

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

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CUB SCOUTING IS A FAMILY PROGRAM

Families are the basis of our society. In the family, children learn about love, values, and social interactions while they prepare for today's world. The family is vital to the future of our communities and our nation. The Boy Scouts of America has a great interest in the strength of the family.

Cub Scouting is a family program. Family involvement is vital to Cub Scouting's success. When we talk about "family" in Cub Scouting, we might be referring to several different types of groups of people. Many Cub Scouts do not come from traditional two-parent homes. Some boys live with a single parent or other relatives or guardians. *Cub Scouting considers a boy's family to be the people with whom he lives.*

The family is probably the most effective mutual-help organization to be found. Family life has its good times and bad times, but, above all, it is people giving strength to one another when needed, people caring and letting it show, people leaning on one another, and people feeling loyal to one another. It's worth the effort to keep a family strong.

Scouting aims to develop its youth into participating citizens of good character who are physically, spiritually, and mentally fit. The organization recognizes that it is the responsibility of parents and family to teach their children. Scouting is an available resource that can help families accomplish worthy goals while building and strengthening relationships among family members.

THE FAMILY'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Cub Scouting gives families an opportunity to spend quality time together. It is your role as a leader to provide interest,

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skill, and time in developing a good program. The family provides help and support for the den and pack.

Here are some examples of family involvement:

- Working with their Cub Scout on advancement projects and activities
- Attending pack meetings with their Cub Scout
- Presenting advancement awards to their Cub Scout at pack meetings
- Becoming a leader
- Providing ways for their Cub Scout to earn money he needs for den dues
- Helping at an occasional den meeting on a specific project or activity badge
- Providing refreshments
- Providing transportation
- Assisting with den outings
- Telephoning
- Helping teach a Webelos activity badge
- Attending a council-organized family campout with their Cub Scout

FAMILY AND ADVANCEMENT

The advancement program is part of the fun of Cub Scouting. It is an excellent opportunity for families to get to know their sons better, and both family members and boys will get much satisfaction from it.

Parents and guardians should read the “Parent Guide” in their boy’s handbook so that they will understand the advancement program. Den leaders should discuss achievements and electives or activity badge areas with families so that they fully understand the importance of following the requirements. Emphasize that the boy won’t be able to accomplish some of the achievements without his family’s help.

Advancement Helps for the Family

1. Review and explain the boy’s handbook with his parent or guardian. Tell families where they can buy the handbook.
2. Ask each adult participant to read the “Parent Guide.”
3. Explain that the boys should always bring their handbooks to den meetings so that their advancement progress can be recorded.
4. Discuss the advancement plan, including badges, ranks, and the Arrow of Light Award. Review how the requirements help the boy advance.
5. Explain the family’s role in working with the boy and approving projects. Note that the Webelos den leader or activity badge counselor approves requirements for Webelos Scouts rather than a family member.
6. Emphasize that “Do Your Best” is the boys’ criterion for completing requirements, electives, or badges.
7. Explain what modifications might be necessary to help boys with special needs.
8. Explain how recognition methods will be used to reinforce the boy’s advancement.
9. Explain how awards are presented at pack meetings and how families may participate.

Den leaders should discuss advancement with parents at a den adults’ meeting. (See Chapters 19–21, “The Tiger Cub Program,” “The Wolf and Bear Programs,” and “The Webelos Scout Program.”) They can also help families keep a happy balance between expecting too much and expecting too little as their sons work on advancement projects and activities. If a family is too critical, a boy is likely to lose confidence in himself and lose interest in Cub Scouting. On the other hand, some families are inclined to be too easy on boys. Boys are great testers, and if families let them get by with less than their best, they might be influencing character development in the wrong direction.

It is important not to measure a boy’s efforts by an adult’s yardstick, but to encourage him to do his best at all times.

PACK RESPONSIBILITIES

Cub Scout pack leaders must be sensitive to family situations. Although the costs involved in Cub Scouting are not excessive, some families have limited budgets. Take care not to embarrass any Cub Scout because of a lack of funds required for uniforming or den or pack activities.

Be sensitive about using specific words or phrases when referring to family situations. Many boys do not live in a traditional two-parent family. Begin notes with “Dear family,” and tell each boy to be sure to “bring your family.” Children can be hurt by references to parents that may not be a part of their lives.

Cub Scout leaders need to be creative and understanding in helping all types of families participate as fully as possible in the program. Leaders must recognize that not all families can participate equally or in the same way. Be considerate of economic, health, and other factors that can affect a family’s participation.

The pack has the following responsibilities to the parents or guardians:

1. To provide a well-planned, year-round program of activities in the den and pack that meets the aims of Scouting and, more specifically, the purposes of Cub Scouting and the needs of boys
2. To provide trained, qualified, and enthusiastic leaders for all den and pack meetings and activities
3. To provide training for parents/guardians and to keep them informed
4. To provide activities that help strengthen family members and give them opportunities to work and play together
5. To help families participate in Cub Scouting according to each family’s unique ability to do so

DEVELOPING FAMILY COOPERATION

The expectations of families are usually much closer to the aims of Scouting than the expectations of the boys. Families sometimes have special reasons for encouraging their son to join a Cub Scout pack.

Leaders from the pack should visit the home, get to know the family, and discuss the program and the purposes of Cub Scouting with them. Tell the family of your interest in their son and explain what is expected of them. Through home visits and special den and pack adults’ meetings, you can show families what you are doing and ways you need their help. Show them that they are a much needed and essential part of

Cub Scouting. Try to involve them in small ways, and then during busy times, they will be ready and willing to help with meetings and activities.

Family Orientation

Orienting families to Cub Scouting will encourage their participation. A good, well-planned orientation can make the difference in how receptive the family will be with future involvement in the pack.

Family orientation is a process that should begin before the family joins the pack. The information may be given to the family in an informal setting, during the first visit in the home, or at Rally Night for Cub Scouting.

Information to Review at a Family Orientation

- Procedures for joining a pack, helping with den activities, paying dues, and helping with the boy's advancement
- The "Parent Agreement" on the Application to Join a Pack
- The "Parent Guide" in the boy's handbook, which explains how parents or guardians work with their sons on advancement
- "The Family's Responsibilities" in this chapter, to let them know what is expected of all families
- *Cub Scouting's BSA Family Activity Book* (No. 33012A), which explains how Cub Scouting can help meet family needs (See Chapter 30, "Cub Scouting's BSA Family Program," for more details.)
- The Family Talent Survey Sheet (page 34-11).

Video Help

Cub Scout Orientation (No. AV-01V012), a 10-minute video that orients parents and guardians of new Cub Scouts to Cub Scouting, is available for use during an orientation or roundup or in another setting. The video reviews the roles and responsibilities of Cub Scout parents and provides an overview of all phases of the Scouting program. Testimonials from leaders, parents, youth members, and community leaders emphasize the values, education, and character development that are key elements of Cub Scouting.

Involving Parents/Guardians in the Pack

Orientation alone is not enough to keep parents involved. Communication is the key (see "Good Communication," on page 5-4). The more that families know about Cub Scouting, the more interested and cooperative they will be.

- Keep parents and guardians fully informed as soon as they join the pack.

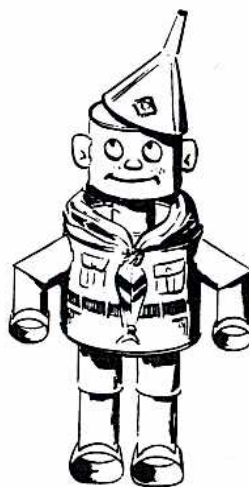
- Keep the lines of communication open. Informed families are usually interested families.
- Urge and expect a parent or guardian to be present at and participate in ceremonies when the Cub Scout is inducted, recognized for advancement, or graduated from the pack.
- Use the Family Talent Survey Sheet (page 34-11) to identify talents, abilities, and resources that can be used in den and pack meeting activities.
- Give adults specific jobs in the den and pack. A request to do a specific job will get better results than a vague "I'll be needing your help sometime."
- Include adult recognition in pack ceremonies.
- Recognize dens that have good adult attendance at pack meetings.

Increasing Family Attendance at Pack Meetings

Once families get into the habit of attending pack meetings, they usually continue if the pack program is worthwhile. When families enjoy their first pack meeting, they usually want to attend the next pack activity.

A good rule: Plan all meetings with families in mind.

Each pack has its own way of building family attendance. If attendance of families at the pack meeting is not what it should be, perhaps the pack committee can come up with a plan for increasing attendance. Some packs have a **simple trophy** or a homemade "Cubby" that is presented to the den with the best adult attendance at each pack meeting. The winning den keeps the trophy in its meeting place until the next pack meeting, when it is passed to the den with the most attendance.



"Cubby," a homemade attendance trophy, can be made from tin cans or any scrap material. Challenge a creative parent to design and make your own attendance trophy. (See the *Cub Scout Leader How-To Book* for Cubby ideas.)

Some packs present a **family attendance ribbon** to the den with the best attendance. An attendance ribbon could be given

to every den that reaches a certain percentage in attendance. The den keeps this ribbon and attaches it to the den flag.

Telephoning is another method for increasing and maintaining attendance. An adult in each den can call other den families to remind them of the pack meeting and relay special details about the plans of the meeting. An **e-mail list** for the pack could also be used to send out messages.

Each family could get a **personal invitation and a reminder** of the meeting. Some packs have a regular **newsletter** that is sent to families to keep them informed and to remind them of meetings. This newsletter could also be sent via e-mail. Remember, however, that not all families have access to the Internet or e-mail.

But an increasing number of families do have access to the Internet, so many packs are establishing a **Web site**. Through this site, pack families can have instant access to information on upcoming activities and events.

PARENT-LEADER CONFERENCES

Throughout the year, a parent-leader conference is an opportunity for a family adult member or members to discuss with you, the leader, the boy's participation and expectations of a den. The conference can help a boy gain the most from his Cub Scouting experience by giving parents and you the knowledge and awareness you need to work as a team to help the boy succeed.

Here are some suggested topics for discussion:

- 1. General Characteristics:** Start with a general picture of the boy. Is he shy or outgoing? What is his usual temperament—easygoing or easily frustrated? What does he like to do? What are his strengths and abilities?
- 2. Special Needs:** You need a clear picture of any special needs, limitations, or diet or health restrictions of a boy in order to determine how to best help him experience the fullest program possible.
- 3. Unit Operation:** Explain the Scouting program and emphasize why advancement is important to the boy's development. Discuss your expectations of the family's involvement.
- 4. Discipline:** Parents should inform you of the usual discipline used to maintain appropriate behavior. Discuss expected behavior at meetings.
- 5. Medication:** It is the responsibility of the boy and/or his parent or guardian to make sure that prescription medication is taken as needed. A Scout leader, after obtaining all the necessary information, can agree to accept responsibility for making sure a Scout takes the necessary medication at the appropriate time, but BSA policy does not mandate nor necessarily encourage the Scout leader to do so. Also,

if your state laws are more limiting as regards this issue, you must follow them.

- 6. Emergency Procedures:** You should have emergency phone numbers, appropriate written medical permission, and any other information specific to the boy's needs.

More suggestions on parent-leader conferences are given in Chapter 17, "Cub Scouts With Disabilities."

Good Communication

Good communication between leaders and families is essential to obtaining family cooperation. Here are some helpful tips:

- Talk with each boy's family about what is going on, what is needed, and how the family can help.
 - Be sure families know the regular den and pack meeting dates and times. Provide reminders as needed.
 - Let families know that the best way to find out what is going on with their boy is to stay actively involved in his life.
 - Don't rely entirely on boys to take information home. The message might never get through to parents or guardians. Use newsletters, telephoning, e-mail, personal visits, or other means to stay in touch with and inform families of any special activities, projects, or needs.
 - Get to know the family. Find out how the den and pack can help meet their needs.
 - Hold den and pack adults' meetings as needed to communicate information.
 - Keep families up-to-date on how their sons are progressing. Let them know how they can help them.
 - Keep families up-to-date on how the den and pack are operating. Share with them the successes and the needs.
 - Encourage families to read *Boys' Life* magazine to find out what's going on in Scouting and Cub Scouting.
 - Keep families informed about activities that the entire family can enjoy, such as family camping.
- Cub Scouting is for families. The involvement of parents and guardians, as well as other family members, can enhance a boy's experience and success. As family members participate together, the entire family can be strengthened.