



*International MOMS Club
Fact Sheet:*

MOMS Club® Chapter Boundaries

In a perfect world, we wouldn't need any policies on chapter boundaries. Everyone would just join whatever chapter they wanted, all chapters would succeed admirably and there would be no problems.

Unfortunately, we don't live in a perfect world, and we have found through the years that boundaries help all our chapters, as well as the mothers on both sides of any boundary. The boundaries help the chapters "play fair" and make sure that every mother has the opportunity to have a chapter right in her home area.

In general, our boundary policy is that while chapters are growing, in flux or surrounded by areas that do not have chapters, all chapter boundaries are carved in stone. In those cases, if a mother lives outside of a chapter's boundaries, she may not join that chapter – even if there is no chapter in her own area. If there is no chapter in the mother's area, she may visit one meeting to see if she would like to start a chapter in her area and will be given an invitation to start a chapter there, but she may not cross over the boundary to join the existing chapter.

"But," she might say, "I only live a block outside the boundary!"

Yes, we understand... but for every boundary, there is always someone who lives just one block farther on... and another mother one more block farther on, and so on... There is ALWAYS someone just a little bit farther away. If a chapter's area is extended to accommodate one mother, then how could they not also extend their territory for the next? Pretty soon, there is one chapter spread so thin, that none of the mothers truly has a MOMS Club.

Chapters that over-extend themselves find members pick to go only to the activities closest to them, so the chapters have to jump their activities all over town to accommodate moms in different areas. But those chapters never get good participation from most of the moms at any activity, because no matter where the activity is, it's always "too far" for a lot of the mothers.

And the moms, on the other hand, never feel a part of the overall chapter and sometimes never even meet a lot of the other members in their chapter because they won't go to activities in other parts of town – it's just too much of a hassle to go very far with small children!



How can we say, "No," to a mom who wants to join our chapter?

You love your chapter and know she would, too, so how can you turn a mother away? Actually, we NEVER turn ANY mother away! Any mother who lives outside a MOMS Club chapter territory can start a new chapter and we always help them! That's the ULTIMATE in helping mothers – to help them start a chapter right where they are instead of expecting them to travel to an area outside their home.

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In fact, taking in mothers from outside a chapter's area actively discourages them from starting their own chapters! It's always easier to join an existing chapter than start a new one, but that doesn't mean that it's better for either the mother or the chapter she wants to join.

Taking in mothers from outside a chapter's area does not do any favors to the mothers or the chapter. It just spreads the chapter too thin and discourages the "outside" mothers from starting something wonderful in their own area.

If a mother wants a MOMS Club, no matter where she is, there will be a MOMS Club for her. Maybe she'll have to start it, just like your chapter – *all* chapters – were started by a mother who wanted to have a chapter in her area. All mothers have the same opportunity.



If a chapter feels they need a larger area because their membership is too small...

...We're always willing to consider their case. All chapter territories are carefully thought out when a chapter is first registered, so the chapter will need to show:

- * That the original population is too small;
- * That they've worked really hard doing publicity and open houses;
- * That they've done a good job keeping the visitors and turning them into members, but there just aren't enough at-home moms in their area to fill the chapter.



Chapter size and success

Usually, when a chapter doesn't "get going," it's because of internal factors, not geography. To succeed, a chapter has to be well publicized, welcoming, exciting and projecting a happy image to newcomers. If a chapter is all that, it *will* get enough members, even if its area population is small.

And, of course, the success of a chapter isn't strictly attributable to its size! Some chapters will be smaller because of their area, but they can still be just as active and supportive of their members as larger chapters. A normal, healthy-sized chapter is anywhere from 30 to 60 members.

Although chapters can be smaller, we have found that having 30 members allows a chapter to plan any kind of activities or outings that its members may wish. Also, having 30 members means a chapter will be self-sustaining. If a few members move away or go back to work, the chapter doesn't dissolve for lack of leadership or members.

Having between 30 to 60 members allows a chapter to plan a variety of activities, have a good-sized pool of leader moms to help the chapter, and still be small enough for just about all the members to know and be comfortable around each other.

When chapters become larger than 60 members, however, the dynamics change. It becomes more difficult to plan activities and the number of mothers willing to volunteer to help actually becomes

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smaller, not larger, as you might expect. We've seen over and over that bigger isn't better, especially when a chapter is larger than 60 members. By that time, a chapter needs to sister into two or more chapters to keep the smaller, more immediate support that moms need.



Are there any cases where chapter boundaries are not carved in stone?

Yes. When a large geographical area is covered with chapters, and all of them are healthy and on an even-keel, then the following example would apply:

Say a mother who lives in TOWN-X wants to join a chapter that is in TOWN-Y (maybe because her child goes to preschool in that town or her best friend lives there – some personal reason that has nothing to do with the chapters themselves). It is okay for her to join the other chapter IF (and only if):

- (1) TOWN-Y chapter has asked permission from their Regional Coordinator for her to join and they have received that permission,
- (2) TOWN-X chapter understands and accepts that it isn't anything personal, it's just to help the mother, and
- (3) TOWN-Y chapter votes her in (she does not live in their area, so under the Bylaws, she must be voted in).

If she is voted in, this does NOT mean that the chapter may take in other mothers from her area. Each case is considered separately. Also, TOWN-Y chapter does NOT have to vote her in if they don't want to.

If this is an isolated incident, over time, the number of mothers in TOWN-X going to the TOWN-Y chapter and the mothers in TOWN-Y going to the TOWN-X chapter will pretty much balance out.

BUT, if things start getting unbalanced, then the territories go back to their carved-in-stone borders. If TOWN-X starts attracting more mothers from outside their area because they, for example, do more outings, or say the mothers from TOWN-Y start flooding to the TOWN-X chapter because the chapter in their area has some internal problems, then the boundaries go back up.

If you think you might want to accept someone from another chapter's area, you must ask your Regional Coordinator for permission first. Your chapter may decide if it does not want to admit a mother from outside your area, but your Regional Coordinator is the only one who can give permission for any cross-over-boundary memberships. If you want to accept a member from outside your boundaries, talk to your Regional Coordinator first. Never let any out-of-area person join your chapter without first getting written approval from your RC.



Each chapter has the right to succeed, so the first thing ANY chapter should do if approached by any mother from another chapter's area is to send the mother to the other chapter.

It's never right to poach members from another chapter's territory, and it's never right for members to abandon ship when they come up against an internal difficulty.

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The Bylaws provide the means for the chapters' members to handle any internal difficulty. Members who leave one chapter because it is having difficulty to join another chapter, usually only take the original problem over to their new chapter, spreading the problem instead of solving it.

That is a very specific situation, though, and one that you're not likely to come across. Far more likely for most chapters is the complaint that a potential member lives just a little outside wherever the boundary has been drawn for your chapter.

We know that it is ALWAYS easier to join a chapter than to start one, but there is ALWAYS somebody who lives "just one street" outside any boundary.

It's in the chapters,' members' AND individual mothers' best interests to have chapters cover specific, smaller geographic areas where everyone is near everyone else and all the activities.

It's human nature to strain against any boundary, but this rule is here to protect and strengthen the chapters, and since we always help mothers start a sister chapter wherever they live, no one is ever turned away.

*If you have questions
about this or anything else
concerning your chapter,
please contact your
Regional Coordinator!*

