

MEETING PLACE SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR TROOP/GROUP CO-LEADERS

Councils and troops often use the facilities of schools, shopping malls, parks, and other municipal entities as meeting places or venues for special events. Careful considerations should be used to find appropriate facilities for the age of the girls to be served and the activities to be conducted.

A meeting place needs to provide a safe, clean, and secure environment that allows for the participation of all girls. Review *Volunteer Essentials* for tips and guidance in selecting meeting sites.

Reminders:

- ✓ Direct any questions or concerns regarding a possible meeting place to your Service Unit Manager or the Member Experience Specialist for your area.
- ✓ Use the Meeting Place Safety Checklist when selecting any meeting site.
- ✓ Written agreements may be required when securing meeting sites. Please remember that you are *not* authorized to sign any building-use agreements or contracts. Send all building-use agreements and/or contracts to customercare@gsfct.org to be reviewed and forwarded for approval.
- ✓ Annually review your meeting place information on your Troop tab in your Member Profile in MY GS. Troop meeting place information can also be updated by emailing customercare@gsfct.org.
- ✓ Your Girl Scout activity insurance is only in place at your regular meeting location. If updates to the troop meeting location are needed, they must be made prior to the meeting.
- ✓ Inspect the meeting place prior to each meeting for physical hazards and overall safety precautions using the meeting place safety checklist.
- ✓ Ensure meeting space is accessible to all girls and adults, including those with disabilities.
- ✓ Set up the meeting area prior to the arrival of the girls so that you will be ready to greet and supervise them when they arrive. (Move furniture, operate equipment, decorate room, etc.)

Meeting Place Safety Guidelines

- ✓ Ensure that an adequate number of adults will be present at each meeting to supervise the girls. Girl Scouts adult-to-girl ratios show the *minimum* number of adults needed to supervise a specific number of girls. See *Safety Activity Checkpoints* for girl to adult ratios.
- ✓ Make sure that girls are supervised at the beginnings and endings of meetings, when accidents can occur because girls lack supervision.
- ✓ Keep girls away from restricted areas or known hazards of the meeting place
- ✓ Ensure safe bathroom practices. Remind girls and adults that bathrooms are for individual use and items within the area are not to be used without prior permission.
- ✓ Ensure medications and cleaning solutions are in a *secure* place and out of the girls' reach.
- ✓ Volunteers are prohibited from smoking or drinking alcoholic beverages in the presence of girls and/or during any Girl Scout activity.
- ✓ Secure all pets away from the meeting area and access to girls at all times.
- ✓ Discourage the presence of younger or older siblings of girls or children of leaders from attending troop meetings or going along on a Girl Scout outing or activity. "Tagalongs" can distract girls from their planned activities and distract the leaders from providing proper supervision of girls.
- ✓ Reference *Safety Activity Checkpoints* and other Girl Scout program resources to determine age-appropriate activities for girls in the troop/group.
- ✓ Teach the girls to use the buddy system to keep each other safe.
- ✓ Enforce rules about where the girls are allowed to run and play games at the meeting place.
- ✓ Check all equipment for safety prior to use by girls. Reference the *Safety Activity Checkpoint* specific to the activity the girls will be participating in.
- ✓ Talk with parents or guardians about who will pick up their daughter, and about pick-up times and places so that girls will get home safely.
- ✓ Release each girl only to her parent or guardian, unless the Annual Pick-Up Authorization Form has been completed.
- ✓ Homeowners must have valid and current Homeowners or Renters insurance.
- ✓ Personal property damage due to Girl Scout activities is at the responsibility of the homeowner/renter.
- ✓ There must be a clear exit available with quick access to the outside.

Meeting Place Safety Checklist

A meeting place needs to provide a safe, clean, and secure environment that allows for the participation of all girls. At all times, safety should be foremost in our minds.

Use the following checklist prior to each troop/group meeting to prevent accidents or injuries.

Exterior Grounds Around Meeting Place

- ☐ Does the lighting system illuminate entrances, walkways, and parking?
- ☐ Are facility access points located in open, well-traveled areas?
- ☐ Are sidewalks and exterior stairs clear of snow and ice?
- ☐ Is playground equipment anchored so that it does not tip, slide, or move in an unintended manner?
- ☐ Are there pinch, crush, or tearing points on individual pieces of playground equipment that could injure a girl?
- ☐ Do surface materials in fall zones under playground equipment absorb shock (materials such as rubber-like material, sand, gravel; shredded wood products)?
- ☐ If the property has a pool, is the pool access locked so that girls cannot enter the pool area unless swimming activities are to be conducted?
- ☐ Are pool chemicals stored, secured, and out of reach from children?

Interior of Meeting Place

- ☐ Are there two or more separate, usable exits available?
- ☐ Are exits ever blocked?
- ☐ Are exits available clearly marked with emergency lighting?
- ☐ Are handrails and railings on stairs present and secure?
- ☐ Are floors, steps, and walking areas free of trip and fall hazards?
- ☐ Is the meeting space clean and free of clutter?
- ☐ Is floor space adequate for the desired activities?
- ☐ Are toilets and sanitary facilities accessible?
- ☐ Is meeting space accessible to girls and adults with disabilities?
- ☐ Are electrical outlets protected with covers?
- ☐ Are extension cords tucked away so that they will not be walked on or trip someone?
- ☐ Are barriers or warnings provided for hot surfaces like fireplaces, heaters, radiators, wood stoves, and space heaters?
- ☐ Are fire extinguishers available?
- ☐ Is first aid equipment readily available?
- ☐ Is a landline or mobile telephone available and operational?
- ☐ Are emergency phone numbers provided for fire, ambulance, police, and poison control center?
- ☐ Is space well-ventilated and have an adequate, safe, and legal heating source?
- ☐ Are smoke alarms installed and in working order?

Physical Hazards Check

Physical Hazards within the Meeting Place

- ☐ Are all chemical cleaning solutions kept out of reach and properly stored to prevent access to children?
- ☐ Are all over-the-counter and prescription medications kept out of reach and properly stored to prevent access to children?
- ☐ Are all weapons kept out of reach and properly stored to prevent access to children?
- ☐ Are all tools and power equipment kept out of reach and properly stored to prevent access to children?
- ☐ Is area free of biting and stinging insects?
- ☐ Is access restricted to recreational equipment such as ATVs, archery equipment, trampolines, and other sports equipment restricted, unless as part of the planned and supervised activity?