girl scouts of western ohio

Volunteer Essentials

Updates to Summer 2024 edition | *as of August 1, 2026*

This insert provides updates to Volunteer Essentials, Summer 2024 version. Please keep it with your printed book. Or, for a complete view of Volunteer Essentials, visit gswo.org/volunteeressentials.

Page 8- Troop Leadership Roles

A troop is considered viable as long as it has at least two approved volunteers: at least one must be a qualified Troop Leader; the other may be a troop leader or a troop assistant. Troop assistants must be registered, pass a background check, complete Youth Protection Training, and any role-specific required training, while Troop Start-up Training is encouraged but not required.

Page 9 - Service Unit Support Positions

Each service unit position has a regional GSWO staff member available for support. This chart has been updated to reflect new titles for those staff.

Volunteer Position	Staff Support
Service Unit Chair	Volunteer Experience Specialist
Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) Chair	Volunteer Experience Specialist
Data Chair	Volunteer Experience Specialist
Service Unit Treasurer	Volunteer Experience Specialist
Product Program Coordinator (Fall Product/Cookie Coordinator)	Product Program Manager
Service Unit Recruitment Chair	Recruitment Specialist
School Coordinators	Recruitment Specialist

Page 15 - Updates to Required/Recommended Trainings

Learning opportunities are offered consistently throughout the Girl Scout membership year in a variety of ways: on-demand, virtual, and in-person. Please note that certain volunteer roles have specific requirements that must be completed in a timely manner. Also, please check the Safety section of Volunteer Essentials (pp 81-103) for more information about volunteer requirements as they relate to safety.

- **Troop Year Plans:** Troop Year Plans are a newer resource that will help keep your troop going strong with tools and resources.
- **Find support on gswo.org:** We are committed to providing a volunteer experience that is enriching, impactful, and ensures you have the necessities to make the most of your volunteer experience.

Below are a few of the required/recommended adult trainings, some of which are required only once—as long as you maintain your skills and don't have a gap in membership. Requirements are subject to change.

Troop Start-up
gswo.org/mygstroopstartup

Be a Sister to Every Girl Scout
gswo.org/mygsbelonging

Youth Protection Training
gswo.org/mygsyouthprotection

CPR First Aid
gswo.org/mygscpr

Safety Beyond the Troop Meeting
gswo.org/mygstroopsafety

Page 86 - Girl Scout Activity Insurance

Every registered Girl Scout and registered adult member in the Girl Scout movement is automatically covered under the basic Mutual of Omaha plan upon registration. The premium cost for the Basic Plan is paid for 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.

As of 2023, non-registered caregivers, tagalongs (brothers, sisters, friends), and other people are now covered by the basic plan as long as they are registered to participate in the approved Girl Scout activity.

This insurance coverage is not intended to diminish the need for or replace family health insurance. However, the plan does pay for the first $140 in benefits. Any subsequent benefits for the same accident will be payable only for covered medical expenses that exceed the limit of benefits available under other forms of insurance or health care programs. If there is no family insurance or healthcare program, a specified maximum of medical benefits is available.

As of October 1, 2025, Activity Accident Insurance is completely automatic with no additional cost to councils. In addition to accident/injury coverage for day events, the new policy will automatically include sickness coverage for all overnight stays (including camp) and international travel. This change, effective for trips occurring on and after October 1, 2025, eliminates the need for manual individual insurance requests entirely.

Summary of Girl Scout Insurance Plans

The chart below provides a high-level summary of the insurance coverages provided by GSUSA.

Plan	Description	Premium
Plan 1	**Girl Scout Activity Accident Insurance Basic Coverage:** • Provided to every registered girl and adult AND any non registered people who are actively participating in the approved Girl Scout event (includes tagalongs). • Pays the first $140 of medical bills related to an accident, then becomes secondary to any other insurance coverage the individual may have. • Pays up to $15,000 of bills incurred over a 52-week period after the accident that are not covered by any other insurance the individual may have.	No charge – Covered by GSUSA
Plan 3E	**Accident and Sickness Insurance for Extended Events:** • Adds $10,000 of Sickness Medical Expense Benefit and $1,500 of Returned Transportation Benefit to Plan 1. • Will not pay more than 100% of total medical expenses incurred in conjunction with any other insurance the participant may have (Non- Duplication Provision).	No charge - Covered by GSUSA
Plan 3P	**Accident and Sickness Insurance for Extended Events:** • Same as Plan 3E without the non-duplication provision. • Therefore, the insurance pays without regard to what other insurance might be paying.	No charge - Covered by GSUSA
Plan 3PI	**Accident and Sickness Insurance for Extended International Trips or Events (lasting more than two nights):** • Same as Plan 3P – for International Trips • Provides travel assistance up to $50,000	No charge - Covered by GSUSA

Page 96 - Computer / Online Safety

NEW: Girl, volunteer, and caregiver safety is paramount in Girl Scouting. Safety not only includes physical and emotional safety, but it also includes protecting personal information and data.

Protecting Personally Identifiable Information (PII) is critical in today's digital landscape. PII includes any data that can be used to identify an individual, such as names, addresses, Social Security numbers, financial details, and includes Personal Health Information (PHI). Safeguarding this information helps prevent identity theft, fraud, and unauthorized access. Your handling of PII and PHI protects both individuals and organizations from significant legal and financial risks.

To ensure safety, it is important to take the following steps when working with your troop and/or service unit:

- Create a strong password for all Girl Scout accounts: All passwords should be 14 or more characters – including a mix of capital letters, lower case letters, numbers, and/or special characters. Passwords should be 3 – 4 random words and should not include personal information like your child's name or pet's name. Additionally, your passwords must be unique to the Girl Scout application. Do not repeat passwords used in other platforms or accounts.

- Do not send girl or adult personal information over public Wi-Fi. Enjoying coffee at the local coffee shop using their Wi-Fi is not the time to send rosters, health history forms, etc., to caregivers or co-leaders.

- Paper with PII or PHI should be protected, kept in a safe place, and not readily accessible to anyone until needed. Accessibility is to be limited to leader and co-leader if possible. Troop rosters with girl names, addresses and emails, and health history forms are often in the form of paper documents. Think through who has access and where they are kept during Girl Scout events and in between Girl Scout events. When an event is over or the membership year is complete, shred all documents with PII and PHI.

- When possible, minimize use of paper documents.

Following these few steps will help keep girl, volunteer, and your own information safe.

Page 5 - Council Shop Hours

Shop hours are subject to change based on organizational need. The most current hours can be found at gswo.org/visit.

Cincinnati, Dayton, and Toledo Shop Hours (as of August 1, 2026):

Tuesday: 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Wednesday - Friday: 10 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Saturday* - Monday: Closed

**Open from 9 a.m. - noon first Saturday each month, starting Saturday, November 7, 2026*

Shops are closed daily from 1:30 - 2 p.m. for lunch.

Page 12-13 - Criminal Background Check

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio requires all appointed volunteers who have care and custody of girls and supervision to successfully complete a criminal background check every three years while an active volunteer. Background checks must be completed with the council's approved vendor.

Any person who has direct contact with girls (including caregivers participating in overnights) must become a registered member of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio for the current membership year and have successfully completed a criminal background check.

Frequently Asked Questions About Criminal Background Checks	
Why do you require a criminal background check?	The safety of girls is paramount and a priority for Girl Scouts of Western Ohio. Caregivers and girls trust that Girl Scouts is a safe place for them. A criminal background check is one of the strategies used to ensure that girls are having a safe Girl Scout experience.
Can I just send the background check that I did for work/school to Girl Scouts?	To confirm we are getting exactly what we need and ensure the safety and well-being of girls, we require our volunteers to complete a background check through our approved vendor.
How much does it cost?	It's free! Girl Scouts of Western Ohio covers the cost of the criminal background checks.
How often do I have to complete the background check?	Once every three years. You will receive an automatic email 90 days prior to the date when your background check is set to expire. Adults are not eligible to volunteer without renewing their background check and will be made ineligible to serve as a volunteer if the background check expires.
Who will see the results of my background check?	Details of a volunteer's criminal history are kept confidential outside of the small staff team that reviews background check reports as part of the volunteer screening process. If eligibility status needs to be communicated to volunteers, no specific details are shared. Only eligibility status is shared.
How long does it take to get the background check report?	On average, it takes 3–10 days. During times of high volume, it may take longer. Do not count on the three-day turnaround time if you're planning an event and will be recruiting volunteer support. Please plan ahead.
What is checked in a criminal background check?	**Through our background check vendor, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio has the following information researched when a criminal background check is completed:** • Social Security Number Trace • Government Watch List (Office of Foreign Assets Control-US Department of Treasury) • 50 State Department of Justice (DOJ) Sex Offender Registry (Dru Sjodin Sex Offender database) • Nationwide Database search with primary source validation • Current County/State of Residence Search • Monthly updates for one year • It is a standard operating procedure of criminal background check vendors to utilize consumer credit agencies to obtain an individual's seven-year address history; however, **a volunteer's personal credit history is not checked or reported.**
If I am made ineligible due to my background check results, what does that mean?	• This means you cannot serve as an appointed volunteer having direct care or supervision of girls. You will not be able to serve as an adult for girl/adult ratio. Additionally, you may not handle money or be responsible for troop or service unit finances. • You may support Girl Scouts as a caregiver who provides snacks, supplies, and attends troop functions. You may also have a Girl Scout membership since Girl Scouting is open to anyone who accepts the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

Criminal Background Check Policy | *as of August 1, 2026*

The following rules shall apply if Girl Scouts of Western Ohio learns (via a criminal background search or otherwise) that a prospective or current volunteer as been convicted of, has pled guilty to, has received deferred adjudication for, is being investigated for or charged with, or has pled no contest to one of the following crimes under the laws of the states of Ohio or Indiana, another state, or the United States:

1. Automatic disqualification:

- Crimes against children
- Felony offenses against persons
- Felony offenses against the family
- Crimes defined as public indecency
- Crimes involving the use of weapons
- Arson
- Any violent crime or felony drug related offense, other than those drug offenses specifically identified below
- Residing on same premises as a Registered Sex Offender

*** * Registered sex offenders are not eligible for membership in Girl Scouts of the USA and may not participate in any capacity with Girl Scouts of Western Ohio. Any adult living on the premises with a registered sex offender may participate only as a parent and may not host any Girl Scout activities at their residence.**

2. Possible Disqualifications:

For a first offense DWI, DUI, or possession of a controlled substance under two ounces, the decision whether to allow participation shall be within the absolute and exclusive discretion of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio. The date of disposition and frequency will be the determining factors. Driving restrictions apply regardless of number of offenses.

Crimes involving theft, fraud, and forgery and all other criminal offenses (except traffic violations classified as fourth-degree misdemeanors) will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The date of disposition, amount and frequency will be the determining factors. The decision whether to allow service shall be within the absolute discretion of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio. Financial restrictions may be given, should approval be granted.

If a person is charged with any criminal offense, other than traffic violations classified as fourth-degree misdemeanors, involvement with Girl Scouts of Western Ohio as a volunteer will be temporarily suspended pending disposition of the case.

The decision whether to allow service shall be within the absolute discretion of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio. If a person is charged with any criminal offense, other than traffic violations classified as fourth-degree misdemeanors, involvement with Girl Scouts of Western Ohio as a volunteer will be temporarily suspended pending disposition of the case.

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