

Volunteer Essentials

2021–2022

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Adventure Ahead!

Girl Scout volunteers are community-builders, champions of fun, and role models for what it means to lead with your heart. And because of your support, Girl Scouts of all ages are emboldened to chase their dreams and make a positive impact in their communities and across the globe. Your mentorship and encouragement are powerful and make a difference—and your girls will carry that support throughout their lives. Thank you for all you do.

This guide is designed to support busy troop volunteers on the go. You can easily find what you need to get started on your Girl Scout journey and search for answers throughout the troop year.

Get started by browsing through these sections:

- All About Girl Scouts
- Engaging Girls and Families
- Troop Management
- Product Program
- Troop Finances
- Safety
- Coming soon: Post-COVID Guidance

New troop leader? We've got you covered. Check out the *New Leader's Guide to Success*, a resource designed especially for you. Plus, council staff and volunteer coaches are ready to help throughout your first year and beyond!

Girl Scouts of Connecticut's website, gsofct.org, is your source for all your Girl Scout information.

Questions? Our Customer Care Team can be reached at (800) 922-2770 or customer care@gsofct.org.



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All About Girl Scouts

Girls' dreams are our dreams, and Girl Scouts is where they'll see the limitless possibilities ahead of them and aim for the stars—and reach them. Whether she's making a new friend on the playground, raising her hand in class, starting her own nonprofit, or advocating for climate justice, a Girl Scout builds a better world—just as Girl Scouts have been doing for over a century. And with programs in every zip code from coast to coast and across the globe, every girl can find her place in Girl Scouts and start creating the world she wants to see.

Who Can Join Girl Scouts—and How?

If you believe in the inherent power of girls to change the world and you're ready to be their champion, you belong with Girl Scouts.

Girl Scout volunteers are a dynamic and diverse group, and there's no one "type" of volunteer. Whether you're a recent college grad, a parent, a retiree, or really, anyone with a sense of curiosity and adventure (of any gender, who is 18 years or older and has passed their council's screening process), your unique skills and experiences and your mentorship can open your Girl Scouts' eyes to all the possibilities ahead of them.

All members are united by the values in the [Girl Scout Promise and Law](#), as well as by our extraordinary strengths as go-getters, innovators, risk-takers, and leaders. Each member also agrees to follow safety guidelines and pay the annual membership dues of \$25. Adults have the option to purchase a [lifetime membership](#) for \$400.

Girls at Every Grade Level

Girls can join in the fun at any grade level:

Girl Scout Daisy (grades K–1)	Girl Scout Cadette (grades 6–8)
Girl Scout Brownie (grades 2–3)	Girl Scout Senior (grades 9–10)
Girl Scout Junior (grades 4–5)	Girl Scout Ambassador (grades 11–12)

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience

Everything centers around the girl in Girl Scouts: Activities are girl-led, which gives girls the opportunity to take on leadership roles and learn by doing in a cooperative learning environment. [It's what makes Girl Scouts truly unique](#)—our program is designed by, with, and for girls.

Although girls may start building their leadership skills in school and on sports teams, [research shows](#) that the courage, confidence, and character they develop as Girl Scouts stay with them throughout their lives. Our program and outcomes are based in research, and our studies show that Girl Scouting has a measurable impact on girls. [Check out our studies and in-depth research.](#)

What girls *do* in Girl Scouting all fits within three keys: **Discover, Connect, and Take Action.**

- When Girl Scouts do exciting [badge activities](#), [earn a Girl Scout Journey award](#), attend an amazing program or event, or go camping, you are helping them *discover* who they are, what excites them, and what their talents are.

- Girl Scouts *connect* when they collaborate with others—their troop, leaders, or community experts—and expand their horizons. This helps them care about, support, inspire, and team with others locally and globally.
- With your guidance, your Girl Scouts will deepen their relationship with the world around them, and they'll be eager to *take action* to make the world a better place.

As for how they do it? The Girl Scout Leadership Experience draws on three unique processes that help girls unlock their inner leader.

- *Girl-led* means Girl Scouts of every age take an active and age-appropriate role in figuring out the what, where, when, why, and how of all the exciting activities they'll do. The girl-led process is critically important to the Girl Scout Leadership Experience—when girls actively lead and shape their experiences, they know their voices matters, they feel empowered to make decisions, and they stay engaged in their activities.
- Girl Scouts enjoy hands-on activities and *learn by doing*. Then, after reflecting on their activities, girls gain a deeper understanding of the concepts and skills the activities require.
- Through *cooperative learning*, Girl Scouts share knowledge and skills in an atmosphere of respect, teamwork, and collaboration as they work toward a common goal.

As a volunteer, you'll draw on these Girl Scout processes as you lead girls of any age. Girl-led at the Daisy level will look very different from the Ambassador level, of course. What's most important is that your Girl Scouts make decisions about the activities they do *together* and that they also make choices *within* that activity. As they learn from their successes and failures and gain a major confidence boost, all girls have the opportunity to lead within their peer groups. By the time girls are Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors, they'll be using the leadership skills they've developed to take more ownership of their activities, mentor younger Girl Scouts, and take action to make the world a better place.

One last tip about following these processes: Girl Scouting isn't a to-do list, so please don't ever feel that checking activities off a list is more important than tuning in to what interests girls and sparks their imaginations. Projects don't have to come out perfectly—in fact, it's a valuable learning experience when they don't—and Girl Scouts don't have to fill their vests and sashes with badges. What matters most is the fun and learning that happens as they make experiences their own, so don't be afraid to [step back and let your girls take the lead](#).

Reflection

Was a badge-earning activity a resounding success? Or was it derailed by something your troop hadn't factored in? No matter an activity's outcome, you can amplify its impact by encouraging your girls to reflect on their latest endeavor.

Reflection is the necessary debrief that reinforces what the girls learned. As your Girl Scouts explore the "whats" and "whys," they'll make meaningful connections between the activity at hand and future challenges that come their way. In other words, reflection gives girls the confidence boost they need to pick themselves up, try again, and succeed.

Reflection doesn't need to be a formal process, but you can kick-start the conversation with three simple questions: What?, So what?, and Now what?

- Go over the *what* of the activity. For example, ask, "What did we do today? What part was your favorite? If we did it again, what would you want to do differently and what would you repeat?"
- Then move to the *so what* elements. You might ask, "So what did you learn by doing this activity? So what did you learn about yourself? So what did you learn about your community (or environment, school, or others) that you didn't know before?"

- Lastly, review the *now what*. Say something like, “Now that we’ve done this, what would you like to do next? Now that you know this about yourselves, what would you like to try next? Now that we did this Take Action™ project, what do you think we should do next to make sure it continues on?”

What?, So what?, and Now what?—or whatever style of reflection you choose to use with your girls—are powerful elements of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, and they’ll carry these lessons with them for the rest of their lives.

Progression

Although program elements—like outdoor expeditions or entrepreneurial ventures—align across all grade levels, Girl Scout Brownies and Juniors won’t be doing the same activities as seasoned Seniors and Ambassadors. But with your support, they will get there!

Girl Scout programming is designed to be progressive, and it’s what makes Girl Scouting fun and effective! By building on the knowledge and skills they gain year after year, your girls’ confidence will grow exponentially, and they’ll be eager to take the next steps. As a volunteer, you will cultivate a [supportive, nonjudgmental space](#) where your Girl Scouts can test their skills and be unafraid to fail.

Keep in mind that good progression drives success for your troop. We’ve outlined some suggestions that will help you determine when your girls are ready for their next [outdoor challenge](#), [their next troop trip](#), or [their next cookie-selling challenge](#).

Inclusion

Girl Scouts has a strong commitment to inclusion and diversity, and we embrace girls of all abilities and backgrounds into our wonderful sisterhood.

Inclusion is at the core of who we are; it’s about being a sister to every Girl Scout and celebrating our unique strengths. Part of the important work you do includes modeling friendship and kindness for your girls and showing them what it means to practice empathy. Here’s how you can nurture an inclusive troop environment.

Equal Treatment: Girl Scouts welcomes all members, regardless of race, ethnicity, background, cognitive or physical abilities, family structure, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, and socioeconomic status. When scheduling, planning, and carrying out activities, carefully consider the needs of all girls involved, including school schedules, family needs, financial constraints, religious holidays, and the accessibility of appropriate transportation and meeting places.

Girl Scouts of Connecticut follows the recommendations of GSUSA to serve girls who are transgender. Girl Scouts is proud to be the premiere leadership organization for all girls. If a child is recognized by the family and school/community as a girl, and lives culturally as a girl, the Girl Scouts will serve her in a setting that is both emotionally and physically safe. At Girl Scouts, the welfare and best interests of the child are our top priority. For more information or if any questions arise, please contact us.

The National Program Pillars

Girl Scouts lead their own adventures and team up with their fellow troop members to choose the hands-on activities that excite them most. Our program focuses on [four areas \(pillars\) that form the foundation](#) of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience:

- [Outdoors](#): When Girl Scouts embark on outdoor adventures, they learn to confidently meet challenges while developing a lifelong appreciation of nature.
- [Science, technology, engineering, and math \(STEM\)](#): Whether they're building a robot, developing a video game, or studying the stars, Girl Scouts become better problem-solvers and critical thinkers through STEM activities and learn how they can use STEM to help others.
- [Life skills](#): Girl Scouts discover they have what it takes to become outspoken community advocates, make smart decisions about their finances, and form strong, healthy relationships—skills that inspire them to accept challenges and overcome obstacles, now and always.
- [Entrepreneurship](#): By participating in the Girl Scout Cookie Program or fall product program or by earning one of the new entrepreneurship badges, girls spark their curiosity, confidence, and innovation as they learn the essentials of running their own businesses and how to think like entrepreneurs.



The Volunteer Toolkit provides inspiring ideas so you can engage your troop in a mix of activities all year long. For example, if you want to take your troop outside when doing a badge activity, look for the evergreen icon, which tells you that activity can be taken outdoors, or the globe icon, which lets you know you can bring a global perspective to the activity.

The Important Difference Between Journeys and Badges

Journeys and badges are designed to give girls different leadership-building experiences, all while having fun!

- [Journeys](#) are multi-session leadership experiences through which girls explore topics such as bullying, media literacy, design thinking, or environmental stewardship. They'll do hands-on activities, connect with experts, and take the reins on age-appropriate Take Action projects. Because of their leadership focus, Journeys are also a prerequisite for the highest awards in Girl Scouting: the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards.
- [Badges](#) are all about skill building. When a Girl Scout earns a badge, it shows that she's learned a new skill, such as how to make a healthy snack, build and test a toy race car, or take great digital photos. It may even spark an interest at school or plant the seed for a future career. And remember: you'll have fun and learn by doing right alongside your troop!

If they choose, your Girl Scouts can pursue badges and Journey awards in the same year; encourage them to find the connections between the two to magnify their Girl Scout experience! While you're having fun, keep in mind that the quality of a girl's experience and the skills and pride she gains from earning Journey awards and skill-building badges far outweigh the quantity of badges she earns.

As a volunteer, you don't have to be the expert in any badge or Journey work. In fact, when you show that you're not afraid to fail and willing to try something new, you are modeling what it is to be a Girl Scout. Our badge and Journey requirements are structured so your girls can learn new skills without you having to be an expert in all the topics, including STEM.

The Difference Between Community Service and Take Action Projects

As your Girl Scouts look for meaningful ways to give back to their community, you can help sharpen their problem-solving skills and expand their definition of doing good by discussing community service and Take Action projects. Both projects serve essential needs, but at different levels.

- When a Girl Scout performs **community service**, she's responding to an immediate need in a one-off, "doing for" capacity. In other words? She's making an impact right now!
- Through **Take Action/service learning**, girls explore the root causes of a community need and address it in a lasting way; they truly make the world—or their part of it—a better place.

If your troop members want to pursue their Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award, they'll develop a Take Action project on an issue that's close to their hearts. To make Take Action projects even more impactful for your Girl Scouts set time for them to reflect on their projects. When they make time to internalize the lessons they've learned, they're more likely to find success in their future projects—or anything else they put their minds to.

Traditions, Ceremonies, and Special Girl Scout Days

Time-honored traditions and ceremonies unite Girl Scout sisters—and the millions of Girl Scout alums who came before them—around the country and around the globe and remind girls how far their fellow trailblazers have come and just how far they'll go.

A few of those extra special days, when you'll want to crank up the celebrations, include:

- Juliette Gordon Low's birthday or Founder's Day, October 31, marks the birth in 1860 [of Girl Scouts of the USA founder Juliette Gordon Low](#) in Savannah, Georgia.
- [World Thinking Day](#), February 22, celebrates international friendship. It's an opportunity for Girl Scouts and Girl Guides to connect with each other and explore a common theme around the world.
- Girl Scouts' birthday, March 12, commemorates the day in 1912 when Juliette Gordon Low officially registered the organization's first 18 girl members in Savannah, Georgia.

Whether they're making cool SWAPS to share with new friends or closing meetings with a friendship circle, your troop won't want to miss out on these [traditions, ceremonies, and special Girl Scout days](#).

Highest Awards

As your Girl Scouts discover the power of their voices, they'll want to take on an issue that's close to their hearts and is meaningful to them. Encourage them to turn their vision into reality by taking on the ultimate Take Action projects in order to earn Girl Scouts' highest awards.

The Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards honor girls who become forces for good and create a lasting impact on their communities, nationally and around the world.

- [The Girl Scout Bronze Award](#) can be earned by Juniors; the prerequisite is one Junior Journey and its associated Take Action project. The Bronze Award is earned by the group.
- [The Girl Scout Silver Award](#) can be earned by Cadettes; the prerequisite is one Cadette Journey and its associated Take Action project. The Silver Award can be earned by an individual girl or by a small group.
- [The Girl Scout Gold Award](#) can be earned by Seniors and Ambassadors who have completed either two Girl Scout Senior/Ambassador level Journeys and the associated Take Action project or earned the Silver Award and completed one Senior/Ambassador level Journey.

Did you know that a Gold Award Girl Scout is entitled to enlist at a higher paygrade when she joins the U.S. military? A Gold Award Girl Scout's achievements also prime her for the fast track when it comes to college admissions and make her an outstanding candidate for academic scholarships and other financial awards.

Girl Scouts are eligible to earn any recognition at the grade level in which they are registered. Any Girl Scout is eligible to earn the Gold Award even if she joined Girl Scouts for the first time in high school.

Ask your council about the Gold Award Girl Scouts in your community and how they're doing their part to make the world a better place. For some major inspiration, consider inviting a local Gold Award Girl Scout to speak to your troop about how she took the lead and made a difference. You'll be inspired when you see and hear what girls can accomplish as leaders—and by the confidence, grit, problem-solving, time and project management, and team-building expertise they gain while doing so!

Girl Scout Travel and Destinations

Girl Scouts try new things and see the world with new eyes, both inside and outside of their usual troop meetings. As COVID-19-related travel restrictions are lifted across the globe and you and your troop feel safe doing so, you may be excited to explore the world again as a troop.

Traveling as a Girl Scout is a more engaging experience than traveling with family, school, or other groups because [girls take the lead](#). They'll make important decisions about where to go and what to do and take increasing responsibility for the planning of their trips, all while growing their organizational and management skills—skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

Girl Scout travel is built on a [progression of activities](#), so girls are set up for success. Daisies and Brownies start with field trips and progress to day trips, overnights, and weekend trips. Juniors can take adventures farther with a longer regional trip. And Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors can travel the United States and then the world. There are even opportunities for older girls to travel independently by joining trips their councils organize or participating in our travel program, [Destinations](#), which resumes in 2022.

Planning Ahead for Adventure

Get in touch with your council as you start thinking about planning a trip to find out more about their approval process for overnight and extended travel. They will also likely have training programs that will raise your confidence as a chaperone.

To see the courses offered by Girl Scouts of Connecticut and what is required for trips, please visit <https://www.gsocfct.org/en/for-volunteers/volunteer-training.html> or contact Customer Care at customercare@gsocfct.org or (800) 922-2770. Girl Scouts of Connecticut offers many training courses and resources through gsLearn designed to help you enhance the skills needed for your trip.

Not sure where to begin? Check out the Girl Scout [Guide to U.S. Travel](#). This resource is designed for Juniors and older Girl Scouts who want to take extended trips—that is, longer than a weekend—but also features tips and tools for budding explorers who are just getting started with field trips and overnights.

Once girls have mastered planning trips in the United States, they might be ready for a global travel adventure! Global trips usually take a few years to plan, and the Girl Scout [Global Travel Toolkit](#) can walk you through the entire process.

Safety First

If you're planning any kind of trip—from a short field trip to an overseas expedition—the “Trips and Travel” section of *Safety Activity Checkpoints* is your go-to resource for safety. Your council may have additional resources and approval processes. Be sure to follow all the basic safety guidelines, like the buddy system and first-aid requirements, in addition to the specific guidelines for travel. You'll also want to refer to the COVID-19 guidelines in *Safety Activity Checkpoints* as well as any COVID-19 guidelines for your destination.

All GSOFCT trips that are considered high adventure, to destinations outside of the state of Connecticut, destinations that require an overnight stay, or are a day trip within Connecticut **MUST** be accompanied by a Troop/Group Trip Application. Please submit the completed [Troop/Group Trip Application](#) with enough time for the application to be approved as outlined below.

- 6 Weeks prior to International travel
- 4 weeks prior to a High Adventure Trip
- 3 weeks prior to all other trips

Also, the service unit manager or designee should be made aware of all trips, by way of written communication. Remember to check the Safety Activity Checkpoints to determine if your trip is considered high adventure.

Please make sure that there is always an emergency contact not attending the trip who is aware of your itinerary. Please keep in mind, if siblings, friends or guardians will be attending any activity or trip supplemental insurance must be purchased.

Note that extended travel (more than three nights) is not covered under the basic Girl Scout insurance plan and will require additional coverage.

Girl Scout Program Connections

It's easy to tie eye-opening travel opportunities into the leadership training and skill building your girls are doing in Girl Scouts! When it's safe to travel together, girls can use their creativity to connect any leadership Journey theme into an idea for travel. For example, girls learn where their food comes from in the *Sow What?* Journey. That would connect well with a trip focusing on sustainable agriculture and, naturally, sampling tasty food!

There are abundant opportunities to build real skills through earning badges too. The most obvious example is the Senior Traveler badge, but there are plenty more, such as Eco Camper, New Cuisines, Coding for Good, and, of course, all the financial badges that help girls budget and earn money for their trips.

Want to include Girl Scout traditions into your trip? Look no farther than [the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace](#) in Savannah, Georgia! Your girls also have the chance to deepen their connections to Girl Scouts around the world by visiting one of the WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts) [World Centers](#), which offer low-cost accommodations and special programs in five locations around the world.

And if your troop is looking to stay closer to home this year? Ask your council about council-owned camps and other facilities that can be rented out.

As your Girl Scouts excitedly plan their next trip, remember to limit your role to facilitating the girls' brainstorming and planning, never doing the work for them. Share your ideas and insight, ask tough questions when you have to, and support all their decisions with enthusiasm and encouragement!

Engaging Girls

Creating the kind of environment in which girls are unafraid to try new things and to be who they want to be starts with you! By meeting your girls where they are, you'll help them develop the leadership skills they'll use now and as they grow.

Understanding Healthy Development in Girls

It sounds simple, but just being attentive to what girls are experiencing as they mature is a big help to them—and to you, as you guide and mentor them!

You'll experience different joys and challenges with each Girl Scout level, but here are some guidelines for meeting girls' needs and abilities at different grade levels; you'll also find these listed in the adult guide of each leadership Journey.

Girl Scout Daisies	
At the Girl Scout Daisy level (kindergarten and first grade), girls . . .	This means . . .
Have loads of energy and need to run, walk, and play outside.	<i>They'll enjoy going on nature walks and outdoor scavenger hunts.</i>
Are great builders and budding artists, though they are still developing their fine motor skills.	<i>Encouraging them to express themselves and their creativity by making things with their hands. Girls may need assistance holding scissors, cutting in a straight line, and so on.</i>
Love to move and dance.	<i>They might especially enjoy marching like a penguin, dancing like a dolphin, or acting out how they might care for animals in the jungle.</i>
Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.	<i>Showing instead of telling, for example, about how animals are cared for. Plan visits to animal shelters, farms, or zoos; meet care providers; or make a creative bird feeder.</i>
Are only beginning to learn about basic number concepts, time, and money.	<i>You'll want to take opportunities to count out supplies together—and, perhaps, the legs on a caterpillar!</i>
Are just beginning to write and spell, and they don't always have the words for what they're thinking or feeling.	<i>That having girls draw a picture of something they are trying to communicate is easier and more meaningful for them.</i>
Know how to follow simple directions and respond well to recognition for doing so.	<i>Being specific and offering only one direction at a time. Acknowledge when girls have followed directions well to increase their motivation to listen and follow again.</i>

Girl Scout Brownies	
At the Girl Scout Brownie level (second and third grade), girls . . .	This means . . .

Have lots of energy and need to run, walk, and play outside.	<i>Taking your session activities outside whenever possible.</i>
Are social and enjoy working in groups.	<i>Allowing girls to team up in small or large groups for art projects and performances.</i>
Want to help others and appreciate being given individual responsibilities for a task.	<i>Letting girls lead, direct, and help out in activities whenever possible. Allow girls as a group to make decisions about individual roles and responsibilities.</i>
Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.	<i>Doing more than just reading to girls about the Brownie Elf's adventures. Ask girls questions to gauge their understanding and allow them to role play their own pretend visit to a new country.</i>
Need clear directions and structure and like knowing what to expect.	<i>Offering only one direction at a time. Also, have girls create the schedule and flow of your get-togethers and share those at the start.</i>
Are becoming comfortable with basic number concepts, time, money, and distance.	<i>Offering support only when needed. Allow girls to set schedules for meetings or performances, count out money for a trip, and so on.</i>
Are continuing to develop their fine motor skills and can tie shoes, use basic tools, begin to sew, and the like.	<i>Encouraging girls to express themselves and their creativity by making things with their hands. Girls may need some assistance, however, holding scissors, threading needles, and so on.</i>
Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.	<i>Girls might like to create a play about welcoming a new girl to their school or to tell a story through dance or creative movement.</i>
Know how to follow rules, listen well, and appreciate recognition of a job done well.	<i>Acknowledging when the girls have listened or followed the directions well, which will increase their motivation to listen and follow again!</i>

Girl Scout Juniors	
At the Girl Scout Junior level (fourth and fifth grades), girls . . .	This means . . .
Want to make decisions and express their opinions.	<i>Whenever possible, allowing girls to make decisions and express their opinions through guided discussion and active reflection activities. Also, have girls set rules for listening to others' opinions and offering assistance in decision making.</i>
Are social and enjoy doing things in groups.	<i>Allowing girls to team up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities.</i>
Are aware of expectations and sensitive to the judgments of others.	<i>Although it's okay to have expectations, the expectation is not perfection! Share your own mistakes and what you learned from them, and be sure to create</i>

	<i>an environment where girls can be comfortable sharing theirs.</i>
Are concerned about equity and fairness.	<i>Not shying away from discussing why rules are in place and having girls develop their own rules for their group.</i>
Are beginning to think abstractly and critically and are capable of flexible thought. Juniors can consider more than one perspective as well as the feelings and attitudes of another.	<i>Asking girls to explain why they made a decision, to share their visions of their roles in the future, and to challenge their own and others' perspectives.</i>
Have strong fine and gross motor skills and coordination.	<i>Engaging girls in moving their minds and their bodies. Allow girls to express themselves through the written word, choreography, and so on.</i>
Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.	<i>Girls might like to tell a story through playwriting, playing an instrument, or choreographing a dance.</i>
May be starting puberty, which means beginning breast development, skin changes, and weight changes. Some may be getting their periods.	<i>Being sensitive to girls' changing bodies, possible discomfort over these changes, and their desire for more information. Create an environment that acknowledges and celebrates this transition as healthy and normal for girls.</i>

Girl Scout Cadettes	
At the Girl Scout Cadette level (sixth, seventh, and eighth grades), girls . . .	This means . . .
Are going through puberty, including changes in their skin, body shape, and weight. They're also starting their menstrual cycles and have occasional shifts in mood.	<i>Being sensitive to the many changes Cadettes are undergoing and acknowledging that these changes are as normal as growing taller! Girls need time to adapt to their changing bodies, and their feelings about their bodies may not keep up. Reinforce that, as with everything else, people go through puberty in different ways and at different times.</i>
Are starting to spend more time in peer groups than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.	<i>That girls will enjoy teaming up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities as well as tackling relationship issues through both artistic endeavors and Take Action projects.</i>
Can be very self-conscious—wanting to be like everyone else but fearing they are unique in their thoughts and feelings.	<i>Encouraging girls to share, but only when they are ready. At this age, they may be more comfortable sharing a piece of artwork or a fictional story than their own words. Throughout the activities, highlight and discuss differences as positive, interesting, and beautiful.</i>
Are beginning to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults at school and at home.	<i>Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions and allowing them to experience “fun failure,” which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.</i>

Girl Scout Seniors	
At the Girl Scout Senior level (ninth and tenth grades), girls . . .	This means . . .
Are beginning to clarify their own values, consider alternative points of view on controversial issues, and see multiple aspects of a situation.	<i>Asking girls to explain the reasoning behind their decisions. Engage girls in role-play and performances, where others can watch and offer alternative solutions.</i>
Have strong problem-solving and critical thinking skills and are able to plan and reflect on their own learning experiences.	<i>Girls are more than able to go beyond community service to develop projects that will create sustainable solutions in their communities. Be sure to have girls plan and follow up on these experiences through written and discussion-based reflective activities.</i>
Spend more time in peer groups than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.	<i>That girls will enjoy teaming up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities. They'll also want to tackle relationship issues through both artistic endeavors and Take Action projects. Alter the makeup of groups with each activity so that girls interact with those they might not usually pair up with.</i>
Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality.	<i>Encouraging girls to express their individuality in their dress, creative expression, and thinking. Remind girls frequently that there isn't just one way to look, feel, think, or act. Assist girls in coming up with new ways of expressing their individuality.</i>
Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures—from home, school, peers, work, and other sources.	<i>Acknowledging girls' pressures and sharing how stress can limit health, creativity, and productivity. Help girls release stress through creative expression, movement, and more traditional stress-reduction techniques.</i>
Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults at school and at home.	<i>Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience "fun failure," which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.</i>

Girl Scout Ambassadors	
At the Girl Scout Ambassador level (eleventh and twelfth grades), girls . . .	This means . . .
Can see the complexity of situations and controversial issues—they understand that problems often have no clear solution and that varying points of view may each have merit.	<i>Inviting girls to develop stories as a group and then individually create endings that they later discuss and share.</i>
Have strong problem-solving and critical thinking skills and can adapt logical thinking to real-life situations. Ambassadors recognize and incorporate practical limitations to solutions.	<i>Girls are more than able to go beyond community service to develop projects that will create sustainable solutions in their communities. Be sure to have girls plan and follow up on these experiences</i>

	<i>through written and discussion-based reflective activities.</i>
Spend more time with peers than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.	<i>Girls will enjoy teaming up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities. They'll also want to tackle relationship issues through artistic endeavors and Take Action projects. Alter the makeup of groups with each activity so that girls interact with those they might not usually pair up with.</i>
Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality.	<i>Encouraging girls to express their individuality in their dress, creative expression, and thinking. Remind girls frequently that there isn't just one way to look, feel, think, or act. Assist girls in coming up with new ways of expressing their individuality.</i>
Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures—from home, school, peers, work, and other sources.	<i>Acknowledging girls' pressures and sharing how stress can limit health, creativity, and productivity. Help girls release stress through creative expression, movement, and more traditional stress-reduction techniques.</i>
Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults—at school and at home—and are looking to their futures.	<i>Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience "fun failure," which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.</i>

Creating a Safe Space for Girls

A safe space is where girls feel they can be themselves, without explanation or judgment. As a volunteer, the environment you create is just as important as the activities girls do; it's the key to developing the sort of group that girls want to be part of! Cultivate a space where confidentiality is respected and girls can express their true selves.

Recognizing and Supporting Each Girl

You're a role model and a mentor to your girls. Since you play an important role in their lives, they need to know that you consider each of them an important person too. They can weather a poor meeting place or an activity that flops, but they cannot endure being ignored or rejected.

- Give a shout-out when you see girls trying their best, not just when they've had a clear success.
- Emphasize the positive qualities that make each girl worthy and unique.
- Be generous with praise and stingy with rebuke.
- Help your girls find ways to show acceptance of and support for one another.

Promoting Fairness

Girls are sensitive to injustice. They forgive mistakes if they are sure you are trying to be fair. They look for fairness in how responsibilities are shared, in handling of disagreements, and in your responses to performance and accomplishment.

- When possible, ask the girls what they think is fair before decisions are made.
- Explain your reasoning and show why you did something.

- Be willing to apologize if needed.
- Try to see that responsibilities as well as the chances for feeling important are equally divided.
- Help girls explore and decide for themselves the fair ways of solving problems, carrying out activities, and responding to behavior and accomplishments.

Building Trust

Girls need your belief in them and your support when they try new things. You'll also need to show them that you won't betray their confidence.

- Show girls you trust them to think for themselves and use their own judgment.
- Encourage them make the important decisions in the group.
- Give them assistance in correcting their own mistakes.
- Support girls in trusting one another—let them see firsthand how trust can be built, lost, regained, and strengthened.

Inspiring Open Communication

Girls want someone who will listen to what they think, feel, and want to do. They like having someone they can talk to about the important things happening in their lives.

- Listen to the girls. Respond with words and actions.
- Speak your mind openly when you are happy or concerned about something, and encourage girls to do this too.
- Leave the door open for girls to seek advice, share ideas and feelings, and propose plans or improvements.
- Help girls see how open communication can result in action, discovery, better understanding of self and others, and a more comfortable climate for fun and accomplishment.

Managing Conflict

Conflicts and disagreements are an inevitable part of life, but if handled constructively, they show girls that they can overcome their differences, exercise diplomacy, and improve their communication and relationships. Respecting others and being a sister to every Girl Scout means that shouting, verbal abuse, or physical confrontations are never warranted and cannot be tolerated in the Girl Scout environment.

When a conflict arises between girls or a girl and a volunteer, get those involved to sit down together and [talk calmly in a nonjudgmental manner](#), keeping in mind that each party may need some time—a few days or a week—to calm down before being able to do this. Talking in this way might feel uncomfortable and difficult now, but it lays the groundwork for working well together in the future. Whatever you do, *do not* spread your complaint around to others—that won't help the situation and causes only embarrassment and anger.

You'll also find conflict resolution activities in some of the Journeys, such as the Amaze Journey for Cadettes or the Mission Sisterhood Journey for Seniors.

If a conflict persists, be sure you explain the matter to your volunteer support team. If the supervisor cannot resolve the issues satisfactorily (or if the problem involves the supervisor), the issue can be taken to the next level of supervision and, ultimately, to your council if you need extra help.

Communicating Effectively with Girls of Any Age

Make sure your words and intentions create connection with the girls. Keep in mind how important the following attitudes are.

Listen

Listening to girls, as opposed to telling them what to think, feel, or do (no “you shoulds”) is the first step in building a trusting relationship and helping them take ownership of their Girl Scout experience.

Be Honest

If you’re not comfortable with a topic or activity, it’s OK to say so! No one expects you to be an expert on every topic. Ask for alternatives or seek out volunteers with the required expertise. Owning up to mistakes—and apologizing for them—goes a long way with girls.

Be Open to Real Issues

Outside of Girl Scouts, girls may be dealing with issues like relationships, peer pressure, school, money, drugs, and other serious topics. When you don’t know, listen. Also seek help from your council if you need assistance or more information than you currently have.

Show Respect

Girls often say that their best experiences were the ones where adults treated them as equal partners. Being spoken to as young adults reinforces that their opinions matter and that they deserve respect.

Offer Options

Girls’ needs and interests change and being flexible shows them that you respect them and their busy lives. Be ready with age-appropriate guidance and parameters no matter what the girls choose to do.

Stay Current

Show your girls that you’re interested in their world by asking them about the TV shows and movies they like; the books, magazines, or blogs they read; the social media influencers they follow; and the music they listen to.

Remember to LUTE: Listen, Understand, Tolerate, and Empathize

Try using the LUTE method to thoughtfully respond when a girl is upset, angry, or confused.

Listen: Hear her out, ask for details, and reflect back what you hear; try “What happened next?” or “What did she say?”

Understand: Show that you understand where she’s coming from with comments such as, “So what I hear you saying is . . .” or “I understand why you’re unhappy,” or “Your feelings are hurt; mine would be, too.”

Tolerate: You can tolerate the feelings that she just can’t handle right now on her own. Let her know that you’re there to listen and accept how she is feeling about the situation. Say something like: “Try talking to me about it. I’ll listen,” or “I know you’re mad—talking it out helps,” or “I can handle it—say whatever you want to.”

Empathize: Let her know you can imagine feeling what she’s feeling with comments such as, “I’m sure that really hurts” or “I can imagine how painful this is for you.”

Addressing the Needs of Older Girls

Let these simple tips guide you in working with teenage girls:

- Think of yourself as a “guide on the side”—a partner, a coach, or a mentor, not a “leader.”
- Ask girls what rules they need for safety and what group agreements they need to be a good team. When girls take the lead in establishing group rules, they’re more likely to stick to them!
- Understand that girls need time to talk, unwind, and have fun together.
- Ask what they think and what they want to do.
- Encourage girls to speak their minds.
- Provide structure, but don’t micromanage.

- Give everyone a voice in the group—understanding that “speaking up” may look different for each girl. For some girls, it might mean sharing their ideas in front of the entire group; for others that could mean submitting a written response or contributing as part of a group.
- Treat girls like partners.
- Don’t repeat what’s said in the group to anyone outside of it (unless necessary for a girl’s safety). See the “report concerns” section below to understand the guard rails.

When Sensitive Topics Come Up

It’s an amazing feeling when your Girl Scouts put their trust in you—and when they do, they may come to you with some of the issues they face, such as bullying, peer pressure, dating, athletic and academic performance, and more. Some of these issues may be considered sensitive by families, and they may have opinions or input about how, and whether, Girl Scouts should cover these topics with their girls.

Girl Scouts welcomes and serves girls and families from a wide spectrum of faiths and cultures. When girls wish to participate in discussions or activities that could be considered sensitive—even for some—put the topic on hold until you have spoken with parents and received guidance from your council.

When Girl Scout activities involve sensitive issues, your role is that of a caring adult volunteer who can help girls acquire skills and knowledge in a supportive atmosphere, not someone who advocates a particular position.

Girl Scouts of the USA does not take a position or develop materials on issues relating to human sexuality, birth control, or abortion. We feel our role is to help girls develop self-confidence and good decision-making skills that will help them make wise choices in all areas of their lives. We believe parents and caregivers, along with schools and faith communities, are the primary sources of information on these topics.

We at Girl Scouts of Connecticut consider any activity that might cause conflict, discomfort, or distress a sensitive issue.

Parents/caregivers make all decisions regarding their girl’s participation in Girl Scout program that may be of a sensitive nature. As a volunteer leader, you must get written parental permission for any locally planned program offering that could be considered sensitive. Included on the permission form should be the topic of the activity, any specific content that might create controversy, and any action steps the girls will take when the activity is complete. Be sure to have a form for each girl, and keep the forms on hand in case a problem arises. For activities not sponsored by Girl Scouts, find out in advance (from organizers or other volunteers who may be familiar with the content) what will be presented, and follow your council’s guidelines for obtaining written permission.

Report Concerns

There may be times when you worry about the health and well-being of girls in your group. Alcohol, drugs, sex, bullying, abuse, depression, and eating disorders are some of the issues girls may encounter. You are on the frontlines of girls’ lives, and you are in a unique position to identify a situation in which a girl may need help. If you believe a girl is at risk of hurting herself or others, your role is to promptly bring that information to her parent/caregiver or the council so she can get the expert assistance she needs. Your concern about a girl’s well-being and safety is taken seriously, and your council will guide you in addressing these concerns.

Contact a staff member at your Girl Scout council to find out how to refer the girl and her parent/guardian to experts at school or in the community. Call (800) 922-2770 and ask for the deputy chief of member experience.

Share your concern with the girl’s family, if this is feasible.

Here are a few signs that could indicate a girl needs expert help:

- Marked changes in behavior or personality (for example, unusual moodiness, aggressiveness, or sensitivity)
- Declining academic performance and/or inability to concentrate
- Withdrawal from school, family activities, or friendships
- Fatigue, apathy, or loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Sleep disturbances
- Increased secretiveness
- Deterioration in appearance and personal hygiene
- Eating extremes, unexplained weight loss, distorted body image
- Tendency toward perfectionism
- Giving away prized possessions; preoccupation with the subject of death
- Unexplained injuries such as bruises, burns, or fractures
- Avoidance of eye contact or physical contact
- Excessive fearfulness or distrust of adults
- Abusive behavior toward other children, especially younger ones

GSOFACT Reporting Procedures

Connecticut law requires certain citizens to report suspected child abuse and neglect. These mandated reporters are people in professions or occupations that have contact with children or whose primary focus is children.

Mandated reporters are required to report or cause a report to be made when in the ordinary course of their employment or profession and/or volunteer activities, they have reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child under the age of 18 has been abused, neglected, or is placed in imminent risk of serious harm (Conn. Gen. Statute 17a-101a). Certainty is not required. A suspicion is enough to file a report based on what you observe, or are told by the child and/or your knowledge from professional training and experience.

Mandated reporters must report orally to the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) Hotline or a law enforcement agency as soon as practical **but no later than 12 hours after the mandated reporter becomes aware of or suspects abuse/neglect or imminent risk of serious harm to a child or children**. A written report must follow (DCF-136) within 48 hours of the oral report.

Mandated reporters are required to give their name when they make a report to DCF, however, reporters may request anonymity to protect their privacy (Connecticut General Statutes, Sections 17a-28 and 17a-101).

To report suspected child abuse and neglect, call *Careline* (1 (800) 842-2288). This Child Abuse and Neglect *Careline* operates 24 hours a day and seven days a week. Anyone who suspects that a child has been abused or neglected or is in danger of abuse or neglect is strongly encouraged to call.

GSOFACT staff and volunteers **are** considered mandated reporters. It is GSOFACT's expectation that all staff and volunteers follow the state of Connecticut's Child Abuse Reporting Laws*.

The first oral report from the field should be made as soon as possible to the DCF *Careline* (1 (800) 842-2288) or by calling the local law enforcement agency within 12 hours.

Should reporting circumstances arise, we ask that you also make GSOFACT aware of your reporting. Confidential reports should be made directly to the deputy chief of member experience or the director of girl experience (gsofact.org/about/staff.php) or call (800) 922-2770 and ask to be connected to either the deputy chief of member experience or the director of girl experience.

*For more information on Connecticut's Child Abuse Reporting Laws go to <http://www.ct.gov/dcf/cwp/view.asp?a=2556&q=314384>.

Engaging Families

You want your Girl Scouts to have fun, be inspired, take risks, and learn about themselves and the world—that's why you're a Girl Scout troop leader or troop volunteer! Parents and caregivers want the same thing for their girls but getting families to pitch in and play an active role in the troop while also enhancing the experience for their own girl and themselves can be tricky for many volunteers. *It doesn't have to be this way!*

Kick the Year Off Right by Engaging Parents and Other Caregivers

When families step up and play an active part in troop life, your troop can shine its brightest! Plus, girls feel a special sense of pride when their families take part and show interest in the things they are doing.

What Is a Parent and Caregiver Meeting?

It's the first meeting you have to start each troop year—whether you are a new or returning troop. It is valuable for all troops.

Why Hold a Meeting?

[Kicking off each year with a parent and caregiver meeting](#) sets the troop up for success. Outlining clear expectations, building a team, and engaging parents in the Girl Scout experience is a great way to start off on the right foot. When parents are involved, leaders have support, the troop has a plan, and girls benefit! The meeting helps:

- Families understand what Girl Scouting can do for their girl.
- Families and leaders identify ways they will work as a team to support the troop.
- Families and leaders agree about what the troop pays for and what families pay for individually.
- You fill key troop positions—you never know which parent will make an awesome assistant leader or troop cookie manager.
- Families know how the troop will communicate things like upcoming events or schedule changes.
- Families learn about uniforms, books, and other important basics.

Check out our step-by-step guide and “Parents & Caregivers Meeting Outline” on the Volunteer Toolkit. This 60- to 90-minute meeting will make all the difference in the year ahead.

Another meeting you don't want to miss is the **Cookie Program Girl & Family Meeting** in the Volunteer Toolkit. Just like the parent and caregiver meeting at the beginning of the year, this meeting is your chance to share what girls gain through the cookie program, outline expectations, and find the support you need for a successful cookie season. The cookie program is a team effort and you'll want to get families on board!

For even more tips on working with troop families, check out Girl Scouts' [Tips for Troop Leaders hub](#).

How to Keep Parents and Other Caregivers On Board

Make the Ask(s)

The main reason people don't take action is because they were never asked to in the first place. That's why hearing one out of three Girl Scout parents say no one had communicated expectations around involvement with their girl's troop is so troubling. Parents may have many talents, but they're certainly not mind readers! If you're nervous about getting turned down, don't be. Sure, a few parents might be unable to lend a hand, but the helpers you do get will be worth their weight in gold. And just

because someone wasn't available a month or two ago doesn't mean they won't be free to help now. Loop back, follow up, and ask again!

Make Sense of “Why”

Explain that not only does the whole troop benefit with extra help from parents and other caregivers, but also that girls feel a special sense of pride in seeing their own family member step up and take a leadership role. Getting involved can strengthen the caregiver/girl bond and is a meaningful way to show daughters that they are a priority in their parents' lives.

Make It Quick and Easy

Everybody's got a full plate these days, so instead of starting conversations with a list of tasks or responsibilities that parents and other caregivers could take on (which can be intimidating!), ask how much time each week they might be able to dedicate to the troop, then go from there. For instance, if a troop mom or dad has 15 minutes each week to spare, they could organize and manage the calendar for troop snacks and carpools. If a grandparent has one to two hours, they could assist with leading the troop through a specific badge on a topic they're already comfortable with. For more ways parents and other caregivers can help out when faced with a tricky schedule, check out the Family Resources tab in the Volunteer Toolkit.

Make Family Part of the Formula

While Girl Scout programming is always focused on the girls themselves, it's important and helpful to open up a few events to their families throughout the year. Inviting the whole crew to celebrate her accomplishments in Girl Scouting—whether at a holiday open house, a bridging ceremony, or a fun “reverse meeting” where girls take the role of leaders and guide the adults, including caregivers, through an activity—will help parents better understand the value of Girl Scouts and they'll be more likely to invest their time and talents to the troop.

That said, there's no need to wait for one of these special events to engage families in their girls' Girl Scout lives! Keep communication lines open throughout the year—whether it's through your troop's social media page, personal emails, or in-person chats—to keep parents in the loop on what the girls are doing and learning during each meeting, and encourage them to let their daughters “be the experts” at home, explaining or teaching the new skills they've learned. You can get everyone in on the fun and keep Girl Scouts strong at home by sharing the family badge guides on the Volunteer Toolkit.

Troop Management

Leadership is more than “being in charge” or having a title; it’s recognizing that you’re part of a team and understanding that team’s needs and interests. Here’s how you’ll do that with your troop!

Your Role as a Volunteer

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience is based on three keys—discover, connect, and take action—but it’s not just for your troop! As a Girl Scout leader, you’ll embark on your own leadership journey as you help girls develop the vital leadership skills they’ll use to make the world a better place. Here are a few basic concepts that outline what leadership means in Girl Scouting.

Leadership is teaching your Girl Scouts:

- That they can do and be anything!
- That they are decision makers and should own their decisions.
- How to live the Girl Scout Law by modeling it for them.

As a leader, see yourself as a coach who:

- Advises, discusses, and cheers on your troop, not as a teacher with a planned lesson or activity.
- Ensures each member understands and can carry out their responsibilities within the troop.
- Encourages Girl Scouts to build their skills and their ethics.
- Gives more responsibilities to the girls as they grow and develop.

It’s important to remember that:

- You cannot know everything that your Girl Scouts might ever want to learn.
- You’ll explore and learn alongside your girls and grow your confidence in the process.
- You’re not expected to know everything about Girl Scouting, but you should know where to go for information—and to ask for help when you need it.

Your Responsibilities as a Girl Scout Volunteer

Your responsibilities as a Girl Scout volunteer include:

- Accepting the [Girl Scout Promise and Law](#).
- Understanding and coaching the three keys to leadership that are the basis of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience: discover, connect, and take action.
- Sharing your knowledge, experience, and skills with a positive and flexible approach.
- Working in a partnership with your Girl Scouts so that their activities are girl-led and that they learn by doing, individually and as a group. You’ll also partner with other volunteers and council staff for support and guidance.
- Organizing fun, interactive, girl-led activities that address relevant issues and match girls’ interests and needs.
- Providing guidance and information regarding Girl Scout group meetings with troop families on a regular and ongoing basis through a variety of tools, including email, phone calls, newsletters, blogs, other forms of social media, and any other method you choose.
- Processing and completing registration forms and other paperwork, such as permission slips. Some information received may be confidential in nature, and must be handled as such.
- Communicating effectively and delivering clear, organized, and vibrant presentations or information to an individual or the group.

- Overseeing with honesty, integrity, and careful record-keeping the funds that girls raise.
- Role-model the right behavior. GSOFCT expects volunteers to be fully capable of performing their duties. While volunteering, it is not permitted to be under the influence of any substance, including medicinal marijuana, which may impair physical and/or mental skills. Don't consume alcohol, smoke, vape, or use foul language in the presence of girls. Do not carry ammunition or firearms in the presence of girls unless given special permission by your council for group marksmanship activities.
- Maintaining a close connection to your volunteer support team as well as your council.
- Facilitating a safe experience for every Girl Scout.

Planning for Your First Troop Meeting

Depending on the ages of your girls, you might take the lead in guiding the structure and experiences of your troop—from how and when meetings are held to how the troop communicates, from steering girl-led activities to setting financial expectations. You'll make these decisions collaboratively with your volunteer team or co-leader, as well as with input from the girls and their parents and caregivers.

Use these questions to guide your conversation with your troop committee volunteers or co-leader before discussing these topics with parents and caregivers.

- When will we meet and for how long? How frequently should we schedule troop meetings?
- Where will we meet? Your meeting space should be somewhere safe, clean, and secure that allows all girls to participate. Some great meeting space ideas include schools, places of worship, libraries, and community centers. If working with teens, consider meeting at coffee shops, bookstores, or another place they enjoy.
- Which components of the uniform will families need to purchase? Which uniform components will the troop provide for each girl?
- Will our troop be a single-grade level or [facilitated as a multi-level troop](#) with girls of many grade levels combined into one troop? If multi-level, how will we make sure they each get an age-appropriate experience?
- How will we keep troop activities and decisions girl-led? Use the Volunteer Toolkit to help you through this process by exploring options for activities and reviewing the meeting plans and resources lists.
- How often are we going to communicate to troop families? Which channels will we use to keep families in the loop? Effective communication [will help set expectations](#) and clarify parent/caregiver responsibilities.
- Will our troop charge dues, use product program proceeds, and/or charge per activity? How much money will we need to cover supplies and activities? What should our financial plan look like?

Choosing a Meeting Place

What makes a great meeting space? It depends on your troop, but here are a few considerations as you visit potential spaces:

Cost: The space should be free to use.

Size: Make sure the space is large enough for the whole group and all planned activities.

Availability: Be sure the space is available for the day and the entire length of time you want to meet.

Resources: Ask if tables and chairs come with the room and ensure that the lighting is adequate. A bonus would be a cubby of some sort where you could store supplies or a safe outdoor space for activities.

Safety: Potential spaces must be safe, secure, clean, properly ventilated, heated (or cooled, depending on your location), free from hazards, and have at least two exits that are well-marked and fully functional. Also be sure first-aid equipment is on hand.

Facilities: It goes without saying, but make sure that toilets are sanitary and accessible.

Communication-friendly: Check for cell reception in the potential space and whether Wi-Fi is available.

Allergen-free: Ensure that pet dander and other common allergens won't bother susceptible girls during meetings.

Accessibility: Your space should accommodate girls with disabilities as well as parents with disabilities who may come to meetings.

Need a few talking points to get started? Try:

"I'm a Girl Scout volunteer with a group of [number of girls] girls. We're doing lots of great things for girls and for the community, like [something your group is doing] and [something else your troop is doing]. We're all about leadership—the kind that girls use in their daily lives and the kind that makes our community better. We'd love to hold our meetings here because [reason why you'd like to meet there]."

Stuck and need additional support? Contact your council or your service unit support team for help with a troop meeting place.

Virtual Meetings

If your group or troop can't meet in person or hold a traditional meeting, there are so many ways to bring the power of Girl Scouting home! Meeting virtually can be a fun, engaging option for your troop.

[Before setting up a virtual meeting](#), you'll want to:

- Partner with troop families to make sure the girls are safe online.
- Select a meeting platform that allows families who may not have internet access to call in.
- [Think about logistics](#): work with the girls to set up ground rules; consider how you'll incorporate in-person meeting traditions in your virtual space and how you'll keep the meeting on track.
- Talk with families on [how to keep activities girl-led](#) if your girls will be completing them from home.

And don't worry if your girls want to use a web or social platform you're not as familiar with, because you'll learn alongside them! For more tips on successful virtual meetings, check out the [For Troop Leaders section of Girl Scouts at Home](#). Also, all members can request to join the [GSOFC @ Home Facebook](#) group.

Girl Scout Troop Size

The troop size "sweet spot" is large enough to provide an interactive and cooperative learning environment and small enough to encourage individual development. Though the ideal troop size is 12 girls, we recommend that groups be no fewer and no larger than:

- Girl Scout Daisies: 5–12 girls
- Girl Scout Brownies: 10–20 girls
- Girl Scout Juniors 10–25 girls
- Girl Scout Cadettes: 5–25 girls

- Girl Scout Seniors: 5–30 girls
- Girl Scout Ambassadors: 5–30 girls

A Girl Scout troop/group must have at minimum five girls and two approved adult volunteers. (Double-check the volunteer-to-girl ratio chart to make sure you've got the right amount of coverage for your troop!) Adults and girls registering in groups of fewer than five girls and/or two approved, unrelated adult volunteers, at least one of whom is female, will be registered as individual Girl Scouts to more accurately reflect their status and program experience. Individual girls are always welcome to participate in Girl Scout activities and events.

Registering Girls and Adults in Girl Scouting

Every participant (girl or adult) in Girl Scouting must register and become a member of Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA). GSUSA membership dues are valid for one year. Membership dues cannot be transferred to another member and are not refundable.

Preregistration for the upcoming membership year occurs in the spring. Girls are encouraged to register early to avoid the fall rush. Early registration allows for uninterrupted receipt of forms and materials from the council, helps girls and councils plan ahead, and gets girls excited about all the great stuff they want to do as Girl Scouts next year. Girl Scout grade level is determined by the current membership year beginning October 1.

[Lifetime membership](#) is available to anyone who accepts the principles and beliefs of the Girl Scout Promise and Law, pays the one-time lifetime membership fee, and is at least 18 years old (or a high school graduate or equivalent). Volunteers with ten or more years of service can become lifetime members at the discounted young alum rate.

Adding New Girls to Your Troop

Growing your troop is a great way to share the power of the Girl Scout experience and [there are many ways to get the word out](#), like hanging posters at your girl's school, using social media to reach families in your community, or including your troop in your council's Opportunity Catalog or Troop Catalog.

It is GSOFCT standard that all troops be displayed in the Participation Catalog until there are at least 12 girls registered (for Daisy, Brownie, Junior, and Multi-Level Troops) or 8 girls registered (for Cadette, Senior, and Ambassador Troops).

Please call (800) 922-2770 or email customer care@gsofct.org to contact a member experience specialist regarding marketing and recruitment materials or the Opportunity Catalog. Also, you can access the [Brand Center](#) on the GSOFCT website to learn more about the Girl Scout brand.

Creating an Atmosphere of Acceptance and Inclusion

Girl Scouts is for every girl, and that's why we embrace girls of all abilities and backgrounds with a specific and positive philosophy of inclusion that benefits everyone. Each girl—regardless of her socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, physical or cognitive ability, sexual orientation, primary language, or religion—is an equal and valued member of the group, and groups reflect the diversity of the community.

We believe inclusion is an approach and an attitude, rather than a set of guidelines. Inclusion is about belonging, all girls being offered the same opportunities with respect, dignity, and celebration of their unique strengths. It's about being a sister to every Girl Scout! You're accepting and inclusive when you:

- Welcome every girl and focus on building community.
- Emphasize cooperation instead of competition.
- Provide a safe and socially comfortable environment for girls.
- Teach respect for, understanding of, and dignity toward all girls and their families.
- Actively reach out to girls and families who are traditionally excluded or marginalized.
- Foster a sense of belonging to community as a respected and valued peer.
- Honor the intrinsic value of each person's life.

If you have questions about accommodating an individual girl, please reach out to GSOFCT's customer care team at (800) 922-2770 or customercare@gsfct.org.

As you think about where, when, and how often to meet with your group, consider the needs, resources, safety, and beliefs of all members and potential members. Include the special needs of any members who have disabilities or whose parents or caregivers have disabilities. But, please, don't rely on visual cues to inform you of a disability: Approximately 20 percent of the U.S. population has a disability—that's one in five people of every socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and religion.

If you want to find out what a girl with a disability needs to make her Girl Scout experience successful, simply ask her or her parent or caregiver. If you are open and honest, they'll likely respond in kind, [creating an atmosphere that enriches everyone](#).

It's important for all girls to be rewarded based on their best efforts—not on the completion of a task. Give any girl the opportunity to do her best and she will! Sometimes that means changing a few rules or approaching an activity in a more creative way. Here are some examples of ways to modify activities:

- Invite a girl to complete an activity after she has observed others doing it.
- If you are visiting a museum to view sculpture, find out if a girl who is blind might be given permission to touch the pieces.
- If an activity requires running, a girl who is unable to run could be asked to walk or do another physical movement.

Focus on a person's abilities—on what she *can* do rather than on what she cannot. In that spirit, use people-first language that puts the person before the disability.

Say . . .	Instead of . . .
She has a learning disability.	She is learning disabled.
She has a developmental delay.	She is mentally retarded; she is slow.
She uses a wheelchair.	She is wheelchair-bound.

When interacting with a girl (or parent/caregiver) with a disability, consider these tips:

- When talking to a girl with a disability, speak directly to her, not through a family member or friend.

- It's okay to offer assistance to a girl with a disability, but wait until your offer is accepted before you begin to help. Listen closely to any instructions the person may have.
- Leaning on a girl's wheelchair is invading her space and is considered annoying and rude.
- When speaking to a girl who is deaf and using an interpreter, speak to the girl, not to the interpreter.
- When speaking for more than a few minutes to a girl who uses a wheelchair, place yourself at eye level.
- When greeting a girl with a visual disability, always identify yourself and others. You might say, "Hi, it's Sheryl. Tara is on my right, and Chris is on my left."

Registering Girls with Cognitive Disabilities

Girls with cognitive disabilities can be registered as closely as possible to their chronological ages. They wear the uniform of that grade level. Make any adaptations for the girl to ongoing activities of the grade level to which the group belongs. Young women with cognitive disorders may choose to retain their girl membership through their twenty-first year, and then move into an adult membership category.

Getting Support for Your Troop

Just as your Girl Scouts rally around each other for support, you'll also have a dedicated Girl Scout support team, consisting of council staff and passionate volunteers just like you. Your support team, which may be called a service unit at your council, is ready to offer local learning opportunities and advice as well as [answer your questions](#) about the Girl Scout program, working with girls, product sales, and so much more.

Before you hold your first troop meeting with girls, consider the support and people resources you'll need to cultivate an energizing troop experience. Parents, friends, family, and other members of the community have their own unique strengths and can provide time, experience, and ideas to a troop, so get them involved from the very beginning as part of your volunteer troop team. This team is made up of troop leaders (like you) and troop committee volunteers.

Your [troop committee volunteers](#) are the extra set of eyes, ears, and hands that help the troop safely explore the world around them. Depending on your troop's needs, they can play a more active role—for instance, someone can step up as a dedicated troop treasurer—or simply provide an occasional helping hand when you need to keep a meeting's activity on track.

If a parent or caregiver isn't sure if they can commit to a committee or co-leader role, encourage them to try [volunteering in a smaller capacity](#) that matches their skill set. Just like your young Girl Scouts, once troop parents and caregivers discover they can succeed in their volunteer role, they'll feel empowered to volunteer again.

Troop Management Tools and Resources

From toolkits and guides to regular contact with experienced people, you'll have all the support you need to be a Girl Scout volunteer. Here's a list of some important resources you'll want to check out.

The Volunteer Toolkit

The Volunteer Toolkit is a customizable digital planning tool for troop leaders and co-leaders to easily manage their troop year-round and deliver easy, fun troop meetings. Accessible via desktop and mobile devices, the Volunteer Toolkit saves you time and energy so that you can focus on having fun with your Girl Scouts.

With the Volunteer Toolkit, girls and leaders can explore meeting topics and program activities together and follow the fun as they plan their Girl Scout year. Through the Volunteer Toolkit, troop leaders can:

- Plan the troop's calendar year and meeting schedule.
- Email parents/caregivers with one click.
- View the troop roster, renew girls' membership, and update girls' contact information.
- View meeting plans for Journeys and badges, including suggested tracks for multi-level groups (K–5 and 6–12).
- Customize meeting agendas to fit your unique troop.
- Explore individual meeting plans that show a breakdown of every step, including a list of materials needed, editable time allotments for each activity within a meeting, and printable meeting aids.
- Record attendance at meetings and their troop's badge and Journey achievements.
- Add council or custom events to the troop's calendar.
- Submit troop's finance reports (depending on the council's process).
- Easily locate both national and local council resources, such as *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.

Parents and caregivers can:

- View the troop's meeting schedule and individual meeting plans to stay up to date on the badges and Journeys they are working on.
- Renew their memberships and update their contact information.
- View their Girl Scout's attendance and achievements.
- See upcoming events the troop is planning or attending.
- Easily locate both national and local council resources, such as the Family Hub.
- View the troop's finance report (depending on the council's process).

Get started by visiting: gsfct.org

The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting

What does it mean to be a go-getting Girl Scout? It's all in *The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting*. These grade level-specific binders will help you break it down for your girls. It's part handbook, part badge book, and 100 percent fun! <https://www.girlscoutshop.com/CONNECTICUT-COUNCIL>

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Safety is paramount in Girl Scouting, and this resource—[Safety Activity Checkpoints](#)—contains everything you need to know to help keep your girls safe during a variety of exciting activities outside of their regular Girl Scout troop meetings.

Tips for Troop Leaders

When you're looking for real-world advice from fellow troop leaders who've been there, [this volunteer-to-volunteer resource](#) on the Girl Scouts of the USA website has what you need for a successful troop year.

Girl Scout Volunteers in Your Community

Remember that Girl Scout support team we mentioned? You'll find them in your service unit! Troops are organized geographically into service units or communities. You'll find a local network of fellow

leaders and administrative volunteers [ready to offer tips and advice](#) to help you succeed in your volunteer role.

Customer Care Contacts

Questions? Need help resolving an issue? We've got you! Reach out anytime by either clicking on the "Contact Us" form at (gsofct.org) or email customer care@gsofct.org. During business hours, Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. (summer hours will vary), you can reach a customer service specialist by calling (800) 922-2770.

Newsletters/Communication

Be sure to add us (gsofct@email.girlscouts.org) as a contact in your email so we don't end up in your spam folder!

- Volunteer Newsletter: This newsletter goes out the third Wednesday of the month. It is for all co-leaders, service unit team members, and council learning facilitators to get the important updates, newly added programs, and promotions.
- Membership Update: Goes out weekly on Monday's to all members; provides information on upcoming events around the council!

Taking Advantage of Learning Opportunities

We know that when you have the knowledge and skills you need to manage your girls, both you and your troop will thrive. Contact your council to ask about ongoing learning opportunities that will help you grow your skills and confidence.

Girl Scouts of Connecticut offers many training courses and resources through *gsLearn* designed to help you enhance the skills needed for your role. To get the most up-to-date schedule of learning opportunities and to register online, visit [Troop Volunteer Resources and Training](#). Registration deadline is one week prior to the course.

For information on required training for those in the role of co-leader, for those taking a troop/group on a trip outside of the meeting place that lasts longer than four hours, and for volunteers that will be the troop/group first aider, please visit our [Troop Volunteer Resources and Training](#) page of the website.

Girl Scouts of Connecticut requires all co-leaders in every troop/group to complete New Leader Orientation. At least one trained co-leader must be present at all times when meeting with girls.

Knowing How Much You're Appreciated

What begins with Girl Scouts speaking up at a troop meeting can go all the way to speaking in front of their city council for a cause they champion—and they'll have your support to thank for that. Your volunteer role makes a powerful difference. Thank you for all you do.

Just as you'll receive support throughout your volunteering experience, when you reach the end of the term you signed up for, you'll talk with your support team about the positive parts of your experience as well as the challenges you faced, and you'll discuss whether you want to return to this position or try something new. The end of your troop year, camp season, overseas trip, or series/event session is just the beginning of your next adventure with Girl Scouts!

If you're ready for more opportunities, be sure to let your council support team know how you'd like to be a part of girls' lives in the future—whether in the same position or in other, flexible ways. Are you ready to organize a series or event? Take a trip? Work with girls at camp? Work with a troop of girls

as a yearlong volunteer? Share your skills at a council office, working behind the scenes? The possibilities are endless and can be tailored to fit your skills and interests.

Visit the [Ways to Recognize Volunteers](https://gsfct.org) page on gsofct.org for ideas about how to recognize volunteers or to nominate someone to be awarded at the annual recognition event in the fall.

Volunteer Appreciation Month

Without our passionate and dedicated volunteers, there would be no Girl Scouting. That's why we celebrate National Volunteer Month every April! And get ready to crank up the party as we ring in National Girl Scout Leader's Day on April 22.

Girl Scouts also celebrates National Volunteer Week, which falls during the third week of April. What can we say—we love our volunteers!

Girl Scout Participation in Activities with Other Scouting Organizations

The decision by Boy Scouts of America (BSA) to open the Boy Scout program to girls has fundamentally altered the nature of the relationship between BSA and Girl Scouts nationally and locally. Local relationships between BSA and Girl Scout councils that have led to partnerships and joint activities in the past may now create certain risks or challenges for Girl Scouts. For this reason, councils are encouraged to avoid joint recruiting and/or joint participation in community events or activities.

Marketplace Confusion

To protect the integrity of the Girl Scout brand and reinforce our programming as unique, girl-only, and best in class, we must ensure that we take care that the activities in which girls participate are exclusive to the Girl Scout program, are safe and girl-led, and are conducted under the appropriate supervision of Girl Scouts.

Protecting Use of Girl Scout Materials

Girl Scout materials are intended for the exclusive use of Girl Scouts and are protected as the intellectual property of Girl Scouts of the USA. Materials include but are not limited to: Girl Scout logo, tag lines, and/or program and badge requirements.

Girl Scout Cookie Program and the Fall Product Program

Learning to think like an entrepreneur? Developing business smarts? Getting to know customers and building lasting relationships? There's so much more to that box of Thin Mints®.

Whether they participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program or the Girl Scout Fall Product Program (or both!), everything your Girl Scouts learn prepares them to take on the world. Plus, Girl Scout Cookie proceeds stay local in your community to power amazing year-round experiences—experiences that broaden their worlds and spark their sense of wonder.

Five Essential Skills

Girl Scouts as young as five develop five essential skills through the Girl Scout Cookie Program—skills that will help them be successful today and throughout their lives:

- *Goal setting:* Girls learn to create a plan to reach their goals.
- *Decision making:* Girls learn to make decisions on their own and as a team.
- *Money management:* Girls learn to create a budget and handle money.
- *People skills:* Girls find their voice and up their confidence through customer interactions that build relationships.
- *Business ethics:* Girls learn to act responsibly and honestly, both in business and in life.

But building their business know-how isn't just tied to the cookies themselves! Girl Scouts at any level can continue honing their entrepreneurial skills by earning the [Cookie Business badges, Cookie Entrepreneur Family pin, and the Financial Literacy badges](#) year over year.

Before your cookie bosses open shop, be sure to check out these [helpful troop leader resources](#) that will empower you to:

- Manage your troop's funds.
- Learn how girls participate in money earning.
- Discover how your troop can reach its financial goals.
- Plan activities to help her earn cookie pins and badges
- Understand just how much your girls are capable of by grade level and [how their entrepreneurial skills progress](#).

Girl Scout Cookie History

What started with Girl Scouts selling home-baked cookies to raise money grew into enlisting professional bakers in 1936 to handle the growing demand—and the rest is history. Explore [Girl Scout Cookie History](#) to find out how cookies have helped build generations of female entrepreneurs and leaders who make the world a better place.

Where Cookie Proceeds Go

After paying for the cost of cookies and materials, [Girl Scout Cookie proceeds stay local](#) and help councils provide Girl Scout programs in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), the outdoors, life skills, entrepreneurship, and more—in camps, through leadership training, and multiple other ways. A portion of the proceeds is directly managed by girls, and it's up to them to decide how to invest their troop's share of the earnings.

Your council will provide a breakdown of how cookie program proceeds support Girl Scout activities locally. Please share this information with girls and their families so everyone understands that product program sales make it possible for your Girl Scout council to serve girls.

Troop members share in the proceeds from a successful product program; proceeds aren't distributed to individual girl members. Girls, however, may be eligible for rewards and credits that they put toward

council-sponsored camps, programs, and Girl Scout swag. The council plan for rewards applies equally to all girls participating in the product program activity. Visit the [cookie section](#) of your council website for more information about individual rewards and troop proceeds locally.

The Girl Scout [Blue Book of Basic Documents](#) specifies that:

“All money and other assets, including property, that are raised, earned, or otherwise received in the name of and for the benefit of Girl Scouting must be held and authorized by a Girl Scout council or Girl Scouts of the USA. Such money and other assets must be used for the purposes of Girl Scouting.”

—“Ownership of Assets,” *Blue Book of Basic Documents* (April 2020), page 21

Making s’mores under the stars, creating a lasting impact on your community, or ordering supplies for an eye-opening STEM project—there are limitless ways to put troop proceeds toward dynamic Girl Scout experiences! There are a few things, however, that don’t qualify for “purposes of Girl Scouting,” for instance, using troop proceeds to purchase memberships in or uniforms for another organization. We encourage all councils to remind their volunteers of this policy in order to protect the all-girl environment and to avoid diversion of Girl Scout funds.

Your Council’s Role

When you are set up for success, you are better able to set up your girls for success! That’s why every year, your council provides trainings, guidelines, and procedures for conducting the Girl Scout Cookie Program and fall product program, and determines how the proceeds and product rewards system will be managed. Check the [cookie section](#) of your council’s website to find the answers you need as well as local trainings and resources.

Each council also selects the vendors of its choice to provide the products for their product programs. Two commercial bakers are licensed by Girl Scouts of the USA to produce Girl Scout Cookies: [Little Brownie Bakers](#) and [ABC Bakers](#). You can also [Meet the Cookies](#) and find additional info on cookie varieties, including nutritional details.

Councils also work with vendors to offer magazine subscriptions, nut and candy products, and more for the fall product program. These companies are [Ashdon Farms](#), [Trophy Nut](#), and [M2 Media group](#). Each provides online tools and activities for girls to download. Magazine selection and sales may take place online—check with your council for more details.

Your Role

You play an exciting role in giving your Girl Scouts opportunities to practice the five skills as they learn how to think like entrepreneurs. Some of the things you’ll do include:

- Get girls excited about the opportunities to support the troop (but allowing their participation to be voluntary).
- Support both [competitive and apprehensive cookie bosses](#), helping all your girls set meaningful goals for themselves.
- [Fostering partnerships with each Girl Scout’s family](#) to ensure cookie season success, whatever that may look like for her. The [Creating Cookie Success](#) and [Coaching Your Budding Businesswoman](#) resources will help you build a positive partnership with girls and families, and the [Cookie Entrepreneur Family pin](#) is designed to help families support girls’ growth at home.

Not only can girls sell individually, both in-person and using the online tools provided by each vendor, they can also participate in group booth sales during product programs. Your local council has additional guidance and processes to market and ensure every booth is in a safe and appropriate location.

As your Girl Scouts grow, your role will evolve from a hands-on one to providing oversight and support where needed. No matter their ages, remember that *volunteers and parents/caregivers do not sell the product*. Your role is to encourage your girls and let their entrepreneurial spirit soar. Learning by doing is exactly how your girls develop the business savvy and communication skills that will [empower them to reach any goals they set for themselves](#).

Another critical task for each troop is to establish a clear accounting system for all proceeds and product during the programs. It's up to you to make sure that money is spent wisely, that excellent records are kept (remember to keep copies of all receipts in a binder or folder), and that all product is tracked. For older girls, your job is to oversee their work as they learn to keep impeccable records. Be sure to attend product program orientation or training so you are aware of the systems and helpful tools available.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program and the fall product program can be exhilarating and busy times during the troop year, but you're never alone in your efforts! You can reach out to your service unit product program manager when you're feeling stuck, or you can [build a cookie team](#) to provide the support your troop needs.

Product Program Safety

Safety is the top priority while selling Girl Scout Cookies and other products. Volunteers, families, and girls should be familiar with and practice the safety guidelines outlined in local program resources as well as those available in the [troop leader resources](#) section of girlscoutcookies.org and in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.

Communicate with GSOFC's Mission Delivery department within 24 hours in case of any accident, injury, or incident.

Accident/Injury Report Form: This form is to be used to report:

- Any accident/injury occurring at a Girl Scouts of Connecticut event/activity/meeting/campout/field trip/etc.
- Any non-injury incident that occurs which may result in future problems or other future repercussions for the people involved or for Girl Scouts of Connecticut.

Council staff is prepared and eager to assist you.

Incident Report Form: This form is to be used to report:

- A serious argument (may or may not escalate into a verbal or physical threat)
- A physical altercation
- A non-injury incident of any sort where police are summoned
- Possible or threatened legal proceedings
- Possible or threatened adverse report(s) to the media

In the event of an emergency, follow the Council Emergency Procedures as outlined below.

Girl Scouts of Connecticut Volunteer Procedures for handling Serious Accidents or Major Emergencies:

1. Call 911 for emergency care.
2. Give priority attention to providing all possible care for injured.
3. Secure doctor, ambulance, police, and other support as appropriate.

4. Contact staff on site and call the Administrative Office at (800) 922-2770, or the emergency after-hours and weekend number at (800) 459-6311 to secure additional assistance.
 - a) Your call will be taken by an operator and forwarded to the director responsible for that situation.
 - b) A confidential telephone report form will be filled out.
 - c) The appropriate staff member will be notified of the situation.
5. In the event of a serious accident, ALWAYS notify the police. Retain a responsible person at the scene. See that there is no disturbance to the victim or surrounding area until the police have assumed authority.
6. Make no statements to the press. Refer all media (press, radio, television) inquiries to the GSOFCT communications department by stating:

“Girl Scouts always puts its members’ safety first. For more information, call the Communications Department at (800) 922-2770.” **Do not** discuss the incident, place blame, or accept liability.
7. Do not sign any statements or reports, except for police, your own insurance company, and your own attorney.
8. Document details and witnesses.
9. Complete a written [Accident/Injury Report Form](#), found on our website gsofct.org under the Resource and Form Library and submit to the Girl Scout Service Center in Hartford within 24 hours, if possible.

Girl Scouts of Connecticut
Attn: Risk Management
340 Washington Street
Hartford, CT 06106
(800) 922-2770 Fax (860) 548-0325

Selling Cookies Online

Will your troop use the [Digital Cookie® platform](#) to manage its cookie business? Check the specific guidelines provided by each cookie vendor before participating. Before girls use their Digital Cookie or Smart Cookie site, they should partner with their families to learn how to safely run their business online.

A few more online safety practices to keep in mind:

- The Girl Scout Cookie Program is a girl-led program and online marketing and sales efforts should always be led by a Girl Scout, with the supervision of her parent or caregiver.
- Girl Scouts engaging in online sales and marketing must review and apply the [Digital Marketing Tips for Cookie Entrepreneurs and Their Families](#).
- Girls, volunteers and parents must review and adhere to the [Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge](#), the [Digital Cookie Pledge](#), the [Supplemental Safety Tips for Online Marketing](#), and Girl Scouts’ [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) for Computer and Internet Use and Cookie and Product Sales (with the exception that they may share beyond friends and family).
- Girl sales links should never be posted to resale sites (Craigslist, eBay, Facebook Marketplace etc.).
- Girls must adhere to all terms and conditions on Digital Cookie and Smart Cookie platforms. For copies of terms and conditions, please contact GSUSA, ABC, or M2 as needed.
- Girl Scouts of the USA reserves the right to remove or disable the link for any reason including violation of guidance, inventory fulfillment issues, safety issues, or if sales and marketing activity goes viral and otherwise creates unanticipated disruption.

Additionally, families, girls, and volunteers should contact and collaborate with their councils and Girl Scouts of the USA in advance on any national news media opportunities tied to girls online marketing and sales efforts.

The Buddy System

Using the buddy system, the troop is divided into teams of two. Each Girl Scout is responsible for staying with her buddy at all times, warning her buddy of danger, giving her buddy immediate assistance if safe to do so, and seeking help if needed. Girls are encouraged to stay near the group or buddy with another team of two so that in the event someone is injured, one person cares for the patient while two others seek help.

Preparing for Your Girl Scout Cookie Booth

Cookie booths—that is, cookie pop-up sales in areas with lots of foot traffic—are a fun way for Girl Scouts to connect with their community and practice their sales pitch with new customers. Booth locations must be approved by councils, facilitated within council jurisdiction, and participants must follow all council guidelines with regard to setting up, running, and taking down a booth.

Please check your local COVID-19 guidelines for any restrictions on booth locations and other safety considerations, or [consider a virtual cookie booth](#) or [virtual cookie rally](#) if it makes sense for your troop.

Create a great cookie booth experience for your Girl Scouts by:

- Using your best judgment in setting up cookie booths in locations that will be open, accessible, and safe for all Girl Scouts and potential customers.
- Choosing a high traffic area—this could be your local supermarket, mall, or park—where you'll maximize the number of visitors to your booth.
- Checking out your booth site ahead of the sale. Talk to business owners in the area so they'll know what to expect. Find out what security measures are in place—these may include lights for evening sales and whether a security camera watches the booth area—and where the nearest bathrooms are located.
- Respecting the surrounding businesses by making sure your booth isn't blocking a store entrance or exit.
- Encouraging your Girl Scouts to unleash their creativity—and work on their advertising skills—to make colorful signs and booth decorations that potential customers can't resist! Remind girls to be polite and to have their sales pitch ready for interested customers.

And keep in mind:

- A minimum of two volunteers (at least one of whom is a registered Girl Scout volunteer with the required background check) and one Girl Scout should be present at the booth at all times. With two or more volunteers, you'll have adequate booth coverage if the girls need to be accompanied to the restroom.
- If your Daisies are still learning how to make correct change, help them handle money as needed. But remember that girls make all sales at the booth!
- Changing your cookie booth hours or location? Keep your customers in the loop and update your baker's Digital Cookie or Smart Cookie system with the new details. All scheduled booths are available on the Cookie Finder App ([IOS](#) or [Android](#)).
- Certain locations may be inappropriate for younger Girl Scouts based on the standards of your local community, may negatively impact the cookie program experience for girls, and/or may negatively impact our brand in your community. For additional clarity, girls should not sell in or in front of establishments that they themselves cannot legally patronize.

- Additionally, with respect to marijuana dispensaries, we have been steadfastly combating the unauthorized uses of the Girl Scout trademark by the cannabis community, which has been marketing—without our authorization—certain cannabis products under our youth-appealing brand. We are continuing to aggressively fight these unauthorized uses of the Girl Scout brand and hope that our councils and volunteers will join Girl Scouts of the USA's efforts by discouraging cookie booth locations at such locations.

For more tips to make your booth a success, check out our [Cookie Booth Essentials](#). For additional information about setting up a booth and safety and security suggestions, consult your council guidelines.

At Girl Scouts of Connecticut, safety is our first concern when girls are participating in the Girl Scout Cookie Program. **All [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) and council policies and guidelines must be followed.**

GSOFCCT expects that at least one currently registered *approved* adult from each troop/group participates in Product Program training and convey safety, sale, and program materials to girls and troop/group volunteers *prior* to the scheduled booth sale.

Individually Registered Girls (Juliettes) who are **not** affiliated with a troop/group must ensure they have reviewed all safety rules on the order card and submit an [Annual Consent form](#), signed by their parent/guardian, to their service unit product sales manager or the GSOFCCT Product Program Department prior to scheduling a booth sale. Adults working with them must also be aware of and adhere to all GSOFCCT and GSUSA safety policies.

While GSOFCCT does not require that the adult(s) supervising the booth sale have First Aid/CPR/AED training or outdoor training, a troop/group first aid kit must be present at all times during the activity.

- Report any suspicious people in the area to local security.

If someone takes money or cookies from your booth, **do not** attempt to physically recover the stolen items and **do not** allow the girls to do so. Instead, get a good description of the offender(s), call 911, and alert local security (if applicable). Make sure girls know what to do in case of theft. Report any incidents to your local council according to its guidelines.

Cookie Donation Programs

Cookies also help girls make a big impact in their community! Your council may have an established cookie donation program where customers can purchase cookies that will be donated to an organization by your council. Cookie donations are not only a great talking point for girls to share with their customers—they're also a thoughtful way to show girls how cookies can help them give back.

With cookie donations, remember that:

- All cookie donation programs must be approved by your council.
- Donated cookies must stay within the council jurisdiction unless your council has the approval from other council jurisdictions.
- Donated products cannot be resold and must be used in a responsible and ethical way.
- Donated products are used in a way that does not undermine the work of councils or jeopardize the integrity of the Girl Scout brand.

Handling Product Complaints

Girl Scout Cookies are well loved and for good reason—it has always been the practice of Girl Scout councils and the bakers to guarantee customer satisfaction with their delicious cookies. If a customer is not satisfied with the quality of their cookies for some reason, they can contact the baker via the phone number printed on the side of the cookie package.

Troops should notify their council if they are aware of any customer dissatisfaction.

Recognizing Cookie Sellers in the Media

Focusing on entrepreneurial outcomes has always been the focus of the Girl Scout Cookie Program. The cookie program has never been about and does not focus on individual girls' sales results.

- There are many impressive cookie bosses throughout the United States, and the Girl Scout organization will continue to recognize dynamic cookie entrepreneurs for various achievements tied to the Girl Scout Cookie Program and through their participation in Girl Scouts.
- Girl Scouts of the USA does not currently track the top seller(s) of Girl Scout Cookies on a national level and does not identify a specific Girl Scout as the number one or “record-breaking” national cookie seller.
- Girl Scout councils should not reference such girls as “top sellers” in the media. Doing so detracts from the essence of the Girl Scout Cookie Program, which is based on offering girls important experiences in entrepreneurship, business, and finance from a young age as well as providing girls and local Girl Scout councils with the funds necessary to power amazing experiences and opportunities for Girl Scouts year-round.

Troop Finances

With your guidance, your Girl Scouts will learn money skills that will serve them throughout their lives. Your Girl Scout troop will plan and finance its own activities, and you'll coach your girls as they earn and manage troop funds. Troop activities are powered by proceeds earned through council-sponsored product program activities (such as the Girl Scout Cookie Program), group money-earning activities (council approved, of course!), and any dues your troop may charge which **may range** from 50 cents per meeting up to \$25 per year (level-appropriate).

Remember that all funds collected, raised, earned, or otherwise received in the name of and for the benefit of Girl Scouting belong to the troop and must be used for the purposes of Girl Scouting. Funds are administered through the troop and do not belong to individuals.

Establishing a Troop Account

No matter how much your troop plans on saving or spending, you'll need a safe place to deposit your troop dues, product program proceeds, and other funds. If you've stepped up to lead an existing troop, you may inherit a checking account, but with a new troop, you'll want to open a new bank account.

Here are a few helpful tips you can take to the bank:

- Be sure to find a bank that has free checking and low fees.
- Designate a "troop treasurer," that is, one person who is responsible for troop funds and for keeping a daily account of expenditures.
- Ensure your account comes with a debit card that you can use during activities or trips. These transactions are easier to track at the end of the year.
- Be prepared like a Girl Scout, and make sure another troop volunteer has accessible a debit card for the troop account in case the main card is lost.
- Handle a lost troop debit card the same way you would a personal debit card: cancel it immediately.
- Keep troop funds in the bank before an activity or trip and pay for as many items as possible in advance of your departure.

Follow your council's financial policies and procedures for setting up an account. Most council-sponsored product program activities have specific banking and tracking procedures.

Troop Disbanding and Unused Troop Funds

When a troop disbands, any unused Girl Scout money left in the account becomes the property of the council. Troop funds are not the property of any individual member. Before disbanding, ask your girls how they want to pay it forward: they may decide to donate any unused funds to their service unit, to another troop, or to pay for Girl Scout activities. Activities can also include purchasing materials to support another organization through Take Action projects.

Closing the Troop Account

When closing a troop account, be sure all checks and other debits have cleared the account before you close it. Remember, you may have to close the account in person. Turn remaining funds over to a council staff member.

Girl Scouts of Connecticut Troop/Group Bank Account Policies and Procedures

Each troop/group must have a checking account into and out of which all funds flow. This account must be used solely in support of Girl Scout program. All statement savings or certificate of deposit (CD) accounts must have a designated purpose and must also be accounted for in the Troop/Group Year-End Financial Report submitted through the Volunteer Toolkit. GSOFCT **does not** authorize passbook savings accounts.

Each troop/group account must be in the name of “Girl Scouts of Connecticut, Troop/Group #_____” **with the address of the primary troop co-leader or her/his designee.** Additionally, the corporate nonprofit identification number, # 06-0662134, must be used on each account.

- There must be at least two authorized signers*, none of whom are related to each other nor reside in the same household, on all Troop/Group accounts (including statement savings and certificate of deposit (CD) accounts). These signers shall be as follows:
 - The service unit treasurer or service unit manager and one approved* adult from the troop/group **or**
 - In the absence of the service unit manager and service unit treasurer, two approved* Girl Scout adults from the troop/group.

Please note: GSOFCT **highly** recommends that a service team member be an additional signer on all troop/group accounts.

*All volunteers who handle money must be currently registered Girl Scout members and have successfully completed the Volunteer Onboarding Process and Background Screening **prior** to opening the bank account.

- Checks are never to be signed without a payee written on the face of the check.
- Troop/group bank accounts and the funds therein, are the property of Girl Scouts of Connecticut. Girl Scouts of Connecticut, therefore, reserves the right to randomly audit troop/group accounts as deemed necessary.

Procedures:

- Ensure that **only** authorized signers are on troop/group accounts. Annually review accounts making certain that **only currently registered and approved volunteers** are listed as signatories. Verify with your banking institution that accounts are current and up-to-date; remove signatories who are no longer authorized signers. Report any changes to the account(s) to the service unit treasurer or service unit manager. Include a current listing of authorized signers on your *Troop/Group Year-End Financial Report*.
- To support girl programming, troops/groups will need to develop an operating budget. This budget will reflect anticipated income and expenses for the upcoming Girl Scout year. A [Troop/Group Budget Forecast Worksheet](#) has been developed to assist you in this process.
- Reimbursement from troop/group accounts should only be made with appropriate supporting documentation.
- Money earned during a membership year should be spent during that year. These monies belong to the troop/group jointly, and only as long as the troop/group is registered.
- It is appropriate to have \$10 per girl remain in the account to help with the next year's troop/group start-up. If a troop/group is saving for a more expensive activity and needs to carry over more than the \$10 per girl allotment to accomplish it, please note the details on the

Troop/Group Year-End Financial Report in the Volunteer Toolkit. Special circumstances requiring larger carry over balances must be discussed and approved by the membership experience specialist.

- It is appropriate to allocate end-of-year troop/group funds to purchase and/or supplement GSUSA Membership Dues for the following year. All *currently* registered troop/group members would be considered.
- Service unit event expenses must never be processed through a troop/group account. Troops/groups hosting a service unit event should process all event-related monies through the service unit account.
- Troops/groups must reconcile bank accounts monthly.
- All bank statements, check registers, and supporting documentation (receipts, invoices, canceled checks, etc.) must be maintained for seven years by the troop/group.

Managing Your Account

The troop/group treasurer is responsible for coordinating deposits, expenditures, and financial reporting for and to the troop/group. Since the money belongs to the “troop/group,” it is important that the management of funds is transparent for the girls, parents, and volunteers as well as the council. The service unit treasurer is responsible for providing local training and ongoing support to troop/group volunteers.

Purchasing supplies and requesting reimbursements correctly for troops/groups is an essential part of managing your bank account. Follow these guidelines to keep the process easy:

Purchases

Whenever possible, purchase supplies, equipment, goods, and services as a debit card transaction or with a troop/group check. This provides for a detailed accounting of monies spent. Use the [Sales Tax Exempt](#) certificate for all purchases.

It is also important to only use the troop/group bank account for appropriate troop/group expenses. If a troop/group co-leader has a question about appropriate purchases, the service unit treasurer should be contacted. See below for a partial list:

- GSUSA Membership Dues
- Purchase of troop/group checks
- Training/workshops for registered troop/group adults that will directly benefit working with the girls
- Supplies, equipment, goods, and services purchased for troop/group use (become property of the troop/group and must be included in the troop/group inventory)
- Troop events and field trips
- Donations to GSOFCT’s Girl Assistance Fund or the Juliette Gordon Low World Friendship Fund
- Co-leader books and materials (become property of the troop/group and must be included in the troop/group Inventory)
- Babysitting for troop/group co-leader to attend training or meeting times – this should be discussed and agreed upon during a parent/guardian meeting. All parents/guardians must be made aware of the childcare need *prior* to any troop/group monies being used.
- Recognitions for girls and adults (i.e. – gift for cookie volunteer, outdoor trained adult, etc.)
- Purchase of food gift cards to donate to needy families (Stop & Shop, Big Y, etc.)

Reimbursements

If a volunteer or parent requires a reimbursement for pre-approved purchases, requests need to be submitted to the troop/group and/or service unit within two weeks of purchase **and** must be

accompanied by a detailed receipt. To maintain good financial management, strict adherence to the two-week timeframe is suggested. No reimbursements are to be given without a *detailed* receipt. Reimbursements should be made by check with the reason for reimbursement noted in the check memo section. If a signer on the account or a member of her or his family is receiving reimbursement, one of the alternate signers must review the receipts and sign the check.

Cash

An ATM withdrawal receipt **does not** qualify as a receipt for reimbursement or justification for troop/group purchases. Troop/group checks may not be made out to cash. All purchases made with cash require detailed receipts of the goods and services purchased.

Debit Cards

To help facilitate troop/group money management, GSOFCT has established guidelines for debit card use.

- GSOFCT recommends that troops only have one debit card to be used for deposits and payments. The card is for official Girl Scout business only.
- Debit cards should only be issued to currently registered troop/group co-leaders who have completed the onboarding process and have had a successful background screening.
- The cardholder is responsible for obtaining purchase receipts, securing the card, and is *legally* responsible for the transactions posted to the card.
- Debit card expenditures should be reconciled monthly to ensure that there are no unauthorized expenditures to the account.
- Inappropriate debit card usage will result in forfeiture of the debit card privilege.
- Credit cards will not be authorized since borrowing money is not allowed for troop/group accounts.
- *PayPal* accounts **are not** authorized for troop/group use.

Online Banking

Online banking is authorized on troop/group bank accounts to view account balances, download transaction history, and print copies of checks and statements. Because all signers are responsible for maintaining the troop/group account, the user ID and password for access to the account should be shared with all account signers. This will facilitate monitoring the account activity and balance and help prevent cardholders/signers from inadvertently overdrawing the account and/or incurring fees.

Passwords should be changed whenever there is a change in account signers.

Please note: *Webster Bank requires additional paperwork to be completed and notarized prior to gaining online access to banking accounts.*

Reporting

By June 30, troops/groups are required to submit the Troop/Group Year-End Financial Report, accompanied by copies of month-end bank statements for the months of September, December, March, and the most recent month of the current membership year, through the Volunteer Toolkit. **All troops/groups must complete this form regardless of their year-end balance.**

Girl Scout troops/groups **cannot** participate in non-council sponsored money-earning activities of any kind if they have not submitted their year-end financial reports from the previous year(s).

Bad Check Procedures

It is the responsibility of the troop/group co-leader to ensure all accounts are in compliance with GSOFCT Financial Procedures and monthly bank reconciliation is occurring.

- Any checks returned by our bank as NSF (insufficient funds), account closed, refer to maker, etc. will be immediately forwarded to Payliance for processing. Payliance will have full authority to contact the check writer for collection on the bad check and to charge collection fees from the check writer as allowed under current state law. GSOFCT will no longer attempt redeposit of bad checks.
 - An initial courtesy phone call will be made if contact information is available.
- As a reminder, all checks accepted and deposited on behalf of GSOFCT should include name, residence address (no P.O. Boxes), phone number with area code, and driver's license number. Temporary checks and checks lacking imprinted information should never be accepted. If possible, use the reference line to list the troop number and activity (example: Troop XXXXX/cookies).
- At no time will the council accept or hold a check to be deposited at a later date.
- Troops/groups with any financial delinquencies will be submitted to the council chief financial officer for further action.

When a bank account is mismanaged and fees are accumulated, it is the responsibility of the volunteer(s) managing the account to personally pay such fees assessed by the bank or by a given business.

Poor financial management on a volunteer's part will result in jeopardizing not only the individual's financial status but also places GSOFCT's credit standing and relationship with the financial institution at risk.

Bank Account fees may not be deducted from troop/group funds.

Outstanding Debt Procedures

A person owing a debt to GSOFCT for more than 120 days will be removed immediately from any adult volunteer position currently held. Only if the debt is repaid within three months from the date it was incurred may the individual be reinstated in a volunteer position. Any person incurring a second debt to the council will be removed immediately from any adult volunteer position and permanently banned from any volunteer position.

Procedures:

1. The council will notify the debtor via mail that there is a debt. The debtor will be given 10 business days from the date the first letter is mailed to pay the debt in full.
 - If the debt is not paid in full, the responsible party will be charged a \$25 surcharge/processing fee.
 - Should the council agree to work out payment arrangements, there will be a \$10 monthly service fee in addition to the amount owed.
2. If the debtor does not make arrangements or pay within the 10-business day period, the debtor will be notified via certified letter that she/he is removed as a volunteer.
 - A copy of the certified letter will be retained by council.
 - The service unit manager, membership staff, and any other appropriate individuals will be notified of volunteer's release.
 - Reinstatement as a volunteer will occur after all payments have been made in full; appropriate individuals will be notified.
 - If the debt remains uncollected it will be turned over to the collection agency for them to handle.

3. If a second debt occurs, the council will notify the debtor via certified mail that she/he is immediately **and** permanently removed from any adult volunteer position.
 - The volunteer's council record will be marked with a permanent ban from any volunteer position.
 - The service unit manager, membership staff, and any other appropriate individuals will be notified of volunteer's permanent release.

Protect Yourself!

Money is one of those areas that can cause a lot of bad feelings and ill will among girls and parents/guardians in a troop/group. Save yourself an endless amount of heartache and avoid the possibility of having your financial practices being called into question by following these practices:

- Keep good financial records including receipts for all expenditures.
 - Bank statements and receipts should be retained for seven (7) years. If a troop is disbanded, all records should be handed to the service unit manager to retain for seven (7) years.
- Ensure all financial responsibilities are addressed in a timely manner. All outstanding delinquencies will be reported to the council chief financial officer for further action.
- Involve girls (and sometimes parents/guardians) in financial decision-making. The more they know, the better!
- Ensure there is no comingling of personal and troop funds.
- Ensure all signers on the account(s) are aware of financial transactions not just the primary checkbook holder.
 - We recommend both signers on the account independently reconcile the accounts monthly in order to identify and resolve any discrepancies as soon as possible.
- Review account status regularly with all signers to ensure compliance with GSOFCT policies and procedures. Report any discrepancies to your service unit manager.
- Report on troop/group finances regularly to girls and parents/guardians. The money belongs to the girls, and they should know how much they have and how it has been spent.
 - We recommend maintaining transparency with the girls and the parents regarding the troop financials throughout the entire year.
 - We recommend utilization of a balance sheet to be distributed to the girls monthly, so they can review and share with their families their plans for utilizing the funds throughout the year.
- Pay attention to and follow the other financial guidelines in this booklet. They are there to protect you, and to keep you in compliance with GSOFCT policies and guidelines.
- We recommend two account signers to sign all checks payable for \$500 or more.
- Always use caution when receiving calls, texts, emails from a financial institution, always confirm with either GSOFCT or the financial institution verbally if uncertain about the validity of the request and verify who is requesting the financial or confidential information.

Service Unit Bank Accounts

Each service unit must have a checking account into which and out of which all funds flow. This account must be used solely in support of Girl Scout program. All statement savings or certificate of deposit (CD) accounts must have a designated purpose and must also be accounted for in the Annual Service Unit Financial Report. GSOFCT **does not** authorize passbook savings accounts.

“Such money and other assets must be used for the purposes of Girl Scouting. They are the property of and are administered by the Girl Scout council or Girl Scouts of the USA and shall not be sold, given, transferred, or conveyed to a third party for less than fair market value. Such assets are not the property of individuals, troops, geographic units, subordinate units, or communities within a Girl Scout council.” (Blue Book of Basic Documents, 2017, Page 22)

Each service unit account must be in the name of “Girl Scouts of Connecticut, Service Unit _____” **with the address of the service unit treasurer or the service unit manager.** Additionally, the Corporation non-profit identification number, #06-0662134, must be used on each account.

- There must be at least two authorized signers*, none of whom are related to each other nor reside in the same household, on all service unit accounts (including statement savings and certificate of deposit (CD) accounts).
 - These signers must include the service unit treasurer and service unit manager **or**
 - In the absence of a service unit treasurer and/or service unit manager, another service team member appointed by the council may serve as an authorized signer.

*All volunteers that handle money must be currently registered Girl Scout members and have successfully completed the Volunteer Onboarding Process and Background Screening **prior** to opening the bank account.

- Checks are never to be signed without a payee shown on the face of the check.
- Service unit bank accounts and the funds therein, are the property of Girl Scouts of Connecticut. Girl Scouts of Connecticut, therefore, reserves the right to randomly audit service unit accounts as deemed necessary.

Procedures:

- Ensure that **only** authorized signers are on service unit accounts. Annually review accounts making certain that **only currently registered and approved volunteers** are listed as signatories. Verify with your banking institution that accounts are current and up-to-date; remove signatories who are no longer authorized signers. Report any changes to the account(s) to the service unit manager and membership specialist. Include a current listing of authorized signers on your *Annual Service Unit Financial Report*.
- Reimbursement from service unit accounts should be only made with appropriate supporting documentation.
- It is appropriate to have \$10 per girl, and \$10 per adult, remain in the service unit account to assist in the overall management of the service unit and for providing program opportunities for girls. If a service unit needs to carry over more than the \$10 per girl and \$10 per adult allotment, please note the details the Annual Service Unit Financial Report. Special circumstances requiring larger carry over balances must be discussed and approved by the membership specialist.
- The Annual Service Unit Financial Report, accompanied by a copy of the most recent banking statement, must be submitted to the membership specialist by August 15. Ensure that the service unit manager has reviewed and approved. These reports are reviewed by service unit treasurers, service unit managers, and/or council staff.
- Troops/groups hosting a service unit event should process all event related monies through the service unit account. Service unit event expenses must never be processed through a troop/group account.

- The service unit exists to support troop/group programming. In order to cover related administrative costs and create opportunities for inter-troop/group activities, service units will need to develop an operating budget. This budget will reflect anticipated income and expenses for the upcoming Girl Scout year. A service unit Budget Forecast Worksheet has been developed to assist you in this process. A service unit proposed budget is due to the member experience specialist no later than August 15 of each year. GSOFCT reserves the right to disapprove anticipated expenses.
- Service units must reconcile bank accounts monthly.
- All bank statements, check registers, and supporting documentation (receipts, invoices, canceled checks, etc.) must be maintained for seven years by the service unit treasurer or service unit manager.

Managing the Service Unit Account

The service unit treasurer is responsible for coordinating deposits, expenditures, and financial reporting for and to the service unit. Since the money belongs to the “service unit,” it is important that the management of funds is transparent for the volunteers as well as the council. The service unit manager is responsible for ensuring the service unit treasurer obtains training necessary for the position and that she/he supports local troop/group volunteer’s financial needs. Purchasing supplies and requesting reimbursements correctly for service units is an essential part of managing your bank account. Follow these guidelines to keep the process easy:

Purchases

Whenever possible, purchase supplies, equipment, goods, and services as a debit card transaction or with a service unit check. This provides for a detailed accounting of monies spent. Use the [Sales Tax Exempt](#) certificate for all purchases.

It is also important to only use the service unit bank account for appropriate service unit expenses. If the service unit treasurer has a question about appropriate purchases, the service unit manager should be contacted. See below for a partial list.

- Training/workshops for registered troop/group adults that will directly benefit working with the girls.
- Purchase of service unit checks
- Supplies, equipment, goods, and services purchased for service unit use (become property of the service unit and must be included in the service unit inventory)
- Service unit events and field trips
- Service unit donations to GSOFCT’s Girl Assistance Fund or the Juliette Low World Friendship fund
- Purchase copies of National Portfolio materials for all service unit troop/groups to use (become property of the service unit and must be included in the service unit inventory)
- Volunteer recognitions (i.e. Helping Hands, Leading the Way, etc.)
- Purchase of food gift cards to donate to needy families (Stop & Shop, Big Y, etc.)

Reimbursements

If a volunteer or individual troop/group requires reimbursement for a pre-approved purchase and/or event expenses, requests need be submitted within two weeks of purchase or event completion **and** must be accompanied by a detailed receipt. To maintain good financial management, strict adherence to the two-week timeframe is suggested. No reimbursements are to be given without *detailed* receipts.

Reimbursements should be made by check with the reason for reimbursement noted in the check memo section. If a signer on the account or a member of her or his family is receiving reimbursement, one of the alternate signers must review the receipts and sign the check.

Cash

An ATM withdrawal receipt **does not** qualify as a receipt for reimbursement or justification for service unit purchases. Service unit checks may not be made out to cash. All purchases made with cash require detailed receipts of the goods and services purchased.

Debit Cards

To help facilitate service unit money management, GSOFCT has established guidelines for debit card use.

- GSOFCT recommends that each service unit obtains one debit card to be used for deposits and payments. The card is for official Girl Scout business only.
- Debit cards should only be issued to currently registered service unit treasurers who have completed the onboarding process and have had a successful background screening.
- The cardholder is responsible for obtaining purchase receipts, securing the card, and is *legally* responsible for the transactions posted to the card.
- Debit card expenditures should be reconciled monthly to ensure that there are no unauthorized expenditures to the account.
- Inappropriate debit card usage will result in forfeiture of the debit card privilege.
- Credit cards will not be authorized since borrowing money is not allowed for service unit accounts.
- *PayPal* accounts **are not** authorized for service unit use.

Online Banking

Online banking is authorized on service unit bank accounts to view account balances, download transaction history, and print copies of checks and statements.

Because all signers are responsible for maintaining the service unit account, the user ID, and password for access to the account should be shared with all account signers. This will facilitate monitoring the account activity and balance and help prevent cardholders/signers from inadvertently overdrawing the account and/or incurring fees. **Passwords should be changed whenever there is a change in account signers.**

Please note: Webster Bank requires additional paperwork to be completed and notarized prior to gaining online access to banking accounts.

Money Management and the Individually Registered Girls (Juliettes)

Girl Scouts of Connecticut uses the title “Juliette” for a girl who registers in Girl Scouts individually (Individually Registered Girls), rather than as a part of a specific pathway. As Juliettes, girl members may participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall Product Program, Treats & Reads, as well as, additional money-earning activities (when applicable). Monies for Juliettes can be managed through the service unit banking account. These monies are the property of the service unit and should be distributed to girls following GSOFCT guidelines and accounted for on the Service Unit Year-End Financial Report. The following resource has been developed to help in managing these funds:

- [Request for Funding – Independently Registered Girl Scout](#) – This form is to be completed when a Juliette is requesting monies to help pay or defray the cost of participating in Girl Scouts. The form, along with supporting documentation, is submitted to the service unit treasurer or designee for approval and disbursement. See form for more specifics.

Remember: All monies raised in the name of Girl Scouting must be used solely for that purpose. Monies are never directly disbursed to a girl, her parent/guardian or an adult volunteer without proper documentation.

Reporting

By August 15, service units are required to submit the Annual Service Unit Financial Report, accompanied by a copy of the most recent banking statement, to the service unit manager. If the account year-end balance is more than the allotted \$10 per girl and \$10 per adult carry over, note details on the Annual Service Unit Financial Report. Special circumstances requiring larger carry over balances must be discussed and approved by the membership specialist. This report is reviewed by the service unit manager and council staff. ***All service units must complete this form regardless of their year-end balance.***

Girl Scout service units **cannot** participate in non-council sponsored money-earning activities of any kind if they have not submitted their year-end financial reports from the previous year(s).

Bad Check Procedures

It is the responsibility of the service unit treasurer to ensure the service unit account(s) are in compliance with GSOFCT Financial Procedures and monthly bank reconciliation is occurring.

- Any checks returned by our bank as NSF (insufficient funds), account closed, refer to maker, etc. will be immediately forwarded to Payliance for processing. Payliance will have full authority to contact the check writer for collection on the bad check and to charge collection fees from the check writer as allowed under current state law. GSOFCT will no longer attempt redeposit of bad checks.
 - An initial courtesy phone call will be made if contact information is available.
- As a reminder, all checks accepted and deposited on behalf of GSOFCT should include name, residence address (no P.O. Boxes), phone number with area code and driver's license number. Temporary checks and checks lacking imprinted information should never be accepted. If possible, use the reference line to list the service unit number and activity (example: Service unit XXXX/Square Dance).
- At no time will the council accept or hold a check to be deposited at a later date.
- Service units with any financial delinquencies will be submitted to the council chief financial officer for further action.

When a bank account is mismanaged and fees are accumulated, it is the responsibility of the volunteer(s) managing the account to personally pay such fees assessed by the bank or by a given business.

Poor financial management on a volunteer's part will result in jeopardizing not only the individual's financial status but also places GSOFCT's credit standing and relationship with the financial institution at risk.

Bank Account fees may not be deducted from service unit funds.

Protect Yourself!

Money is one of those areas that can cause a lot of bad feelings and ill will among volunteer in a service unit. Save yourself an endless amount of heartache and avoid the possibility of having your financial practices being called into question by following these practices:

- Keep good financial records including receipts for all expenditures
 - Bank statements and receipts should be retained for seven (7) years.

- Ensure all financial responsibilities are addressed in a timely manner. All outstanding delinquencies will be reported to the council chief financial officer for further action
- Ensure all signers on the account(s) are aware of financial transactions not just the primary checkbook holder
 - We recommend all signers on the account(s) independently reconcile the account(s) monthly in order to identify and resolve any discrepancies as soon as possible.
- Review account status regularly with all signers to ensure compliance with GSOFCT policies and procedures. Report any discrepancies to your service unit manager.
- Report on service unit finances at monthly volunteer meetings. Service unit monies support your area's girl and adult activities as well as cover administrative expenses. Local volunteers should know how much the service unit has and how it has been spent.
- Pay attention to and follow the other financial guidelines in this booklet. They are there to protect you, and to keep you in compliance with GSOFCT policies and guidelines.
- We recommend two account signers to sign all checks payable for \$500 or more.
- Always use caution when receiving calls, texts, emails from a financial institution, always confirm with either GSOFCT or the financial institution verbally if uncertain about the validity of the request and verify who is requesting the financial or confidential information.

Handling Discrepancies of Service Unit Funds

At the time of appointment, the service unit treasurer should be told that she/he is the custodian of the service unit funds. The service unit treasurer is responsible for any monies collected in the name of Girl Scouts of Connecticut. Such monies are to be used **ONLY** by the service unit and for service unit activities. The service unit treasurer is responsible for maintaining records and preparing reports, which reflect the status of funds within the service unit. If the service unit treasurer fails to maintain records and prepare reports, the service unit manager should review the situation with the service unit treasurer and try to reconcile the problem.

If it is suspected that there has been misappropriation of funds or when actual misappropriation is established, the service unit manager or her/his designee will contact the membership specialist to establish a course of action that may include the audit of service unit monies and/or the possible removal of the service unit treasurer from her/his position.

Thank you for adhering to these policies. GSOFCT reserves the right to step in and close accounts if there is misappropriation or policy violations. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact GSOFCT's director of finance at (800) 922-2770.

Money-Earning Basics for Troops

Troops flex their financial muscles in two distinct ways:

- The Girl Scout Cookie Program and other sales of Girl Scout–authorized products (such as calendars, magazines, or nuts and candy) organized by your council. All girl members are eligible to participate in two council-sponsored product program activities each year with volunteer supervision: the cookie program and one other council-authorized product program. Please remember, volunteers and Girl Scout council staff don't sell cookies and other products—girls do.
- Group money-earning activities organized by the troop (not by the council) that are planned and carried out by girls (in partnership with volunteers) and that earn money for the group.

Participation Guidance

Girls' participation in both council-sponsored product program activities and group money-earning projects is based upon the following:

- Voluntary participation
- Written permission of each girl's parent or guardian
- An understanding of (and ability to explain clearly to others) why the money is needed
- An understanding that money earning should not exceed what the group needs to support its program activities
- Observance of local ordinances related to involvement of children in money-earning activities as well as health and safety laws
- Vigilance in protecting the personal safety of each girl
- Arrangements for safeguarding the money

Additional Guidelines

Keep these specific guidelines—some of which are required by the Internal Revenue Service—in mind to ensure that sales are conducted with legal and financial integrity.

- All rewards earned by girls through the product program activities must support Girl Scout program experiences (such as camp, travel, and program events, but not scholarships or financial credits toward outside organizations).
- Rewards are based on sales ranges set by councils and may not be based on a dollar-per-dollar calculation.
- Troops are encouraged to participate in council product programs as their primary money-earning activity; any group money earning shouldn't compete with the Girl Scout Cookie Program or other council product programs.
- Obtain written approval from your council before a group money-earning event; most councils ask that you submit a request for approval.
- Girl Scouts discourages the use of games of chance. Any activity which could be considered a game of chance (raffles, contests, bingo) must be approved by the local Girl Scout council and be conducted in compliance with all local and state laws.
- Girl Scouts' *Blue Book* policy forbids girls from the direct solicitation of cash. Girls can collect partial payment toward the purchase of a package of Girl Scout Cookies and other Girl Scout–authorized products through participation in council-approved product program donation programs.
- Girl Scouts forbids product demonstration parties where the use of the Girl Scout trademark increases revenue for another business, such as in-home product parties. Any business using the Girl Scout trademark or other Girl Scout intellectual property must seek authorization from GSUSA.
- Group money-earning activities need to be suited to the ages and abilities of the girls and consistent with the principles of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.
- Money earned is for Girl Scout activities and is not to be retained by individuals. Girls can, however, be awarded incentives and/or may earn credits from their Girl Scout product programs. Funds acquired through group money-earning projects must be reported and accounted for by the group according to council procedures.

Sample Money-Earning Activities

Collections/Drives

- Cell phones for refurbishment
- Used ink cartridges turned in for money
- Christmas tree recycling

Food/Meal Events

- Lunch box auction (prepared lunch or meal auctioned off)
- Themed meals, like a high tea or a build-your-own-taco bar, related to activities girls are planning (For instance, if girls are earning money for travel, they could tie the meal to their destination).

Service(s)

- Service-a-thon (people sponsor a girl doing service and funds go to support a trip or other activity)
- Babysitting for holiday (New Year's Eve) or council events
- Raking leaves, weeding, cutting grass, shoveling snow, walking pets
- Cooking class or other specialty class

The Girl Scout Cookie Program and other council-sponsored product programs are designed to unleash the entrepreneurial potential in your girls. From there, your troop may decide to earn additional funds on its own.

Help Your Troop Reach Its Financial Goals

We get it—there's something exciting about opening that first case of Girl Scout Cookies. However, before your girls take part in all the cookie program fun, it's important they have a clear plan and purpose for their product program activities. As a volunteer, you have the opportunity to facilitate girl-led financial planning, which may include the following steps for the girls:

1. *Set goals for money-earning activities.* What do girls hope to accomplish through this activity? In addition to earning money, what skills do they hope to build? What leadership opportunities present themselves?
2. *Create a budget.* Use a budget worksheet that includes both expenses (the cost of supplies, admission to events, travel, and so on) and available income (the group's account balance, projected cookie proceeds, and so on).
3. *Determine how much the group needs to earn.* Subtract expenses from available income to determine how much money your group needs to earn.
4. *Make a plan.* The group can brainstorm and make decisions about its financial plans. Will cookie and other product programs—if approached proactively and energetically—earn enough money to meet the group's goals? If not, which group money-earning activities might offset the difference? Will more than one group money-earning activity be necessary to achieve the group's financial goals? In this planning stage, engage the girls through the Girl Scout processes (girl-led, learning by doing, and cooperative learning) and consider the value of any potential activity. Have them weigh feasibility, implementation, and safety factors.
5. *Write it out.* Once the group has decided on its financial plan, describe it in writing. If the plan involves a group money-earning activity, fill out an application for approval from your council and submit it along with the budget worksheet the girls created.

Remember: It's great for girls to have opportunities like the Girl Scout Cookie Program to earn funds that help them fulfill their goals. As a volunteer, try to help girls balance the money earning they do with opportunities to enjoy other activities that have less emphasis on earning and spending money. Take Action projects, for example, may not always require girls to spend a lot of money!

Financial Management and Product Program Abilities by Grade Level

As with other Girl Scout activities, girls build their financial and sales savvy as they get older. Every girl will be different, but here you'll find some examples of the abilities and opportunities for progression of girls at each grade level.

Girl Scout Daisies

The group volunteer handles money, keeps financial records, and does all group budgeting.

Parents/guardians may decide they will contribute to the cost of activities.

Girls can participate in Girl Scout Cookie activities and other council-sponsored product programs.

Daisies are always paired with a volunteer when selling anything. Girls do the asking and deliver the product, but volunteers handle the money and keep the girls secure.

Girls should be given the opportunity to practice identifying money and counting back change with an adult during each transaction.

Girl Scout Brownies

The group volunteer handles money, keeps financial records, and shares some of the group-budgeting responsibilities.

Girls discuss the cost of activities (supplies, fees, transportation, rentals, and so on) with guidance from their volunteer(s).

Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product programs.

Girls may decide to pay dues to contribute to the cost of activities.

Girl Scout Juniors

The group volunteer retains overall responsibility for long-term budgeting and record keeping, but shares or delegates all other financial responsibilities.

Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product programs.

Girls decide on group dues, if any. Dues are collected by girls and recorded by a group treasurer selected by the girls.

Girls budget for the short-term needs of the group based on their plans and income from the group dues.

Girls budget for more long-term activities, such as overnight trips, group camping, and special events.

Girls budget for Take Action projects, including the Girl Scout Bronze Award, if they are pursuing it.

Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors

Girls estimate costs based on plans.

Girls determine the amount of group dues, if any, and the scope of money-earning projects.

Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product programs.

Girls carry out budgeting, planning, and group money-earning projects.

Girls budget for extended travel, Take Action projects, and leadership projects.

Girls may be involved in seeking donations for Take Action projects with council approval.

Girls keep their own financial records and give reports to parents and group volunteers.

Girls budget for Take Action projects, including the Girl Scout Silver or Gold Awards, if they are pursuing them.

Working with Sponsors and Other Organizations

Local sponsors can help councils power innovative programs for Girl Scouts. Community organizations, businesses, religious organizations, and individuals may be sponsors and may provide group meeting places, volunteer their time, offer in-kind donations, provide activity materials, or loan equipment. Encourage your girls to celebrate a sponsor's contribution to the troop by sending thank-you cards, inviting the sponsor to a meeting or ceremony, or working together on a Take Action project.

For information on working with a sponsor, consult your council, which can give you guidance on the availability of sponsors, recruiting guidelines, and any council policies or practices that must be followed. Your council may already have relationships with certain organizations or may know of some reasons **not** to collaborate with certain organizations.

If your troop has the opportunity to apply for funding from a foundation, please contact fund development directly to discuss your request in the event GSOFCT has received funding from them or is in the process of requesting funding.

Girl Scouts of Connecticut supports and encourages troop/groups and service units to fundraise monetary and in-kind contributions from local businesses, foundations, organizations, or individuals using the following guidelines:

1. The **maximum** amount a troop/group/service unit may accept from donated monetary gifts in a membership year is \$1,000.
 - a. The funds must benefit the entire troop/group or service unit, not a specific individual.
 - b. Funds will be disbursed to the troop/group or service unit only after the troop/group co-leader or service unit manager sends written correspondence confirming that the funds will be for the benefit of the entire troop/group or service unit and not for a specific individual.
2. Any **designated donation monies of \$250 or more** from a foundation, corporation, government entity, or individual (including recognition of volunteer service hours) should be written payable to Girl Scouts of Connecticut, Inc. and sent to 340 Washington Ave., Hartford, CT, 06106 and designated to the specific troop/group or service unit. Online donations can be made at gsofct.org (click the "Donate" button on top right corner of main page) **and** call (800) 922-2770 to confirm troop/group or service unit designation.
 - a. The troop/group or service unit should complete the [Monetary Gift Acceptance Form](#) and forward to the Hartford Service Center, Attn: Fund Development, email customercare@gsofct.org.
 - b. The council is responsible for thanking the donor though the troop/group or service unit may want to send an acknowledgement as well.

- c. Girl Scouts of Connecticut will issue up to \$1,000 of donation to the designated troop/group or service unit upon completion of the [Monetary Gift Acceptance Form](#).
 - d. The balance of donations will be used toward the council's Girl Assistance Fund to benefit Connecticut Girl Scouts in need.
 - e. Troops/groups or service units are not legal 501(c) (3) organizations. The troop/group or service unit therefore cannot provide documentation of tax-deductibility of the donation. GSOFCT will provide a tax receipt.
3. Any **designated donation monies of \$249.99 or less** from a foundation, corporation, government entity, or individual can be written to and received directly by the troop/group or service unit.
- a. Notification to the council is appreciated.
 - b. The troop/group or service unit is responsible for thanking and acknowledging the donor.
 - c. If the donor requests a tax-deductible receipt the troop/group or service unit must forward the donation to the council to process with the completed [Monetary Gift Acceptance Form](#).
 - d. Troops/groups or service units are not legal 501(c) (3) organizations. The troop/group or service unit therefore cannot provide documentation of tax-deductibility of the donation. GSOFCT will provide a tax receipt if requested by the donor.
4. **In-kind Gifts:** Troops/groups or service units should notify their deputy chief of member experience or her/his designee of any in-kind gifts of goods for troop/group or service unit activities.
- a. If an in-kind gift of goods or services is received that is valued at **over \$250** and/or the donor requests a tax-deductible receipt, the [Gift-In-Kind Acceptance Form](#) must be completed and submitted to the council so the donor may be properly thanked. If the form is not submitted, the gift may not be recognized as tax deductible.
 - b. All in-kind gifts of goods or services received that are valued at **\$250 or less** can be received directly by the troop/group or service unit. The troop/group or service unit is responsible for thanking and acknowledging the donor.
5. Funds donated must benefit the entire troop/group or service unit not a specific individual. The funds in the troop/group or service unit never become the property of individual girls/adults.
6. All donations must be accounted for on the Troop/Group Year-End Financial Report submitted through the Volunteer Toolkit or the Annual Service Unit Financial Report.
7. Troops/groups or service units that do not comply with fundraising guidelines may be subject to sanctions.

Girl Scouts of Connecticut thanks all volunteers, service unit managers and troop/group co-leaders who solicit and secure donations for the benefit of our members.

Gifts Designated to Troops/Groups and Service Units

Volunteer Hours – Matching Gifts – Donations

Members of a troop/group or service unit may be eligible to participate in their employer's charitable giving program for donations, matching gifts or volunteer hours. These gifts can be designated to a specific troop/group/service unit or they can be directed to the council for the benefit all Girl Scouts in Connecticut.

Adult volunteers are encouraged to contact their employer to inquire if a volunteer-hours grant is available. Such programs require the volunteer to report their service hours and summarize their volunteer activities. Upon approval, the employer will make a charitable contribution to the organization designated by the volunteer.

Families, volunteers, and friends can also direct a donation or matching gift made through an employer charitable giving program to a troop/group or service unit.

Troops/groups or service units are allowed to receive a maximum of \$1,000.00 per fiscal year in donations. GSOFCT's fiscal year runs October 1 through September 30.

To expedite the processing of the gift to your troop/group or service unit, please follow the directions below.

Requesting the Gift from an Employer:

When requesting a donation, please only use the account for Girl Scouts of Connecticut. All donations requesting a matching gift, a tax receipt, and/or are \$250 or more must go through GSOFCT as they are the nonprofit entity with the legal status of tax exemption. Troops/groups or service units are considered subdivisions of the council and therefore do not have separate tax exemption status.

1. Access your employer's Charitable Giving Program:

- Search for the "Girl Scouts of Connecticut" or "Girl Scouts of Connecticut, Inc." main account. *Please note: There should be no GSOFCT accounts listed for individual troops/groups or service units.*
- If you need to search by Tax ID Number/EIN, contact Girl Scouts of Connecticut for this information at customercare@gsofct.org or (800) 922-2770.
- If you cannot find an established account for GSOFCT, please have your employer contact:

**Fund Development
Girl Scouts of Connecticut
340 Washington Street, Hartford, CT 06106
(800) 922-2770 or email customercare@gsofct.org**

Our staff will send your employer the documentation required to set up the account.

- Do not set up a separate account for the troop/group or service unit. Doing so will result in the following:
 - The account set up for your troop/group or service unit will be closed.
 - GSOFCT staff will need to call the employer to have them move the gift into the GSOFCT main account.
 - The processing of the gift will be delayed and may miss the deadline set by the employer's charitable giving program.
2. There will be a field in which to designate how you would like GSOFCT to use the donation. Complete this field with the specific troop/group and/or service unit you wish to receive the donation; if the troop number is unknown, enter the town or troop/group co-leader's name. Donations can also be designated to GSOFCT Campership Fund or Girl Assistance Fund. If this field is left blank, the gift will be allocated to general operating.
3. Allow ample time when processing the donation or matching gift, or requesting volunteer hours from the employer. Familiarize yourself with the employer's charitable giving program deadlines and timeline for processing gifts.

Notifying GSOFCT of a Gift for Troop/Group or Service Unit:

In order to receive the gift, you must complete the [Monetary Gift Acceptance Form](#) and forward to the Hartford Service Center, Attn: Fund Development, email to customercare@gsfct.org, or fax to (860) 548-0325. Gifts will not be released to a troop/group or service unit without this form on file at GSOFCT.

Please note:

- Gifts that are directed to a troop/group or service unit must be used for the benefit of the entire troop/group or service unit and not for a specific individual(s).
- If your troop/group or service unit receives a check or cash over \$250 directly from a parent, guardian, organization, etc. please send the donation to GSOFCT along with the [Monetary Gift Acceptance Form](#). GSOFCT will process the donation, issue it to the designated troop/group or service unit, and provide a tax receipt to the donor. **Do not deposit the check/cash into your troop/group or service unit bank account.**
- If your troop/group or service unit has reached the \$1,000 limit for the current fiscal year, the balance of the gift(s) can be designated to benefit another Girl Scout through the GSOFCT Campership Fund or GSOFCT Girl Assistance Fund.

Receiving a Gift for Troop/Group or Service Unit:

Once GSOFCT has received the gift from your employer and has the corresponding Monetary Gift Acceptance Form on file, an EFT will be requested from the GSOFCT Finance Department.

- The GSOFCT Finance Department completes EFTs every two weeks; depending upon the timing of your paperwork, it may take up to three weeks to process.
- This donation must be reported on the appropriate year-end financial report for the troop/group or service unit.

If you have any questions, please contact the Fund Development Department at customercare@gsfct.org. A staff member will promptly contact you.

When collaborating with any other organization, keep these additional guidelines in mind:

Avoid Fundraising for Other Organizations

Girl Scouts are not allowed to solicit money on behalf of another organization when identifying themselves as Girl Scouts by wearing a uniform, a sash or vest, official pins, and so on. This includes participating in a walkathon or telethon while in uniform. However, you and your group can support another organization through Take Action projects. Girl Scouts as individuals are able to participate in whatever events they choose as long as they're not wearing anything that officially identifies them as "Girl Scouts."

Steer Clear of Political Fundraisers

When in an official Girl Scout capacity or in any way identifying yourselves as Girl Scouts, your group may not participate, directly or indirectly, in any political campaign or work on behalf of or in opposition to a candidate for public office. Letter-writing campaigns are not allowed, nor is participating in a political rally, circulating a petition, or carrying a political banner.

Be Respectful When Collaborating with Religious Organizations

Girl Scout groups must respect the opinions and practices of religious partners, but no girl should be required to take part in any religious observance or practice of the sponsoring group.

Avoid Selling or Endorsing Commercial Products

A commercial product is any product sold at a retail location. Since 1939, girls and volunteers have not been allowed to endorse, provide a testimonial for, or sell such products.

Safety in Girl Scouting

The emotional and physical safety and well-being of Girl Scouts is our top priority. *Safety Activity Checkpoints* outlines the Safety Standards and Guidelines used in Girl Scouting, which apply to *all* Girl Scout activities.

For current COVID-19 guidelines, check your local council's version of *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.

All volunteers should review the *Safety Activity Checkpoints* manual when planning activities with girls in order to manage safety and risk in Girl Scout-sanctioned activities.

In [*Safety Activity Checkpoints*](#), you'll find:

- Girl Scout Activity Safety Standards and Guidelines with requirements for adult supervision, permission slips, preparation, field trips and overnight trips, and other vital information
- Activities that are not permitted by Girl Scouts of the USA and actions that girls and volunteers should not take
- Policies surrounding chartered aircraft trips and aviation
- First-aid and overall health information you'll need from the girls
- Standards for well-being and inclusivity, including working with Girl Scouts with disabilities and ensuring emotional safety
- A breakdown of specific activities—such as camping, internet use, and water sports—and their individual safety checkpoints

Following the Safety Standards and Guidelines is an Activity-at-a-Glance chart which details two critical points to keep in mind:

- Age-appropriate activities and participation by grade level
- Whether prior approval from your council is required before girls participate in a specific activity

Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need

From camping weekends to cookie booths, adult volunteers must always be present to ensure their Girl Scouts have fun and stay safe, no matter their grade level.

Not sure just how many adults you'll need for your activity? The following chart breaks down the minimum number of volunteers needed to supervise a specific number of Girl Scouts; councils may also establish maximums due to size or cost restrictions, so be sure to check with them as you plan your activity.

	Group Meetings		Events, Travel, and Camping	
	Two unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for up to this number of girls:	One additional volunteer to each additional:	Two unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for up to this number of girls:	One additional volunteer to each additional:
Girl Scout Daisies (grades K–1)	12	1–6	6	1–4
Girl Scout Brownies (grades 2–3)	20	1–8	12	1–6
Girl Scout Juniors (grades 4–5)	25	1–10	16	1–8
Girl Scout Cadettes (grades 6–8)	25	1–12	20	1–10
Girl Scout Seniors (grades 9–10)	30	1–15	24	1–12
Girl Scout Ambassadors (grades 11–12)	30	1–15	24	1–12

Transporting Girls

How parents decide to transport girls between their homes and Girl Scout meeting places is each parent's individual decision and responsibility.

For planned Girl Scout field trips and other activities (outside the normal meeting time and place) in which a group will be transported in private vehicles, keep the following in mind:

- Every driver must be an approved volunteer at least 21 years old, have a good driving record, a valid license, and a registered/insured vehicle.
- Girls never drive other girls.
- GSOFCT expects volunteers to be fully capable of performing their duties. While volunteering, it is not permitted to be under the influence of any substance, including medicinal marijuana, which may impair physical and/or mental skills. Don't consume alcohol, smoke, vape, or use foul language in the presence of girls. Do not carry ammunition or firearms in the presence of girls unless given special permission by your council for group marksmanship activities.
- If a group is traveling in one vehicle, there must be at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers in the vehicle, one of whom is female. In addition, the girl-volunteer ratios in the "Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need" section must be followed.
- If a group is traveling in more than one vehicle, the entire group must consist of at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers, one of whom is female, and the girl-volunteer ratios in the "Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need" section must be followed. Care should be taken so that a single car is not separated from the group for an extended length of time.
- Check gsfct.org for the most up to date COVID guidelines surrounding transportation.

Private transportation includes private passenger vehicles, rental cars, privately owned or rented recreational vehicles and campers, chartered buses, chartered boats, and chartered flights. Each driver of motorized private transportation must be at least **21** years old and hold a valid operator's license appropriate to the vehicle. In addition, state laws must be followed, even if they are more stringent than the guidelines here.

Anyone who is driving a vehicle with 12 or more passengers must follow all state laws regarding driving these vehicles. Fifteen passenger vans are not permitted for use to transport girls.

To help reduce the likelihood of a serious accident involving 10 passenger or greater capacity vehicles, GSOFCT suggests:

- Drivers should have no less than six years driving experience with the type of vehicle being driven.
- Use of seatbelts by driver and passengers should be strictly enforced.
- To reduce driver distractions, the front seat passenger should be designated to assist the driver by reading maps, caring for passenger needs, etc.
- Procedures should be in place to avoid driver fatigue.
- No roof-top loads or luggage is allowed.

GSOFCT has a listing of approved vendors for Girl Scout activities. Check with your membership experience specialist prior to reserving any vehicle to ensure they are on the council approved vendor list.

Please keep in mind the following non-negotiable points regarding private transportation:

- Even though written agreements are always required when renting or chartering, you are *not* authorized to sign an agreement or contract, except for rental car agreements, even if there is no

cost associated with the rental. Such agreements must instead be signed by the person designated by your council.

- Check with your council to make sure you are following accepted practices when using private transportation. This ensures that both you and your council are protected by liability insurance in the event of an accident.
- If your council has given permission to use a rented car, read all rental agreements to be sure you comply with their terms and avoid surprises. For example, in many cases the minimum age of drivers is 25, and the maximum age is often under 70. In addition, make sure the car is adequately insured and you know who is responsible for damage to, or loss of, the vehicle. Finally, ensure you have a good paper trail that shows the vehicle rental is Girl Scout-related.
- Auto insurance is one of the most frequently used types of personal insurance and is ***required*** in Connecticut in order to drive legally. As of June 2013, Connecticut law requires:
 - \$10,000 in coverage per accident for property damage liability
 - \$20,000 in coverage per person per accident for bodily injury liability
 - \$40,000 in coverage per accident for bodily injury liability
- A driver's personal automobile insurance is the ***primary insurer***. Girl Scouts of Connecticut does not provide any additional coverage for that automobile.
- Obtain parent/guardian permission for any use of transportation outside of the meeting place.

Checklist for Drivers

When driving a car, RV or camper, take the following precautions and ask all other drivers to do the same:

- Ensure all drivers are volunteers at least 21 years old
- Girls should not be transporting other girls.
- Never transport girls in flatbed or panel trucks, in the bed of a pickup, or in a camper-trailer.
- Keep directions and a road map in the car, along with a first-aid kit and a flashlight.
- Check your lights, signals, tires, windshield wipers, horns and fluid levels before each trip, and recheck them periodically on long trips.
- Keep all necessary papers up to date including, but not limited to: your driver's license; vehicle registration; any state or local inspections; and insurance coverage.
- Wear your seat belt at all times, and insist that all passengers do the same. Girls under 12 must ride in the back seats. Adhere to Connecticut State laws regarding booster seats and requirements for children in rear seats (ctsafekids.org/child-passenger-safety/).
- Follow all the established rules of the road in your state, including the speed limit. Some additional guidelines include: keeping a two-car-length distance between you and the car ahead of you; not talking or texting on a cell phone or other personal electronic device while driving; not using ear buds or headphones while driving; and turning your lights on when your windshield wipers are on.
- Plan rest stops every few hours and avoid driving for extended periods at night. If traveling with others, prearrange stopping places along the way. When planning longer trips, arrange for relief drivers.
- Do NOT drive when you are tired or taking medication that makes you drowsy.
- Check with your council for any other specific guidelines or requirements they have.

It is recommended that you create a folder for each car that will be transporting girls during your trip. This folder should include:

Trip Folder
For each participant:
Parent/Guardian Trip/Event Permission Form
Annual Consent and Health History Form
Girl Health Record (if applicable)
Adult Health History Card (suggest all adults complete and carry)
Over-the-Counter Medication – Parent/Guardian Authorization Form (if applicable)
Also:
GSOFACT Crisis Card
Girl Scout Activity Insurance Information
Accident/Injury Report Form
Incident Report Form
Troop Roster with phone numbers of other drivers and at-home contacts
Trip Itinerary - map, directions, or address of destination (if applicable)

Computer/Online Safety

Understand the Girl Scout Online Safety Pledge

In order to make sure that girls are aware of how to safely use the Internet, you should discuss online safety issues with the girls and distribute copies of the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge (the pledge is available at the end of this document and at girlscouts.org). The girls should also take a copy of the pledge home and go over it with their parents. Both the girl and her parent should sign the pledge.

Safeguard Information

Girls must understand that the internet is an open means of communication that anyone can access. As such, websites will often attract people other than their intended users. It is therefore imperative that any information that could jeopardize the safety and security of girls and volunteers not be disclosed on a website. The following measures will help to ensure girls' online safety:

- Girl Scouts should only use their first names
- A Girl Scout's last name, address, phone number, or email address should never be posted. For Digital Cookie, a girl may post her unique Digital Cookie URL on her Facebook page and may email it to friends and family (for additional information please refer to Safety Activity Checkpoint for Online Product Program, Digital Cookie Terms & Conditions for Volunteers and Digital Cookie Pledge for Girls)
- Always have a parent's or guardian's permission when using pictures of girls on a website. This is especially important if the girl is under 13 years old
- Do not post addresses of group meeting places, dates and times of meetings, events or trips on a website. Instead, a volunteer who wishes to communicate upcoming events with families of Girl Scouts should send an email to the families

- Do not allow automatic posting of messages to a website. All postings to message boards, social media, and guest books should have volunteer oversight, and be screened prior to posting live
- Ensure that websites do not show personal email addresses of girls, but use a troop, group or volunteer's email

Approaching Activities

How can you, as a Girl Scout volunteer, determine whether an activity is safe and appropriate for Girl Scouts? Good judgment and common sense often dictate the answer. What's safe in one circumstance may not be safe in another. An incoming storm, for example, might force you to assess or discontinue an activity. If you are uncertain about the safety of an activity, call your council staff with full details and don't proceed without approval. Remember, the safety of girls is your most important consideration.

Prior to any activity, read the specific section in *Safety Activity Checkpoints* (available on your council's website or from your support team in some other format) related to any activity you plan to do with girls. If a section in *Safety Activity Checkpoints* does not exist for an activity you and the girls are interested in, check with your council **before** making any definite plans with the girls. A few activities are allowed only with written council pre-approval and only for girls 12 and over, while some are off-limits completely:

- **Caution:** You must get written pre-approval from your council for girls ages 12 and older who will:

- Use firearms for target shooting (see "Sport Shooting" in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*)
- Take trips on waterways that are highly changeable or uncontrollable (See "Whitewater Rafting" in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*)

Need more information on the troop trip process? Contact your service unit manager.

When planning activities with girls, note the abilities of each girl and carefully consider the progression of skills from the easiest part to the most difficult. Make sure the complexity of the activity does not exceed girls' individual skills. Bear in mind that skill levels decline when people are tired, hungry or under stress. Also use activities as opportunities for building teamwork, which is one of the outcomes for the Connect key in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE).

Certificates of Liability Insurance (COI)

Girl Scouts of Connecticut requires a Certificate of Liability Insurance (COI) be on file from certain program providers or sites our members are using.

Activities: A Certificate of Liability Insurance (proof of insurance) is needed for any activity that involves significant risk. Below is a list of activities that require certificates of liability (for \$1 million), though the council may deem one necessary for activities that are not listed:

- Archery
- Caving
- Challenge Courses
- Climbing and Rappelling
- Downhill Skiing and Snowboarding
- Fencing
- Hayrides
- Horseback Riding
- Martial Arts
- Scuba Diving

- Sledding, Tobogganing, and Snow Tubing
- White-Water Rafting

Once a COI is on file, other troops/groups are able to utilize that venue without requesting a new certificate. A certificate of liability insurance is required to ensure that if someone is hurt on the property as a result of the negligence of the company, there is proper insurance coverage. If you have further questions, please contact the Risk Management Department at customercare@gsofct.org.

Waivers could be required by facilities that offer activities that may involve risk. It is a GSUSA policy that waivers releasing vendor liability are not to be signed by our members without council review. Therefore, GSOFACT must review all required waivers prior to granting approval for any activity where risk is involved. The council, on behalf of its membership, has the final say when accepting insurance liability.

GSOFACT will permit waivers to be signed only after we have screened them and have agreed to accept the liability. We will make every effort for girls to try new opportunities, but ultimately the goal is to keep them safe and to protect their rights.

Please note: Girl Scout volunteers may not sign a waiver on behalf of a troop/group member. Only a parent or guardian may sign a vendor's waiver for their girl/ward.

High Adventure Approval Process: Approved Vendor List

For trips that include activities that are considered high adventure, council approval is required. For the safety of our members, the council must approve sites and vendors for these activities before a troop/group uses the site or vendor for a troop/group or service unit event. Council approval verifies that the site or vendor has met the safety and insurance guidelines for Girl Scouts of Connecticut. This procedure is designed to ensure a safe experience for our girls, as well as to protect the legal interests of the adult volunteers and the council. For more information, contact your membership experience specialist.

High Adventure Trip Process

Trips that include activities requiring specialized skills, training, and/or equipment, are considered to be high adventure. These activities involve a reasonable expectation of physical risk to the girls or a legal risk to the adult volunteers and/or the council. In the 2021-2022 Safety Activity Checkpoints, a column has been added to the chart that begins on page 23 which indicates if an activity is High Risk/High Adventure.

1. Complete the [Troop Trip Application](#) form which now includes all trips (High Adventure, Day Trip, Extended Trip, and Parade Float/Hayride). This form can be found on our website at gsofct.org under Forms.

Please note: The GSOFACT vendor list is fluid and changes continuously. All troops/groups must complete the High Adventure Approval Process even if they have previously visited a site.

2. Submit the High Adventure Trip Application form along with your troop/group roster, to your service unit manager or designee for approval ***four weeks*** prior to trip.
 - **Approved:**
 - Customer Care will review the application and then forward to Risk Management for final approval.
 - Once final approval is granted, an email will be sent to the troop/group co-leader containing the approval.

- **Non-Approved:**
 - If approval is *denied*, the troop/group co-leader will be notified.
 - Customer Care and/or Risk Management will work with the troop/group co-leader to ensure needed information is obtained to approve request.
 - **Not on Council Vendor Approved List:**
 - If during the approval process it is noted that the facility or vendor is not on the council approved vendor list, customer care will forward the High Adventure Trip Application form onto the GSOFACT Risk Management department for further research.
 - The GSOFACT Risk Management department will contact facility or vendor to begin the process of adding proposed facility or vendor the council-approved vendor list. Depending on the vendor, this process could be lengthy. Allow at least four weeks for new facility/vendor approval (see below for more information on adding vendors to the approved vendor list).
 - **Vendor Approval:** Once facility or vendor has been approved, an email will be sent to the troop/group co-leader containing the approval.
 - **Vendor Non-approved:** There may be instances when a facility or vendor does not meet GSOFACT safety standards. In these instances, the Risk Management Department will work with the troop/group to find an alternate facility or vendor.
3. Troop/group co-leader submits the High Adventure Trip Evaluation form to the Risk Management department within two weeks of trip completion (customercare@gsofact.org).

Adding Vendors to the Approved Vendor List

Troop/groups are NOT limited to the facilities and vendors on the approved vendor list. If you find a site or vendor that you would like to use, Risk Management will work with them to place them on the approved vendor list. For a facility or vendor to be listed as an “approved vendor,” they must meet the safety and insurance guidelines for GSOFACT, which include the following:

- Comply with all guidelines listed in the *Safety Activity Checkpoints* and in *Volunteer Essentials*.
- Facilities and vendors must supply GSOFACT with a Certificate of Liability for one million dollars or more, naming Girl Scouts of Connecticut as additionally insured.
- GSOFACT will list the facility or vendor as additionally insured on the council Certificate of Liability.

If you would like to have a facility or vendor approved for your troop or group’s use, please forward the following information to the Risk Management Department at customercare@gsofact.org.

- Your contact information
- Contact information for the facility or vendor, including phone number
- Possible dates for the trip/activity
- Explanation of proposed activities

Once we receive this information, we will work with the facility or vendor to become an approved vendor for your activity. If you wish to be involved in the process (vendors can sometimes be a little quicker to supply the needed information when they are working directly with their customer), please let us know and we’ll supply you with the information you need. Please allow as much time as possible (at least four weeks) for approving a new facility or vendor.

If a facility or vendor refuses to follow the safety and insurance guidelines for Girl Scouts of Connecticut then we will not be able to endorse this facility or vendor on our approved vendor list or approve trips/activities using this facility or vendor.

Caution needs to be taken when deciding whether to participate in activities that involve the handling of animals. While animals can provide important opportunities for learning and entertainment, there is also

a risk of illness and injury from contact with animals. Research the activity site prior to your outing. The education center or organization that owns the animals should:

- Provide trained and/or certified personnel to ensure for a safe learning environment.
- Ensure sound hygiene practices are maintained. Have areas where participants can wash hands before and after the handling of animals (if applicable).
- Provide a Certificate of Liability Insurance proving they are insured. Work with your membership experience specialist to ensure coverage is adequate and all safety precautions are identified and in compliance with GSOFCT requirements.

Please note: When planning activities that include animals, consider those girls and adults that may have pet allergies.

Verification of site approval must be obtained **prior** to your trip. Trips to locations such as petting zoos, farms, animal shelters, pet stores, and horseback riding facilities are approved site by site. Opportunities to provide service rather than participating in activities with animals may be available. Safety of our members is the primary concern in our approval process.

Health Histories (Including Examinations and Immunizations)

Girl Scout health histories and records may be handled differently by each council. For example, the staff at your council office may take care of obtaining and storing girl health histories, including a physician's examination and list of required immunizations. In other councils, you may be asked to maintain these records for your group. Either way, keep in mind that information contained in a girl's health history is confidential and protected by law. This information may only be shared with people who have a need to know this information such as the girl herself, her parent/guardian and a healthcare provider.

Appropriate medical history and information for each girl member must be secured in writing before she can participate in Girl Scout activities. This form must accompany co-leaders/adult chaperones during all events/trips/activities. All necessary paperwork must be in vehicles transporting the girls to whom they refer.

Adults should carry the Adult Health History cards whenever they participate in Girl Scout activities.

The [Annual Consent and Health History Form](#) must be reviewed/updated yearly—or any time medical information changes—for each girl in the troop/group and may be re-signed for an additional two years.

For trips of three nights or more, also complete the [Girl Health Record Form](#).

The volunteers working with a Girl Scout troop/group should be diligent in ensuring all medical forms are up-to-date, and in reminding parents to partner with them to make sure that happens.

These forms can be found in English and Spanish on our website at gsofct.org under the Forms search.

For various reasons, some parents/guardians may object to immunizations or medical examinations. Councils must attempt to make provisions for these girls to attend Girl Scout functions in a way that accommodates these concerns.

The Connecticut State Department of Public Health states:

Immunization exemptions are permitted under certain circumstances. According to state law a child can be exempted from receiving a vaccine for medical conditions which are contraindicated or for religious reasons. If one of these circumstances is true for your child, please visit <http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3136&q=388416> and read the appropriate form for additional information.

It is important for you to be aware of any medications a girl may take or allergies she may have. Keep in mind the following

- Medication, including over-the-counter products, must never be dispensed without prior written permission from a girl's custodial parent or guardian. GSOFCT has developed the [Over-the-Counter Medication – Parent/Guardian Authorization](#) form to provide volunteers with the written instructions needed **for girls to self-administer** any non-prescription medications that may be necessary during an event. The child will request the medication approved by the parent/guardian and the first aider will oversee the child taking the medication to ensure they are taking the correct medication, dosage, etc.
- Some girls may need to carry and administer their own medications, such as bronchial inhalers, EpiPens or diabetes medication. You must have documentation from the girl's parent or guardian that it is acceptable for the girl to self-administer these medications.
- Common food allergies include dairy products, eggs, soy, wheat, peanuts, tree nuts, and seafood. This means that before serving any food (such as peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, cookies or chips), **ask** whether anyone is allergic to peanuts, dairy products or wheat. Do this even if you are aware of which girls have specific allergies! Even Girl Scout Daisies and Brownies should be aware of their allergies, but double checking with them and their parents/guardians is always a good idea.

Girl Scouts of Connecticut's adult members are **not permitted** to administer medication. This *includes* the administration of an Epi-Pen (epinephrine). Volunteers and staff who have been certified to dispense medications and are comfortable doing so can administer medication upon proof of current certification (Medic First, American Red Cross, CT State Department of Developmental Services, etc.)

GSOFCT requires that any over-the-counter or prescribed medications should be in the original container and ***administered by the girl*** in the prescribed dosage in the ***presence*** of the responsible adult as per written instruction by custodial parent, guardian, or physician. In some instances, there may be a need to have a certified first aider administer medication.

Please note: The attendance of a Girl Scout's parent/guardian or other responsible adult may be necessary when considering certain activities where an individual child needs additional assistance. Girl Scout volunteers and staff are responsible for the safety of ***all*** girls during Girl Scout activities. Volunteers and staff may have varying levels of comfort providing care and support for girls with medical conditions. With this in mind, open conversations between troop/group co-leaders and the parents/guardians is encouraged prior to Girl Scout activities.

Girl Scout Activity Insurance

Every registered Girl Scout and registered volunteer member in the Girl Scout movement is automatically covered under the basic Mutual of Omaha Activity Insurance plan upon registration. The premium for the Basic Plan, which provides supplemental medical insurance is paid for in full by Girl Scouts of the USA.

This insurance provides up to a specified maximum for medical expenses incurred as a result of an accident while a member is participating in an approved, supervised Girl Scout activity. This is one reason why all volunteers and girls should be registered members. It is important to remember that non-registered parents, tagalongs (brothers, sisters and friends) and other persons are **not** covered by the basic plan.

A Tagalong is any person not registered with the troop that is actively participating in an activity or event. A Tagalong is not just a younger brother or sister attending a troop meeting or going along on a

Girl Scout outing or activity, they may also be a registered Girl Scout who is attending a meeting or event not designed for her age group, unless working in a leadership capacity. Tagalongs can distract girls from their planned activities and distract the co-leaders from providing proper supervision of girls. Decisions as to how to handle this situation should be discussed by the leadership team.

This insurance coverage is **not** intended to diminish the need for, or replace existing, family health insurance. When \$130 in benefits has been paid under this plan for covered expenses, any subsequent benefits from the basic plan will be payable (up to the specified maximum) only for expenses incurred that aren't covered under another insurance policy. If there is no family insurance or healthcare program, a specified maximum of medical benefits is available under the basic plan.

An optional Activity Insurance plan is available for Girl Scouts taking extended trips (trips that are more than two overnight stays) and for non-members who participate in Girl Scout activities. These optional plans are secondary insurance that a council may offer to cover participants taking part in any council-approved, supervised Girl Scout activity. Contact your council to find out how to apply. In some cases, your council may make this insurance mandatory, particularly for overseas travel.

Review the [Girl Scouts insurance plan](#) description here.

Please note:

All requests for additional Activity Insurance must be submitted at least **two weeks prior** to the activity or event.

Forward the enrollment form **along with** payment to your membership experience specialist for processing.

Enrollment forms submitted **less than two weeks** before an event or activity may jeopardize the purchase of additional Activity Insurance. To ensure for the safety of all participants, adhere to submission deadlines.

To obtain additional Activity Insurance coverage for *extended trips*, contact your membership experience specialist for enrollment and/or submission and instructions.

In the event that you or one of the girls in your troop/group is injured, treatment must occur within thirty days after the accident. For information on how to file a claim please contact your membership experience specialist.

Mutual of Omaha Insurance - Girl Scout Coverage Overview

Plan	Plan 1	Plan 2 (covers accidents only)	Plan 3E (covers accidents and illness)	Plan 3P (covers accidents and illness)	Plan 3PI (covers accidents and illness)
Coverage	Basic accident protection to <u>registered</u> Girl Scout members.	<i>Supplemental</i> insurance to personal health insurance for accidents only <ul style="list-style-type: none"> for activities lasting more than two consecutive nights non-member participants 	<i>Supplemental</i> insurance to personal health insurance for accidents and illness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> for events lasting more than three days and two consecutive nights non-member participants 	<i>Primary</i> insurance for accident and illness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> for events lasting more than three days and two consecutive nights non-member participants 	<i>Primary</i> insurance for accident and illness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> for events lasting more than three days and two consecutive nights non-member participants
Does not cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Illness Activities lasting more than three days and two consecutive nights Non-members, including tagalongs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Illness Once \$130 of covered expenses is paid by United of Omaha the remaining benefits will be payable <i>only</i> for expenses not covered by claimant's personal health insurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once \$130 of covered expenses is paid by United of Omaha, the remaining benefits will be payable <i>only</i> for expenses not covered by claimant's personal health insurance 		
Use	For approved, supervised Girl Scout activities; troop/group meetings, trips, camping as well as travel <i>directly</i> to and from these activities	Service unit events, extended troop/group trips, non-member participants in all approved and supervised Girl Scout activities, including travel <i>directly</i> to and from these activities	Service unit events, extended troop/group trips, including travel <i>directly</i> to and from these activities.	Trip and Destinations including travel <i>directly to</i> and from these activities.	Recommended for <u>international</u> travel. Includes travel directly to and from these activities. This plan includes 24-hour travel assistance and medical services.
Premium	Included as benefit with national membership fee	\$11 a day per participant Enrollment form <u>along with premium</u> must be returned to your membership experience specialist at least two weeks prior to event. Contact your membership experience specialist for more info. (\$5 minimum premium)	\$29 a day per participant Enrollment form <u>along with premium</u> must be returned to your membership experience specialist at least two weeks prior to event. Contact your membership experience specialist for more info. (\$5 minimum premium)	\$70 a day per participant Enrollment form <u>along with premium</u> must be returned to your membership experience specialist at least two weeks prior to event. Contact your membership experience specialist for more info. (\$5 minimum premium)	\$1.17 a day per participant Enrollment form <u>along with premium</u> must be returned to your membership experience specialist at least three weeks prior to event. Contact your membership experience specialist for more info. (\$5 minimum premium)

*reviewed 8-2015

In case of an accident, the [Mutual of Omaha, Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. Claim Form](#) must be completed at the time of accident (minor or major) and signed by an adult (either the injured party or the parent/guardian of the injured girl). Fill out the form for all accidents, even if minor. The Mutual of Omaha Claim form can be found on our website at gsocf.org under Forms.

Do not mail the claim form directly to Mutual of Omaha. Return a completed claim form along with the [Accident/Injury Report](#) to the Hartford Service Center **within 24 hours**, if possible.

Steps for Requesting Additional Activity Insurance: Plan 2

Additional Activity Insurance is **required** when ANY person – girl, sibling, adult, or anyone who is **not** currently registered as a Girl Scout member, will participate in a meeting, on a trip, or other Girl Scout gathering.

If an adult will participate other than a visiting speaker or presenter or audience member, or unregistered children (siblings or friends) will participate in any way other than as an audience member, the additional insurance is required. This insurance is reasonably priced, and the process is easy.

1. Complete the [Mutual of Omaha Enrollment Form - Plan 2](#) form on our website at gsofct.org under Forms.
2. Please complete the following information:
 - **Contact Information**
 - **Name and Location of the Event/Trip.** In order to ensure the site is covered, please provide the address of where the event/trip will be.
 - Bowling Event,
Scouting Lanes,
12 Girl Scout Way,
National Portfolio, GSUSA 12345
 - **Beginning Date and Ending Date** of the event/trip
 - **Number of Participants**
 - This number reflects the number of *unregistered* participants attending an event/trip
 - If the event/trip is more than three days, all participants registered **and** unregistered must be included.
 - **Number of Days** the event/trip will last
 - **Number of Participant Days** (Multiply columns 1 x 2 of form)
 - **Premium Each Day** – this is pre-established by Mutual of Omaha
 - **Total Premium due** (Multiply columns 3 x 4 of form)
 - **Verification of information.** Signature is required verifying information is true and correct.
3. Submit the completed form along with banking information for the required premium **two weeks prior** to the event/trip. Up to five events/trips can be listed on each form.

Please Note: There is a minimum premium of \$5.00 per enrollment form. Enrollment forms submitted with less than the required \$5.00 will be returned unprocessed.
4. If for any reason the event/trip is rescheduled please submit a new enrollment form and payment for the new date.

Please Note: To obtain additional Activity Insurance coverage for *extended trips* lasting more than three days and two consecutive nights, contact your membership experience specialist for enrollment and/or submission instructions.

Please take the time to become familiar with the council instructions ***before*** requesting additional insurance.

Mutual of Omaha Enrollment Forms ***may not*** be sent directly to the insurance company. Those sent directly to Mutual of Omaha will be returned ***unprocessed*** and therefore delay obtaining additional insurance coverage.

Someone Needs Emergency Care

As you know, emergencies can happen. Girls need to receive proper instruction in how to care for themselves and others in emergencies. They also need to learn the importance of reporting to volunteers any accidents, illnesses or unusual behaviors during Girl Scout activities. You can help girls by keeping in mind the following:

- **Know what to report.** See the “What to Do If There is an Accident” section earlier in this chapter.
- **Establish and practice procedures for weather emergencies.** Know the type of extreme weather to expect in your area (e.g. tornadoes, hurricanes and lightning). Please consult with your council for the most relevant information for you to share with girls.
- **Establish and practice procedures for such circumstances as fire evacuation, lost persons and building-security issues.** Every girl and adult volunteer must know how to act in these situations. For example, you and the girls, with the help of a fire department representative, should design a fire evacuation plan for meeting places used by the group.
- **Assemble a well-stocked first aid kit that is always accessible.** First aid administered in the first few minutes can make a significant difference in the severity of an injury. In an emergency, secure professional medical assistance as soon as possible, normally by calling 911, and then administer first aid, if appropriately trained.

First Aid/CPR

Emergencies require prompt action and quick judgment. For many activities, Girl Scouts recommends that at least one adult volunteer be first aid/CPR-certified. For that reason, if you have the opportunity to get trained in council-approved first aid/CPR, do it! You can take advantage of first aid/CPR training offered by chapters of the American Red Cross, National Safety Council, EMP America, American Heart Association or other sponsoring organizations approved by your council. As a partner of GSUSA, American Red Cross offers discounts on certification courses.

Caution: First aid/CPR training that is available entirely online does not satisfy Girl Scouts’ requirements. Such courses do not offer enough opportunities to practice and receive feedback on your technique. If you’re taking a course not offered by one of the organizations listed in the previous paragraph, or any course that has online components, get approval from your support team or council prior to enrolling in the course.

First Aider

A first aider is an adult volunteer who has taken Girl Scout-approved first aid and CPR training that includes specific instructions for child CPR. If, through the American Red Cross, National Safety Council, EMP America, or American Heart Association, you have a chance to be fully trained in first aid and CPR, doing so may make your activity planning go a little more smoothly.

To be considered a certified first aider with Girl Scouts of Connecticut, the adult volunteer must hold current certifications in First Aid, CPR/AED for **both** children and adults. Your troop/group first aider must also be an **approved** adult.

The *Safety Activity Checkpoints* always tell you when a first aider needs to be present. Since activities can take place in a variety of locations, the presence of a first aider and the qualifications they need to have are based on the remoteness of the activity. For example, if you take a two-mile hike in an area that has cell phone reception and service along the entire route and EMS (Emergency Medical Services) is no more than 30-minutes away at all times the first aider will not need to have knowledge of wilderness first aid. If, on the other hand, you take the same two-mile hike in a more remote area with no cell phone

service and where EMS is more than 30 minutes away, the first aider must have knowledge of wilderness first aid (see the chart below).

Access to EMS	Minimum Level of First Aid Required
Less than 30 minutes	First Aid
More than 30 minutes	Wilderness First Aid (WFA) or Wilderness First Responder (WFR)*

**Although a WFR is not required, it is strongly recommended when traveling with groups in areas that are greater than 30 minutes from EMS.*

It is important to understand the differences between a first aid course, and a wilderness-rated course. Although standard first aid training provides basic incident response, wilderness-rated courses include training on remote-assessment skills, as well as emergency first-aid response, including evacuation techniques, to use when EMS is not readily available.

Note: The presence of a first aider is required at resident camp. For large events—200 people or more—there should be one first aider for every 200 participants. The following healthcare providers may also serve as first aiders: physician; physician's assistant; nurse practitioner; registered nurse; licensed practical nurse; paramedic; military medic; and emergency medical technician.

First Aid Kit

Make sure a general first aid kit is available at your group meeting place and accompanies girls on any activity (including transportation to and from the activity). Please be aware that you may need to provide this kit if one is not available at your meeting place. You can purchase a Girl Scout first aid kit, you can buy a commercial kit, or you and the girls can assemble a kit yourselves. The Red Cross offers a list of potential items in its [Anatomy of a First Aid Kit](#) (note that the Red Cross's suggested list includes aspirin, which you will not be at liberty to give to girls without direct parent/guardian permission). You can also customize a kit to cover your specific needs, including flares, treatments for frostbite or snake bites, and the like.

In addition to standard materials, all kits should contain your council and emergency telephone numbers (which you can get from your council contact). Girl Scout activity insurance forms, parent consent forms and health histories may also be included.

Following the Girl Scouts Safety Guidelines

Every adult in Girl Scouting is responsible for the physical and emotional safety of girls, and we all demonstrate that by agreeing to follow these guidelines at all times.

1. **Follow the Safety Activity Checkpoints.** Instructions for staying safe while participating in activities are detailed in the Safety Activity Checkpoints, available from your council. Read the checkpoints, follow them, and share them with other volunteers, parents, and girls before engaging in activities with girls.
2. **Arrange for proper adult supervision of girls.** Your group must have at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers present at all times, plus additional adult volunteers as necessary, depending on the size of the group and the ages and abilities of girls. Adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old (or the age of majority defined by the state, if it is older than 18) and must be screened by your council before volunteering. One lead volunteer in every group must be female.

- Girl Scouts of Connecticut defines a troop as consisting of at least five girls from more than one family.

- In order to ensure all girls have an opportunity to participate in Girl Scouting, GSOFCT recommends all troops/groups with less than ten girls remain open to new members.
- Two non-related adults, one of which is female, must be present at all times and all volunteers in the role of co-leader should have successfully completed the Volunteer Onboarding process, Background Screening, and Core Leadership training requirements.

3. **Get parent/guardian permission.** When an activity takes place that is outside the normal time and place, or a topic is discussed that could be considered sensitive, advise each parent/guardian of the details of the activity and obtain permission for girls to participate.
4. **Report abuse.** Sexual advances, improper touching, and sexual activity of any kind with girl members are forbidden. Physical, verbal, and emotional abuse of girls is also forbidden. Follow your council's guidelines for reporting concerns about abuse or neglect that may be occurring inside or outside of Girl Scouting.

- It is GSOFCT's expectation that all staff and volunteers follow the state of Connecticut's Child Abuse Reporting Laws (<http://www.ct.gov/dcf/cwp/view.asp?a=2556&q=314384>).
- Should reporting circumstances arise, we ask that you *also* make GSOFCT aware of your reporting. Call (800) 922-2770 and ask to be connected to either the deputy chief mission delivery officer or the director of girl experience

5. **Be prepared for emergencies.** Work with girls and other volunteers to establish and practice procedures for emergencies related to weather, fire, lost girls/volunteers, and site security. Always keep handy a well-stocked first aid kit, girl health histories, and contact information for girls' families.
6. **Travel safely.** When transporting girls to planned Girl Scout field trips and other activities that are outside the normal time and place, every driver must be an approved adult volunteer, over the age of 21, and have a good driving record, a valid license, and a registered/insured vehicle. Insist that everyone is in a legal seat and wears her seat belt at all times, and adhere to state laws regarding booster seats and requirements for children in rear seats (<http://www.ctsafekids.org/child-passenger-safety/>).
7. **Ensure safe overnight outings.** Prepare girls to be away from home by involving them in planning, so they know what to expect. Avoid having men sleep in the same space as girls and women. During family or parent-daughter overnights, one family unit may sleep in the same sleeping quarters in program areas. When parents are staffing events, daughters should remain in quarters with other girls rather than in staff areas.

Girl Scouts of Connecticut requires that separate provisions are made for any men attending Girl Scout activities.

- Separate bathroom and sleeping quarters are required. In situations where spouses are attending, separate sleeping arrangements also apply. Ensure designated areas are properly signed and the girls respect these areas.
- Adult males do not supervise sleeping areas.

Bed Space Guidelines:

Each participant has her own bed or sleeping space. Parent/guardian permission must be obtained if girls are to share a double bed, such as in the case of staying in a hotel. It is required that girls sharing a bed use sleeping bags or alternate under-over the linens.

No adult may sleep alone in a room or in the same bed with a girl; the exception being mothers/female guardians and daughters/wards. In the event that a Girl Scout troop/group is using a facility that does not lend itself to this practice, a minimum of two adults per sleeping area must occur and safety girl/adult ratios must be maintained. When using hotel rooms, safety girl/adult ratios must also be maintained.

8. **Role-model the right behavior.** Never use illegal drugs. Don't consume alcohol, smoke, or use foul language in the presence of girls. Do not carry ammunition or firearms in the presence of girls unless given special permission by your council for group marksmanship activities.
9. **Create an emotionally safe space.** Adults and volunteers are responsible for making Girl Scouting a place where girls are as safe emotionally as they are physically. Protect the emotional safety of girls by creating a team agreement and coaching girls to honor it. Agreements typically encourage behaviors like respecting a diversity of feelings and opinions; resolving conflicts constructively; and avoiding physical and verbal bullying, clique behavior, and discrimination.
10. **Ensure that no girl is treated differently.** Girl Scouts welcomes all members, regardless of race, ethnicity, background, disability, family structure, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic status. When scheduling, helping plan, and carrying out activities, carefully consider the needs of all girls involved, including school schedules, family needs, financial constraints, religious holidays, and the accessibility of appropriate transportation and meeting places.
11. **Promote online safety.** Instruct girls never to put their full names or contact information online, engage in virtual conversation with strangers. Girls should never arrange in-person meetings with online contacts, other than to deliver cookies and only with the approval and accompaniment of a parent or designated adult. On group websites, publish girls' first names only and never divulge their contact information. Teach girls the [Girl Scout Online Safety Pledge](#) and have them commit to it.

Keep girls safe during money-earning activities. Girl Scout Cookies and other council-sponsored product sales programs are an integral part of the program. During Girl Scout product sales programs, you are responsible for the safety of girls, money, and products. In addition, a wide variety of organizations, causes, and fundraisers may appeal to Girl Scouts to be their labor force. When representing Girl Scouts, girls cannot participate in money-earning activities that represent partisan politics or that are not Girl Scout-approved product program and efforts.

GSOFACT Properties

Girl Scouts of Connecticut owns and maintains a wide variety of properties to provide many outdoor and indoor camping experiences. Properties are available for use by our members and non-members. You will find that each site has different facilities and outdoor opportunities to explore. Accommodations at each camp range from modern buildings with heat and running water to primitive sites with tents and latrines. Most camps are open year-round. Using these properties will build great experiences, lasting memories, and skills for your girls.

In this section, you will find the procedures and guidelines for use of the properties, as well as basic summaries of each site and its facilities. More detailed information regarding our properties can be found on the GSOFACT website at gsofact.org by selecting Participate and then Property Tours. **Please note** online reservations and payments are the only option for site use. You can make a reservation here: <http://gsofact.doubleknot.com/facilitysearch/3554>.

GSOFACT Procedures for use of Council Properties – Troop/Group

Outdoor activities have always been an integral part of Girl Scouting. Girl Scout camping is different from other outdoor experiences because it is a group effort. The girls involved plan their own activities, meals, and schedules to meet their needs. It is a creative, educational experience that not only instills an appreciation for the environment, but also enforces the importance of minimal impact, all accomplished while having fun and learning new skills!

Troop/Group Procedures:

- Reservations for the use of council-owned sites are processed on a first-come, first-served basis. You can register for a site by going to <http://gsofact.doubleknot.com/facilitysearch/3554>. Use the link to reserve sites on this page.
- Troops can make a reservation for sites up to 90 days prior to the scheduled start day of their reservation. Please note reservations must be made after **2:01 p.m.** Eastern Standard time.
Payment in full is required when making a site reservation.
- A confirmation will be sent when the reservation is processed. GSOFACT will contact the person who reserved the site 48 hours prior to their event with access instructions via email.

Additional Camp Information:

- Buildings and gates at most GSOFACT properties have key boxes or combination locks for easy entry upon your arrival. You will receive the codes to enter the property 48 hours prior to your stay. You will also be sent a full description of the property and any important information you may need for your visit.
- **Overnight Use**
 - **Check-in** at all camp facilities begins at **3:00 p.m.** on the first day of the reservation.
 - **Check-out:** everyone must check out of the property no later than **2:00 p.m.** on the last day of their reservation. After all campers have departed, the ranger or caretaker will inspect the facility and note the condition and any damage. A fee may be charged to your group and/or a security deposit may be instituted on future site usage if the condition of the facility is not deemed acceptable.
- **Hourly Use:**

- **Check-in and check-out** will be based on the time reserved between the hours of 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m.
- **You cannot enter a property prior to the time reserved.** You must check out on time to allow next group entry to the property. After all campers have departed, the ranger or caretaker will inspect the facility and note the condition and any damage. A fee may be charged to your group and/or a security deposit may be instituted on future site usage if the condition of the facility is not deemed acceptable.
- **Food service and kitchen use:** In order to use the kitchen, the person in charge of food preparation must have a *ServSafe* certificate or equivalent documented experience. For more information on *ServSafe* certification contact the Property Services Department at property@gsofct.org or visit servsafe.com.
- Any **outside, non-Girl Scout groups** must contact the Property Services Department directly to request use of a facility. You can reach the office at (800) 922-2770 or property@gsofct.org.
- **Specialty Equipment Use/Certifications:**
 - The Program Department is prepared to help service units utilize specialty areas. Additional fees are required for facilitators. For information regarding specialty areas and/or equipment please contact the Program Department at (800) 922-2770 or program@gsofct.org.
 - Troops/groups may utilize specialty areas if they secure their own facilitators and pay the appropriate fees. **NOTE:** Many facilitators expect to be paid for services rendered.

Payment Expectations:

- Payment is due **in full** at time of registration for troop overnights or weekly use.

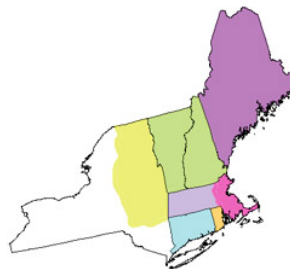
For more information concerning the registration process, **property, or Camporees**, please contact the Property Services Department at property@gsofct.org.

For more information concerning **specialty equipment and/or program equipment**, please contact the Program Department at program@gsofct.org.

Girl Scout Properties at Other Northeast Councils

Girl Scout Councils in the Northeast Region are opening their camps to Girl Scout troops and groups from around the region. Check out these camps for your next campout. Many are located near great attractions or easy transport to major cities.

[Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts](#)
[Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts](#)
[Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains](#)
[Girl Scouts of Maine](#)
[Girl Scouts of Northeastern New York](#)
[Girl Scouts of Southeastern New England](#)



All camps will accept your appropriate council training for camping as required. Reservations for camps are made with the **sponsoring** Girl Scout Council. Be sure to check and follow GSOFACT's procedures for travel.

GSOFACT Procedures for use of Council Properties – Service Unit Camporees/Events

Service Unit Camporees are intended to provide a dynamic program to girls in a particular service unit. They are organized by volunteers in the service unit and girls usually attend with troops. Some service units have been enjoying camporees for many years. Usually a theme helps the committee plan and prepare for their event. Sometimes bridging ceremonies, Scout's Own, or awards ceremonies are included in the camporee plans.

Frequently, activity facilitators are brought in by the Service Unit Camporee Committee to run boating, archery, or challenge course activities. These specialists may teach specific skills and/or facilitate a program. Many service unit camporee committees have found that the event provides a perfect venue for older girls to practice leadership skills, while some older girls even run most of the camporee. If the kitchen at the camp is available and will be staffed by a qualified food operator, food service may be provided by the camporee organizers.

Camporee Procedures:

- To request a camp property for camporee use, go to gsofct.doubleknot.com/facilitysearch/3554.
- Service units can book sites **180 days prior to** the start date of their scheduled camporee and/or service unit event. A 10 percent deposit is due upon making a reservation. The balance is due **six weeks** prior to the event. Any balance not paid will result in cancellation of the reservation and forfeit of full deposit.
- The remaining balance must be **paid in full** six weeks prior to the event. The initial 10 percent deposit will be deducted from the final amount due. **Please note: The reservation deposit is non-refundable.**
- If a camporee will not be using all sites at the camp, they may be asked to share the camp property with another Service Unit Camporee, GSOFACT event, or troop camping. If the Service Unit Camporee wishes to have exclusive use of the camp, they must pay for the entire camp. See property profiles on the website for details. gsofct.org/en/camp/property-information-and-rental.html.
- The service unit camporee coordinator or person making the reservation will receive a confirmation when making initial reservation. They will receive a receipt stating when balance is due. It is the responsibility of the service unit to make additional payments. If payment is not received by six weeks before the event, the camporee and/or event will be canceled.
Please note: All reservations are made online and on a first-come, first-served basis. Reservations **cannot** be made over the phone.
- Lifeguard, archery, and/or adventure course facilitator certifications **must** be received by the Property Services Department at least **six weeks prior** to use date. Copies of each certification, front and back, are required.
- At least one member of the Service Unit Camporee Committee, preferably the coordinator, **must** attend Camporee Planning Training.

Additional Camp Information:

- Buildings and gates at most GSOFACT properties have key boxes or combination locks for easy entry upon your arrival. You will receive the codes to enter the property 48 hours prior to your stay. You will also be sent a full description of the property and any important information you may need for your visit.
- **Check-in** at all camp facilities begins at **3:00 p.m.** on the first day of the reservation.
- **Check-out:** Everyone must check out of the property no later than **2:00 p.m.** on the last day of their reservation. After all campers have departed, the ranger or caretaker will inspect the facility

and note the condition and any damage. A fee may be charged to your group and/or a security deposit may be instituted on future site usage if the condition of the facility is not deemed acceptable.

- **Hourly Use:**
 - **Check-in and check-out** will be the actual hours you reserve the property for. **You cannot enter a property prior to the time reserved.** You must check out on time to allow next group entry to the property. After all campers have departed, the ranger or caretaker will inspect the facility and note the condition and any damage. A fee may be charged to your group and/or a security deposit may be instituted on future site usage if the condition of the facility is not deemed acceptable.
- **Food service and kitchen use:** In order to use the kitchen, the person in charge of food preparation must have a *ServSafe* certificate or equivalent documented experience. For more information on *ServSafe* certification contact the Property Services Department at property@gsofct.org or visit servsafe.com.

For more information, please contact property@gsofct.org.

Cancellation and Refund Procedures – Troops/Groups and Service Units

Cancellations and Refunds

- If weather conditions make transporting girls dangerous, you must notify the council at (800) 922-2770 about your cancellation. If a reservation is canceled because of weather concerns by the party holding the reservation, they have until the end of the fiscal year (i.e. September 30, 2019) to reschedule. **Failure to do so will result in their forfeiting 100 percent of the rental fee.**
- If GSOFACT needs to cancel a reservation, the impacted party can either accept a full refund or reschedule for another date.
- If a service unit cancels **six weeks or more prior** to the scheduled camporee/event date. **The reservation deposit is non-refundable. For Service Unit Camporees or events, any payments made six weeks prior to the event are non-refundable.**
- **No refunds** are given for troops/groups who cancel their reservations. In extreme situations, you should contact the Property Services Department at property@gsofct.org.

3 for Free

- GSOFACT registered Girl Scout troops may use all sites, including most buildings, for three hours or less after 3:00 p.m. on Sunday until 10:00 p.m. on Thursday free of charge. Anything more than three hours will be charged the hourly rate.

An online reservation **must** be completed prior to use. If your troop/group plans to utilize any of the buildings during their visit, they must request these areas **when booking** their site reservation.

Please Note: This does not apply to service units or service unit events.

FAQ's - Frequently Asked Questions

May we exceed the stated capacities for buildings?

Day use and overnight capacities for each building are based on several factors, including local Fire Marshall State Codes and American Camp Association safety standards and may not be exceeded.

What is a ServSafe Certification?

ServSafe is a food and beverage safety training and certificate program administered by the National Restaurant Association. Your food handler needs to know food safety and the critical importance of her or his role. Some of the concepts in the training include: Sanitation, The Flow of Food through Operation, and Sanitary Facilities and Pest Management. The *ServSafe* Food Handler Certification is recognized for a three-year period. For more information on *ServSafe* certification, visit servsafe.com

GSOFACT Procedures for use of Council Properties – Outside User Groups

- Each request for use of Girl Scouts of Connecticut properties by an outside group shall be made to the Property Services Department via email or telephone. Each request shall be evaluated separately to determine if the usage is appropriate.
- Consideration shall be given to non-profit and for-profit organizations whose mission and purpose are compatible with that of Girl Scouting. Consideration shall also be given to private individuals and groups for personal or family recreation with appropriate insurance coverage. In all cases, first priority shall always be given to Girl Scout related events and activities.
- All outside groups shall be required to execute and return the agreement, furnish the necessary fees, any deposits, submit a certificate of insurance, and abide by all the conditions set forth in the agreement and accompanying rules.
- Outside groups will be placed in properties only when Girl Scouts are not using any part of the premises.
- Groups using pools, lakes, and ponds must furnish their own lifeguards and provide proof of certification prior to use.
- Use of specialty equipment must be negotiated including rescue equipment.
- All groups using GSOFACT facilities must abide by GSUSA guidelines and GSOFACT Property Policies.

Volunteer Policies & Procedures

Approved by the GSOFCT Board of Directors 10/1/07

INTRODUCTION: Girl Scouts of Connecticut, Inc. (GSOFCT), maintains that the strength of the Girl Scout Movement rests in the volunteer leadership of its adult members. It is through its volunteer leadership that the movement serves its girls. To ensure the satisfaction of its volunteers and to best use their talents, it is essential that the following policies and procedures be established and maintained. These policies and procedures work in conjunction with the council's by-laws and the following current Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. (GSUSA) publications:

- [*Blue Book of Basic Documents*](#),
- [*Safety Activity Checkpoints*](#)

GSOFCT upholds all GSUSA policies and has adopted the following policies and procedures of its own.

DEFINITIONS

A **POLICY** is an established course of action that must be followed. Policies provide consistency of action, give direction, and minimize the need for risk management.

These policies do not create a contract, express or implied, with any volunteer and may be changed at any time at the discretion of the council. In addition, volunteers are not employees of the council and are not covered by any of its pay, benefit plans, or practices. Specifically, volunteers are not paid or provided benefits for their volunteer services.

A **PROCEDURE** describes the course of action to carry out a policy.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

I. RECRUITMENT: Each volunteer is provided with an overview of the Girl Scout purpose and organization, local council information, and the support systems available to help her/him in her/his role. The volunteer position description provides specific responsibilities and schedules, cites expectations, and, in conjunction with performance goals, forms the basis for assessment of volunteer performance.

GSOFCT strives to include volunteers who strengthen the council through two distinct types of service.

A. **GOVERNANCE VOLUNTEERS:** These include members of the Board of Directors, Board Nominating and Development Committee, and Delegates.

B. **OPERATIONAL VOLUNTEERS:** Service Team members, Co-Leaders, Program Volunteers, Episodic Volunteers, etc., are those involved in carrying out the council's specific, measurable objectives, which have been developed within the framework of the corporate goals as adopted by the Board of Directors. These volunteers are ultimately accountable to the Chief Executive Officer.

II. INCLUSION: In recognition of its responsibility to its volunteers and girls and in keeping with GSUSA equal opportunity policies, GSOFCT expressly prohibits any form of unlawful discrimination on the basis of race,

color, religion, age, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, socioeconomic status, learning disability, physical or mental disability, ancestry, genetic information, and any other protected class status.

To ensure full equality of opportunity in all operations and activities of the organization, affirmative action policies and procedures shall be utilized in the recruitment, selection, training, placement, and recognition of volunteers.

GSOFACT is committed to a policy of equal opportunity and outreach in the recruitment, selection, placement, development, and recognition of volunteers in all communities within its jurisdiction.

III. MEMBERSHIP. All volunteers and girls participating in GSOFACT shall meet GSUSA membership standards and be a currently registered member of GSUSA and Girl Scouts of Connecticut, Inc. She/he shall agree to abide by the policies, principles, practices, and standards of GSOFACT and GSUSA.

IV. REGISTRATION. All adult volunteers participating in the Girl Scout Movement shall be registered members of GSUSA.

V. VOLUNTEER SYSTEMS

A. SELECTION: Policy: Every adult volunteer is selected on the basis of qualifications for membership, ability to perform the volunteer position, and the willingness and availability to participate in training for the position.

Procedure: All adult volunteer members must complete the onboarding process and have a satisfactory background check according to the requirements of their position.

B. TRAINING: Once a volunteer has successfully completed the onboarding process, she/he must participate in orientation and training as required by the position. The level of orientation will correspond to the level of participation. For example, those who are serving as Co-Leaders take full orientation, while those who are less involved will have a less intensive level of orientation.

C. PLACEMENT: Every attempt will be made to place volunteers in positions that meet both their needs and the needs of GSOFACT. In instances where this is not possible, the needs of GSOFACT will take precedence over the needs of the individual.

D. PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL: Volunteers will have the opportunity to confer with the person to whom she/he is accountable concerning her/his annual performance review.

E. REAPPOINTMENT: Prior to completion of a volunteer's term, she/he will receive confirmation of reappointment to her/his position or rotation to a different position. Reappointment takes place only after completion of a satisfactory performance review and mutual acceptance of position accountabilities, expectations, and adherence to GSOFACT and GSUSA policies and standards.

F. RECOGNITIONS: Girl Scouts of Connecticut, Inc.'s, formal recognition system shall be consistent with GSUSA policies and standards.

G. TERMINATION: Any volunteer may resign her/his position at any time, but the council expects that resignations will be with reasonable notification to the council. GSOFCT may terminate the services of a volunteer at any time and for any reason, such as these listed below.

- Restructuring of volunteer positions
- The elimination of the volunteer position in which a person serves
- The inability or failure to complete the requirements for the position
- Misappropriation of funds
- The inability or failure to perform the agreed-upon responsibilities to the satisfaction of GSOFCT
- The refusal to support the Mission and values of the organization and the council goals
- Membership in an organization whose goals are not compatible with those of GSUSA
- Failure to comply with council or GSUSA policies
- Providing false, incomplete, or misleading information in the onboarding process
- Inappropriate behavior including, but not limited to, physical violence, abuse, stalking, threatening, menacing, lying, harassment, falsification of documents, and carrying firearms at a Girl Scout activity
- Failure to pass successive background checks

An adult volunteer who is terminated from her/his adult position may continue her/his membership with GSUSA unless it is determined that she/he is not able to meet the membership requirement related to accepting the principles and beliefs of the Movement or to supporting the Mission and values of the organization. When this is the case, her/his Girl Scout membership will not be renewed.

Procedure: The volunteer and her/his manager will confer both in person and in writing as to reasons for the termination. A third party should be present during this process. At this time, the volunteer will be given the opportunity to withdraw voluntarily from the position by submitting a written resignation within five (5) working days.

If termination is not voluntary, the volunteer will be fully informed, in writing, regarding the reasons for the termination by the person to whom she/he is accountable.

Unless otherwise indicated, the discussion should be followed by a written summary, one copy of which is given to the volunteer and one to be retained by the council. Absolute confidentiality must be observed at all times to protect the rights of the volunteer.

H. CONFLICT RESOLUTION: GSOFCT has established a system for resolving conflicts that arise when a volunteer believes that policies and/or procedures related to her/his position are not being administered properly as applied to her/him.

Philosophy:

• **Phase I:** Many conflicts can be prevented and/or resolved by volunteer managers who understand the Volunteer Management System of GSOFCT and who are sensitive to human relations. Likewise, many conflicts can be avoided when volunteers are informed at the time of placement of the council's structure and role accountability for decision-making responsibilities.

Most conflicts can be resolved when they are brought to the attention of the volunteer's immediate manager. It is hoped that most, if not all, conflicts will be resolved informally. The goal is to eliminate the cause for the conflict.

- **Phase II:** When a volunteer and her/his immediate manager are unable to resolve a conflict through informal efforts, the volunteer should refer to the council's conflict resolution procedure for all volunteers listed below. Every volunteer may expect a welcome reception and a fair resolution of the conflict without fear of jeopardizing her/his volunteer status. The initiation of the conflict resolution procedure, however, will not restrict the GSOFCT from taking appropriate action to safeguard the health and safety of the girls.

Procedure:

Step 1: The volunteer requests a conference with her/his manager to take place within ten (10) working days of the date the written complaint was filed. The volunteer cites the policy or procedure that has allegedly been misapplied, misinterpreted, or violated. If the manager is the issue, proceed to the next level. If the manager is not a staff member of GSOFCT, the appropriate staff member must be informed of the complaint and the date of the conference meeting. The staff member informs the Chief Executive Officer, or her/his designee, of the complaint and conference date.

Step 2: If the volunteer is not satisfied with the disposition, the council staff member or, if appropriate, the staff member's supervisor, will meet with the volunteer within ten (10) working days. After the initial review of the issues, the volunteer can expect a response within ten (10) working days.

Step 3: In the event that the complaint is not resolved in Step 2, the staff member prepares a written report on the complaint, including recommendations for her/his supervisor, and sends a copy to the Chief Executive Officer.

Step 4: The Chief Executive Officer will make the final decision as to the resolution of the complaint and see that this decision is implemented.

VI. HARASSMENT/SEXUAL HARASSMENT

GSOFCT is committed to maintaining an environment free of harassment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. The council will not tolerate harassment, including sexual harassment as defined in this policy, of volunteers, employees, or members, by anyone, including any volunteer, employee, vendor, member, client, or customer, whether on the Girl Scout premises, at assignments outside, or at sponsored social or membership functions.

Harassment is defined as verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of her/his race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, socioeconomic status, learning disability, physical or mental disability, ancestry, genetic information, or any other protected class status that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome or unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other physical, verbal, or visual conduct based on sex when (1) submission to the conduct is an explicit or implicit term or condition of the volunteer's position, (2) submission or rejection of the conduct is used as

the basis for a decision relating to the volunteer, or (3) the conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with the volunteer's performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. The offender or the victim of harassment may either be a man or a woman, and harassment can occur involving persons of the same or opposite sex.

Examples of sexual harassment include unwanted sexual advances; explicit sexual propositions; demands for sexual favors in exchange for favorable treatment or continued employment; repeated sexual innuendos, suggestive comments, sexually oriented kidding, teasing, or practical jokes; jokes about gender-specific traits; foul or obscene body language or gestures; display of foul or obscene printed or visual material (including, but not limited to, email); and physical contact, such as touching, patting, pinching, or brushing against another's body.

If any volunteer believes that she/he is being harassed, the volunteer should clearly and promptly notify the offender that the behavior is unwelcome. If for any reason a volunteer does not feel comfortable confronting the offender or if a confrontation does not successfully end the harassment, the volunteer should contact the council immediately.

All complaints of harassment will be taken seriously and will be promptly and thoroughly investigated. To the fullest extent practical and appropriate under the circumstances, GSOFCT will treat complaints and the terms of their resolution as personal and confidential. Corrective action will be implemented if an investigation confirms that harassment has occurred. If either party directly involved in a harassment investigation is dissatisfied with the outcome or resolution, that individual should submit a written request to council to have the decision reconsidered.

This policy also prohibits harassment and sexual harassment by any volunteer against any employee or member.

VII. CHILD ABUSE

GSOFCT supports and maintains environments that are free of child abuse and neglect. Child abuse or neglect is any act or failure to act resulting in imminent risk of serious harm, death, actual serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation of a child by a parent or caretaker who is responsible for the child's welfare. A child is defined as a person under the age of 18. The council will follow up and report, if applicable, any unlawful act as stated in the State of Connecticut General Statutes.

Sexual abuse is defined as employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct; or rape and, in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children. Sexual abuse may also include sexual touching and bodily contact, exhibitionism, voyeurism, and/or involvement of children in pornographic material.

Girl Scouts of Connecticut reserves the right to refuse appointment or reappointment, and dismiss or exclude from volunteer status, any volunteer whose alleged actions may pose a risk of injury to a minor, is believed to have abused or neglected any child under the age of 18, or has been convicted of any crimes against children.

Procedure: In order to protect confidentiality, in cases of reported, suspected, or confided abuse/neglect the volunteer should contact the Chief Executive Officer or her/his designee. If none of the above can be

reached, the volunteer may call the Connecticut Department of Children and Families Care Line: 1-800-842-2288. Such a report should include the names and addresses of the children and her/his parents, guardians, or other person having responsibility for her/his care and all evidence forming the basis of such belief. A person who in good faith makes his report is immune from civil or criminal liability per state statute.

VIII. SMOKING/ALCOHOL/DRUG ABUSE

Volunteers are prohibited from smoking in the presence of girls and/or during any Girl Scout activity.

No person shall possess, use, sell, distribute, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or use lawful drugs in an unauthorized manner, on GSOFCT property, during any Girl Scout activity, or at any time if it would adversely affect the reputation of the Girl Scouts.

Any violation of this policy will result in the removal of the volunteer from the council property, and associated costs and/or transportation fees will be the responsibility of the volunteer. No refund of fees will be given. In addition, the volunteer will be removed from her/his volunteer position.

Alcohol may be consumed at adult council-wide functions or events only with the permission of the Chief Executive Officer.

IX. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Each volunteer has an obligation to conduct herself/himself in a manner that does not present an actual or perceived conflict of interest or that has the potential for one. An actual, perceived, or potential conflict of interest occurs when a volunteer, because of her/his position with Girl Scouts, makes or influences a decision that may result in a personal gain for the volunteer or the volunteer's friends or relatives. For purposes of this policy, a relative includes any person who is related to the volunteer by blood or marriage, or who is in a similar relationship. A friend is any social acquaintance or individual with whom the volunteer has a social relationship.

If a volunteer is involved in any activity for Girl Scouts that presents an actual, perceived, or potential conflict of interest (e.g., if the volunteer has any influence on transactions involving purchases, contracts, or leases), full disclosure in writing to the Chief Executive Officer is mandatory as soon as possible, to establish safeguards and to protect all parties involved.

A Board Member shall not, while serving as a member of the council Board of Directors, serve in a council operational volunteer position that would require formal GSUSA or council-developed or sanctioned training.

X. CONTRACTS

All contracts must be authorized and signed by the Chief Executive Officer or her/his designee.

XI. COMMUNITY SERVICE

Any court-mandated community service projects must have prior approval by the appropriate council staff.

XII. ANIMALS

No persons shall bring any animal onto any GSOFCT property or to any Girl Scout activity without the written permission of the Chief Executive Officer or her/his designee. Exceptions will be made for animals needed to assist persons with disabilities.

XIII. WEAPONS

Possession or use of firearms by adults or girls at any Girl Scout activity is prohibited.

XIV. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

All monies raised or earned, and other assets received in the name and for the benefit of Girl Scouting must be authorized by GSOFCT or GSUSA and used for the purposes of Girl Scouting. Such monies and other assets become the property of, and are administered by, GSUSA or GSOFCT. Such assets are not the property of individuals, geographic units, or communities within a Girl Scout council.

Those assuming stewardship of any Girl Scout monies within the jurisdiction of GSOFCT are accountable to GSOFCT.

Volunteers are responsible for complying with all finance and money-earning policies and practices, as defined in *Volunteer Essentials*, including but not limited to the following:

- Money handling
- Banking
- Recordkeeping
- Reporting
- Money-earning activities

Money-earning projects may not be held during the United Way campaign or council-wide fundraisers.

Adults who owe a debt to the council that is past due will be removed from all volunteer positions. A debt is defined as a check written for insufficient funds, unpaid product sales funds to the council or the Troop, or non-payment of money owed to the organization for products or services.

Past due debts (unpaid/misappropriation of funds) more than 30 days after notification will be processed for collection. Individuals will be responsible for all fees associated with the collection of the debt and may be subject to other legal action.

Volunteers who repay a past due debt will not be reappointed to any position that includes leadership or money-handling responsibilities.

All financial information is confidential. It is against council policy to disclose any financial or personal information garnered through one's leadership role as a volunteer to others.

Check out your local service center!

Hartford Service Center- Headquarters

340 Washington Street
Hartford, CT 06106
(800) 922-2770

Lebanon Service Center

175 C Clubhouse Road
Lebanon, CT 06249

North Haven Service Center

20 Washington Ave.
North Haven, CT 06473

Wilton Service Center

529 Danbury Road
Wilton, CT 06897

GSOFCT Service Centers:

- Each service center and outdoor program center is open to every Girl Scout throughout Connecticut.
- We operate a variety of summer camps and program centers across the state consisting of over 1,900 acres and servicing girls from all areas.
- Outdoor program centers can be found in: Lebanon, Manchester, Oxford, Stamford, Tolland, and Weston.
- Our Girl Scouts of Connecticut Alum Network continues to grow as women across the state reconnect and discover new sisters in Girl Scouting.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Who must register?

Membership registration is required if a person will work directly with or supervise girls or handle money. It is recommended that all adults who will participate in any meetings or activities be registered. Registered adult members are automatically covered with the Girl Scout Activity Insurance for the entire membership year.

Who must participate in a background screening?

Any volunteer who will work directly with or has ultimate responsibility for groups of girls, handles money, or assumes the responsibility for driving girls during Girl Scout activities, must be a currently registered member and have successfully completed the Volunteer Onboarding Process, which includes a criminal background screening. This includes any adult attending activities where they will be considered in the adult-to-girl supervision ratios. Asking several troop/group adults to complete the onboarding process and criminal background screening helps to avoid cancellation of meetings or activities if the approved volunteer can't attend.

How do I know if one of my troop/group volunteer's background screening has not been approved?

All criminal background screening results are managed through the GSOFCT Human Resources Department. If a negative decision regarding a prospective volunteer is reached, the director of membership support will be notified. The director then reaches out to the appropriate volunteer leadership advising the status of the prospective volunteer.

I've had a criminal background screening done through another organization. Must I do another?

Yes. State law prohibits organizations from sharing information with other agencies.

Must all drivers complete the onboarding process?

Yes*. Drivers are the only adults who are ever alone with girls. Driving records are part of the background screening process, and it is important to take steps to ensure the safety of the girls. All adults assuming responsibility for driving during Girl Scout activities will need to be registered Girl Scout members and have successfully completed the Volunteer Onboarding Process, which includes a criminal background screening. We highly encourage each troop/group to have several approved adult volunteer drivers.

** At times, emergency situations arise that may cause your approved driver to be unable to attend the scheduled activity or event. In these cases, another adult may assume responsibilities for driving but in a one-time only capacity.*

We will have a firefighter come to our meeting to discuss fire safety. Must that person be registered and complete the onboarding process?

No. The minimum number of registered and approved adults must be present at all times and will provide supervision for the girls while the firefighter is visiting.

What constitutes an *approved* adult?

To be considered an approved adult with Girl Scouts of Connecticut, a volunteer must be a currently registered member who has successfully completed the Volunteer Onboarding Process, which includes a criminal background screening.

What constitutes a *trained* adult?

A *currently* registered volunteer who has successfully completed both the Volunteer Onboarding Process and the Core Leadership Requirements is considered to be the troop/group trained adult.

May non-approved parents/guardians visit during meetings or attend outings with the troop/group?

Non-approved adults may not assume the responsibilities for driving* or supervising girls. However, as long as the minimum number of approved adults will be present to provide the required adult-to-girl supervision ratio, it is acceptable. If ANY person – girl, sibling, adult, or anyone who is not currently registered as a Girl Scout member will actively participate at your meeting, trip, or other Girl Scout gathering, you will need to purchase additional insurance.

All adults wishing to attend meetings or volunteer with a troop/group on a regular basis (more than three times), must successfully complete the Volunteer Onboarding Process.

Can I have my troop/group sleep overnight in my backyard?

Girl Scout troops/groups sleeping in a tent in a contained backyard less than 25 yards from a residence, not using a fire of any sort, grill, or fire ring, are considered to be having a sleepover - not camping.

Troops/groups must be accompanied by at least one *approved* adult who has completed *Out & About* training, have *approved* adult(s) present who have met the Core Leadership requirements **and** must also meet adult-to-girl supervision ratios.

Do adults who attend council-sponsored overnight programs need to go through the onboarding process?

This would depend on the type of event:

An adult must complete the Volunteer Onboarding Process if she/he will:

- Work directly with, supervise, or have the ultimate responsibility for girls
- Accompany girls on an overnight activity as part of the adult-to-girl supervision ratios
- Drive girls for Girl Scout activities*
- Handle monies (to include troop/group treasury and product sales)

Council-sponsored *“Family Events”* are facilitated by council core staff. The adult(s) attending with the family **will not** be supervising children other than their own so no onboarding process needs to be completed. Supplementary insurance has been purchased to cover the non-members in attendance.

• Other council events where there is an overnight component are typically attended by troops/groups. Therefore, the responsibility falls on the troop/group volunteers. The troops/groups attending do so in accordance to GSOFCT policies and procedures. Where an individual girl is attending with an adult, the adult is *only* responsible for that child so no onboarding process needs to be completed.

THANK
YOU!