scouts also should broadly support a change.
- Scouts — Scouts BSA is youth-led, and the Scouts should also be a part of the decision-making process.

We all care deeply about Scouting and want the best for our children. We must remember to live the Scout Oath and Law in our discussions about changing troop models. All stakeholders should enter this discussion with the understanding that once a general agreement is reached (for or against), everyone will commit to that decision and work constructively to help implement it. If broad support cannot be achieved, the troop should not continue to pursue changing troop models. If a small number of Scouts and families are unable to commit to the group's collective decision, it is the responsibility of adult volunteers of the troop to help these Scouts find an alternative troop. Contact your district executive or unit commissioner for assistance.

Considerations

Deciding whether to adopt the family troop **option** is an important matter that will impact Scouts, adult volunteers, parents, and legal guardians. We recommend everyone carefully explore the following discussion points:

Discussion Questions

- Does our charter organization support a family troop? If the chartering organization(s) does/do not approve, you must abide by their decision and may not move forward with this model.
- Is our current troop structure meeting our needs? Why or why not?
- Do our Scouts want a family troop? Why or why not?
- Do the parents and adult volunteers want a family troop? Why or why not?
- Has every member of our troop Key 3 been a part of these discussions?
- If we are merging with another troop to become a family troop, has every stakeholder in both troops been part of these discussions and reached general agreement?
- If we agree to become a family troop, are all our families willing to be supportive of that decision?

- Are there alternative local troop options available?
- Does our troop have any personality conflicts that might be a barrier to success?
- Is our troop open and willing to potentially change practices and traditions or to merge with the practices and traditions of another troop?
- How will we ensure all Barriers to Abuse are met in our family troop?

Remember, the family troop model is just one of three options. Your troop does not need to make a change. If stakeholders cannot come to a general agreement during these discussions, your troop should not become a family troop.

Family Troop Option Implementation

If the decision is reached to form a family troop, there are still a number of important implementation discussion questions and steps that should involve all stakeholders.

Further Discussion Questions

- Troop Number
 - If two troops merge, will the family troop have a new troop number or a combination of troop numbers, or will it inherit the number of one of the existing troops?
 - If a girl troop or boy troop is becoming a family troop, will the troop number change or stay the same?
- Adult Volunteers
 - Who will be the Scoutmaster and assistant Scoutmasters of the family troop?
 - Who will take on important troop committee roles (chair, treasurer, secretary, etc.) for the family troop?
 - How will this decision be made fairly and openly?
 - Do we have a plan to make sure both boys and girls have men and women adult volunteers in direct contact roles as role models?
 - How will we ensure all Barriers to Abuse are met, including having a registered female adult leader 21 years of age or over present for any activity involving female youth?
- If Combining With Another Troop
 - How will the assets of the troops be merged (bank accounts, funds, trailers, equipment, etc.)?
 - What troop practices and traditions will be maintained?

- Please see the *Family Troop Best Practices Guide* for more implementation guidance.

Next Steps to Convert to a Family Troop

- For a single boy or girl troop converting to a family troop, complete the Intent to Convert form and submit it to your council registrar for processing.
- For two troops combining to form a family troop:
 - Complete the Intent to Convert form and submit it to your council registrar for processing, indicating which troop will become the family troop and which troop will be expired.
 - If both troops belong to the same chartering organization, the council registrar does not need applications from youth or adult volunteers to move everyone into the family troop.
 - If the two merging troops have different chartering organizations, adult volunteers of the expiring troop must complete adult applications (paper or digital — follow your council's procedures from your council registrar) to be moved into the family troop.
 - Your council registrar can move youth from the expiring troop into the family troop without an application. Online or paper youth applications for each Scout or other methods as preferred by your local council registrar may also be acceptable.
 - Safeguarding Youth Training must be current for all adult volunteers. We also strongly encourage all adult volunteers to have completed position-specific training.
 - Confirm meeting times and meeting locations. What dates and times will the family troop meet, and where will meetings occur?
 - Patrol Method Implementation — As with any troop, the new family troop should hold elections for senior patrol leader. Please see the *Family Troop Best Practices Guide* for more guidance on patrol formation.
 - Each Scout's advancement status in Scoutbook should be double-checked with the Scout, advancement chair, and the Scoutmaster to ensure up-to-date records are transferred to the family troop. Advancement records in Scoutbook will automatically appear for each Scout in the family troop as they are registered into the family troop.
 - Troop Activity Calendar/Schedule — The newly formed family troop should create and publish a troop activity calendar so that all Scouts, families, and adult volunteers can plan to participate.

- Scoutbook must be updated (patrol assignments, account balances, etc.) once all Scouts are transferred into the family troop.
 - A troop flag, troop neckerchief, troop activity T-shirt, etc., should be designed, and, as funds are available, ordered for the new troop.
- Please see the *Family Troop Best Practices* Guide for more implementation guidance.

The decision to create a family troop requires honest and open communication and much careful thought for all families involved. Remembering the Scout Oath and Law at all times during this process benefits everyone, but most importantly, it benefits our Scouts. It is our top priority to give our youth the immense benefits that Scouting offers in a safe and welcoming environment.