

BSA National Annual Membership Fees (Explained)

The National Council of the Boy Scouts of America has announced the new membership fees that will take effect August 1, 2023. This decision is the result of extensive work by both national council volunteers and staff with input from local councils to determine the fees necessary to operate the Boy Scouts of America. Attached is the memo explaining the decision and the new fees.

The Jayhawk Area Council leadership understands that you may have additional questions and that your families are looking to you for answers beyond the BSA's memo. We hope the following information is helpful to you as well as to the families you serve.

- 1) **Why a fee increase?** In general, the fee changes are related to two items - General Liability Insurance premiums (makes up 64% of the annual membership fees) and costs associated with annual background checks for volunteer leaders. These two items alone are putting the most pressure on annual membership fees.
- 2) **General Liability Insurance Policy (GLIP).** This policy protects our programs, chartering organizations, volunteer leaders and our youth with liability insurance. The GLIP is paid for out of the membership fees paid to the national council. In addition to the costs of the insurance, there is a high deductible rate meaning a large portion of claims comes directly out of the national council's budget before insurance begins to cover. Due to the recent bankruptcy, there is only one provider interested in bidding on the coverage. This leaves the national council with little negotiating ability.

This is not to be confused with the Sickness and Accident Insurance Policy which is an optional policy made available to help cover our Scouts and Volunteers with supplemental insurance if there is an accident that requires medical attention. Some councils leave this up to units to elect to pay for the insurance. The Jayhawk Area Council Executive Board has chosen to pay for all youth and adults that are registered in the Jayhawk Area Council on behalf of our units to ensure everyone is covered.

- 3) **Elimination of pro-rated fees.** Currently, annual registration fees are tied directly to the annual recharter process. Units update their roster and pay each youth's and volunteer leader's registration fees for the year along with Scout Life subscription and the charter fee. If anyone joins in between recharter periods, fees are pro-rated to bring that registrant around to the recharter period with everyone else.

After August 1, registration fees will be paid for a full year no matter when the Scout or volunteer leader first registers. Future renewals will take place on that anniversary date. This will only affect new registrants as everyone else's anniversary will still be in

January since that is when they first paid their full membership fees. Eventually, most will be renewing membership fees in the fall of each year.

An advantage to this new process is it will reduce the confusion of paying in the fall and then paying again in January. It will also provide additional time for a Scout to “earn their own way” by the time their registration fees are due again.

It is our understanding that Scout Life subscriptions will be tied to the member’s anniversary date. We have not received word on how charter fees will be handled.

There will be a way for units to pay registration fees on behalf of their youth and volunteer leaders. There will also be a way to apply the KanCare funds and assistance scholarships for those that qualify. Modifications are being made to ScoutBooks to be able to handle unit paid registrations and well as updated members status when annual fees are paid. The Jayhawk Area Council membership committee is reviewing our scholarship procedures so they can accommodate new changes.

- 4) **Volunteer Leader and Merit Badge Counselor Fees.** As mentioned earlier, the fee increases are due to insurance and background checks. Historically, the BSA conducted background checks whenever an adult first registered. Then, all volunteers were subject to random, periodic background checks. As a condition of the settlement the BSA made with those representing the claimants, the BSA will conduct annual background checks on EVERY volunteer leader. This, as you can imagine, increases the costs to accomplish this expectation. That is why for the first time there will be a fee for merit badge counselors (MBC) that are not registered in any other position.

MBC that are registered as a volunteer leader in a unit or on the district/council level will “multiple” as a merit badge counselor for no additional charge. Someone who is an MBC and decides to join a unit’s leadership or serve on a district or council committee will need to pay the full fee at the time they register in that new position. When the next anniversary date comes, they will be “multiplied” in the merit badge counselor role.

- 5) **Can Merit Badge Counselors attend campouts?** New language will be forthcoming in respect to the policy change that goes into effect September 1 referencing adults attending a Scouts BSA campout. The revision will restrict it to just those that are registered in paid positions other than merit badge counselors.

Side Note: This new policy requires all adults attending an overnight event to be a registered, paid leader. An exemption is granted to Cub Scout Family Camping due to the age of the youth involved so parents do not have to be registered to attend. This has not been extended beyond the Cub Scout program. This was made by the claimants as a condition to exit bankruptcy. The BSA had no choice in this matter.

- 6) **What are the “Council Fees”** the national council memo refers to? National membership fees go to the national council. None remain with the local council. Councils have the option of adding a Council Fee to help cover operating costs related to providing Scouting within the council’s territory.

Of the 247 councils in the country, approximately 160 have opted to charge a council fee. These fees vary in amount and what the funds are directed to as each council can determine how they implement this fee. The Jayhawk Area Council Executive Board has not chosen to add a council fee.

There were rumors prior to this announcement stating the new annual membership fee would be \$99.00 for both youth and adults. That was a proposal presented to the national executive board for consideration. Council leadership across the country expressed their concerns as to what that would do to our membership growth. The National Council leadership listened to those concerns and came back with this revised plan. This was ultimately approved by the national executive board at the National Meeting. There will be some additional clarification and instructions over the summer as we prepare for this transition. We will share these updates with you as we receive them.