



This edition of *Realignment News* contains additional clarification of Mutual of America's 'Early Retirement Window,' following a series of inquiries from councils. Also included is information on 'Resiliency' that was shared by Lee Heckt Harrison, LLC, at the recent AGSES conferences. Attached to this issue are newly revised Girl Scout Council Record Retention Schedules, which also will be posted on the OCN.

The last 2006 issue of *Realignment News* will be sent to councils on Monday December 11, 2006 with a schedule of issues for 2007.

Questions are always welcome and should be sent to Vicki Wright at vwright@girlscouts.org

ITEMS OF INTEREST

VERIP Facts

There are still many questions about the Voluntary Early Retirement Incentive Program and the Early Retirement Window. GSUSA is working closely with Mutual of America to assist councils with their very specific questions and circumstances. Please remember that offering an early retirement program for over 200 councils is very complicated and there are many laws relative to making this offering.

In December, GSUSA will host a teleconference for council Board Chairs CEOs, and Human Resources Directors in order to continue to provide information and answer questions. In the meantime, here are some facts that we hope will clear up some of the questions out there.

- Each council enrolled in the National Girl Scout Council Retirement Plan that is affected by realignment is eligible to offer the Voluntary Early Retirement Incentive Program (VERIP), provided the council was participating in the plan as of March 1, 2006 and is impacted by the realignment process.

- The VERIP is being offered as a way to support longer term council staff who may be adversely affected by the council realignment.
- All active plan participants with 10 or more years of benefit accrual service (as defined in the plan) are eligible if their council opts to offer the VERIP.
- The VERIP provides the addition of five years of service and the addition of up to 5 years of age to eligible participants.
- The five years of service grant benefits to all VERIP eligible participants regardless of age.
- The 5 years of age grant benefits to any VERIP eligible participant under age 65, or, if eligible for the Special Early Retirement Rule of 80, any VERIP eligible participant under age 62. It also can affect eligibility for the pre-retirement death benefit payable to non-spouse beneficiaries.
- Council boards of directors must determine whether they wish to offer the VERIP and determine the timeframe **at least three months** prior to the Early Retirement Window being opened to staff. (We apologize for the error in the last edition of Realignment News, which indicated six months – it is six months for the total process.)
- Employees must make their own decision whether or not to take the early retirement window package within the election period designated by the council, which is normally three months in length.
- The election period (window) cannot extend beyond the merger; councils must remain intact (cannot be merged) during the election period.
- Employees electing the window must remain employed through the end of the Early Retirement Window election period.

The costs related to offering the VERIP are being paid by the assets or funds in the plan. Councils do not have to fund the costs of the window for their eligible employees.

- **Resiliency in Times of Change**

Lee Hecht Harrison, LLC has a wonderful tool to assist people to deal with Resilience at Work – *Developing Personal Resilience – Learning to Thrive in Ambiguity and Change*. This tool was shared at the Fall AGSES Conferences and provided great guidance in dealing with change.

Resiliency is defined as the capacity to remain flexible and strong in the midst of ambiguity and change. Resilient people tend to:

COPE effectively with stress and uncertainty.

BOUNCE BACK from physical and psychological stress.

ABSORB high levels of change and remain effective.

ADJUST to disruptions in life.

MAINTAIN high levels of productivity.

Building greater personal resilience can be divided into the notion of resiliency in four areas:

Understanding Yourself

By knowing your capabilities, you can act to build on your strengths and compensate for your weaknesses, increasing your ability to manage change.

Know the Territory

Awareness of the trends having an impact on your situation will enable you to recognize and acquire the knowledge and skills needed to prosper in tough times.

Connect to Resources

Maintaining a personal support network, and accessing personal, organizational and community resources, can help you be effective in times of stress.

Take Action

Using the above components as tools, you must have persistent and determined action in order to thrive in stressful, changing environments.

Other resources for dealing with change: *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*, William Bridges, and *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*, Stephen Covey.

Extending Board and Nominating Committee Terms

In the October 23rd issue of the *Realignment News*, we shared two examples of ways that councils could extend board terms during realignment. Before taking any action, we encourage councils to consult with legal counsel on your bylaws, appropriate state law and any other governing documents relevant to nominations, elections and board terms.



- 1. When there are multiple councils merging to form one legal entity, do each of the councils need to have an audit since it will be their final year of operation? Answer:** Yes. Every council should conduct their own individual final audit. GSUSA requires an audit of the final financial statements that cover the ending period of 12 months or less. This will provide significant value in presenting final balances for transferring net assets to the on-going entity. Work with your external certified public accountant and the councils in your group on a process and timeline. Previous guidance suggested a compilation or review might suffice, however, after further consideration we are now requiring an audit. If you have further questions regarding this matter, contact Susana A. Guarino, sguarino@girlscouts.org or Cheryl R. Olson, colson@girlscouts.org.
- 2. I understand that GSUSA is offering a series of teleconferences and/or webinars for councils that started realigning in October. Will there be similar opportunities for those of us not starting our training until next year? Answer:** Yes. We are trying to facilitate further learning and sharing opportunities for councils following their Realignment Training. And, we know that those councils “waiting” need some help also. Beginning in January, the Council Partnerships and Realignment department will be hosting some pre-training sessions for those councils starting Realignment in April and October 2007. Additionally, HR Consulting will be hosting a teleconference on staff retention at the beginning of the year.

3. Our new council group will be attending training in October 2007 and our Board Chairs and CEOs would like to start meeting to get ready. Since we do not have an assigned realignment consultant at this point, can we get someone to help facilitate our meetings?

Answer: Yes. If your group would like some assistance with meetings, we can make a staff or NOV consultant available to your group. Contact Vicki Wright, Project Director, Realignment Strategy, or Dale Scolnick, Manager, Council Realignment.

4. We would like some objective input into where to locate council offices as we get ready for our new council. Is there any assistance GSUSA can provide? Answer: Yes. Our demographer, Jeanne Gobalet, can provide an analysis of population and transportation trends that may be of assistance. Contact Vicki Wright, Project Director, Realignment Strategy, with you request.

5. Can you remind me of the criteria and process for selecting a new council name? Answer: Yes. The new council name criteria is as follows:

1) Should start with **Girls Scouts**

The importance of having a coordinated national identity for the Girl Scout Movement was noted.

2) Have a **State and/or Regional** identity that the external market recognizes.

Name recognition that is reflective of a council's state and regional identity that is easily recognized in a national context.

3) Submit **new council names** that are not current council names.

Select names that are new to all councils. Currently used council names are not to be submitted.

Examples of Acceptable Names:

Girls Scouts of Oregon

Girls Scouts of Northern California

Girl Scouts of South Carolina - Coastal

Naming Procedure:

Selecting a new council name should be part of the beginning stages of realignment. This task can help create the new council a new identity in the CRC process, and uplift membership moral. Having a name to refer to as you develop the new council helps create the vision that the CRC participants can strive towards building.

Submit up to three potential names to Vicki Wright, Project Director, Realignment Strategy, in an email or a letter. A response from the GSUSA team will follow within two weeks of receipt.