

## Unit Meetings and Scouting for Counties In the “Yellow” Phase

It is extremely difficult to maintain proper six-foot social distancing among young people and even adults. We have all been home bound for so long it becomes natural for youth to want to run and play together without thinking about safety. While few youths become symptomatic of COVID 19, they can certainly carry it and pass it along to parents, grandparents and others who may be compromised. As much as we are eager to have Scouting return to something that looks normal, we ask that you seriously consider if your unit adults can maintain the standards needed. It is the strong recommendation of the Pennsylvania Dutch Council that Scout units continue to meet virtually until our council service area is deemed to be “green”. Any unit activity should be done as **family units** with parents strictly supervising their Scouts and other youth for proper safety precautions.

In order to help support you and your scouts we will be encouraging outdoor activities, once our council is deemed to be in the green stage, we will have numerous opportunities for Scouts and families to come to one of our camps for outdoor fun. This could include fishing, hiking, a campfire or even an overnigher. We understand the need to get out and back to nature and we want to help our council Scouts do it safely. We will announce the opportunities as we have more information.

As counties served by the Pennsylvania Dutch Council move from the “red” to the “yellow” phase of the Governor’s plan to re-open Pennsylvania, we know that some units are eager to resume Scouting activities. We have assembled guidance for Scouting units to follow as they consider holding in-person meetings, activities, service projects, and other Scouting events, however again, we encourage virtual meetings to continue.

**Although some Scouting meetings and events may restart, the relaxing of restrictions is not a return to pre-COVID-19 normalcy.** The items outlined below are guidelines and steps to guide units concerning meetings and other Scouting activities. These guidelines draw heavily from information provided by the [National Council of the Boy Scouts of America](#), the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), and the [Process to Reopen Pennsylvania](#).

All units are required to follow all state or local guidelines that are currently in place. **Units located in counties still in the “red” or “stay at home” phase are not permitted to meet or conduct Scouting events. Before any in-person meetings can begin, units must obtain permission from your chartered organization and meeting host (if different than your chartered organization).**

## Guidelines for In-Person Unit Meetings During “Yellow” Phase:

- No more than 25 people in total can be in attendance, including Scouts, leaders, parents, and family members.
- Troops larger than 25 will not be able to meet as a whole and may consider certain patrols meeting on different nights or breaking the troop into smaller groups to stay under 25 people.
- Packs larger than 25 will not be able to have pack meetings. Emphasis should be placed on den meetings at different times.
- Disinfect/sanitize the meeting area before and after unit functions, including tables, chairs, doorknobs, restrooms, and other surfaces. Make sure you coordinate with your Chartered Organization or the meeting host location to follow all appropriate cleaning procedures.
- Require anyone who has or thinks they have any symptoms not to attend the meeting.
- Question everyone before they enter the meeting location regarding fever, chills, or other [COVID-19 symptoms](#). Do not allow anyone with these symptoms to enter.
- Maintain social distancing (minimum of 6 feet).
- All attendees must wear face masks at any gathering.
- Handwashing facilities, such as restrooms, must be readily available for participants at a Scouting event or meeting. If handwashing facilities are unavailable, hand sanitizer should be readily available.
- The [PA Department of Health](#) recommends holding meetings outside if possible. It is easier to sanitize because there are fewer surfaces for the virus to live on. Social distancing and the use of masks is still required in the outdoors.

Thank you for keeping our Scouts, volunteers, and Scouting families safe by following these guidelines.

Below are some Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) based on the information above. The National Council, Boy Scouts of America has also put together a FAQ here, <https://www.scouting.org/coronavirus/covid-19-faq/>, with information pertaining to Unit Activities, Camping, and Advancement. Please utilize both FAQ sheets for support.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q: Should we hold in-person Scouting meetings, outings, or activities?**

**A:** With safety in mind and based on guidance from state and national health officials, units may resume in-person Scouting meetings, outings, and activities in counties that are in at least the “yellow” phase of the governor’s plan. As outlined above, all Scout gatherings must comply with the guidelines

above. Units do not have to resume in-person activities or events just because the stay-at-home restriction in their community has been lifted. The “yellow” phase of the Governor’s reopening plan encourages continued use of telecommuting for businesses. We also recommend continuing the use of virtual meetings during the “yellow” phase.

### **Q: We are in the “Yellow” phase, but my Chartered Organization will not let us meet in- person. What can we do?**

**A:** The Chartered Organization “owns” the unit and annually sign a [Charter Agreement](#) with the Pennsylvania Dutch Council. If a Chartered Organization is not comfortable with a unit resuming in-person Scouting activities even after moving to the “yellow” phase or even “green” phase, then the unit must follow the guidance of the Chartered Organization. This applies to meetings, service projects, fundraising, camping, trips, and any other Scouting activities and events **whether they take place physically at the chartered organization or not**. Similarly, as per the agreement, if a Chartered Organization wishes to allow a unit to reopen before the “yellow” phase, the unit must follow the council restriction and not hold in-person meetings or activities.

### **Q: If meeting locations are open, can units meet or do other in-person activities?**

**A:** Unit in-person activities may resume under the guidelines listed above. If in-person activities take Scouts out of their immediate communities, unit leaders need to consider both the regulations of their county and regulations for wherever they intend to travel. For example, a unit in a “red” phase county is under a “stay at home” order. It should not hold in-person Scouting events or activities even if the event or activity is in a county with lesser restrictions. Conversely, a unit in a “yellow” or “green” phase should not participate in events or activities in counties that are still in the “red” phase.

### **Q: What do we do about Scouts’ fundraising activities?**

**A:** Fundraising activities may be held if those activities are conducted within the guidelines outlined above. Before units decide to do in-person fundraisers, please be mindful that there may be traditional locations that have changed their usual fundraising policies due to COVID-19.

**Q: Summer camp is canceled; can my unit get together with other units and have our own camp?**

**A:** No. Chartering organizations play an essential role in the program and activities for their chartered units. Chartering organizations promote a well-planned unit program for the units they charter and encourage their units to have active outdoor unit programs. Chartering organizations are not authorized to plan, and, and deliver programs for units outside of their charter.

It is the role of the council to plan summer camps and the role of councils or districts to plan camporees and other outings during the year that give youth an opportunity to test their knowledge and skills in competitive events with other troops and/or patrols.

When units with different chartered organizations do activities together, this becomes a district or council event and requires council approval. In fact, some states require such activities to be licensed.

Should your troop, crew or ship decide to do a long-term summer camping program for their own unit (Cub Scouts units are prohibited from this activity) please note that the Scouter Code of Conduct and relevant program safety and training requirements are still in place, e.g., Safe Swim Defense, Hazardous Weather, Wilderness First Aid, etc.

**Q: What is the BSA's policy on social distancing in a tenting environment when camping?**

**A:** To maintain social distancing, it is recommended scouts and adults have their own tent. Family members, ie, two brothers or two sisters could share a tent though. As always, all BSA youth protection policies must be followed.