How Membership Renewal Works

Membership renewal and recharter are related but separate processes. Recharter is the annual event where a unit renews its charter and confirms its leadership roster. Membership renewal works differently: each member renews on a rolling 12-month cycle tied to their date of joining or last renewal. Recharter happens once a year. Membership renewal happens year-round, for different members at different times.

That distinction is the starting point for everything else on this page.

The decision your unit needs to make

Every unit has to decide who handles membership renewal: the unit pays centrally, or each family and adult pays for themselves. The system defaults to self-pay. A Unit Key 3 member can change that default in Organization Manager settings, but paying centrally requires someone to set it up and actively manage it — coordination, tracking, and follow-through on an ongoing basis.

For units where families struggle with the online process, or where the committee wants to absorb the cost, paying centrally may be the right call. For most units, self-pay with follow-through by a Renewal Coordinator works just as well.

Make this decision early and communicate it clearly to your families. A common reason members accidentally lapse is that a family assumed the unit was handling renewal, or that a unit assumed the family acted on the reminder email. Neither assumption is safe.

Appoint a Renewal Coordinator

Regardless of which payment approach your unit chooses, someone needs to own the tracking. The Heart of Virginia Council recommends designating one person as your Renewal Coordinator — ideally your New Member Coordinator, Committee Chair, or another committee member.

The job is straightforward: check the roster monthly, identify upcoming renewals, send reminders, and follow up until renewals are confirmed. Done monthly, it stays manageable. Left for several months, it becomes a scramble.

How the timing works

Per the Heart of Virginia Council, units can access member renewals in the roster 90 days before a member's expiration date. Verify this window with the council if you are planning your renewal process around it. Individual members and parents can access their own renewal 60 days before expiration. That gap gives units processing renewals centrally a chance to act before members receive their own notices, potentially creating duplicate renewals.

Scouting America sends renewal reminders by email and text at 60, 45, 30, 15, and 7 days before expiration, and again 7 days after if renewal is still incomplete. The system handles notifications. The Renewal Coordinator's job is to catch the people who missed it.

Members who pass their expiration date without renewing enter a two-month lapsed period during which membership can still be reinstated. What happens after that differs for youth and adults. If a member has lapsed and you are not sure what applies, contact your Unit Commissioner or District Commissioner. They can confirm the current process and help you get the member back on the roster.

Adults registered in multiple positions

Adults registered in more than one unit, or in any district or council position, must renew all of their registrations themselves in their own my.scouting account under My Applications > My Renewals. A unit cannot renew positions outside its own roster. This applies to any adult carrying registrations in more than one place: an Assistant Scoutmaster who also serves on the district committee, a Den Leader registered as a merit badge counselor, and so on.

Make sure these adults know they are responsible for their own renewal. They will not be caught by your unit's renewal process.

How to complete renewal

Three paths exist depending on who is doing the renewing. Step-by-step instructions for each path from the Heart of Virginia Council are attached as downloadable files.

Unit renewing its members — a Unit Key 3 member logs in to my.scouting and navigates to Organization Manager > Roster, selects members to renew, and processes payment. Per the Heart of Virginia Council, all renewals are completed online. The ACH processing fee is $1.00; the credit card fee is 3%.

Parent renewing a Scout's membership — the parent or guardian must be linked to the Scout in my.scouting. They log in to their own account and complete renewal through the red notification icon. Only the linked parent or guardian can renew a youth this way.

Adult renewing their own membership — log in to my.scouting, click the red notification icon, and follow the prompts. Adults holding multiple positions must renew each position separately.

Scout Life magazine is selected by default in all three paths. Members who do not want a subscription need to uncheck the box before completing payment.

For national renewal guidance and resources, see scouting.org/resources/unit-and-membership-renewal

Safeguarding Youth Training and Unit Renewal

This section applies to unit renewal, which runs separately from membership renewal. All adults must have current Safeguarding Youth Training (SYT) before unit renewal can be completed. If an adult's SYT will expire before the unit's next renewal date, it needs to be completed first. Expired SYT is the most common validation error units encounter. Check SYT status for all adults in my.scouting before starting the unit renewal process.

Questions about renewal?

Contact your Unit Commissioner for roster questions and support with the renewal process. For payment issues or lapsed registrations, contact the Heart of Virginia Council directly.

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