

# Recreation Age Policy

Approved 6/23/18

**History and Context:** For as long as anyone can remember, there have been a wide range of approaches to handling campers whose birthdays fall in the middle of the Bay View season. At Tot Lot, attendance begins at age 3 with potty training. Staff at Fawns have experienced that when campers join before turning 5, there is often a large maturity gap and the kids are unable to fit in smoothly with the rest of the group. At the Boys and Girls Club level, this seems to be less of an issue, with kids more easily fitting in with kids who might fit by grade but not by age. There are of course individual situations in which campers still have maturity issues even when in the appropriate age group. Organically, many campers who have early summer birthdays have “moved up” to an older group before their official birthday, whereas many campers with later summer birthdays have “stayed down” with a younger group, even after their birthday. These moves have helped to keep campers in the same group for the entire season and avoid the difficulty of changing groups of friends in the middle of a season. Due to the wide range of strategies to approach these issues and the varying consequences depending on the age group, the Recreation Director, Recreation Committee, and many parents and community members were engaged to discuss how best to put in writing the Recreation Department’s approach to these issues.

**Objective:** The goal of this policy is to allow all campers to be put in the best situation to be successful physically, socially, and emotionally while in our program. It allows for some parent and director discretion in placing campers whose birthdays toe the line between two different groups. As said by the Fees Committee in their report in 2016 with regards to member/non-member fee rates, we should not expect the box office or individual staff to become investigators on these issues, but we are working primarily on the honor system at the Boys’ and Girls’ Club level. Birth certificate records are now being kept to help establish clear birthdates early on so as to avoid deception and placing students in a disadvantageous environment.

**Policy:** Tot Lot (3-4 yrs old), Fawns (5-6 yrs old), and Antelopes/Bunnies (7-8 yrs old) will retain strict age requirements. Birth Certificates must be shown once to establish a birth date and campers may not move into Tot Lot, up to the Fawns group, or up to Boys’ and Girls’ Club *until the week* that they turn 3, 5, or 7 years old. This will occur by week because registration is done a week at a time.

Once a child becomes of Boys’ and Girls’ Club age, a camper may choose to sign up for a group based on their current age or their age by August 15<sup>th</sup> of that year. This allows a parent to look at their child’s maturity, birth date, size, etc., and decide which group they feel is most developmentally appropriate. They can then sign up for the entire summer for either one of those groups and allow the camper to remain with the same group of kids the entire time.

Example: John’s birthday is on July 27<sup>th</sup> and he is 8 turning 9. His family has the option to sign him up for Antelopes (7-8 year olds) or Cubs (9-10 year olds). He may remain in either of those two groups for the entire summer or he may start in Antelopes and move up to Cubs on his birthday if he wants to do that.

Example 2: Olivia’s birthday is on July 2<sup>nd</sup> and she is 4 turning 5. She will attend Tot Lot until the week of July 2<sup>nd</sup> and then she may move up to Tot Lot.

Note: A concern has been voiced regarding how this age policy may relate to the Ernie Gray Olympics or other more physically demanding Club competitions. All of these events are designed for friendly competition and once a group is chosen for the summer, that child is free to compete with that group for the entire summer. If, for developmental reasons or otherwise, a person is held back to a younger group beyond the extent of a summer birthday (an 11 year old staying in Antelopes, for example), they would not compete for the plaque, but could certainly participate in all events.

**LIT Policy:** An important and relevant component of the overall age policy for Bay View Recreation is the age requirement to be a Leader in Training, which for many campers is the next step after completing Bears and Squirrels. Children cannot begin their time as LITs until they have reached their 15<sup>th</sup> birthday, regardless of groups they have attended in the past. This may be a consideration when placing children into groups earlier on in the process. Students may choose to remain a Bear or Squirrel after turning 15 or they may begin their LIT process.