



May 20, 2020

Re: Mid-May Update

Dear Scouting Family,

Much has happened since my mid-April update to you all and, in many ways, not much has changed. Hopefully, we are starting to see our lives slowly return to some sense of normalcy. I thought it prudent to take some time and give an update on a number of fronts.

### **Office Operations**

We suspect that our office can open during phase 2 of the governor's reopening plan. That having been said, we are targeting June 1<sup>st</sup> as a potential opening date that is still very tentative. Some things to be mindful of:

- Thanks to prudent fiscal stewardship, all our staff continue to be working, albeit, from their homes. Council phones are redirected to staff members' home or cell phones, so you can continue to reach anyone should you have any questions.
- When the Scout Service Center finally opens, large meetings may still not be able to take place and there will be a phase-in of functionality.
- Field staff will continue to work from home after the Scout Service Center reopens.
- The Scout Shop is run by our National Office and will probably reopen within two weeks of our office reopening as their phase-in plan requires more lead time once we have a confirmed office opening date.

### **Unit Operations**

Amazingly, over 75% of our units have continued to meet virtually during the COVID -19 shutdown. I have personally sat in on boards of review, unit meetings, and watched OA elections, virtual campouts and many unit activities take place. Setting up a Zoom call and a game on Kahoot is simple and a great way to keep the Scouts engaged. As your unit gives thought to resuming physical meetings, here are some considerations to keep in mind:

- Looking at the 4 Phase re-opening plan the Governor has established, units should be able to start meeting again (along with Churches and Camps) during Phase 4.
- When to start resuming physical meetings is the discretion of your unit committee and sponsoring organization, however, this will probably not even be possible until the zone you live in gets to phase 4. Probably not likely before July 1<sup>st</sup> for most of us.
- Most of the units in our Council fall within the Finger Lakes re-opening zone, though a handful of border units may need to follow the advice of a neighboring zone.
- To continue to support unit operations we will continue to run Cub Scout activities and Scouts BSA merit badge classes online at least through the end of June.

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- Though it is tempting to get out and start doing activities and meetings, please be respectful of the requests from our community leaders to stay at home. Also be mindful that the parents of your Scouts will have varying opinion on what is safe so taking necessary precautions will be important.
- Larger Scout units may be subject to different gathering restrictions than smaller ones and this may also vary by county.
- Scouts ROC at Home Awards are still available to be applied for until June 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Camp Operations**

I should start with how impressed and encouraged I am by the program team that leads our Council. Since we first started quarantine, our team has been in almost daily meetings designing a health and safety plan that works and has about 18 different “plan B” options on what camp will look like. The team has had regular calls with both county and state health departments and honestly it appears like we are having to create the standards for the whole state. The good news is that because viruses threaten summer camp every year, the safety standards we employ are done to combat just this situation. That having been said, if we run camp there will be some new safety items as well.

As of today, we still do not know if we are going to be able to run camp or not. Each county will interpret the State Health Department recommendations which means we may get to run all three camps or maybe just one. We do know that only about four Boy Scout Councils in New York are still giving serious consideration to running camp and that many smaller camps have announced their closure for the summer. Our “Go / No Go” date for summer camp remains June 1<sup>st</sup>.

The health and safety of our members is our number one priority. If we don’t believe we can do camp safely we won’t open. That having been said the COVID-19 pandemic will bring a whole host of extra precautions. Here is a partial list of the changes you should expect ...

- Parents and adult participants will need to sign off that the campers have not been diagnosed with COVID-19 and they have been symptom free for two weeks prior to attending camp. Participants who had COVID-19 will have to have a COVID test prior to attending and certify they are COVID-free.
- Parents will be asked to sign a Health and Safety agreement which will outline our entire plan but also their understanding that should their child get symptoms while at camp, he/she will be sent home immediately.
- Units will be asked to conduct individual health screenings prior to traveling to camp (including a temperature check).
- Medical Forms are required and assuming no medical issues, and under age 65, then the period to have your form signed by a physician has been extended (after Feb 1, 2019). If you are over 65 and/or have a condition that makes you a high risk to contract COVID-19 (any respiratory condition such as Asthma) then you must have a current note from a physician allowing you to participate in summer camp.
- Health screening upon arrival at camp will also be conducted by our health officers, who will also administer a temperature check.
  - Should anyone in the unit not pass the arrival screening, the *entire* unit will not be allowed to enter camp.

- Strict limitations on camp visitors. Parents will not be allowed past the parking lot unless they are volunteering for the session.
  - All visitors will be screened upon arrival before entry to camp
- Hygiene reminders while at camp including wearing masks (neckerchiefs will do).
- Extra handwashing /sanitizer stations will be available throughout camp.
- Dedicated staff to clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces and shared program equipment and a limit on shared equipment.
- Units will need to bring their own tentage for Hovey and Massawepie (canvas tents cannot be disinfected without ruining the tent). Limited indoor bunking available for Cutler, personal tents encouraged when possible.
- Meal service format is still being determined but salad bars and family-style dining are out for this summer.
- An emergency response plan that includes an isolation and quarantine protocol should a person at camp develop symptoms of COVID-19 or other communicable disease. All sick campers will be sent home.
- Check-ins with each unit one week and two weeks after the unit leaves camp to determine if any participants have developed symptoms.
- Units who live in counties or states whose COVID-19 status is not equal or better than NY Phase 4 may not be able to participate.

As stated, this is just a partial list and not inclusive of any of the plan B options nor specific task force recommendations expected out later this month. Likewise, direction from the Governor's office and Health Department could create standards we haven't considered. A few final thoughts:

- Merit badge online registration is up and running for summer camp.
- Campership applications are still available.
- The early bird deadline for camp will be extended to June 15<sup>th</sup>.

If for whatever reason camp does not run, please know that we will be running a virtual summer camp program and hope to – at bare minimum – run a family camping option at each of our properties (those are part of the Plan B list).

In closing, let me take the time to again say thank you for all you are doing to help deliver Scouting to the youth of our community. From the key Cubmaster or Scoutmaster delivering program, to the parent who simply sits down with their Tiger Scout to read part of their handbook, you all play a key role in delivering a Scouting program to nearly 10,000 youth members in our region. On behalf of those Scouts, thank you for all that you do.

Sincerely,



Stephen T. Hoitt  
Scout Executive