

# Scouting America<sup>™</sup>

Bay-Lakes Council



## AOL TO TROOP TRANSITION GUIDE

#ADVENTUREON!

Dear Troop Leadership,

The lifeblood of many Scouts BSA troops is the Arrow of Light Scouts who transition from a pack. Ensuring that the transition process is smooth for every Scout and their family is crucial for the future success of both the Scout and the troop.

The AOL to Scout transition should not be an afterthought or simply a spring ceremony. It involves making sure that Scouts get to know you, your youth leadership, and your troop. An Arrow of Light Scout can choose any troop they want, and we want them to find the right fit, so they remain in Scouting. Here are two essential questions to consider:

- What makes your troop an ideal choice for Arrow of Light Scouts?
- How does your program stand out as the best fit for both the Scout and their family?

The more effectively you communicate the answers to these questions, the more successful you will be in transitioning Scouts into your unit.

It is also very important to remember; every Scout has a parent or guardian. Some parents have been actively involved in the pack and may want to continue their involvement, while others may be new to volunteering but willing to get involved. When talking with Scouts, also engage with their parents to see how they fit with your program.

Thank you for making the AOL to Scout transition a major part of your Scouting year!

Yours in Scouting,

Bay-Lakes Council Membership Team

## Arrow of Light (AOL) to Scout Transition

All eligible youth in the Bay-Lakes Council should have the opportunity to benefit from a Scouting program.

The transition from Cub Scouts to Scouts BSA is often a critical point where youth may leave Scouting. This can be due to several reasons, including fatigue from five years in the Cub Scout program, increased competing activities, or simply not being invited to continue. While the first two reasons are more challenging to address, the last one should never be a barrier to continuing Scouting.

It is vital for packs and troops to collaborate to ensure Scouts and their families are aware of local Scouting opportunities. Scouts should be given the chance to visit and experience these opportunities before committing to a specific troop. The crossover ceremony should not be the Scout's first introduction to the troop but rather the culmination of "getting to know you" opportunities. This way, the Scout and their family will be excited about the next big step in their Scouting journey.

The Arrow of Light to Scout transition shouldn't be a time when troops sit back and wait for Scouts to come to them. Just as packs actively recruit Scouts and families, troops should do the same. In fact, troops that assist packs in their recruitment efforts benefit from making positive impressions and building good relationships with families earlier in their Scouting journey.

This guide is designed to help troops support Arrow of Light Scouts and their families in finding the troop that is the right fit for their future Scouting adventures. The Arrow of Light to Scout transition is a shared responsibility among Arrow of Light Leaders, Cubmasters, Parents, Scoutmasters, Commissioners, District Membership Committee, and Council Membership Committee. Everyone must work together to ensure the Fifth Graders and their parents are aware of the fun and adventure awaiting them in Scouts BSA.

Just as youth transition between schools, moving from AOL to Scout is a normal and expected part of the program.

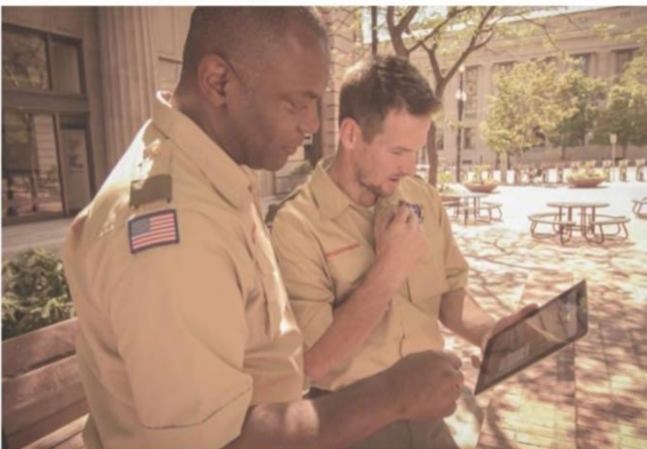
### Eligibility

- Youth can join Scouts BSA if they have completed the fifth grade and are at least 10 years old **OR** have earned the Arrow of Light rank and are at least 10 years old **OR** are age 11 but have not reached age 18.
- All Arrow of Light Scouts joining a Scouts BSA troop must complete a new youth application for the unit they are enrolling



## Responsibilities of the Troop

- The Troop Committee Chair appoints a New Member Coordinator, and reports that person's name and contact information to the District Membership Chair.
- Troop New Member Coordinator with the advice of the Scoutmaster selects advanced Scouts to serve as den chiefs for each Webelos/Arrow of Light den in packs associated with your troop. Arrange for Den Chiefs to attend training.
- Troop serves as a resource for the pack.
- Troop New Member Coordinator and the Assistant Scoutmaster assigned to new Scout conducts orientation in packs to explain the changing role as Scouts transition through Webelos to Arrow of Light, and then again as they become Scouts BSA. Explain how being an Arrow of Light will help prepare them for Scouts BSA. Take some Eagle Scouts with you.
- An Arrow of Light/Scout troop camp out should show AOLs and their parents what to expect when they move into the troop. The troop should cook and camp using the patrol method and use skills in which AOL Scouts can participate.
- Troop New Member Coordinator ensures that the Troop provides a copy of the troop's activities for the upcoming year.
- Troop New Member Coordinator/Scoutmaster works with Arrow of Light Den Leaders to encourage them to plan to move into the troop with their AOL Scouts.
- Troop New Member Coordinator arranges to have a Scoutmaster conference for each Arrow of Light. The conference covers the meaning of the Scout Oath and Law, the advancement program, troop camping, the patrol method, summer camp, and personal equipment.
- Troop New Member Coordinator works with the Cub master in planning a meaningful crossover ceremony.
- Remember that the future of the Troop is many times dependent on the pack. The troop should not wait until Scouts are AO Ls for them to get to know each other. Help packs recruit, help them with their activities, create familiarity early.



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# Timeline

This timeline should be adjusted to accommodate Arrow of Light dens that complete all requirements and are ready to cross over to Scouts BSA, with some as early as December. It is the responsibility of the Troop Membership Chair and the Pack Membership Chair to ensure that Scoutmasters, Cubmasters, and Arrow of Light Leaders are informed about and adhere to the timeline.

## Spring

- Arrow of Light Den Scouts receive "Arrow of Light to Troop Transition Guide"

## Fall

- Troops assist with Pack Sign Up Nights. Troops can be great for organizing games for incoming Cub Scouts while their parents sign registration forms and get information. It also helps with recruitment to see where they may be in the future.
- Scoutmaster attends a Pack Committee meeting to explain the Den Chief program and find out how to work together to secure a Den Chief. This gives the Scoutmaster adequate time to recruit Den Chiefs from their older Scouts and send them to Den Chief training.

## August

- Contact packs to request names, addresses, and phone numbers of Arrow of Lights and parents to recruit.
- Work with packs to plan a joint Troop/AOL Den camping trip for late September or early October.
- Troop leadership works with packs to set a date for Arrow of Light Scouts and their parents to visit a troop meeting.

## September

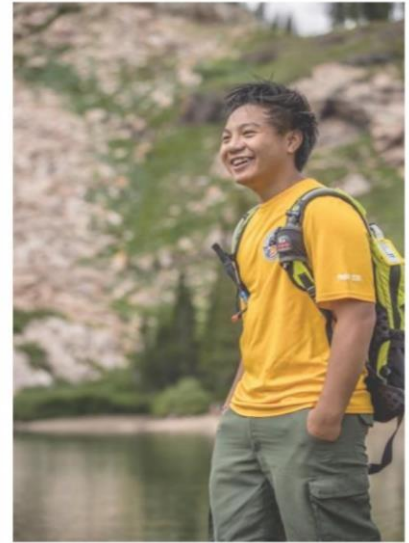
- Encourage Arrow of Light Scouts and their families to join the email list of your troop. This is a great way to see how active the troop is and how well they communicate.
- Mail a letter or email of introduction from the troop to AOLs to introduce them to the troop.
- Help with Pack Back to School Recruiting Nights.

## October

- AOLs participate in a joint camping trip with a troop.
- Encourage/invite Arrow of Light Den to visit troop meetings.
- Discuss with packs fundraising opportunities in which the Arrow of Light Scouts may participate with the Troop so they will have funds for camp next summer with the troop.
- Begin discussion with potential crossovers about Scouts BSA summer camp for the AOLs. Troops should provide printed material for Arrow of Light Leaders to distribute.

## November

- Troop leadership attends a den meeting to teach AOL Scouts how the troop works. They can show pictures of summer camp, tell what first year Scouts will do at camp, give dates and other summer camp information. They can also give the AOLs their annual troop program plan.
- The Scoutmaster should prepare a basic list of Scouting equipment the new BSA Scouts will be needing so these items might be able to be Christmas gifts. Help the parents by giving tips on the best prices, best brands, etc.



## December

- The Troop Committee Chair, Membership Chair, and New Member Coordinator should attend a Pack Committee meeting to introduce themselves to the Arrow of Lights, parents, and leaders.
  - From December until the crossover, the Troop New Member Coordinator will work closely with Den Leaders to ensure that all Scouts are on track to earn the Arrow of Light and that youth applications for troop membership are completed. Additionally, they should attend a Den Meeting in January to explain troop operations, answer questions, and build a good relationship with all Arrow of Light parents.
- Send a Christmas card to potential recruits. Let them know you are excited for them to join the Troop.

## January

- Plan a crossover ceremony. Both troop and pack should help coordinate this.

## February

- Hold the crossover ceremony
- Get new Scouts actively involved in a patrol and in troop activities.
- Troop leadership attends a meeting to meet the Webelos Den and begin introducing them to Scouts BSA as they prepare to transition to Arrow of Lights.

## March

- Ensure all new Scouts are planning to attend summer camp.
- Follow-up with the family by phone, email, and letter of every youth that did not crossover into a troop. Assure them it is not too late, describe the fun events scheduled, and work with them to visit additional troops or to help make the right decision for them.

## The Troop Visit

Visiting a troop is a crucial part of the rank requirement and is vital for a Scout aiming to join a troop that fits them well. Whether through an invitation or independent research, it's essential for an Arrow of Light Scout to visit the troop(s) they are considering. Since each troop is unique, AOL Scouts are encouraged to visit multiple troops to make an informed decision.

We have compiled and are providing AOLs with some helpful resources in order to prepare them for their troop visits. Given that they will spend considerable time with the troop they choose, it is important to approach the visit seriously and ensure all questions are answered before they make a decision. While a Scout can transfer to another troop at any time, conducting thorough troop visits increases the likelihood of finding the best fit from the start.

*Scouts BSA today at*



# Questions to ask when visiting Troops

## Arrow of Lights should ask:

- Is the Troop active?
- Do they do things I would enjoy?
- What size is the Troop?
- What size of Troop would I like?
- Are there other boys/girls my age in the Troop?
- Does the Troop go to a summer camp?
  - o Which summer camp?
  - o Is it important to me where they go?
  - o Should I/ Could I go to summer camp?
- Does the Troop participate in any Honor Camper programs (e.g., Order of the Arrow)?
  - o Do they matter to you?
- How often does this Troop do outdoor activities (e.g., Camping)?
- Will I have a say in decision making?
- Does the Troop have advanced programs for older Scouts?
- How often does the Troop meet?
- Do I have a good chance of advancing to Eagle with this Troop?
- Will I have fun?

## Parents should ask (Troops should tell parents if they don't ask):

- What values/skills will my son/daughter learn?
- What are the other adult leaders like?
- Can I participate in leadership if I desire?
- Is this a Scout run Troop? Is that important?
- Where, when, and how often does the Troop meet?
- Is it convenient for transporting my child?
- What is the age ratio of the Scouts? Do the older Scouts help the younger Scouts?
- How much will it cost? Camping? Summer Camp? Fundraisers? Uniforms?
- How often does the Troop camp?
- Do I have to camp with them?
- Does the Troop go to a summer camp?
  - o Which one(s)?
  - o Is it important to me where they go?
- Does the Troop participate in the Order of the Arrow?
- Is the Troop active?
- Do they do activities my son/daughter will enjoy?
- Will my son/daughter be encouraged/able to advance to Eagle in the Troop?
- How can moms/dads participate?
- Can this Troop provide a quality Scouting experience for my son/daughter and his/her friends?
- What is expected of the parents and family by the Troop?
- Will my child have fun?

### Arrow of Light Troop Visit Checklist

Troop Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Meeting Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Scoutmaster's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Senior Patrol Leader's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Troop Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

#### My Evaluation of this Troop

Are all the Scouts in Uniform?	Yes	No
Was the meeting organized?	Yes	No
Is the meeting run by scouts?	Yes	No
Did I feel welcome?	Yes	No
Did their campouts sound fun?	Yes	No
Do they have a calendar?	Yes	No
Do I already know scouts in the troop?	Yes	No
Will I enjoy activities they have planned?	Yes	No
Were the older scouts helpful?	Yes	No
Did they answer my questions?	Yes	No
Did they have a program for new scouts?	Yes	No

Things I like about this troop:

Things I did not like about this troop:

## Parent Troop Visit Evaluation

Troop Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsored by: \_\_\_\_\_ How long? \_\_\_\_\_

Scoutmaster's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Run by: Youth          Adults          Mixed

Was the meeting organized?                  Yes    No

Does the troop have a calendar of events?                  Yes    No

Does the program schedule:

    Remain similar from year to year                  Change yearly

    Remain similar with different summer camps

What special events does the troop participate in? (i.e Scouting for Food, Merit Badge Clinics, Camporees)

### Scout Leadership:

Does the troop have active Scout Leadership?    Yes    No

How often do the Scout leaders meet?

How many Scouts are in leadership positions?

How is the youth leadership decided?

    Elected by Youth    Decided by Adults combination

How often does the troop hold elections?

## **Camping**

How often does the troop camp?

What type of camping does the troop do? (check all that apply)

Summer camp      Winter camp                      Backpacking                      Camporees

Canoeing              High Adventure      Monthly Troop Camp

Most popular camp location: \_\_\_\_\_

Do all the Scouts get to go on all the outings?      Yes      No

Do campouts have a theme, merit badge or rank requirement focus?

## **Uniforms**

Were Scouts in uniform?              Yes      No      Were adults in uniform?      Yes      No

What are the uniform requirements of the troop?

## **Costs**

What are the joining costs? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the local troop costs? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there additional costs to join the troop?      Yes      No

What fundraisers are available for the Scouts? \_\_\_\_\_

How are fundraiser earnings used in the troop?

    Support troop needs?      Applied to reduce expenses of Scouts?

Things I liked about this troop:

Things I did not like about this troop:

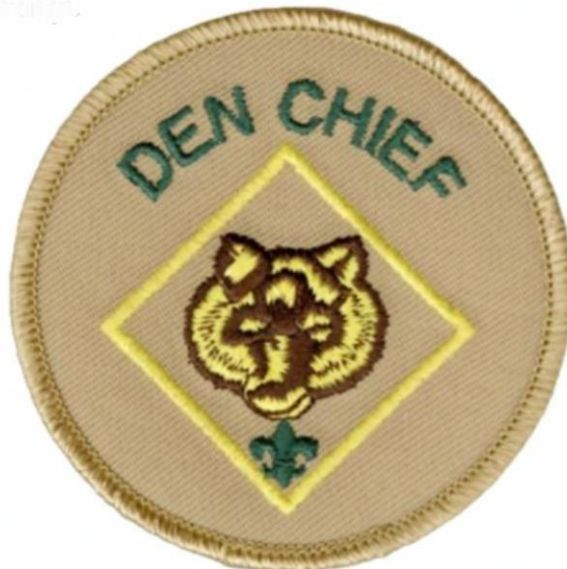
# Webelos/Arrow of Light Den Chief Job Description

The Webelos/Arrow of Light Den Chief is a current Scouts BSA Scout who gives leadership to the den in the pack. It is recommended that this be a Scout who has achieved First Class rank. Upon request by a Cubmaster, this Scout is selected by the Scoutmaster to represent the troop as a valuable source of guidance. There is online training for this position.

The den chief has the following duties and responsibilities:

- Know the purposes of Cub Scouting and help the den achieve those purposes. Serves as a rank advancement and/or elective assistant for the den leader.
- Set an example for the Webelos and AOL's with proper attitude and proper uniform attire.
- Help the den leader lead the weekly den meeting and help the den participate in the monthly pack meeting.
- Meet regularly with the den leader to review the meeting plan.
- Help Webelos/AOLs earn advancements.
- Teach the Denner and Assistant Denner leadership skills.
- Attend den chief training.
- Help plan and carry out den outdoor activities including joining programs/meetings with the troop, campouts, etc.
- Work with the Scoutmaster and Cubmaster to plan a crossover ceremony for the den.
- Attend all den meetings and pack meetings.

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## The Unit's New Member Coordinators

[Note that a unit is encouraged to have co- or multiple holders of this position.]

Sustaining strong membership in a unit depends not only on having new members join the unit but also on engaging youth and their families in the unit experience so that they stay. The role of the New Member Coordinators is to ensure that both of these keys to success take place.

### **Appointment and Support:**

The **New Member Coordinators** are appointed by and report to the Unit Committee Chair.

The **New Member Coordinators** work with and are supported by the District Membership Chair as well as by unit leadership, the sponsoring organization, and commissioners.

### **Responsibilities:**

**In general, all New Member Coordinators:**

Serve as welcoming ambassadors for the unit.

Work with the unit committee in developing and implementing the Unit Membership Plan.

Participate in New Member Coordinator training and collaborate with the district membership team.

**Specific responsibilities** for each New Member Coordinator should be determined by the unit's New Member team depending on individual interests and the needs of the unit. The tasks and opportunities listed below should help to guide the planning for individual and shared responsibilities.

**Each of the three action elements listed should be included in the Unit Membership Plan developed with the leadership of New Member Coordinators:**

#### **1. Share the benefits of Scouting.**

- a. Develop and share your own Scouting story, showing the impact of Scouting on your family.
- b. Identify and access research data and local examples confirming the fun and value of Scouting to youth, families, and the community.
- c. Promote Scouting benefits through social media and other avenues of communication.
- d. Showcase Scouting through engagement in local community events and service.

#### **2. Coordinate unit recruitment.**

- a. Oversee unit recruitment efforts such as joining events, informational presentations, and peerto- peer initiatives.
- b. Appeal to potential youth members and their families through well-designed and widely-distributed invitations shared through electronic media, handouts, and personal contacts.
- c. Ensure that the unit's BeAScout pin is up-to-date and that prompt follow-through takes place.
- d. Collaborate with local school representatives and community leaders, particularly in the chartered organization, to foster promotion of Scouting opportunities.

#### **3. Guide the joining and welcoming process for youth and their families.**

- a. Help youth and adults to greet newcomers warmly and to establish friendly, enjoyable relationships so that new members form a strong sense of belonging.
- b. Develop a unit welcome packet, electronically and/or in print, to answer frequently asked questions and to provide resource and contact information.
- c. Ensure that youth and adult applications, transfers, and payments are promptly submitted to the council service center.
- d. Build fun and excitement about the unit program and encourage youth and their families to take pride in Scouting accomplishments.
- e. Promote feedback and sharing of ideas through customer satisfaction surveys and other means.