

Guidelines for Managing Colony Waiting Lists



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Success breeds success and Beaver Scouting is certainly successful!

The one blot on the horizon is the growth of Colony waiting lists, that is, the increasing number of young people clamouring to join but denied the chance to do so.

Although the total number of Colonies nation-wide and their size is influencing the total size of the Movement, the issue is not about numbers or statistics. Our primary concern should be for unhappy, disappointed youngsters. This is the only reason why long waiting lists should concern us. Our satisfaction and pride is in the total number of young people enjoying Beaver Scouting and all that it has to offer them, wherever it is taking place.

These guidelines offer some criteria to help you manage your waiting list and suggest a formula to help you decide the appropriate size of the waiting list for your Colony.

1. Setting the size of the Colony

A Beaver Scout Colony normally comprises a maximum of 24 Beaver Scouts, though the Colony Leadership team and the Group Scout Leader may agree to a smaller maximum number for a variety of reasons. You may increase the maximum beyond 24, in the short or long term, to meet local circumstances. Such decisions of your Colony Leadership team should be with the agreement of the Group Executive and the District Commissioner.

2. Managing Membership

Having decided the maximum number of Beaver Scouts that you are comfortable within the Colony, the next thing to do is to decide how to manage those waiting to join.

All Colonies need some form of waiting list because they are the new recruits to replace those moving on to Cub Scouts. The waiting list is the means to keep the total number of Beaver Scouts at your agreed Colony level.

In an ideal world, only youngsters under the age of 6 would be on the waiting list, eagerly awaiting their sixth birthday. There would be no 6 and 7 year olds on waiting lists. But we all know it's not an ideal world!

So perhaps an important first step might be to draw up two separate lists:

- a **'waiting list'**, to include anyone who has **already reached their 6th birthday** and is waiting for a place to become available in your Colony. A specimen form is provided with these notes.
- a **'register of interest'**, to include anyone **under the age of 6** who has expressed interest in joining your Colony when old enough. The specimen form mentioned above can be adapted - you will need to record similar information.

3. Setting the size of the 'waiting list'

If our first concern is to be able to offer a place in Beaver Scouting at the earliest opportunity after the 6th birthday, some guidelines are required.

A suggested 'rule of thumb' might be that the total number on your waiting list would not exceed approximately one third of the agreed total number of Beaver Scouts in your Colony. Thus, a Colony with a limit of 18 places would have a waiting list of approximately 6 potential Beaver Scouts at any one time, aged 6 or over.

This close management of your waiting list will be helped if you sit down with your records, including your 'register of interest', perhaps at the start of each term and note the number of Beaver Scouts due to go up to Cub Scouts during that period and the next term as well. You will then have an accurate picture of future vacancies and can adjust the 'rule of thumb' to suit.

Monitoring your records in this way will also give you advanced warning of situations like:

- the waiting list is growing beyond your 'rule of thumb'
- the register of interest is growing so that you will not be able to maintain your 'rule of thumb' for waiting lists
- a possible short fall in Members.

4. Who should go on your 'register of interest'?

With the Colony Leadership team, agree:

- the minimum age you will take a name onto the register of interest. Remember, the greater the time between that age and the 6th birthday, the more difficult it is to accurately predict vacancies and thus you are less likely to be able to guarantee a place within your agreed maximum period on the waiting list. There are no hard and fast rules here - much will depend on the local catchment area. But a minimum age of 4 years might give you a more manageable problem.
- how to cope with names of under 6 year olds which appear on lists in other Colonies.

5. Who should go on your waiting list?

As a first step, the Colony Leadership team should agree a maximum length of time that a youngster of 6 or 7 will be kept on the waiting list. Obviously, you should try to keep this period as short as possible because in placing that youngster's name on the waiting list, you have given a clear message that a place will become available.

Then, in trying to maintain your agreed size of waiting list, the Leadership team might also consider:

- whether some names appear on more than one Colony's waiting list
- whether you give priority to those with brothers or sisters already in the Colony/Scout Group.
- whether you give priority if parents/carers offer to help.

6. What to do when it all goes wrong.

If, despite your best efforts, you cannot keep the Colony waiting list to the level you have decided, then there are a number of things you can try.

If your meeting place facilities would allow you to take more Beaver Scouts but you are limited by the number of Leaders and Helpers available, then tell your Group Scout Leader and the Assistant District Commissioner (Beaver Scouts). They may be able to help in recruiting more adult support.

If your numbers are limited by the size of the meeting place, then again, tell your Group Scout Leader and the Assistant District Commissioner (Beaver Scouts). It might be possible to open another Colony in the Group, perhaps running at a different time of day, thus helping in the recruitment of adults and helpers. Remember here, it is important to consult with the Leaders in the Cub Scout Pack. Alternatively, there may be places in a nearby Colony or perhaps the District needs to consider opening a new Colony or different ways of managing young people queuing to join Beaver Scouting. After all, the responsibility for developing

Beaver Scouting in the District lies with the District Commissioner and the District Team.

6. In conclusion

Whatever you decide, you will not be going wrong if your first thoughts are for the youngsters affected by your actions.