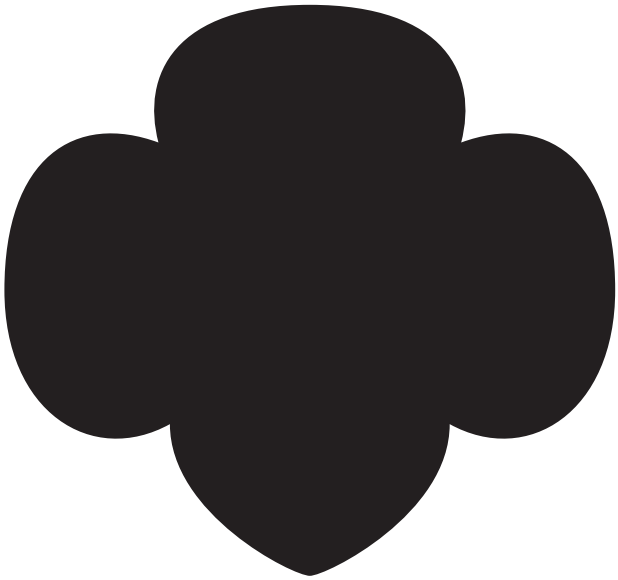
Your reference for all things Girl Scouts!

Volunteer Essentials

girl scouts of western ohio

Summer 2024



In Case of Emergency

Council-wide Emergency Number: 513.619.1398

This phone number should only be called in extreme emergencies after business hours, on the weekends, or when you can't get ahold of anyone during normal business hours during an extreme emergency. If emergency services are needed, always call them first (911), before calling the council emergency number.

- Get to safety, provide care for any victims, and contact emergency medical services (911).
- Contact caregivers.
- Contact Girl Scouts of Western Ohio (GSWO). If at camp, contact the camp ranger.
- Speak only to EMS, police, caregivers, or staff. Leave all media inquiries to GSWO.

At Girl Scout Camp

Please remember when at one of GSWO's camps, contact the ranger for any issues/emergencies you may have. There is an emergency contact list posted at every camp's Welcome Center, all lodges, and camp units.

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Chapter 1:
Welcome to Girl Scouts of Western Ohio

A big THANK YOU for saying yes to Girl Scouting. Welcome to a great adventure in changing girls' lives and in changing yours. Are you ready for unlimited fun and adventure? Are you ready to laugh, make new friends, and build leaders? Girl Scouting will challenge you and encourage you, and at times, you'll wonder, "What did I get myself into?" We know you're busy, and we are excited that you are helping girls find their wow and dream big.

Volunteer Essentials is your reference for all things Girl Scouts. Think of this as your encyclopedia to Girl Scout volunteering. When you have a question, start with Volunteer Essentials. The answer is closer than you think!

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio (GSWO)

Council CEO: Aimée Sproles	**Council Board Chair:** Cassie Barlow, PhD

Council Facts

- Serves more than **28,000 girls** in our council geography
- More than **11,000 adult volunteers**
- Covers a **13,559 square mile** area
- Serves a **32-county area** in western Ohio and southeastern Indiana
- Made up of 85 service units
- Many girls participate in Girl Scouts through Girl Scout troops, series, Girl Scout events, camp, and travel destinations; the primary method of delivery for the Girl Scout program is through a troop.

Council Communication Information

- **Council Website:** gswo.org
- **Council General Email Contact:** customercare@gswo.org
- **Facebook:** facebook.com/girlscoutswoh
- **Instagram:** @girlscoutswoh
- **Twitter:** @girlscoutswoh
- **TikTok:** @girlscoutswoh
- **Blog:** gswoblog.org
- **Volunteer Support on Rallyhood:** gswo.org/rallyhood

Contacting the Girl Scout Centers

- **Phone:** 888.350.5090 or **Email:** customercare@gswo.org
- **Girl Scouts of Western Ohio's Customer Care business hours:**
  - Monday - Friday: 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
  - Wednesdays, September - November: 8:30 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Customer Care hours may change due to council events and customer needs. Any changes to council hours will be shared via the council website, Facebook, and/or email. The Customer Care team responds to all emails within 24 business hours. You can email our council staff by using the person's first and last name (no spaces), followed by @gswo.org. For a list of staff and their roles, visit gswo.org/staff.

Federal Tax Identification Number

The council's Federal Tax Identification Number is 31-0679091. It is required when Girl Scout service units, troops/groups, and volunteers:

- Open a bank account
- Request exemption from taxes on goods and services for use by Girl Scouts in the delivery of the program.
- Are asked to provide evidence of our not-for-profit, tax exempt status.

Please provide the Sales and Use Tax Blanket Certificate Form, found on the council website, to the vendor to request tax-exemption.

For additional resources and up-to-date information, please visit our council website at gswo.org.

Girl Scout Centers

Cincinnati Girl Scout Center
(Administrative Center)
4930 Cornell Rd.
Cincinnati, Ohio 45242

T: 888.350.5090
F: 513.489.1417

Dayton Girl Scout Center
450 Shoup Mill Rd.
Dayton, Ohio 45415

T: 888.350.5090
F: 513.489.1417

Lima Girl Scout Center
1870 West Robb Ave.
Lima, Ohio 45805

T: 888.350.5090
F: 513.489.1417

Toledo Girl Scout Center
460 W. Dussel Dr., Suite A
Maumee, Ohio 43537

T: 888.350.5090
F: 513.489.1417

Council Shops

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio has shops in the Cincinnati, Dayton, and Toledo Girl Scout centers. Each sells Girl Scout uniforms, equipment, badges, patches, pins, and other official insignia as well as casual clothing and accessories for girls and adults. New items are available throughout the year. Each shop maintains an inventory of the most popular Girl Scout catalog items and can special order any items in the current Girl Scout catalog at any time.

Shop Hours:
Shop hours are subject to change based on organizational need. The most current hours can be found at gswo.org/visit. **Note:** Each shop closes for lunch from 1:30 - 2 p.m. on open days.

Toledo

- Tuesday: open 11 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.
- Wednesday & Thursday: open 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.
- Friday - Monday: closed

Dayton

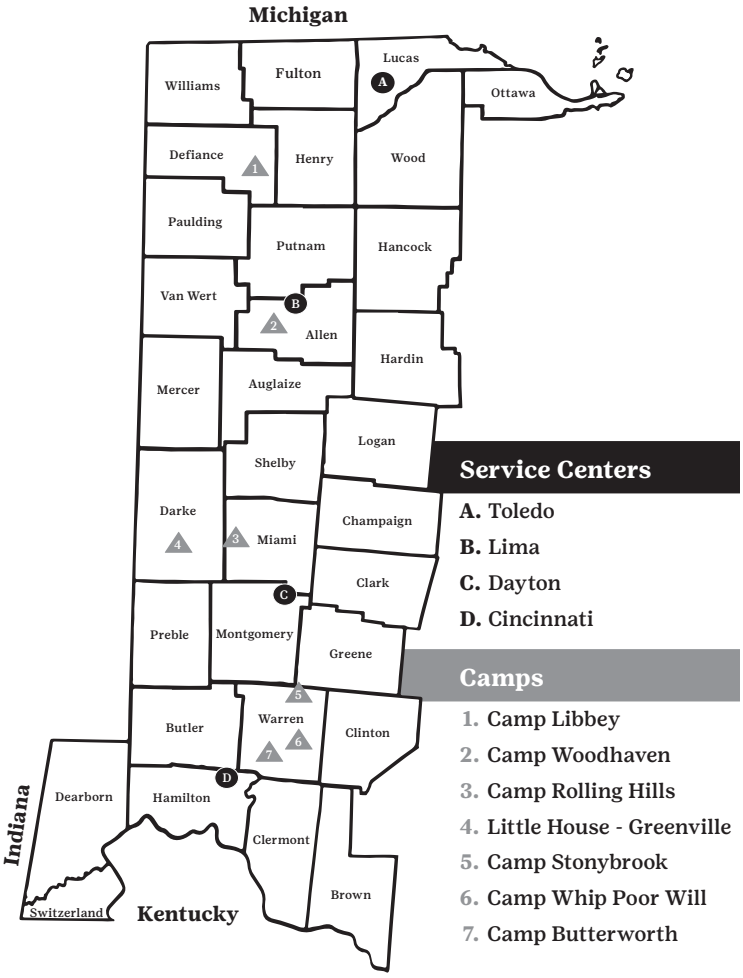
- Tuesday: open 11 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.
- Wednesday & Thursday: open 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.
- Friday: 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.
- 1st Saturday: open 9 a.m. - noon (Sept. - May)
- Sunday - Monday: closed

Cincinnati

- Tuesday & Wednesday: open 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.
- Thursday: open 11 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.
- Friday: 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.
- 1st Saturday: open 9 a.m. - noon (Sept. - May)
- Sunday - Monday: closed

Girl Scout Resource Centers

Resource centers are located in each of the regional offices and contain Girl Scout books, kits, or flags that are available to check out in one-week intervals. For more information or to check out items, visit gswo.org/resourcecenters. Camp resource centers coming soon!



Online Ordering

If you are unable to visit one of the shops in person, the e-commerce shop located at gswo.org/shop is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week! The online shop showcases all the current items, plus clearance and sale merchandise for great bargains. Ordering is fast, easy, and secure. Orders will generally be processed and mailed within two working days of receipt; however, please allow up to two weeks during peak periods, typically spring and fall months. Shipping charges will be applied to all orders except those in the Lima area (troop numbers beginning with 2, and/or are part of service units 107 and 132).

Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Discover, cash, check, or Digital Dough are accepted for payment. Mail/phone/email credit card orders must be a minimum of $5. The online shop accepts credit cards and debit cards. **If you are sending money to Girl Scouts of Western Ohio through the U.S. Postal Service, please use the following address:** Girl Scouts of Western Ohio, 4930 Cornell Rd., Cincinnati OH, 45242

We Are Girl Scouts

Girl Scouts is the premier leadership organization for girls and an expert on their growth and development. We are the largest girl-serving organization in the United States and the largest member of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, a sisterhood of close to **10 million girls** and **adults in 150 countries**. Our extraordinary journey began more than **100 years ago** when trailblazer Juliette "Daisy" Gordon Low organized the very first Girl Scout troop in Savannah, Georgia, in 1912.

Our Mission:
Girl Scouts builds girls of **courage, confidence, and character**, who make the world a better place.

Girl Scout Law:
I will do my best to be
honest and fair,
friendly and helpful,
considerate and caring,
courageous and strong,
and responsible for what I say and do,
and to
respect myself and others,
respect authority,
use resources wisely,
make the world a better place,
and be a sister to every Girl Scout.

Girl Scout Promise:
On my honor, I will try:
To serve God* and my country,
To help people at all times,
And to live by the
Girl Scout Law.

*** Girl Scouts of the USA makes no attempt to define or interpret the word "God" in the Girl Scout Promise. It looks to individual members to establish for themselves the nature of their spiritual beliefs. When making the Girl Scout Promise, individuals may substitute wording appropriate to their own spiritual beliefs for the word "God." Note: This disclaimer appears in the National Leadership Journey adult guides, but not in the girls' books. It is included here as a reminder to you, as a volunteer, that it's your responsibility to be sensitive to the spiritual beliefs of the girls in your group and to make sure that everyone in the group feels comfortable and included in Girl Scouting. Please feel free to share this information with the girls' families.**

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Vision Statement

We best achieve our mission when girls from all backgrounds feel like they belong in Girl Scouts. Therefore, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is committed to ensuring that every girl—each and everyone—has the opportunity to be her best self in Girl Scouts.

- We actively ensure that our girl membership, adult volunteers, board, and paid staff reflect the demographics of the communities we call home.
- We proactively partner with each community to understand their unique assets and needs in order to give every girl access to the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE).
- Every staff member, volunteer, and supporter plays a role to fulfill this vision.
- We continuously measure ourselves against these goals, and when we fall short, we work to live up to these statements.

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience

Girl Scouts' mission is to build girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. **At Girl Scouts, guided by supportive adults in an inclusive, girl-led environment, girls learn to work together to plan hands-on, progressive learning experiences that are fun and that develop the five Girl Scout Leadership outcomes:** Development of a Positive Sense Of Self, Positive Values, Challenge Seeking, Healthy Relationships, and Community Problem-Solving.

We are urban, rural, and suburban. We are in schools, churches, temples, mosques, public housing, foster homes, and detention centers. We are in virtually every zip code and in 92 countries around the world.

- **Here are some additional facts:**

				
1.7 Million Girls 5 to 18 years of age	**50 Million +** Alums	**17,000** Girl Scouts Overseas	**111 Councils** throughout the United States	**750,000** Adult Volunteers

- **At any given point in time, approximately 7% of girls in the U.S. are Girl Scouts, and:**

				
50% of women business owners were Girl Scouts	**Virtually every female astronaut** who has flown in space was once a Girl Scout	**73%** of female U.S. Senators were Girl Scouts	**100%** of female U.S. Secretaries of State were Girl Scouts	**57%** of female members of the House of Representatives were Girl Scouts

Girl Scouts Organizational Structure

Girl Scouts is the world's largest organization of and for girls, currently encompassing 1.7 million girl members and 750,000 volunteers! **Here are three core structures that support these members:**

1. The national headquarters
2. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio
3. Your support team.

National Organization and Worldwide Sisterhood

The national office of Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA), located in New York City, employs roughly 300 employees. GSUSA is a member of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS). Visit GSUSA online, where you'll find a wealth of resources for both girls and volunteers or visit gswo.org/wagggs. Global Girl Scouting ensures that girls have increased awareness about the world, cross-cultural learning opportunities, and education on relevant global issues that may inspire them to take action to make the world a better place. Visit Global Girl Scouting online for additional information.

Since 1925, USA Girl Scouts Overseas (USAGSO), a division of Global Girl Scouting, has helped ease the transition for American families relocating overseas by offering the familiar traditions and exciting opportunities of Girl Scouting to girls abroad. USAGSO now serves thousands of American girls living overseas, as well as girls attending American or international schools.

Through Global Girl Scouting, members participate in World Thinking Day on February 22. By participating, members will visit the four WAGGGS world centers, have opportunities for international travel, and promote both global friendship and understanding. Global Girl Scouting supports the Juliette Low World Friendship Fund and takes action on global issues!

Your Council—Girl Scouts of Western Ohio

Girl Scout councils are chartered by the national office to attract and retain members in a geographic area, provide ways for girls to participate in Girl Scouting, create an environment that reflects Girl Scout values and ideals, manage volunteers' experience with Girl Scouting, and keep girls and volunteers as safe as possible. The national office provides support materials to all councils to ensure that the Girl Scout experience is nationally consistent.

Volunteer Roles

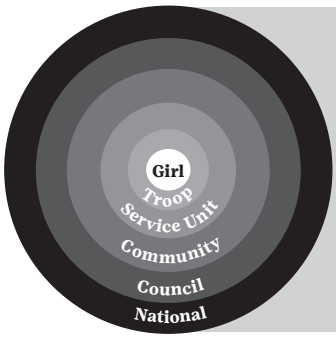
Any adult working directly with girls in any capacity, including helping at troop meetings, driving on field trips, or attending a cookie booth, must successfully complete the steps to volunteer placement and be registered as a troop leader or troop assistant.

- **Troop Leadership Roles**

  - **Troop Leader:** Troop leaders are the primary leader of girls. They plan meetings, ensure everyone's safety and well-being, and manage the troop's business. Two approved troop volunteers must be in attendance at all times, at least one troop leader and either another troop leader or troop assistant. Girl/Adult ratios vary depending on grade levels and group size. See the Safety chapter for details. Two troop leaders need to be registered with every troop.
  - **Troop Assistant:** Assistants count toward the girl/adult ratio. Troop assistants aid the troop leaders by supporting troop activities or by handling specific tasks like acting as a troop treasurer/bank account signer or a driver/chaperone on field trips.
  - **Troop Assistant-Fall Product Manager/ Troop Assistant-Cookie Manager:** If a troop is participating in a council product program like the Fall Product or Cookie Program, one adult must be fully approved and registered as the manager of the program. This adult will assume responsibility for the troop's participation, which includes managing funds, permission forms, and sale materials. Product program managers can also serve as general troop assistants.
  - **Other Volunteer Roles:** Volunteering for Girl Scouts is not restricted to leading a troop. There are a variety of volunteer positions, including service unit leadership, circle volunteers, first-aider, and providing council-wide program support through committee work or direct work with girls. All of these positions require approval and membership registration.

Your Support Team

A team of volunteers and staff provides you with a network of support, learning opportunities, and advice. Your team can be found at the Girl Scout Center as well as in your local community. Never hesitate to contact them, because your support team will guide and assist you in all things Girl Scouting. If you have questions about the Girl Scout program, working with girls, resources in the National Program Portfolio (National Leadership Journeys and The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting), the Volunteer Toolkit, or selling Girl Scout cookies and other products, go to your team for answers and ongoing support. You can also contact Customer Care at customercare@gswo.org or 888.350.5090.



Belonging to a Service Unit

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is divided into geographic sections known as service units. The service unit is the place where volunteers and staff partner to enhance the experience of the girl, volunteer, and caregiver by providing support and programmatic experiences that bring the Girl Scout Leadership Experience to life. The service unit may provide access to council and service unit-sponsored activities, volunteer enrichment opportunities, program activities for girls, and opportunities for volunteers and girls to connect with one another.

Service Unit Circles

A circle is a grouping of two or more service units that work together to share access to an extended network of opportunities and support for girls, volunteers, and caregivers. Circles are encouraged to share resources and opportunities for volunteer enrichment and appreciation, girl program activities, and family events.

Service Unit Support Positions

Volunteer Position	Responsibilities	Staff Support
Service Unit Chair	• Provide leadership to the service unit and service team • Organize and implement service unit and service team meetings • Coordinate assessment, development, and management of Service Unit Annual Plan • Ensure ongoing communication between volunteers, families, girls, and the community • Provide opportunities for volunteers to network and develop skills through the service unit/circle and enrichment events • Recognize and appreciate volunteers (informal and GSWO/GSUSA awards) • Ensure service unit finances are managed in accordance with GSWO policies • Support volunteers in conflict resolution and problem-solving • Support Family Giving	Community Development Manager
Girl Scout Leadership Experience Chair (GSLE)	• Promote the Girl Scout Leadership Experience by providing support to new and returning troops • Ensure that troop leaders are aware of resources available to them (i.e. Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting, Journeys, Volunteer Toolkit) • Identify, coordinate, and support learning opportunities at the service unit and circle level • Support the development of programmatic events for girls that promote girl-led, cooperative learning and learning by doing • Connect girls, adults, and families to service unit, circle, and council program activities	Community Development Manager

Data Chair	• Support volunteers and caregivers/girls with the membership registration process, encouraging at least 12 girls per troop • Educate service unit on benefits and processes for early and on-time registration by established dates • Review membership reports to ensure accuracy and share progress with the service unit • Support placement of girls and adults into new and existing troops through promotion and use of the Participation Catalog • Follow up with lapsed girls and troops	Community Development Manager
Product Program Coordinator (Fall Product/Cookie Coordinator)	• Train and support troops throughout product programs to ensure success of troops within the service unit • Understand and be able to explain programmatic and financial benefits of product programs to troops • Ensure troop fall product or troop cookie managers adhere to fall product or cookie program procedures and timelines • Receive, reconcile, and summarize troop paperwork • Accept delivery of and distribute recognitions to troops • Serve as main resource for troop cookie/fall managers during product programs	Product Program Manager
Service Unit Recruitment Chair	• Partner with the service team and staff to develop a year-round recruitment plan • Lead and/or coordinate recruitment efforts • Organize interested girls and adults into troops by program level, grade, and school and share the registration process (supporting registration of at least 12 girls and one grade level per troop) • Follow up with potential new volunteers and support them through the registration, background check, and new volunteer processes • Build a recruitment team utilizing school coordinators	Community Development Manager
School Coordinators	• Assist service unit with recruitment of girl and adult members at a specific school. This can include reserving space, distributing fliers, and being present at troop formation nights • Represent Girl Scouts at school events and open houses • Maintain a strong relationship and presence with school staff, administrators, and members of the PTA or PTO	Community Development Manager
Service Unit Treasurer	• Follow GSWO financial processes for service unit accounts • Maintain accurate records and reporting on an annual basis • Support service team members in planning and budgeting for service unit events • Support troops in following financial processes • Support new volunteers in establishing bank accounts	Community Development Manager

Volunteer Placement

You make Girl Scouts happen! You are important to every girl, caregiver, and the community that you impact through Girl Scouts. To ensure you are supported in your volunteer experience, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio provides a foundation and structure that includes clear, consistent policies and procedures that ensure a fair and equitable opportunity to volunteer with the organization. Additionally, it is important that you are provided with the skills and knowledge necessary to have a positive volunteer experience.

Equal Opportunity Volunteer Policy

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio welcomes all adult members who have committed to the Girl Scout Promise and Law. Appointment to a volunteer position is based on the ability to perform the responsibilities of the position, completion of any required learning or trainings, and are in compliance with Girl Scouts of Western Ohio and GSUSA volunteer policies, including volunteer screening and placement procedures as outlined below.

There shall be no discrimination by Girl Scouts of Western Ohio staff, volunteers, and members against a volunteer that meets eligibility criteria of a volunteer role by reason of disability, age, race, color, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), national origin, religion, citizenship, ancestry, parental status, sexual orientation, medical history or genetic information, political affiliation, military status, socioeconomic status, or other characteristics protected by federal, state, or local law.

Volunteer Recruitment

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio makes every effort to ensure that the community is provided with information and a variety of activities that help move all potential volunteers from awareness to understanding of Girl Scouts with the goal of involvement in some way with the Girl Scout Movement. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio focuses on recruiting and renewing membership that is reflective of the diversity of the community it serves.

Steps to Volunteer Placement

- **Step 1: Screening**

  Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is committed to providing a safe and quality program for girls in the community. The components of the volunteer screening process ensure that any risk to the quality of the program or the safety of the girls is managed accordingly. **All volunteers must successfully complete and commit to the following as a part of the screening process:**

  - Complete a criminal background check with Girl Scouts of Western Ohio's approved vendor.
  - Commit to uphold the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
  - Commit to follow Girl Scout policies and procedures.
  - Complete the required training if appointed as a troop leader.
  - Complete adult membership for the current year.

- **Step 2: Selection**

  Girl Scouts of Western Ohio has resources and a system of support to help adult volunteers select and register in the most appropriate role. Adult volunteers will register in the volunteer position that is most appropriate for the role they play in the troop or group and must agree to complete the requirements of that position accordingly. Registration must be current based on the Girl Scouts of USA membership year, which runs from October 1-September 30.

- **Step 3: Appointment**

  Girl Scouts of Western Ohio reserves the right to appoint volunteers based on identified eligibility criteria and compliance with volunteer policies and procedures. Appointment is contingent upon the successful completion of the screening and selection processes and is for a term of one year. Volunteers are subject to termination if the above screening criteria is not met and there is a violation in following any of the council's volunteer policies and procedures. Appointment is signified by a Girl Scouts of Western Ohio welcome email and volunteers are asked to keep a copy for their records. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio reserves the right to review a volunteer's eligibility due to reported concerns, including previous behavior prior to volunteer appointment and based on updates to a volunteer's criminal background check.

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 must become a registered member of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio for the current membership year and have successfully completed a criminal background check.

Exceptions to this would be an individual who meets the requirements under each category below:

- **An individual who:**
  - Serves as a one-time advisor or consultant, e.g., a speaker or presenter.
  - Does not have direct supervision of girls.
  - Is never left alone with girl(s).
  - Is not counted when considering girl/adult ratio.
- **A caregiver who:**
  - Attends a group function e.g., Girl Scouts of Western Ohio program, court of awards, family picnic, etc.
  - Is not counted when considering girl/adult ratio.
  - Does not have direct supervision of girls.

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 checks that yield a charge are individually reviewed in partnership with the volunteer applicant. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio reserves the right to investigate an individual's criminal records at any time, including but not limited to, re-processing a criminal background check or checking public records. Discovery of new charges may result in ineligibility or the request for further documentation from the individual. Additional information is often requested (including a police report, court records, and the volunteer's account of the incident/personal statement) before an eligibility determination is made. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio reserves the right to restrict the appointment of or not approve any volunteer applicant whose criminal history presents risk to the girls' safety and well-being.

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio also reserves the right to request the completion of a criminal background check at any time and will not accept background check reports from outside providers. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio reserves the right to suspend a volunteer's appointment status should an active criminal charge be reported or appear on a volunteer's criminal background check report. In accordance with the Fair Credit Reporting Agency (FCRA) guidelines, the volunteer applicant must be provided with notification of the organization that has requested the background check report, has received the results, and if any criminal records were found. All volunteer applicants have access to their background check report directly through the vendor.

Appointment/Reappointment

Appointment to a volunteer position is reflected on a member's registration and is signified by a council communication of an annual welcome letter from GSWO. Appointments occur annually and are often automatic when the volunteer continues to meet eligibility criteria for the position and act in accordance to volunteer policy and procedure.

- **Specifically, appointment/reappointment is contingent upon the following:**
  - Member registration
  - Successful completion of criminal background check within the past three years
  - Maintaining up-to-date records of required volunteer learning and training according to role
  - Ability to perform essential responsibilities of volunteer role
  - Being in good standing with the organization by following policies and procedures

Volunteer Learning & Support

Your Support Team

In your role as a Girl Scout volunteer, you'll team up with co-volunteers, service team members, caregivers, members of the community, council staff, and others who have expressed interest in working alongside you.

- **The other volunteers on your support team may help by:**
  - Filling in for you
  - Arranging meeting places
  - Being responsible for communicating with girls and caregivers
  - Managing group records
  - Locating volunteers with special skills to facilitate a specialized meeting
  - Assisting with trips and chaperoning
  - Building girls' outdoor skills and experiences

If you have a large support team, the first thing you'll want to do is meet with this group and discuss what brought each of you to Girl Scouts, review your strengths and skills, and talk about how you would like to work together as a team. **You might also discuss:**

- When important milestones will happen (Girl Scout cookie activities, field trips, travel plans, events, dates for other opportunities) and how long the planning process will take.
- When and where to meet as a group of volunteers, if necessary.
- When and where you will hold your three caregiver meetings throughout the year.
- Whether an advance trip to a destination, event site, or camp needs to happen.

Remember to call on your volunteer support team. This team can help you observe a meeting, assign you a buddy, help with registration, assist you with opening a bank account, plan your first meeting, and so on. Also, plan to attend support meetings—usually held several times throughout the year—that provide excellent opportunities to learn from other volunteers.

Girl Scout Support System for New Leaders/Volunteers

New to volunteering? Get the support you need to start strong with the following:

- Complete Troop Start-up or required training to begin working with girls or a service team.
- Visit our web page full of helpful information that is dedicated to new leaders gswo.org/newtroopleader.
- Log into your Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) and start planning your troop's Girl Scout year! You can log in at gswo.org/mygs.
- Connect with your service unit to build on Troop Start Up information, plan meaningful activities, and cultivate strong relationships with caregivers in your troop or group.
- Have an adult from your troop attend the regular service unit meetings to gain valuable knowledge and skills.
- Participate in Girl Scouts of Western Ohio and service unit social media to stay up to date on all the Girl Scout happenings. For help and support from volunteers and staff, join Rallyhood.
- Know who your Girl Scouts of Western Ohio support person is and how to contact them. Every volunteer has one primary contact they can always reach out to. Also, our Customer Care team is always prepared to assist you. Contact them at 888.350.5090 or customercare@gswo.org.

Additionally, council staff and volunteers are prepared to provide mentoring and coaching as you progress through your Girl Scout experience!

New Leader: Troop Start-up Training (Required Training)

All troop leaders are required in the first month to complete Troop Start-up training to receive your GSWO bank letter to open your troop bank account. Troop Start-up Training is a self-paced, online introduction to the Girl Scout Leadership Experience and volunteering with Girl Scouts. Visit gsLearn via your MyGS account to get started! Visit gswo.org for more information on recommended training and enrichment opportunities!

Volunteer Learning, Training, and Enrichment

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. Please check the Safety section of Volunteer Essentials 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.

Training Name	Description	Who	Frequency	Where	Length (approx.)
Troop Start-up	Troop Start-up Training will provide new leaders with the information needed to get your troop started or to take over a troop. Learn what girls do, how to guide your troop through their first meetings, troops safety, product program overview, troop finances and how to use the Volunteer Toolkit as a planning tool for your whole year.	For all new troop leaders	Once in your first 15 days as a new troop leader.	gsLearn, live virtual 1:1; or ask your CDM or service unit team	2 hours
Youth Protection Training*	Youth Protection Training is a requirement of all volunteers for understanding their responsibilities and how to identify and report suspected abuse.	All volunteers	Once in your first 15 days as a new volunteer or before meeting with girls for returning volunteers	gsLearn	15 minutes
Be a Sister to Every Girl Scout: Promoting Belonging	Create a sense of belonging in your troop by learning about the principles of belonging, social emotional learning and how the Girl Scout Leadership Experience ties it all together.	All volunteers	Once, or as often as needed	gsLearn or in-person at service unit level	1 hour
Safety Beyond the Troop Meeting	This training prepares you to take your girls outside of your regular troop meeting space/location. You will review GSWO Troop Trip Approval process, how to prepare your girls for travel, additional insurance coverage possibly needed, safety, and transporting girls.	All volunteers	Once prior to meeting outside of your regular meeting space/location.	gsLearn	1 hour
CPR/First Aid	CPR/First Aid is an in-person training for at least one volunteer per troop. The certification can be tracked in gsLearn.	One volunteer per troop	Every 2 years	In-person (blended)	3 or more hours

*** All troops must have two leaders who have completed Youth Protection Training within 30 days of starting their troop. Any volunteer who has not completed Youth Protection Training may not be responsible for girls, including to meet ratio at meetings or troop activities.**

To view the full Required Adult Training Chart, please scan the QR code or visit gswo.org/adulttraining!

Volunteer Appreciation

No matter your position, your hard work to change girls' lives is greatly appreciated by the council staff, caregivers, girls, and other volunteers. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio provides various levels of volunteer appreciation throughout the year. From a simple thank you note to a unique certificate presented at a service unit meeting to formal GSUSA awards presented in front of peers. Volunteer appreciation is fundamental to the daily activities of Girl Scouting.

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio Volunteer of the Month

Volunteer of the Month is a quick and easy way for volunteers, girls, and caregivers to recognize a volunteer for their time and dedication with Girl Scouts. From planning a big event, to the small special moments shared with the girls—all their efforts are appreciated and important to building girls of courage, confidence, and character! Each month, one volunteer will be selected in every region of western Ohio (North, Central, and South). Announcements will be posted on social media and in our monthly newsletter. Volunteers of the Month can also look forward to awesome prizes including a gift certificate to the council shop and social media recognition! To nominate a volunteer for Volunteer of the Month, go to the council website gswo.org/awards.

Formal GSWO and GSUSA Awards

A formal awards process is in place with endorsed awards and earned recognitions. Formal awards are presented in late spring at service unit and council volunteer appreciation events. A volunteer selections committee reviews the endorsements and determines the award recipients. Award endorsements are due each year by February 1.

Below is a brief description of the council, national, and earned awards for volunteers. More information regarding volunteer appreciation and formal awards can be found on the council website: gswo.org/appreciation.

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio Awards

- **Service Team Star:** Current service team members or administrative volunteers who have helped a service unit achieve one of the primary responsibilities of a service unit (extending membership, volunteer support, program support/events).
- **Green Badge of Courage:** Volunteers who have performed a courageous act or met a challenge in a creative way within their role as a Girl Scout Volunteer.
- **Founder's Award:** The Service Unit Founder's Award recognizes the support that service unit's provide to volunteers and girls within their community. Any service unit that meets the requirements will be recognized and celebrated.

GSUSA Awards

- **Volunteer of Excellence Award:** Volunteers who have contributed outstanding service while partnering with girls to implement the Girl Scout Leadership Experience or who have contributed service in support of the Girl Scout mission.
- **Appreciation Pin:** Volunteers who have given outstanding service to at least one service unit.
- **Honor Pin:** Volunteers who have given outstanding service to at least two or more service units or program delivery audiences.
- **Thanks Badge:** Volunteers who are actively giving service that is truly outstanding and impacts the council or entire Girl Scout movement.

- **Thanks Badge II:** Volunteers who, after previously receiving the Thanks Badge, continue to give outstanding service that benefits the council or Girl Scout movement.

Earned Recognitions for Volunteers

- **Membership Year Pin:** Indicates the total number of years as a registered member of Girl Scouts, including years registered as both a girl and an adult. Membership Year Pins are available through the council shop year-round for purchase or may be requested from the council using the request form on the council website (due by February 1).
- **Volunteer Years of Service:** Recognizes a registered adult member for years of active volunteer service. Volunteer Years of Service Pins can be requested for 20 years of service and above (in 5-year increments) through the request form on the council website (due by February 1). They may also be purchased through the council shop year-round.
- **National Volunteer Month:** National Volunteer Month is April. Volunteer Appreciation Week—the third week in April—is set aside especially for you. Girl Scouts pay tribute to the volunteers who help girls make the world a better place. The week centers on the long-standing National Girl Scout Leaders' Day (April 22). In addition, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio hosts volunteer appreciation events across the council in late spring.

General Volunteer Personnel Policies and Procedures

GSWO recognizes that the volunteer role is valuable and complex. Volunteer personnel policies and procedures are designed to support volunteers working through situations that they may encounter.

Volunteer Problem-Solving

Occasionally, volunteers may encounter difficult and complex situations involving their troops/groups. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio works to equip all adult volunteers with the information and support necessary to address issues as they develop in a way that results in little or no negative impact on the girls.

- **Use the following guidelines when confronted with an issue**
  - Keep an open mind and an open heart while always focusing on the girls. How does this situation affect them? What resolution would be best for all girls?
  - Keep the Girl Scout Promise and Law in mind and use it as a "code of ethics."
  - Confidentiality is key. Only those parties directly involved with the situation should be knowledgeable about the details and participate in the problem-solving. (See guidelines for involving additional administrative volunteers or council staff members on the next page.)
  - Operate on facts rather than rumors or speculation. Listen to all perspectives, keeping the best interests of the girls in mind.
  - Work in partnership with caregivers, allowing for two-way communication at all times.
  - Refer to council staff or authorities (law enforcement, Children's Services, etc.) when necessary.
  - **Under no circumstances is a girl removed from a troop or group without first working with the girl(s), caregiver(s), and ultimately, Girl Scout staff to find a solution that is in the best interest of all girls and adults involved.**
  - It is the policy of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio to resolve volunteer conflicts in a fair and equitable manner consistent with council policies and procedures.
- **Follow these steps when problem-solving an issue:**
  - Bring all involved parties together
  - Identify who the issue or situation is currently affecting or could affect
  - Allow each person to state their concerns without interruption

- Encourage re-stating of concerns shared by others to check for understanding
- All parties should seek an understanding of the other parties' perspectives
- All discussions should be grounded in the Girl Scout Promise and Law and Girl Scout Leadership Experience
- Identify options for a mutually-satisfactory solution
- Discuss ideas for resolving the situation, so that all parties' needs are met while the needs of the girls are the priority
- Agree on a solution
- Set a time frame to ensure the solution is effective for all parties
- Put it in writing! All parties should agree to the solution and the time frame as well as what next steps will be taken if the solution proves ineffective
- Maintain respectful, open communication with all parties throughout the problem-solving
- Remember: as a Girl Scout adult, you are modeling positive, responsible, and mature behavior for the girls!

- **Requesting Problem-Solving Assistance from Council Staff**

Girls are our first priority. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio encourages the problem-solving of concerns to occur with the parties most directly involved in the situation, but there are times when council staff assistance is necessary. If resolution cannot be reached with the parties directly involved, contact Customer Care for council staff assistance.

This may include but is not limited to:

- The safety and well-being of the girls and their assets are at risk.
- The safety and well-being of adult volunteers, caregivers, or community members are at risk.
- Problem-solving attempts with parties directly involved were unsuccessful.
- The initial issue or concern has escalated in seriousness or urgency. In cases of unsuccessful problem-solving with parties most directly involved in the situation, work with members of your service team (service unit chair, product program coordinator, etc.) and paid staff support person. They will coach and guide you through the situation, involving additional staff members as needed.
- Decisions made by the Director of Regional Services and Girl Scouts of Western Ohio's CEO and COO are final. Refusal to participate in the established problem-solving process is grounds for removal from a volunteer role.

In cases of urgent safety concerns for girls or adults, first call 911 when appropriate, then contact your Girl Scout service center directly.

Corrective Action and Volunteer Resignation and Release

It is the expectation of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio that volunteers will always act in an appropriate manner when participating in a Girl Scout capacity. However, at times, it may be necessary to take corrective action in order to maintain a positive, safe environment for girls and their assets while safeguarding the sustainability of the Girl Scout troop or group and the council.

Objectionable or unsatisfactory conduct will not be permitted and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including volunteer release, depending on the severity of the situation. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio may initiate the termination of volunteer appointment and release because of the inability or failure to complete the requirements of the position, including learning/ training and criminal background check, failure or refusal to abide by GSUSA or Girl Scouts of Western Ohio policies and standards, misuse or mismanagement of Girl Scout funds, or failure to accept and foster the mission and goals of the organization. When possible, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio will work in partnership with the volunteer to establish actions to correct the situation.

The serious offenses that could result in corrective action or volunteer release include, but are not limited to:

- Indecency of speech or action such as fighting, destruction of property, or willfully or repeatedly disregarding Girl Scouts of Western Ohio or GSUSA's policies and procedures.
- Dishonesty, including but not limited to, falsification of expense reports or any other council records.
- Possession or use of illegal drugs or other controlled substances.
- Possession of weapons or other dangerous objects on council premises or while performing council activities, including troop or group meetings.
- The unauthorized possession or use of alcohol on council premises or while performing council activities or other use of alcohol that the council determines is inconsistent with its policies or otherwise inappropriate.
- Refusal to permit council management to examine any council property or personal property while on council premises.
- Theft, destruction, or unauthorized use of troop, service unit, or council property.
- Misuse or misconduct of Girl Scout funds (troop, service unit, Product Program proceeds, etc.) or refusal to permit council staff to review troop finances.
- Child abuse or failure to report suspected child abuse immediately.
- Negligence or failure to maintain a safe and positive environment for girls.

When a volunteer initiates resignation, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio requests that the volunteer provides a written notification to their direct council support person.

Harassment

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is committed to maintaining an environment and climate in which relationships are characterized by dignity, respect, courtesy, and equitable treatment. It is the policy of the organization to provide all volunteers and paid staff with an environment free from all forms of unlawful or unwelcome harassment, including implied or expressed forms of sexual harassment, and inappropriate behavior. Accordingly, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio will not tolerate any form of harassment or other inappropriate behavior against staff, volunteers, or girls. It is against the organization's policies for any volunteer, male or female, to sexually harass another volunteer, paid staff, or Girl Scout member of the same or opposite sex.

Harassment consists of unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical, or visual, that is based upon a person's protected status, such as race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), sexual orientation, parental status, national origin, age, disability, family medical history or genetic information, political affiliation, military service, or other protected group status. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other physical, verbal, or visual conduct based on sex may constitute sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment may include, but is not limited to, sexually-oriented "kidding," "teasing," or jokes; foul or obscene language, gestures, or photographs; physical contact such as pinching, patting, and grabbing; and demands for sexual favors. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio prohibits any such conduct by our volunteers at all Girl Scout meetings, events, and activities. All volunteers are expected to avoid any behavior or conduct that could be interpreted as unlawful harassment or otherwise inappropriate. Volunteers should also understand the importance of informing an individual whenever that individual's behavior is unwelcome, offensive, in poor taste, or inappropriate.

Any volunteer who feels that she/he/they has been subjected to harassment of any type, whether by another volunteer, council staff member, or any agent of the organization, should promptly report the incident to the Director of Regional Services or another staff member. The staff member will take appropriate measures to resolve or correct the situation in an expeditious manner.

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is committed to prompt and thorough investigation of all allegations of harassment. To the extent reasonably possible, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio will keep the information pertaining to the investigation confidential. If an investigation confirms that a violation of this policy has occurred, then the offending person will be ineligible to volunteer with Girl Scouts.

Whistleblower Policy and Reporting Concerns to Council Staff

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio requires all members, including employees and volunteers, to observe high standards of business and personal ethics, upholding the Girl Scout Promise and Law, council policy, and local, state, and federal laws in conduct of duties and responsibilities.

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio encourages all concerns or conflicts to be handled with the persons directly involved—such as having a conversation with your co-volunteers, girls, or caregivers with whom you may have questions or discrepancies. This policy is intended to encourage and enable Girl Scout members and others to raise serious concerns internally so that Girl Scouts of Western Ohio can address and correct inappropriate conduct and actions. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is committed to fostering and maintaining an environment where all members can act without fear of retaliation by establishing procedures for reporting wrongdoing.

There are times when you may suspect, know, or witness violations of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio policies or situations which put girls, adults, or troop/service unit finances or individual well-being at risk. We recommend gathering facts over speculation before making a report to council staff.

- **Volunteers and employees are expected to report serious concerns. Serious concerns may include:**
  - Violations or suspected violations of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio's policies
  - Suspected fraud or questionable or improper accounting
  - Abuse or misuse of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio's resources or assets
  - Dishonest actions or deeds, including theft
  - Suspected conflict of interest
  - Experienced or awareness of harassment or discrimination of any kind (see harassment and discrimination policies in General Personnel Policies Section of Volunteer Essentials)
  - Safety concerns, including child endangerment or abuse (see policy on child abuse in the Safety section in Volunteer Essentials)
  - Illegal activity

  If a report is made, anonymity will be maintained; however, identity may be disclosed in order to conduct a thorough investigation of the report. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio will confirm receipt of the report and follow up with any questions within 7 days. If insufficient information is given, the report will be kept on file for the remainder of the membership year and no investigation will be conducted. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio will not retaliate or penalize a reporter. However, if you witness a situation which puts girls' or adults' safety at risk, you are required to report the situation immediately. Failure to report known serious concerns may result in an individual's eligibility to volunteer with Girl Scouts of Western Ohio. Reports can be made anonymously; however, it may limit our capacity to fully investigate the issue.

- **Confidentiality:**

  All reports made under these procedures will be handled with the maximum degree of confidentiality and information from the report will be shared only to the extent necessary to conduct a complete and fair investigation and any required follow-up. Individuals may make reports on an anonymous basis, if they so choose.

- **Investigation and Resolution of a Complaint/Report:**

  All complaints/reports will receive immediate attention, and if appropriate an investigation will commence as soon as practical based on the risk assessment and exposure. Upon completion of the investigation, when possible and appropriate, the person filing the complaint will be informed of the resolution.

- **Non-Retaliation:**

  The reporting of action or behavior that an individual reasonably believes is inappropriate is an important component of our Girl Scouts of Western Ohio policies. Individuals making such reports will be free from any retribution, retaliation, or adverse effect in their standing as a member or volunteer. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio will not tolerate acts of retaliation. Any individual (staff, caregiver, or volunteer) who discourages or prevents other individuals from making such reports or seeking the help or assistance they need will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of volunteer role.

- **Acting in Good Faith:**

  Anyone filing a complaint concerning a violation or suspected violation must be acting in good faith and following the appropriate process. Any allegations which prove to have been made maliciously or knowingly to be false will cause a volunteer to be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of volunteer role.

- **Reporting:**

  Reports should be made by calling Customer Care at 888.350.5090 and follow the reporting hierarchy below.

Person Committing Infraction	Who to Ask for When Calling Customer Care
Volunteer	Regional Director or Volunteer Human Resource Manager
Paid Staff Member	Chief People and Belonging Officer or Chief Operating Officer

Smoking

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is a smoke-free environment. The use of tobacco products, including e-cigarettes and vaporizers (vaping), where girls are present is not permitted.

There will be no smoking or vaping in any council buildings or vehicles; including all sites and vehicles, owned, leased, and/or operated by Girl Scouts of Western Ohio. There will be designated smoking areas at all council properties.

Alcohol and Drug Use

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is committed to maintaining an environment free from alcohol and drugs, including marijuana in any form. The possession or use of alcohol is not permitted on Girl Scout property or at any Girl Scout (girl and/or adult) function, except specific, pre-approved occasions.

Persons under the influence of controlled substances or alcohol, or in possession of same, are prohibited from participation in any Girl Scout activity or event.

Possession of Firearms or Weapons

No person will use or possess firearms on council-owned or operated properties (including vehicles) while involved in Girl Scout-related activities, except law enforcement officers acting in an official capacity.

Although Girl Scouts of Western Ohio respects an individual's right to carry a concealed weapon pursuant to Ohio's Carry and Conceal Law, it is the policy of the council that no member, participant, guest, or any other individual shall have the right to carry, conceal, or possess any gun, knife, or any other kind of weaponry while involved in or present at any Girl Scout activity or while on Girl Scout council-owned property.

Council Right to Search

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio reserves the right to:

- Search any person, vehicle, or object that enters or leaves council property.
- Search anything on council property, including lockers, desks, purses, briefcases, baggage, lunch sacks, clothing, and any other item in which firearms, weapons, illegal drugs, and alcohol have the potential to be hidden.
- Search company vehicles owned or leased by the council.

Financial Concerns

Any volunteer that has unpaid funds owed to Girl Scouts of Western Ohio or other councils in the organization for the following will not be eligible to serve in an appointed volunteer position for one year from the date the debt is paid in full:

- Fall Product or Cookie Program
- Payment for an event
- Bounced check(s) totaling $50 or more
- Misuse of troop funds (see section on Chapter 6)

It is the responsibility of the volunteer to contact their Girl Scout center and request a review of his/her/their volunteer eligibility status following the one-year period.

Unpaid funds owed to Girl Scouts of Western Ohio could result in Product Program restrictions on all girls within the caregiver's household for a year after the debt is paid in full. Additional restrictions or actions may be applied for specific circumstances; the volunteer will be notified in writing of any restrictions or actions taken against them. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio reserves the right to seek collection assistance or legal prosecution for funds that are not paid as requested by the council.

Social Media Policy

As a representative of Girl Scouts, your online presence can reflect positively or negatively on Girl Scouts. It's a social media best practice to set your personal social profiles to "private" (only your friends can see it), especially if you have Girl Scouts of Western Ohio listed as an organization that you volunteer for or represent. Please remember that your social profile picture can always be viewed publicly, so keep branding in mind if using Girl Scout images or branding.

Volunteers are personally responsible for what they post online. The Girl Scout Promise and Law serve as good standards for interacting online:

1. **Be honest and fair.** Be transparent about your role as a Girl Scouts of Western Ohio volunteer when communicating about Girl Scout-related issues online.
2. **Be friendly, helpful, considerate, and caring.** Treat others as you want to be treated. Don't use social media to attack other volunteers, troop members, or staff members.

3. **Be courageous and strong.** Careful monitoring of social media is important in maintaining a welcoming and supportive community. If you see posts, comments, or behavior that concern you, please notify Customer Care at 888.350.5090. Don't be afraid to speak up or ask questions.
4. **Be responsible for what you say and do.** Remember that what you post online will be around for a long time; nothing is private.
5. **Respect yourself and others.** Respect other people's privacy and your own personal boundaries by using discretion when choosing to connect with a fellow volunteer or girl guardian. Misappropriating the Girl Scout trademark and committing any other acts in violation of any local, state, or federal law is prohibited.
6. **Respect authority.** If your actions on social media—as with any other kind of actions taken as a Girl Scout volunteer—negatively impact girls, volunteers, or council, we reserve the right to take corrective action.
7. **Use resources wisely.**

Make the world a better place and be a sister to every Girl Scout. This is true regardless of how you are communicating! Volunteers can connect with other volunteers using these two social media platforms:

- **GSWO Volunteer Support (for adult volunteers):** facebook.com/groups/GSWOVolunteerSupport
- **Rallyhood (for volunteers and families to share ideas, get support, and learn from Girl Scout sisters):** gswo.org/rallyhood

Although volunteers develop trusting relationships with girls and adults as part of their volunteer role, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio does not allow the exchange of electronic communication between volunteers and girls, except related to official Girl Scout activities or business.

Sharing Your Girl Scout Stories

We love sharing girls, troop, volunteer, and alum content! Please let us know the amazing things Girl Scouts are doing by submitting the form at gswo.org/stories. In addition, you can tag us on social media, using the handle @girlscoutswoh and/or by using the hashtag #GSWOadventures.

Media Policy

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio's Marketing & Communication staff maintains relationships with all TV, print, and radio outlets in our region and manages all local Girl Scout brand-related media inquiries and crisis communications. GSUSA handles all national media outreach.

Before taking your girl or troop story directly to the press or responding to a media inquiry, always reach out to Girl Scouts of Western Ohio's MarComm team first. This avoids causing confusion for our media friends or duplicating outreach efforts by staff that may be already underway.

It is increasingly common for the media to approach people online. Should a public figure or media representative approach you for an opinion on Girl Scout activities or related issues, please do not respond to the media. Instead, contact the GSWO MarComm team at marketing@gswo.org, 888.350.5090, or if it's a serious after-hours emergency, at 513.619.1398.

Setting Up a Troop or Service Unit Website or Social Media Account

Troops/groups and service units may create a website, Rallyhood page (gswo.org/rallyhood), and/or use social media to promote Girl Scouting or communicate with members. When creating websites

or using other forms of social media, including, but not limited to, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, or Pinterest, at least one adult Girl Scouts of Western Ohio member must be an "owner" of the website and/or account(s), as well as be the person responsible for the email address associated with the account.

Troops/groups and service units using social media must adhere to the age requirements established by social media sites. All girls' caregivers must be invited to become members of all troop/group and service unit social media accounts and given links to any troop/group websites. Girl Scouts who meet the age requirements and have parental permission may participate in setting up and monitoring online communities. Before starting, an adult should review the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge (found in Safety Activity Checkpoints in VTK) and have each girl sign the form.

Websites and social media accounts created by volunteers and girls are unofficial accounts and should be labeled as such. Do not use a Girl Scouts of the USA or Girl Scouts of Western Ohio logo as your profile picture. Copy and paste this disclaimer as part of your profile description: "This is an unofficial page created by volunteers of [insert Service Unit/Troop/Group name]. For official information about Girl Scouts of Western Ohio, visit gswo.org."

Whenever possible, avoid having a social media or website account associated with an individual's personal email. Instead, create an email address for your group (i.e., troop0000@gmail.com). More than one person should have the login information for both the email and social media or website account. Account administrators should send an email to marketing@gswo.org with the link to their website or social media page, as well as the contact information for the person who serves as the primary administrator for the page.

It is important to remember that the internet is an open forum for anyone. To ensure online safety, volunteers should follow these safety measures:

- Use only first names of girls online.
- Ensure photo permission before posting pictures of girls online.
- Never post girls' addresses, phone numbers or email addresses.
- Never post addresses, dates, and times of group meeting places. An adult who wishes to communicate upcoming events with families and girls should use email, a password-protected website, or a private/closed social media page.
- If your website or social media page has open forums, an adult must screen all postings before they are published to the site.
- Before placing a link to an external site on your page, ensure that the page you are linking to is suitable for children and appropriate for Girl Scouts.

Online Branding

Girl Scouts is a well-loved, iconic brand. Girl Scouts of the USA has developed a visual brand language that conveys the Girl Scout Movement and speaks to our core audience: girls. Like with printed materials, brand guidelines must be followed online. Find current guidance at gswo.org/branding.

Misappropriating the Girl Scout trademark and committing any other acts in violation of any local, state, or federal law is prohibited. In addition, do not violate copyright laws by using designs, text from magazines or books, poetry, music, lyrics, videos, graphics, or trademarked symbols without specific permission from the copyright or trademark holder.

Do not sell advertising on your site or within your group—including banner ads, sponsored links, etc. The sale of advertising creates an implied relationship between Girl Scouts and the goods or services advertised and cannot be permitted.

Similarly, volunteer-run pages must be hosted independently from non-Girl Scout pages. It is permissible to use a free hosting service, but not to put a Girl Scout page on an existing external business or organization's website that may create an implied relationship with Girl Scouts.

Girl Scout Product Program & Selling Online

It is important to remember the twofold purpose of the Girl Scout Fall and Cookie Programs. The primary purposes of these programs are: **1.** To help girls grow and **2.** Develop and generate the revenue necessary to provide Girl Scouting to as many girls as possible. For this reason, girls should be directly involved in any sales that are made, whether in-person or over the Internet.

Democratic Process

The democratic process has been part of the basic beliefs characterizing the Girl Scout Movement since its inception. Members of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio are well informed about major issues affecting the council and annually elect the council's board of directors. The board of directors is responsible for setting the strategic direction and making final decisions for the organization.

Council

The purpose of the council is to further the development of the Girl Scout Movement in the United States; to establish local responsibility for leadership, administration, and supervision of the Girl Scout Movement; and to develop, manage, and maintain Girl Scouting in accordance with the terms of the council's charter.

Council Membership

The legal voting members of the council shall all be active adult volunteers and all active girl members 14 years of age and older who are registered in the Girl Scout Movement through the council. An active adult volunteer is a member of Girl Scouts of the USA who has been appointed or elected, including board members, to serve in a specific volunteer position.

Council Membership Responsibilities

In accordance with the procedures set forth in the bylaws, the voting members of the council shall elect the officers of the council, the board of directors, the board development committee, and the delegates and alternate delegates to the National Council. **Each voting member of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is entitled to one vote.**

National Council Delegates

National delegates, whom the council is entitled to elect to the National Council, shall be elected for a term of three years or until their successors are elected. Alternates may be asked to fill possible vacancies among the National Delegates to the National Council and are elected at the same time and in the same manner as the National Delegates to the National Council.

National Council delegates, made up of girl and adult members, influence policy by holding elections, amending the Constitution, establishing requirements for credentials, and determining the general lines of policy of the Girl Scout Movement. In addition, they consider and act upon proposals directed toward the fostering and improvement of Girl Scouting, receive and act upon reports of the National

Board of Directors, and give guidance to the National Board upon general lines of direction of the Movement and program.

How Council Decisions are Made

Volunteers have the opportunity and responsibility to provide input within the council's governance and management system. Our democratic values hold that members should have a voice in influencing major decisions. Individuals should be well informed on the council's mission, vision, and goals in order to identify and/or discuss issues and needs that exist, and to be able to give sound input to both the governance and management of the council. Providing input and influencing decisions is not limited to voting. While this does not mean that every member of the council can vote on everything or make final decisions about policy, it does mean that members will be well-informed about major issues affecting the council. Both types of decisions are based on the belief that members should have a voice in major decisions that will influence a large part of the membership.

Definitions	**Governance** ***Big picture decisions and direction*** Governance decisions are broad policy decisions made by the Board of Directors to provide stability within the council and to give direction for the way Girl Scouting is implemented in the council's jurisdiction. Governance decisions relate to strategic planning, fund development, fiduciary oversight, selection and evaluation of the Chief Executive Officer, and organizational performance appraisal.	**Management** ***Day-to-day operations*** Management decisions relate to annual planning, budgeting, the selection, placement, and supervision of operational volunteers and staff, the development of systems to ensure the effective delivery of the Girl Scout program to all girls within the jurisdiction, oversight of fiscal and physical resources, and the implementation of policies and standards established by the Board of Directors.
Who	**People in governance:** • Board of Directors • National Delegates • Delegates-at-Large • Members of the Board Development Committee • Members of board committees and task groups	**People in operations:** • Leaders and other volunteers working directly with girls • Service Unit team members and others working with operational adults • Council staff
Responsibilities	**People in governance are concerned with:** • Setting policy and long-term direction (strategic goals) • Establishing priorities • Ensuring financial and organizational stability	**People in operations are responsible for:** • Day-to-day management • Implementation of policy • Carrying out strategic goals • Providing feedback to the governance arm on progress and future needs

Board of Directors - Girl Scouts of Western Ohio

The board of directors, which is made up of both girls and adults, are elected to ensure that the council continues to operate effectively over the long term. Specific responsibilities include policymaking, planning, review, funding, community relations, and assuring that the chief executive officer's performance is effective. The board must ensure that the council is operated in compliance with Girl Scouts of the USA charter requirements and state and federal laws.

The board governs with an emphasis on outward vision rather than internal focus, strategic leadership more than administrative detail, clear distinction of board and CEO roles, collective rather than individual decisions, future rather than past or present, and proactivity rather than reactivity. On any issue, the board must ensure that all divergent views are considered in making decisions yet must resolve into a single organizational position. Visit gswo.org/board to see current board members.

Council Finances

What Does It Cost to Support a Girl in Girl Scouting?

The programmatic cost of supporting a girl in Girl Scouts is approximately $450 per year. This is the council's cost of supporting a girl in Girl Scouts, and there may be additional costs to the troop or caregiver. To learn more about where the funds go, visit gswo.org/supportgirlssuccess. While the troop is at the center of delivering the Girl Scout Leadership Experience to girls, the Girl Scout Council has the responsibility of providing program opportunities and other supports that strengthen the troop experience. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio also provides many core services needed to support girls in achieving their goals and the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

Council Finances

To carry out its jurisdictional responsibility for providing and administering the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio shall adhere to Girl Scouts of the USA's policies, criteria, and standards for an effective Girl Scout Council as found in the Blue Book of Basic Documents or Leaders' Digest. This includes sound planning and management and responsible financial procedures and practices. Girl Scouting helps girls learn money management skills as they plan, implement, and evaluate activities. Adults working in partnership with girls are role models in all aspects of planning and management, including the development and practice of money management skills.

The council budget includes:

- A significant subsidy of council-sponsored program activities, such as troop camping, resident camp, older girl opportunities, and high and low ropes challenge courses
- Financial assistance to girls for membership dues, program activities, and troop resources
- Girl Scout leader recruitment, placement, and training, including increasing costs in areas such as background checks and specialized training for issues such as behavior management and conflict resolution
- Communication resources like the Council website, Volunteer Essentials, and the cost of service unit printing and postage
- Maintenance of council camps and Girl Scout centers

Sending Money to Girl Scouts

If you are sending money to Girl Scouts of Western Ohio through the U.S. Postal Service, please use the following address and include your name, Service Unit Number, Troop Number, and reason for sending funds to Girl Scouts of Western Ohio.

- **Girl Scouts of Western Ohio, 4930 Cornell Road, Cincinnati, OH 45242**

Annual Campaign

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio relies on the generosity of the community to provide financial support. These funds help to provide membership financial assistance, camp financial assistance, programmatic supplies, staffing support, and more. Gifts to the Annual Campaign are unrestricted and used as needed to support Girl Scouts of Western Ohio. Community members, foundations, corporations, and organizations are welcome and needed to invest in girls. Donations can be sent to the address above or given directly on our website gswo.org/give.

Family Giving

Family Giving is Girl Scout families supporting Girl Scouts and making it possible for us to offer the programming that empowers girls to be inspired future leaders. An investment in Girl Scouts is a commitment to support our volunteers and girls who will change the world as they develop into the leaders of tomorrow.

- **There are several ways to make a financial contribution to the Family Giving Campaign*:**
  - Donate during Girl Scout registration
  - Donate online at gswo.org/donate
  - Donate at a Family Giving Girl Scout event
  - Contact the Fund Development department at your Girl Scout center at **giving@gswo.org**
  - Donate via community rewards programs (ex. Kroger Rewards)

Girl Scouts cannot endorse products or businesses. This includes third-party fundraisers such as restaurant nights.

Planned Gifts and the Juliette Gordon Low Society

Planned gifts include bequests, life insurance, charitable trusts, charitable gift annuities, and other deferred gifts. Planned gifts ensure that the values of Girl Scouting, as identified in the Girl Scout Promise and Law, are available to future generations of girls, so that they develop the skills needed to reach their full potential. In addition to extending the donor's own values to future generations, a planned gift can offer significant tax benefits to the donor. The Juliette Gordon Low Society of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio recognizes donors who have identified themselves as planned givers.

The Juliette Gordon Low Society is a special group of Girl Scout members who have made a commitment to share their legacy with the next generation. You become part of this distinguished group when you leave a gift in your will, trust, or other account for Girl Scouts. For more information about planned giving or becoming a member, please contact council staff at giving@gswo.org.

Memorial & Tribute Fund

Memorial remembrances are monetary gifts in memory of a friend or relative. Tribute gifts honor an important event or person in your life. They are appropriate for a birthday, anniversary, graduation, the Girl Scout Gold Award, recognition of a Girl Scout leader or volunteer, holiday gift, or other special occasion.

Please include a note to the Fund Development department specifying the type of gift you wish to make and the name and address of the recipient or family. A thank you acknowledgment card that does not mention the amount of the contribution will be sent in your name.

Questions regarding charitable support for Girl Scouts of Western Ohio can be directed to the council's Fund Development department at giving@gswo.org.

Chapter 2:
The Girl Scout Program

Girl Scouts is the largest leadership development organization for girls in the world. With programs from coast to coast and across the globe, Girl Scouts offers every girl the chance to practice a lifetime of leadership, adventure, and success.

Who Can Join Girl Scouts?

Girl Scouts is about sharing the fun, friendship, and power of girls and women together. Any girl—from kindergarten through 12th grade—can join Girl Scouts. Girl Scout volunteers are also a diverse group—you may be a college volunteer working on a community-action project, a caregiver volunteer ready for an outdoor adventure with your girl's group, or any responsible adult (who has passed the necessary screening process) looking to make a difference in a girl's life.

Girl Scouts is open to all girls who are registered members of the organization. Girl Scouts welcomes all girls, regardless of race, ethnicity, background, cognitive or physical abilities, family structure, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

All members, whether girls or adults, share a commitment to the Girl Scout Promise and Law. Each member also agrees to follow safety guidelines and pay the annual membership dues of $25 (Adults can also purchase a lifetime membership).

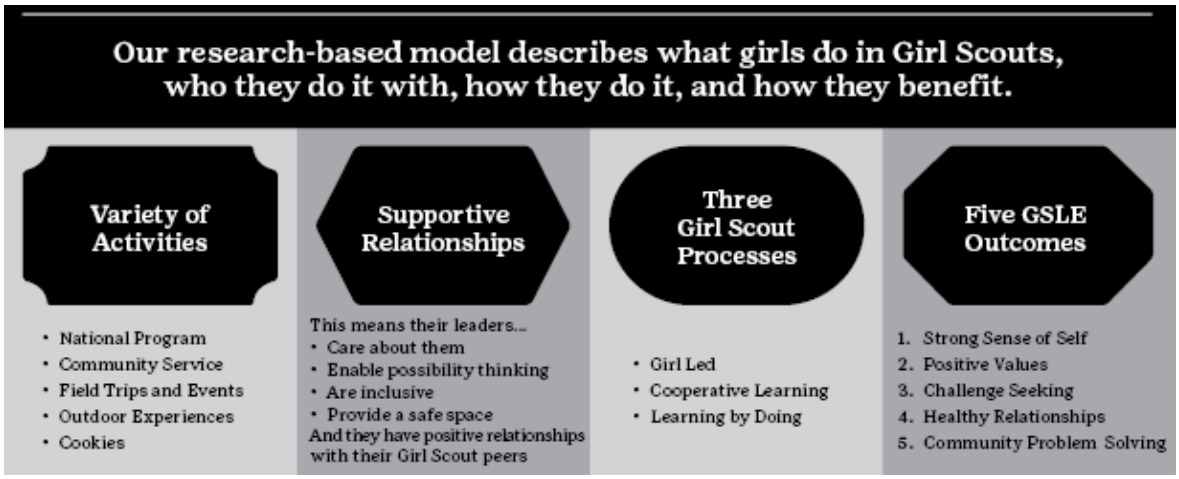
Girls at Every Grade Level

After girls join, they team up in the following grade levels:

Daisy | K-1	**Brownie** | 2-3	**Junior** | 4-5
Cadette | 6-8	**Senior** | 9-10	**Ambassador** | 11-12

The Girl Scout Program

What makes Girl Scouts truly unique? Everything is designed especially for, and is tested by, girls! Our Girl Scout Program centers around our research-backed Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)—that is, what girls do and how they do it. There are so many ways to make sure your girls get the full Girl Scout experience in a way that excites and inspires them! The grade-level-specific resources will help you break it down for your girls and allow you to customize your troop, which gives girls opportunities to explore what interests them.



When girls participate in the GSLE, they gain measurable leadership skills and outcomes that fuel their success.

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience comes to life when activities are led by girls, features cooperative learning, and girls are engaged in learning by doing. These are the three program processes that allow girls to ask questions, offer ideas, use their imaginations, learn to work together, brainstorm, problem-solve, and reflect on their experiences.

Girls' time in 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 girls don't have to fill their vests and sashes with badges. Because what matters most is the fun and learning that happens as girls make experiences their own, 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 the girls hadn't factored in? No matter an activity's outcome, you can amplify its impact by encouraging your girls to reflect on their latest endeavors.

Reflection is the necessary debrief that reinforces what the girls learned. As they explore the "whats" and "whys," girls 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 with girls 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 with the girls. 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 have done 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 girls can test their skills and be unafraid to fail. Keep in mind that good progression drives success for girls.

Inclusion and Belonging

Juliette Gordon Low founded Girl Scouts over 100 years ago as an innovative movement where all would be welcomed. We continuously strive to build a diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization that supports the many faces, cultures, and walks of life that proudly make up our vibrant community. It is essential to our mission that every individual's ideas and perspectives are sought out, heard, respected, and valued. Together, we empower girls to make the world a better place.

How to make a troop more inclusive:

1. Create an environment that values and respects diversity. Foster a belief in your troop that everyone benefits from having a diverse group of girls, by helping the girls be aware of and appreciate the commonalities and differences that they can and can't see.
2. Make sure all girls have the opportunity to fully engage in activities and have access to opportunities and information. This may mean helping girls overcome barriers to participation, adjusting activities, or even changing how you communicate.
3. Model respectful ways to interact with all people. Girls learn by watching how adults interact with girls and other adults.
4. Be mindful of your own biases and assumptions about others by leading with empathy and encourage girls to do the same.
5. Be conscious of and avoid using generalized statements about groups or types of people, and don't refer to a person based on a particular characteristic like race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, education, socioeconomic status, and religion.
6. Get to know the girls and their families. Remember that all families are different, and keep that in mind when planning family events. Girls may have really engaged grandparents, caregivers, or other family members who should be included in important ceremonies and occasions. Also, pay attention to special holidays and cultural traditions that may conflict with troop plans or limit a girl's participation.

The Important Difference Between Badges and Journeys

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. 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. 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 are 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.

Emblems and Patches

In addition to Journey awards and badges, girls can commemorate their Girl Scout adventures with emblems and patches, which can be worn on their tunics, vests, or sashes.

- **Emblems** show membership in Girl Scouts, a particular council, a particular troop, or in some other Girl Scout group. These can be worn on the front of a sash or vest (see the diagram in the handbook section of The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting to see where these are placed).
- **Patches** are developed at the national or council level with a focus on participation. Some come with companion activity booklets, while others are given out at events. These are worn on the back of the tunic, sash, or vest, since they are not emblems or earned awards.

You can purchase emblems and patches—along with badges and leadership awards—at Girl Scouts of Western Ohio's shops or by visiting the GSUSA online shop. There, you not only find a cool list of the earned awards for each grade level, but you can also click on a link that shows you exactly where girls can place all their emblems, awards, badges, pins, and patches on their vests and sashes!

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 and Special Girl Scout Days

Time-honored traditions 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:

- **October 31:** Juliette Gordon Low's birthday, or Founder's Day, marks the birth in 1860 of Girl Scouts of the USA founder Juliette Gordon Low in Savannah, Georgia.
- **February 22:** World Thinking Day 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.
- **March 12:** Girl Scouts' birthday commemorates the day in 1912 when Juliette Gordon Low officially registered the organization's first 18 girl members in Savannah, Georgia.
- **April 22:** A day of appreciation for adult volunteers in Girl Scouting. We encourage the girls, their families, and service unit/Girl Scout communities to plan special gestures to show appreciation for the adult Girl Scout volunteers in their lives.

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 Girl Scout traditions and special Girl Scout days.

Girl Scout Ceremonies

Ceremonies play an important part in Girl Scouts and are used not only to celebrate accomplishments, experience time-honored traditions, and reinforce the values of the Girl Scout Promise and Law, but also to encourage girls to take a short pause in their busy lives and connect with their fellow Girl Scouts in fun and meaningful ways. Many examples of ceremonies—for awards, meeting openings and closings, and so on—are sewn right into the Journeys, including ideas for new ceremonies girls can create.

Girls use ceremonies for all sorts of reasons. Here's a brief list so that you can become familiar with the most common Girl Scout ceremonies:

- **Bridging Ceremonies** mark a girl's move from one grade level of Girl Scouting to another, such as from Junior to Cadette.
- **Closing Ceremonies** finalize the meeting, with expectations for the next. A closing ceremony may be as simple as a hand squeeze while standing in a circle.
- **Court of Awards** is a time to recognize girls who have accomplished something spectacular during the Girl Scout year.
- **Flag Ceremonies** can be part of any activity that honors the American flag.
- **Girl Scout Highest Awards Ceremonies** honor Girl Scout Juniors who have earned the Girl Scout Bronze Award and are usually held for a group and combined with council recognition.
- **Girl Scouts Own** is a girl-led program that allows girls to explore their feelings and beliefs around a topic (such as the importance of friendship or the personal meaning they get from the Girl Scout Promise and Law) using the spoken word, favorite songs, poetry, or other methods of expression. It is never a religious ceremony.
- **Investiture** welcomes new members, girls or volunteers, into the Girl Scout family for the first time. Girls receive their Girl Scout, Brownie Girl Scout, or Daisy Girl Scout pin at this time.
- **Opening Ceremonies** start troop meetings and can also begin other group meetings.
- **Pinning Ceremonies** help celebrate when girls receive grade-level Girl Scout pins.
- **Rededication Ceremonies** allow girls and volunteers to renew their commitment to the Girl Scout Promise and Law

Signs, Songs, Handshake, and More!

Over time, any organization is going to develop a few common signals that everyone understands. Such is the case with Girl Scouts, who have developed a few unique ways to greet, acknowledge, and communicate, some of which are listed here.



- **Girl Scout Sign**

The sign is formed with the right hand, by using the thumb to hold down the pinky, leaving the three middle fingers extended to represent the three parts of the Promise.

- **Girls give the sign when they:**

– Say the Promise or Law.

– Are welcomed into Girl Scouts at an investiture ceremony that welcomes new members or when they receive an award, patch, pin, or other recognition.

– Greet other Girl Scouts and Girl Guides.

- **Girl Scout Handshake**

Another form of greeting between Girl Guides and Girl Scouts is the Girl Scout handshake. Girls raise their right hand in the Girl Scout sign and shake using their left hand, denoting friendliness and loyalty.

- **Quiet Sign**

The quiet sign can be extremely useful to you as a volunteer, so teach it to girls during your first meeting. Raise your right hand high with an open palm; this refers to the original 5th law of Girl Scouting: A Girl Scout is courteous. As girls in the group see the sign, they stop talking and also raise their hands. Once everyone is silent, the meeting can begin.

- **Girl Scout Slogan and Motto**

The Girl Scout slogan is, “Do a good turn daily.” The Girl Scout motto is, “Be prepared.”

- **Songs**

Whether singing around a campfire or joining a chorus of voices at the Mall in Washington, D.C., Girl Scouts have always enjoyed the fun and fellowship of music. In fact, the first Girl Scout Song Book, a collection of songs put together by girl members, was published in 1925.
Songs can be used to open or close meetings, enhance ceremonies, lighten a load while hiking, or share a special moment with other Girl Scouts. Check out Girl Scouts of Western Ohio’s online songbook and videos at gswo.org/songbook.

- **My Promise, My Faith Pin**

The Girl Scout Law includes many of the principles and values common to most faiths. And even though Girl Scouts is a secular organization, we’ve always encouraged girls to explore spirituality via their own faiths. Girls of all grade levels can now earn the My Promise, My Faith pin. By carefully examining the Girl Scout Law and directly tying it to the tenets of her faith, a girl can earn the pin once a year. You can find more about the requirements for this pin in The Girl’s Guide to Girl Scouting.

Highest Awards

As your girls discover their passions and the power of their voices, they’ll want to take on an issue that’s captured their interest 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. For more Girl Scout Highest Award information, council approval processes, and to download the Highest Award guidelines for your age level, visit gswo.org/highestawards.

- **Girl Scout Bronze Award:** Earned by Juniors who have completed one Junior Journey.
- **Girl Scout Silver Award:** Earned by Cadettes who have completed oneCadette Journey.

- **Girl Scout Gold Award:** Earned by Seniors and Ambassadors who have completed two Senior or Ambassador Journeys or earned the Girl Scout Silver Award and completed one Senior or Ambassador Journey. This award requires girls to submit a project proposal via Go Gold (gogold.girlscouts.org) for approval before they can move forward with their project. For more information on how Girl Scouts can earn money to support their projects, see Gold Award money-earning information in the Finance chapter.

A girl is eligible to earn any recognition at the grade level in which she is registered. She does not have to earn a Bronze or Silver Award before earning the Girl Scout Gold Award.

Girl Scout Travel and Destinations

From their first local field trip as Daisies to exploration of another country as Seniors or Ambassadors, girls will find that Girl Scouts is the best way to travel. They'll challenge themselves in a safe environment that sparks their curiosity, and they'll create lifelong memories with their Girl Scout sisters. The Girl Scout Cookie Program can help to make travel dreams a reality!

Traveling with Girl Scouts is very different than traveling with family, school, or other groups because girls take the lead. As they make the decisions about where to go and what to do and take increasing responsibility for the planning and management of their trips, girls build important organizational and management skills that will benefit them in college and beyond.

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. 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 Girl Scouts of Western Ohio organizes or participating in Destinations. There's a whole world of possibilities for your girls!

- **Planning Ahead for Adventure**

  Get in touch with Girl Scouts of Western Ohio as you start thinking about planning a trip. We have training programs that will raise your confidence as a chaperone, as well as an approval process for overnight and extended travel. For more information on Girl Scouts of Western Ohio travel opportunities and policies, please visit our Travel page at gswo.org/travel.

  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 (girlscouts.org/travel) 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 Travel/Trips section of Safety Activity Checkpoints and chapter 7 of this book are your go-to resources for safety. Once you know what to do to prepare, be sure to fill out the Troop Trip and Activity Notification Form found on the Forms and Documents page of our website. 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.

  Note: Extended travel (more than three nights) is not covered under the basic Girl Scout insurance plan and will require additional coverage. Check out Girl Scout Activity Insurance in chapter 7 for more information.

- **Girl Scout Connections**

It's easy to tie eye-opening travel opportunities into the leadership training and skill-building your girls are doing in Girl Scouts! Your girls can use their creativity to connect any leadership Journey theme into an idea for travel, like a Sow What? 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, Photography, and, of course, all the financial badges that help girls budget and earn money for their trips.

Looking to incorporate Girl Scout traditions into your trip? Look no further 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.

Outdoor Adventures

For over 100 years, girls have discovered, explored, and strengthened their outdoor skills and commitment to environmental stewardship through Girl Scouting. Guided by supportive adults and peers, Girl Scouts discover the wonders of nature, experience the thrill of adventure, and challenge themselves and one another to reach new heights!

Outdoor Progression

Progression allows girls to learn the skills they need to become competent in the outdoors, including how to plan and organize outdoor activities. Acknowledge a girl's mastery of an outdoor skill and invite her to challenge herself further by taking that next step up and out! Outdoor fun can be endless when girls lead.

girl scouts of western ohio

Look Out

1. Share past experiences in the outdoors.

- Talk about favorite outdoor places and why they're special.
- Wonder what else can be seen in the outdoors.

Meet Out

2. Step outside to look, listen, feel, and smell.

- Share what was observed.
- Learn more about what was discovered.

Move Out

3. Plan and take a short walk.

- Discuss being prepared for the weather.
- Do activities to explore nature.
- Plan and carry out an indoor sleepover.

Explore Out

4. Plan and take a short and easy hike.

- Discuss what to take in a day pack.
- Dress for the weather.
- Plan a healthy snack or lunch.
- Learn how to stay safe in the outdoor.

Cook Out

5. Plan and cook a simple meal outdoors.

- Make a list of gear and food supplies needed.
- Learn and practice skills needed to cook a meal.
- Review outdoor cooking safety.
- Practice hand and dish sanitation.
- Create a Kaper Chart for the cookout.

Sleep Out

6. Plan and carry out an overnight in a cabin or backyard.

- Discuss what to pack for the sleep out.
- Learn to use and care for camping gear.
- Learn and practice new outdoor skills.
- Plan a menu with a new cooking skill.
- Discuss campsite organization.
- Plan time for fun activities.

Camp Out

7. Plan and take a 1-2 night camping trip.

- Take more responsibility for planning
- Learn and practice a new outdoor skill.
- Learn a new outdoor cooking skill.
- Practice campsite set-up.
- Plan a food budget, then buy and pack your food.
- Plan an agenda that includes fun activities.
- Explore/protect the surrounding environment.

Adventure Out

8. Plan and take an outdoor trip for several days.

- Learn and practice a new outdoor skill.
- Learn a new outdoor cooking skill.
- Develop first aid skills and use safety check points.
- Budget, schedule, and make arrangements.
- Participate in an environmental service project.
- Teach and inspire others about the outdoors.
- Imagine new experiences to be and outdoors.
- Practice all "Leave No Trace" Principles.

Girl Scouts' national outdoor programming features a variety of fun, challenging, and experiential activities that empower girls as they develop attitudes, skills, and behaviors essential to effective leadership in the outdoors:

1. **Outdoor Competence:** Girls engage safely and responsibly in a range of outdoor activities (e.g., practicing Leave No Trace and knowing what to bring to be prepared in the outdoors).
2. **Outdoor Confidence:** Girls have confidence in their outdoor abilities and are willing to try new and challenging outdoor activities.
3. **Outdoor Interest:** Girls have a love of nature and an interest in the natural world.
4. **Environmental Stewardship:** Girls understand how their behaviors impact the environment and what they can do to protect the natural world.

How to Locate and Sign up for GSWO Events

Visit gswo.org/events**.** Here, you will see a list of all the different events. You can click on an event to see full details. **Or visit** mygs.girlscouts.org**.** You will be prompted to log in. Select the yellow **"Join"** box in the upper right corner. Scroll down and select **"Find Events."**

• Three Ways to Find Events

- **"Explore Events":** Use filters to narrow down your search, remember to put your zip code in, and change the radius of your search. If you are looking for something GSWO-specific. Select the box **"Show only the events of My Council."** Virtual events are all listed under zip code 45242, so use that when searching!
- **"Event List"**: Events are listed by month and name. **"Advanced Search"** on this page will allow you to filter options and categories.
- **"Event Calendar":** Events are listed chronologically by date.

• Registering for Events

1. Locate the event that you would like to register for and click "Register Now" – this will take you to the event information and registration page.
2. Click on "Register Now." If you have not signed into your myGS account, you will be prompted to sign in before continuing with your registration.
3. On the left, you will see a description and details of the event that you have selected.
4. On the right, you will see the sign-up/shopping cart. Use the "+" to select the number of spots you need.
5. Click "Add Events."

• Add Details:

1. Add attendee name(s) from the drop-down menu.
2. Choose your payment option.
3. Click "Submit Member Details."
4. Click "Review Cart."

• Review Cart:

1. Review your order for accuracy.
2. Review and agree to the Girl Scout Promise and Law by clicking the check box.
6. Click "Add Payment Details."

• Make Payment:

1. Enter payment and billing address.
2. Click "Submit Payment."
3. You will now see your payment confirmation and order number—you've successfully registered!

For more information on how to log into myGS and register for events, visit our GSWO YouTube channel and watch our myGS Training Playlist. If at any point in the process you hit a snag, please contact Customer Care for assistance at 888.350.5090 or customercare@gswo.org**.**

Chapter 3:
Engaging Girls and Families

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

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! So, take some time to understand the likes, needs, and abilities of girls at different ages.

As you listen and learn along with girls, you may find it useful to review the highlights of their development. 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. Of course, keep in mind that each girl is an individual, and these are only guidelines to help you get to know the girls and understand the stages of their development and maturation.

Girl Scout Daisies (Kindergarten and First Grade)	
At the Girl Scout Daisy level, girls . . .	**This means . . .**
Have loads of energy and need to run, walk, and play outside.	They'll enjoy going on nature walks and outdoor scavenger hunts.
Are great builders and budding artists, though they are still developing their fine motor skills.	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.
Love to move and dance.	They might especially enjoy marching like a penguin, dancing like a dolphin, or acting out how they might care for animals in the jungle.
Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.	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.
Are only beginning to learn about basic number concepts, time, and money.	You'll want to take opportunities to count out supplies together—and, perhaps, the legs on a caterpillar!
Are just beginning to write and spell, and they don't always have the words for what they're thinking or feeling.	That having girls draw a picture of something they are trying to communicate is easier and more meaningful for them.
Know how to follow simple directions and respond well to recognition for doing so.	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.

Girl Scout Brownies (Second and Third Grade)

At the Girl Scout Brownie level, girls . . .	This means . . .
Have loads of energy and need to run, walk, and play outside.	Taking your session activities outside whenever possible.
Are social and enjoy working in groups.	Allowing girls to team up in small or large groups for art projects and performances.
Want to help others and appreciate being given individual responsibilities for a task.	Letting girls lead, direct, and help out in activities whenever possible. Allow girls as a group to make decisions about individual roles and responsibilities.
Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.	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.
Need clear directions and structure, and like knowing what to expect.	Offering only one direction at a time. Also, have girls create the schedule and flow of your get-togethers and share it at the start.
Are becoming comfortable with basic number concepts, time, money, and distance.	Offering support only when needed. Allow girls to set schedules for meetings or performances, count out money for a trip, and so on.
Are continuing to develop their fine motor skills and can tie shoes, use basic tools, begin to sew, etc.	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.
Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.	Girls might like to create a play about welcoming a new girl to their school or tell a story through dance or creative movement.

Girl Scout Juniors (Fourth and Fifth Grade)

At the Girl Scout Junior level, girls . . .	This means . . .
Want to make decisions and express their opinions.	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.
Are social and enjoy doing things in groups.	Allowing girls to team up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities.
Are aware of expectations and sensitive to the judgments of others.	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 an environment where girls can be comfortable sharing theirs.
Are concerned about equity and fairness.	Not shying away from discussing why rules are in place and having girls develop their own rules for their group.
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.	Asking girls to explain why they made a decision, share their visions of their roles in the future, and challenge their own and others' perspectives.
Have strong fine and gross motor skills and coordination.	Engaging girls in moving their minds and their bodies. Allow girls to express themselves through the written word, choreography, and so on.
Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.	Girls might like to tell a story through playwriting, playing an instrument, or choreographing a dance.
May be starting puberty, which means beginning breast development, skin changes, and weight changes. Some may be getting their periods.	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.

Girl Scout Cadettes (Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grade)	
At the Girl Scout Cadette level, 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.	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.
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.	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.
Can be very self-conscious—wanting to be like everyone else, but fearing they are unique in their thoughts and feelings.	Encouraging girls to share, but only when they are comfortable. 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.
Are beginning to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults—at school and at home.	Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience what's known as "fun failure:" girls learn from trying something new and making mistakes.

Girl Scout Seniors (Ninth and Tenth Grade)	
At the Girl Scout Senior level, 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.	Asking girls to explain the reasoning behind their decisions. Engage girls in role-play and performances, where others can watch and offer alternative solutions.
Have strong problem-solving and critical thinking skills, and are able to plan and reflect on their own learning experiences	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.
Spend more time in peer groups than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.	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.
Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality.	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.
Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures—from home, school, peers, work, and so on.	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.
Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults—at school and at home.	Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience what's known as "fun failure:" girls learn from trying something new and making mistakes.

Girl Scout Ambassadors (Eleventh and Twelfth Grade)	
At the Girl Scout Ambassador level, 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.	Inviting girls to develop stories as a group, and then individually create endings that they later discuss and share.
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.	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.
Spend more time with peers than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.	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.
Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality.	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.
Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures—from home, school, peers, work, etc.	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.
Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults—at school and at home—and are looking to their futures.	Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience what's known as "fun failure." Girls learn from trying something new and making mistakes.

Creating a Safe Space for Girls

A safe space is one in which girls feel as though they can be themselves—without explanation, judgment, or ridicule. Girl Scout research shows that girls are looking for an emotionally safe environment, where girls can be themselves, confidentiality is respected, and they can express themselves without fear. Therefore, the environment you create is key to developing the sort of group that girls want to be part of year after year. The following sections share some tips on creating a warm, safe environment for girls.

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.

- Show girls you trust them to think for themselves and use their own judgment.
- Encourage them to 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 and in a nonjudgmental manner. (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, don't spread your complaint around to others—that won't help the situation and causes only embarrassment and anger.

If a conflict persists, be sure to notify your volunteer support team and explain the issue at hand. If the service unit chair cannot resolve the issues satisfactorily or if the problem involves the troop leader, the issue can be taken to the next level of supervision by contacting your Girl Scout center if you need extra help.

Under no circumstances is a girl to be removed from a troop or group without first working with the girl(s), caregiver(s), and ultimately Girl Scout staff to find a solution that is in the best interest of all girls and adults involved.

Behavioral Support Guidelines

Girl Scout's philosophy of behavioral support builds on a child's need to develop a sense of self-worth. In order to promote this, the program has been carefully planned to foster positive behavior. To accomplish this, please ensure that:

- Girls are involved in rule setting and help determine the logical consequences of misbehavior.
- Whenever possible, the site and activities are set up to promote positive interaction among girls.
  - Volunteers encourage girls to learn how to solve problems and settle differences among themselves.
  - **All disciplinary efforts are based on the following philosophy. When a girl's behavior creates a risk for the emotional or physical health and safety of another girl or a volunteer, the following procedures shall be followed:**
    - The girl is separated from the problem activity or situation.
    - A volunteer listens to the girl's side of the story empathetically and then discusses the consequences of further misbehavior, giving the girl an opportunity to correct her actions.
    - Repeated misbehavior will be handled by a telephone conversation or conference with the girl's caregivers.
    - The caregiver, girl, and volunteer agree to a plan that will improve behavior based on the behaviors of the Girl Scout Promise and Law, or further action will be taken that is in the best interest of all girls.

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio will assist in the proper handling of behavior management if it cannot be resolved through the actions taken above. It is our goal to ensure that all girls have the opportunity to participate in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, and our council staff is here to offer support as challenges arise. (See the **General Volunteer Personnel Policies and Procedures** section for more information).

Communicating Effectively with Girls of Any Age

Make sure your words and intentions create a 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 should") 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 or program providers 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 paid staff support 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 a young adult helps them grow.
- **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.

One way to communicate with girls is through the LUTE method—listen, understand, tolerate, and empathize. Here is a breakdown of the acronym LUTE to remind you of how to respond when a girl is upset, angry, or confused.

- **L = Listen:** Hear her out, ask for details, and reflect back what you hear, such as, "What happened next?" or "What did she say?"
- **U = Understand:** Try to be understanding of her feelings, with comments such as, "So what I hear you saying is . . ." "I'm sure that upset you," "I understand why you're unhappy," and "Your feelings are hurt; mine would be, too."
- **T = Tolerate:** You can tolerate the feelings that she just can't handle right now on her own. It signifies that you can listen and accept how she is feeling about the situation. Say something like: "Try talking to me about it. I'll listen," "I know you're mad— talking it out helps," and "I can handle it—say whatever you want to."
- **E = 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 partner, and as a coach or mentor, as needed (not a "leader").

- Ask girls what rules they need for safety and what group agreements they need to be a good team.
- 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.
- 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).

When Sensitive Topics Come Up

It's an amazing feeling when your girls 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 caregivers and/or received guidance from Girl Scouts of Western Ohio.

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.

GSUSA does not take a position or develop materials on issues relating to human sexuality, birth control, or abortion. 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.

A sensitive issue is any issue where a caregiver may have different viewpoints on a topic. For example, moral judgment, politics, values, religion, etc. When a troop engages in an activity that may be deemed a sensitive issue, caregivers should be informed, and permission should be granted.

Participation in Demonstrations, Protests, Marches, and Other Public Advocacy Efforts

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio strives to help each girl tap into her leadership potential and use her voice to make our world a better place. Though Girl Scouts is non-partisan, we respect the rights of each individual girl and adult member of our Movement to make their own decisions about participating in demonstrations, protests, marches, and other public advocacy efforts in support of the causes they care about.

Girl Scouts should follow these guidelines when participating:

- The safety of Girl Scouts is our highest priority. Leaders should consider the age and maturity of the Girl Scouts participating and prepare accordingly for their physical and emotional safety, including researching the location, planned activities, the potential for encountering opposing viewpoints, and safe exit strategies.
- Leaders must get written parental permission for every girl who participates (see Communicating with Caregivers below).
- Individual girls and volunteers may wear their Girl Scout uniform or other Girl Scout attire to participate in non-partisan community celebrations that reflect the Girl Scout Promise and Law or if participation is linked to a specific Take Action project in pursuit of a Girl Scout Journey or Highest Award. Girls may participate together as a troop ONLY if all girls and families agree.
- Carrying signs and/or banners with the Girl Scout name or logo and/or council name or logo is permitted for non-partisan community celebrations that reflect the values of the Girl Scout Promise and Law. In other situations, Girl Scouts or troops may carry signs or banners that reflect their personal opinions, but may not include the Girl Scout name or logo and/or council name or logo.
- Participation and preparation activities (sign-making, use of troop funds, etc.) must happen at an individual level—or troop level ONLY if all members agree. Only council can authorize service unit or council-wide participation.

Communicating with Caregivers

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is committed to partnering with caregivers to ensure their girls' needs are being met through group activities. Therefore caregivers may make all decisions regarding their girls' participation in Girl Scout programming that may be of a sensitive nature.

As a volunteer leader, you must get written permission from the caregiver for any 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 the organizer what will be presented, and obtain caregiver and council permission before proceeding.

Communicating Concerns to Caregivers:

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 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 Girl Scouts of Western Ohio will guide you in addressing these concerns. **If you suspect abuse, refer to the child abuse section in the Safety chapter for guidance.**

- **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

Kick the Year Off Right by Engaging Caregivers

You want the girls in your troop to have fun, be inspired, take risks, and learn about themselves and the world this year—that's why you're a Girl Scout troop leader or troop volunteer! The thing is, 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 girls can be tricky for many volunteers. It doesn't have to be this way!

Girl Scouting provides the best opportunities for girls when families step up and play an active part in the troop. Without meaningful support from caregivers, it's difficult for a troop to be all it can be. Plus, girls feel a special sense of pride when their families take part and show interest in the things they are doing.

- **Who are Caregivers?**

  A caregiver is any parent or legal guardian of a Girl Scout or potential Girl Scout.

- **What Is a 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?**

  Having a caregiver meeting is paramount to the success of the troop. It is an excellent opportunity to engage caregivers, communicate expectations, and ask for their support. Connecting with caregivers at the beginning of each troop year is essential; however, there are other critical times when you must communicate with caregivers. These include: Fall Product and Cookie Sales, end-of-year planning, and before any big trip. Here are the benefits of having a caregiver meeting:
  - Caregivers will know the value and impact of Girl Scouts on their girls.
  - Caregivers and leaders agree on communication and collaboration that benefits all.
  - Caregivers and leaders agree on costs and troop finances; troop leaders communicate the financial status of the troop.
  - Caregivers know how the troop will communicate things like upcoming events or schedule changes.
  - Caregivers learn about uniforms, books, and other important basics.
  - Caregivers make great volunteers. You never know which caregiver is going to be a great troop assistant or cookie manager.

Arranging Meetings with Caregivers

A caregiver meeting, or a meeting of your friends-and-family network (as encouraged in many of the leadership Journeys), is a chance for you to get to know the families of the girls in your group. Before the meeting, be sure you and/or your co-volunteers have done the following:

- For younger girls, arrange for a caregiver, another volunteer, or a group of older girls to do activities with the girls in your group while you talk with their caregivers (if girls are attending the meeting with caregivers).
- Practice a discussion on the following: Girl Scout Mission, Promise, and Law; benefits of Girl Scouting for their girls, including how the Girl Scout Leadership Experience is a world-class system for developing girl leaders; all the fun the girls are going to have; expectations for girls and their caregivers; and ideas of how caregivers and other family members can participate in and enrich their girls' Girl Scout experiences.
- Determine when Product Programs (including Girl Scout Fall Product and Cookie Program activities) will happen in western Ohio; caregivers will absolutely want to know.
- Determine what information caregivers should bring to the meeting.
- Use the Friends and Family pages provided in the adults guides for many of the Journeys, or create your own one-page information sheet (contact information for you and co-volunteers, the day and time of each meeting, location of and directions to the meeting place, what to bring with them, and information on how to get Girl Scout resources and other merchandise like sashes, vests, T-shirts, and so on).
- Gather or create supplies, including a sign-in sheet, an information sheet, permission forms for caregivers, health history forms, and GSUSA registration forms (if needed).
- Prepare yourself to ask caregivers for help, being as specific as you can about the kind of help you will need, for example, providing snacks at meetings, running the Fall Product Program, or being a driver for field trips.

Implementing Your Caregiver Meeting

You're free to structure the caregiver meeting in whatever way works for you, but the following structure works for many new volunteers:

- As the girls and adults arrive, ask them to sign in. If the girls' caregivers haven't already registered them online, you'll want to email or hand out information so they can do so. If caregivers do not have access to register online, work with the community development manager to provide membership registration paper forms. You may also want to email or hand out a brief information sheet before or at this meeting.
- Open the meeting by welcoming the girls and adults. Introduce yourself and other co-volunteers/leaders or assistants. Have adults and girls introduce themselves, discuss whether anyone in their families has been a Girl Scout, and talk about what Girl Scouting means to them. Welcome everyone, regardless of experience, and let them know they will be learning about Girl Scouts today. (If you're new to Girl Scouting, don't worry—just let everyone know you'll be learning about Girl Scouting together!)
- Ask the girls to go with the adult or teen in charge of their activity and begin the discussion (if you are providing activities for girls).
- **Discuss the information you prepared for this meeting:**
  - All the fun girls are going to have!
  - When and where the group will meet and some examples of activities the girls might choose to do; information related specifically to the troop including, meeting protocol for dropping girls off and picking them up.
  - That a caregiver permission form is used for activities outside the group's normal meeting time and place and the importance of completing and returning it.

- How you plan to keep in touch with caregivers; a Facebook page or group, email, text messaging, a phone tree, or fliers the girls take home are just some ideas.
- The Girl Scout Mission, Promise, and Law.
- The Girl Scout program, especially what the Girl Scout Leadership Experience is and what the program does for their girls.
- When Girl Scout cookies (and other products) will go on sale and how participation in Product Programs is to teach life skills and help fund group activities.
- The cost of membership, any troop dues (payments), optional uniforms, and any resources caregivers will need to buy (such as a girl's book for a Journey).
- The availability of financial assistance and how the Girl Scout Product Programs generate funds for the group treasury and the council.
- That families can also make donations to the council—and why they might want to do that!
- That you may be looking for additional volunteers, and in which areas you are looking (be as specific as possible)!
- If you've distributed paper registration forms, collect them at the next meeting or when it makes sense for you and your co-volunteers—that may be in two months if face-to-face meetings are best, or not at all if you're diligent about keeping in touch with caregivers via Facebook, text messages, email, phone calls, or some other form of communication.
- After the meeting, follow up with any caregivers who did not attend to connect them with the group, inform them of decisions, and discuss how they can best help the girls.

How to Keep 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 caregivers say no one had communicated expectations around involvement with their girl's troop is so troubling. Caregivers may have many talents, but they're certainly not mind readers! Don't be nervous about caregivers saying no. Sure, a few caregivers 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. Loopback, follow up, and ask again!

• Make Sense of "Why"

Explain that not only does the whole troop benefit with extra help from caregivers and family members, 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 girls that they are a priority in their caregivers' 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 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 caregivers and family members 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 caregivers 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 caregivers in the loop on what the girls are doing and learning during each meeting, and encourage them to let their girls "be the experts" at home, explaining or teaching the new skills they've learned.

Chapter 4:
Troop Management

Leadership is more than "being in charge" or having a title; it's recognizing that you're a part of a team and understanding that team's needs and interests.

Your Role as a Girl Scout Volunteer

Without you, the volunteer, Girl Scouting could not happen in Western Ohio. THANK YOU for volunteering and investing your time and energy into girls! Your interests and life experiences make you the perfect person to partner with girls, create a safe environment where girls can work together, and each girl can achieve her highest aspirations. Have no doubt: YOU, as a Girl Scout volunteer, are helping girls make a lasting impact on the world.

Girl Scout volunteers have an important responsibility to be excited about everything this opportunity affords you: a chance to help girls succeed, play a critical role in their lives, and watch them blossom! You also want to be someone who enjoys the activities you'll be embarking on with the girls—whether you're volunteering at a camp, working with girls who are traveling, or partnering with girls on a short-term series on a topic that interests you.

As a Girl Scout volunteer, you'll serve as a partner and role model to girls. You'll also work closely with a co-volunteer, because two adults must be present at all times when working with girls, and at least one of those volunteers must be female and not related to the other adult. Men can serve as troop volunteers, but an adult female who is not related to the male volunteer must be present at all times. Only in cases of emergency is a girl to be alone with only one volunteer. Remember to also check the adult-to-girl ratios in the 'Safety' section in this resource. Volunteers must be at least 18 years of age and eligible to be an adult member.

- **Your Responsibilities**

Regardless of your volunteer position, all volunteers share the following responsibilities:

- Accepting and applying the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
- Maintaining your membership with Girl Scouts.
- Facilitating a safe experience for girls.
- Implementing the three program processes and the foundational Girl Scout Leadership Experience.
- Facilitating and partnering with other volunteers, caregivers, and staff to ensure a positive, safe experience for all girls and adults.
- Sharing your knowledge, experience, and skills with an appropriate, positive, and flexible approach.
- Working in a partnership with girls so that their activities are girl-led, allow them to learn by doing, and allow for cooperative (group) learning; you'll also partner with other volunteers and council staff for support and guidance.
- Overseeing troop funds with honesty, integrity, and careful record-keeping.
- Maintaining a close connection to your service unit support team and council support team.
- Understanding and following all Girl Scouts of Western Ohio and GSUSA volunteer policies and procedures.

Planning 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. This includes 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 caregivers.

Use these questions to guide your conversation with your troop committee volunteers or co-leader before discussing these topics with 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.
- 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?
- Which components of the uniform will families need to purchase?
- How will we keep troop activities girl-led? Use the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) 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? What method will we use to keep families in the loop?
- 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 your Meeting Place

What makes a great meeting space? Selecting a designated meeting time is at the discretion of you and your co-volunteer(s). If you choose to meet regularly, you will need to decide what day and times work best for the girls, for you, for your co-volunteer(s), and for other adults who will be presenting or mentoring. Will you meet once per week, twice a month, or once a month? Is after school best for the girls? If yes, can your co-volunteer(s) meet at that time, or will meetings work better in the evenings or on the weekends?

Where to meet can be a bit trickier: A meeting place needs to provide a safe, clean, and secure environment that allows for the participation of all girls. You might consider using meeting rooms at schools, libraries, houses of worship, community buildings, childcare facilities, or local businesses. For teens, you can also rotate meetings at coffee shops, bookstores, and other places where girls enjoy spending time.

• 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, chairs, and furnishings 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.
- **Accessibility:** Be sure the space can accommodate girls with disabilities, as well as caregivers with disabilities who may come to meetings.
- **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 that 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.

- **Need a few speaking points to get started? Try:**

"I'm a Girl Scout volunteer with a group of [number of girls and age level] 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 developing leadership skills—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. **The use of private homes and non-public places for meetings and events is discouraged and should rarely occur. Contact Customer Care with any questions.** Girl Scouts wants to ensure girls, adults, and assets are always safe and protected. Functions held at private homes and residences are not protected under Girl Scouts insurance, and the organization is not liable for any damage to private property.

Girl Scouts encourages the use of public spaces covered by insurance and that have properly outlined safety measures in place in case of emergencies that are in accordance with local and state laws.

- **Request for Certificate of Insurance**

When reserving a facility, including a troop meeting space, or in developing program plans with community organizations, volunteers may be asked to provide a certificate of insurance to verify Girl Scout liability insurance coverage. Volunteers may submit the Request for Certificate of Insurance form, found at gswo.org/insurancerequest. Certificates will be mailed/faxed directly to the location within two weeks. The certificates of insurance for each new membership year are not available until October 1st of the new membership year.

If a program provider or other organization requires the signing of a Hold Harmless Agreement, a copy of it will be requested and reviewed by one or more of the following: program and partnership manager, director of regional services, or director of program and partnerships.

- **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. Research has shown that the ideal troop size is 12 girls; recommended group sizes, by grade level, are:

- **Girl Scout Daisies:** 5–12 girls
- **Girl Scout Brownies:** 5–20 girls
- **Girl Scout Juniors:** 5–25 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 on page 83 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 (or three for CSA troops) 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. There must be two troop leaders registered with each troop.

- **Multi-Level Troops**

We do know that some troops are multi-level and therefore activities need to be age-appropriate for each level. We recommend breaking the girls into their different age levels during the age-level specific portion of the troop meeting and bringing all girls together for the opening and closing portions of the meeting (non-age level specific). This will sometimes require more adult volunteers to help manage the different groups. Please contact your staff support person for more ideas and support around multi-level troops.

Creating an Atmosphere of Acceptance and Inclusion

Girl Scouts embraces girls of all abilities, backgrounds, and heritage, with a specific and positive philosophy of inclusion that benefits everyone. The rich experience in Girl Scouting is a result of being made up of girls and volunteers reflecting diverse socioeconomic status, race, gender, physical and/or cognitive ability, ethnicity, primary language, and religion. Each Girl Scout is an equal and valued member.

Inclusion is an approach and an attitude, rather than a set of guidelines. **Inclusion is about belonging, all girls having equal access to Girl Scout experiences and activities:**

- 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.
- Ensuring all girls have access to the Girl Scout experiences.

Please note: Girl Scouts is working to translate many of its publications into Spanish. Over time, Girl Scouts will continue to identify members' needs and produce resources to support those needs, including translating publications into additional languages and formats.

Transgender and Non-Binary Youth and Individuals

Girl Scouts is a program that honors and celebrates the evidence-based girl-only environment. These spaces provide safety, care, confidence-building opportunities, and a break from the dominant culture. We are proud to offer brave spaces for Girl Scouts to shine.

We respect the right of families and girls to make decisions about the way that their child's gender is reflected in Girl Scouts. If a child lives as a girl in her daily life, she is welcome in Girl Scouts. We will honor and use the gender pronouns that best reflect the Girl Scout. We are loyal to the children and families who participate in our program and are evolving our inclusive practices all the time.

Inclusion for Individuals with Disabilities

As you think about where, when, and how often to meet with your group, you will find yourself considering the needs, resources, safety, and beliefs of all members and potential members. As you do this, include the special needs of any members who have disabilities or whose parents or caregivers have disabilities. With this in mind, 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—and many can be 'unseen.'** As a volunteer, your interactions with girls present an opportunity to improve the way society views girls (and their caregivers) with disabilities. The focus is on a person's abilities—on what she can do rather than on what she/he/they cannot.

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 caregiver. If you are open and honest, it's likely they will 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 sculptures, 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.

When interacting with a girl with a disability, consider these final tips:

- Speak directly to her, not through a parent/caregiver 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. Also, grabbing the wheelchair without permission to "move" them.
- When speaking to a girl who is deaf and using an interpreter, speak to the girl (in a normal voice) 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 should be registered as closely as possible to their chronological ages and 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 21st year and then move into an adult membership category.

Service Animals

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio allows service animals per the guidance of the American Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA defines a service animal as a dog who is trained to take a specific action when needed to assist the person with a disability. The handler is responsible for caring for and supervising the service animal, which includes toileting, feeding, grooming, and veterinary care. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is not obligated to supervise or otherwise care for a service animal. Emotional support, therapy, comfort, or companion animals are not permitted on Girl Scout properties.

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 (VTK)**

  The Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) 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 VTK saves you time and energy all year long, so that you can focus on building the skills in every girl, ensuring she has every opportunity she deserves to build a lifetime of leadership, success, and adventure. Girls have more fun when they can shape their own experiences, do hands-on activities, and work together as teams. With the VTK, 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 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 girls' attendance at meetings and their badge and Journey achievements.
  - Add council or custom events to the troop's calendar.
  - Submit troop's finance reports.
  - Easily locate both national and local council resources, such as Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- **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.

  Get started by visiting mygs.girlscouts.org.
- **Rallyhood**

  Meet other Girl Scout volunteers from across western Ohio and southeastern Indiana on Rallyhood, our all-in-one communication and collaboration platform! Get fast answers and feedback from council staff and other volunteers! Rallyhood can also be used as a way to manage your troop, create signups, take payments, share pictures, and more. For more information, contact Customer Care, or if you are ready, complete the troop rally request form at gswo.org/rallyhood.
- **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!
- **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, called Tips for Troop Leaders, at gswo.org/leadertips, 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.

Girl Scout Participation in Activities with Other Scouting Organizations

The decision by Scouts BSA to open the Boy Scout program to girls has fundamentally altered the nature of the relationship between Boy Scouts 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 now may create confusion in the marketplace regarding the relationship between Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts. Joint participation in activities will increase that confusion and contribute to the misperception that Girl Scouts has merged, or is somehow interchangeable, with Boy Scouts.
To be clear:

- Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is—and always has been—a completely separate and independent nonprofit organization from any other youth-serving or scouting organization and is not now, nor has never been, affiliated with, partnered with, a subsidiary of, or otherwise engaged with any other youth-serving or scouting organization.
- Girl Scouts of the USA and Boy Scouts of America were founded separately, incorporated separately, and have existed as two completely separate and distinct organizations for more than a century. That has not changed, nor will it ever.
- Girl Scouts of the USA does not share or overlap membership or finances with Boy Scouts of America.

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 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.

Chapter 5:
Product Programs

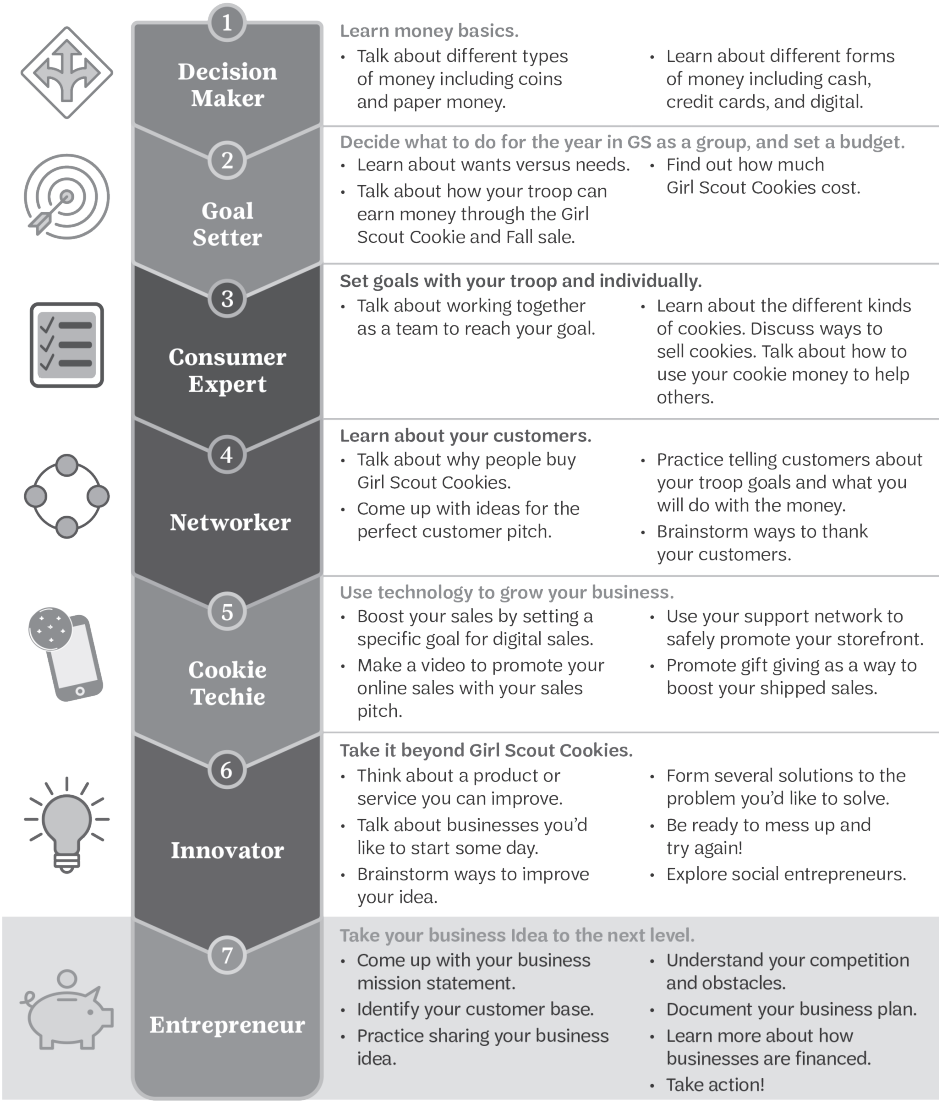
The Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall Product Program

As the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world, the Girl Scout Cookie Program and the Girl Scout Fall Product Program are foundational experiences during which girls learn to think like entrepreneurs and develop vital business skills. Plus, Girl Scout Cookie proceeds power fun and enriching experiences for Girl Scout troops year-round!

Entrepreneurship Progression

Progression allows girls to learn skills they need to become confident entrepreneurs as they engage in the Girl Scout Cookie Program. Throughout girls practice 5 skills that will serve them for the rest of their lives including goal setting, decision making, money management, people skills and business ethics. Acknowledge a girl's mastery of a new entrepreneurial skill and invite her to challenge herself further by taking the next step. Eventually, she will be ready to translate her skills and become a true entrepreneur.

girl scouts of western ohio



Understanding the Girl Scout Cookie and Fall Product Programs

Through the Girl Scout Product Programs, girls gain a tremendous amount of confidence. It's not easy to ask people to buy something—you have to speak up, look them in the eye, and believe in what you're doing—all skills that help a girl succeed now and throughout the rest of her life.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program is the largest girl-led business in the country, with sales of more than $700 million per year for girls and their communities nationwide. The Girl Scout Cookie Program is the leading entrepreneurial program for girls: no university has produced as many female business owners as the Girl Scout Cookie Program.

Council-sponsored product programs are really the best way for girls to earn money to pursue their goals: the programs are beloved by the community and come with program, sales, and marketing materials and support that help girls run great businesses. They are also an integral part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

With every season of cookies, another generation of girls learns five important skills:



Goal Setting	Decision Making	Money Management	People Skills	Business Ethics

Product Program Resources

Looking for a quick reference for all things Cookie Program and Fall Product Program? The below section has our most commonly used links and information!

- **Fall Product Program resources for girls and Fall Product Managers:** gswo.org/fallproduct
- **Cookie Program resources for girls and Troop Cookie Managers:** gswo.org/cookieresources
- **Information on our council cookie donation program:** gswo.org/donatecookies
- **Learn more about cookies:** gswo.org/cookies
- **Learn more about where the cookie money goes:** gswo.org/supportgirlssuccess

A Sweet Tradition

It has been decades since Girl Scouts began selling home-baked cookies to raise money. The idea was so popular that, in 1936, Girl Scouts enlisted bakers to handle the growing demand. For more on Girl Scout Cookie History, visit girlscouts.org/cookiehistory.

Two commercial bakers are currently licensed by Girl Scouts of the USA to produce Girl Scout Cookies—Little Brownie Bakers and ABC Bakers—and each council selects the baker of its choice. Each baker gets to name its own cookies (which is why some cookies have two names) and gets to decide which flavors it will offer in a given year, in addition to the three mandatory flavors (Thin Mints®, Do-Si-Dos®/Peanut Butter Sandwich, and Trefoils®). Girl Scouts of Western Ohio has contracted with ABC Bakers for the production of our Girl Scout Cookies. For additional information on cookie varieties, including nutritional details, visit girlscoutcookies.org.

Knowing Where Proceeds Go

After paying for the cost of cookies and materials, Girl Scout Cookie proceeds stay local and help Girl Scouts of Western Ohio 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.

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio provides a breakdown of cookie proceeds at gswo.org/cookiecrumbles. We invite you to share this information with customers, girls, and their caregivers so everyone is clear on how the revenue raised through Product Programs makes it possible for your Girl Scout council to serve girls. Proceeds resulting from Product Programs support program activities—in fact, council-sponsored Product Programs are a primary way in which the council raises funds to support Girl Scouting. The percentage of money to be allocated to participating groups (like yours) is determined by the council and explained to girls and adults as part of the Product Program activity orientation.

The income from Product Programs does not become the property of individual girl members. Girls, however, may be eligible for incentives and credits that they put toward council-sponsored camps, programs, and programmatic materials.

Girls may earn official Girl Scout grade-appropriate rewards related to Product Program activities, and each council may choose to provide items such as participation patches, rewards, and council credit for event fees, camp fees, grants for travel and Take Action projects, as well as materials and supplies for program activities. The council plan for rewards applies equally to all girls participating in the Product Program activity.

One critical task for each troop is to keep excellent records and establish a clear accounting system for all money earned and spent. As the group's volunteer, you're in charge of making sure money is spent wisely, excellent records are kept (keeping copies of all receipts in a binder or folder), and all income is tracked. For older girls, your job is to oversee their work as they learn to keep impeccable records.

Recognizing Cookie Sellers in the Media

The Girl Scout Cookie Program has always been about and focused on the program outcomes, through which girls learn important entrepreneurial and life skills and invest their earnings to positively affect their local communities; 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 Movement will continue to recognize dynamic cookie sellers for various achievements tied to the Girl Scout Cookie Program.
- 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.

Council's Role

Each year, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio provides learning opportunities on the procedures to follow during each program. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio also establishes guidelines and procedures for conducting the program and determines how the proceeds and girl reward system will be managed. Our goal is to support girls and troops to meet their financial goals, so they can accomplish awesome things in Girl Scouts.

Troop's Role

While the council will put into place the best practices and guidelines for the Product Programs, it's important to be ready as a troop. Your most important role is to be a guide for your girls, helping them navigate skill building while cheering them on to reach their goals. While we encourage all adults within the troop to support the girls' success, each troop should identify a Troop Product Manager that will be the troop expert on the Fall Product Program and/or the Cookie Program.

This position is vital to the troop's program. Due to the level of involvement required, we highly recommend that this volunteer is not also a troop leader. Finding a volunteer who has strong organization and communication skills to be your Troop Product Manager will make it easier for your troop to navigate the Product Programs without devoting all your troop time in order to make it a success.

The Girl-Adult Partnership

Underlying all the lessons that girls can learn from their participation in the Girl Scout Cookie Program is the girl-adult partnership. Ideally, this is a partnership between the girl and her leader and between the girl and her caregivers. Adult members do not sell cookies, they participate only in supporting the direct involvement of girls.

During the Girl Scout Cookie Program, the girl/adult partnership may look like this:

- An adult and girl working together to make plans and set goals
- An adult assisting a girl by giving her access to the information and training she needs, but letting the girl do the selling and delivering of cookies
- An adult guiding a girl in understanding the finances and letting her practice the skills
- An adult advising a girl on how to market her cookies, but allowing her to make her own decisions
- An adult helping a girl understand her responsibility to support her local council, but ensuring that her participation is voluntary
- An adult supports the girls through the various methods of selling cookies, but the girls are actually doing the selling

Using Online Resources and Social Media to Market Cookies and Products

Girls may use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, text messages, IMs, and emails as online marketing tools to let family, friends, and former customers know about the program and collect indications of interest. All are effective ways that girls 13 and older can promote Girl Scout Product Programs. Girls under 13 cannot independently set up online marketing sites. Girls under 13 can use their caregivers' online sites with their approval and supervision.

Girls are only to use the internet to market the Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall Product Program to friends and family (for clarity, "friends and family" are people whom the girl or her family personally know).

- The Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall Product Program are girl-led programs; a Girl Scout should always lead online marketing and sales efforts, 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 (gswo.org/digitalmarketing).
- Girls, volunteers and parents must review and adhere to the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge (gswo.org/internetpledge), Digital Cookie Pledge (gswo.org/cookiepledge), the Supplemental Safety Tips for Online Marketing (gswo.org/onlinesafety), 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. For copies of terms and conditions, please contact GSUSA.
- 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 following sections detail how girls can use electronic marketing, social media, and group websites to gather sale commitments from family, friends, and previous customers. But first, please keep in mind that girls:

- Can market to and collect indications of interest from customers within their councils' zip codes. Refer prospects that come from outside council jurisdiction to the council finder at girlscoutcookies.org. Family members and Digital Cookie sales are the exception to this rule.
- Digital Cookie is the only approved online sales tool available for girls to use when selling cookies. Outside of Digital Cookie, girls cannot set up online sites where cookies are sold and money is exchanged via the internet.
- Must sign the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge before doing any online activities, and all online activities must be under the supervision of adults.
- Cannot expose their own or any other girl's email address, physical address, or phone number to the public. When writing e-mail messages or online announcements, girls should sign with their first name only, along with their group/troop number or name and their council name.

See Chapter 7: Safety (pages 81-103) for additional information and guidance regarding online product marketing and sales.

Cookie Donation Programs

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio may have a cookie donation program established where customers may purchase cookies for the sole purpose of having them donated to an organization coordinated by the council. This is a great talking point for girls to share with their customers and a great way to help teach girls that the Cookie Program can make a big impact in their community and to others.

Here are some things to remember about cookie donations:

- All cookie donation programs must be approved by the council.
- Donated cookies must stay within the council jurisdiction unless the 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 council or jeopardizes the integrity of the Girl Scout Brand.

Handling Product Complaint

It has always been the practice of Girl Scout councils and the bakers to guarantee customer satisfaction with their cookies. If a customer for some reason is not satisfied with the quality of their cookies, they can contact the baker via the number printed on the side of the box of cookies. Troops/groups should notify their council if they are aware of any customer dissatisfaction.

Product Program Safety

Safety is the top priority while selling Girl Scout Cookies and other products. Volunteers, caregivers and girls should be familiar with and practice the following:

- **Safety section:** paying close attention to ratios and driver policies
- **Girl Scout Cookie/Council:** Sponsored Product Program Safety Activity Checkpoints
- **Computer/Online Use:** Safety Activity Checkpoints

Girl Scout council-sponsored Product Programs, which include magazines, candy, and nuts, as well as cookies, give girls proven opportunities to earn money and/or credits for their Girl Scout program activities. These programs also contribute significantly to the girls' local councils and communities through take action projects. In order to ensure the emotional and physical safety and well-being of girls, which is always a top priority in any activity, read and understand the following guidelines.

- **Communicate with Caregivers**

Ensure that the caregivers of all girls participating in Product Programs are fully informed about the activity including the:

- Safety precautions in place
- Need for appropriate clothing and/or supplies
- Need for advance arrangements for all transportation and confirmation of these plans
- Need for written permission from them in order for their girl to participate
- Location of designated sale areas, which are also communicated to the Council

- **Arrange for Volunteer Supervision**

Approved Girl Scout volunteers provide supervision and guidance for all grade levels, and must accompany Girl Scout Daisies, Brownies, and Juniors when they are selling, taking orders for or delivering products. Volunteers must be present at booth activities, regardless of the age of the girls (see also the section "Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need"). **Adults who oversee Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors must:**

- Be aware of how, when and where the girls are selling products.
- Be on call when girls are participating in product programs.
- Be readily available to them should they need assistance.
- Help girls understand how to be safe in their surroundings, and always enforce the use of the buddy system.

Volunteer supervision for all Girl Scouts extends to any online activity. Consult the "Computer/Online Use" Safety Activity Checkpoints for specific information about safe online practices for all activities, and to obtain a copy of the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge.

- **Plan for Safeguarding Money**

Girls should always have a plan for safeguarding money, which includes such things as:

- Don't walk around with large amounts of money.
- Keep the cash box against a wall or behind a barrier of cookie boxes.
- Don't keep money at home or school.
- Give cookie money to supervising volunteers, who will deposit the money as soon as possible.
- Have an adult volunteer keep the money secure, for example in a front-facing pouch tied around their waist.
- Use cashless payment options whenever possible.

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 Customer Care at 888.350.5090 or customercare@gswo.org.

- **Use the Buddy System**

Girls are divided into teams of two, with each girl choosing a buddy. Girls are responsible for staying with their buddy at all times and:

- Warning her buddy of danger
- Giving her buddy immediate assistance if safe to do so
- **Seeking help when the situation warrants it**

- **Be Streetwise and Follow Your Instincts**

In order to ensure the safety of girls while selling door-to-door, you and the girls should become familiar with the areas and neighborhoods in which girls would like to sell. In addition, girls should:

- Participate in door-to-door sales only during daylight hours.
- Wear a membership pin, uniform, or Girl Scout clothing (e.g., Girl Scout T-shirt) to clearly identify themselves as Girl Scouts.
- Avoid a house or person that makes them uncomfortable. They should walk away and find the next person/place that does not make them uncomfortable.
- Call 911 if they see someone that seems to be acting in a way that makes them feel unsafe. This could include, but is not limited to, any person who is staring at them for long periods, seems to be following them for no apparent reason or takes pictures of them.
- Use safe pedestrian practices, such as crossing at corners and obeying walk signals.
- Do not enter the home or vehicle of a stranger.
- Avoid selling to people in vehicles (except at drive-thru cookie booths) or going into alleys.
- No one should carry large amounts of money, see "Plan for Safeguarding Money" above.

Preparing for your Girl Scout Cookie Booths

Cookie booths are a traditional and fun way of selling Girl Scout Cookies. Booth locations are approved by councils, facilitated within council jurisdiction and you must follow all council guidelines with regard to setting up, manning and taking down a booth. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio have established cookie booth locations (council secured locations); refer to your Cookie Book before planning a cookie booth of your own (troop secured location).

Here are some notes about locations for a cookie booth:

- We encourage volunteers to use their best judgment in setting up cookie booths in locations that will be open, accessible, and safe for all girls and potential customers.
- Certain locations may be inappropriate for young girls 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 booths at such locations.
- While businesses may decide to purchase cookies used for beer and wine pairings girls may not host a booth during these events or otherwise directly promote alcohol sales in any way.
- Businesses wishing to purchase cookies (bakeries, restaurants, breweries, etc) to be used as part of a promotional opportunity should contact Girl Scouts of Western Ohio to ensure proper branding guidelines are followed.

Once you've gotten council approval, check out the booth site before the day 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. In addition, review the Girl Scout Cookie/Council-Sponsored Product Program Safety Activity Checkpoints, as well as the Safety section of Volunteer Essentials to make sure you and the girls are as prepared as possible.

When setting up Cookie Booths, it's important that: Two registered and background-approved volunteers are to be present at all times during a Cookie Booth.

- Two to four girls are allowed at a booth during a given shift. Be mindful that too many girls may block pedestrians.
- There is adequate space at the booth for a table, products and girls and to allow safe passage by pedestrians, bikes and cars.
- Girls are a safe distance from cars. If possible, set up a safety barrier between cars and the booth—perhaps a few volunteers could park their cars in spaces near the booth location.
- Respect the surrounding businesses by making sure your booth isn't blocking a store entrance or exit.

While girls can receive cash from buyers and make change, they should hand the money to a volunteer for safekeeping. It is important that cash is kept safe and out of sight. This can be accomplished by:

- Girls and adults do not confront or engage an irate or suspicious customer, call local authorities for assistance.
  - Girls are not allowed to sell in or in front of businesses where they cannot be patrons like liquor stores, bars, or other adult establishments.
  - Girls and troops are not allowed to solicit donations which includes having donation jars on their tables during Cookie Booths. If a customer offers a donation, the troop may accept the donation, but cannot solicit.
  - Attract customers with colorful signs. Remind girls to be polite and to have their sales pitch ready for interested shoppers.
  - Follow guidelines in the Troop Cookie Book.
  - Be cautious of your environment and dress accordingly.
  - Cookie Stands are a "lemonade stand" style cookie booth where a girl and her caregiver work the booth. In these instances where a girl(s) from one household works a booth with their caregiver adults do not need to be background checked and registered. Caregivers working this type of booth must accept sole financial responsibility for the cookies in their possession and may not supervise girls not from their own household.
  - Cookie Stands are acceptable on their personal, private property such as their front yard, or may be at a local business or organization such as a local restaurant or school. Any location that is not a private residence must be entered in the baker software as a Troop Secured Booth for approval. Caregivers should submit these locations to their Troop Cookie Manager who will input it in the baker software.
- All other booth policies are in place for Cookie StandsKeeping the cash box against a wall or behind a barrier of cookie boxes
- Having an adult volunteer keep the money by securing it in a front facing pouch tied around their waist.
- Reduce cash transactions by offering credit card payment options per your council guidelines.

Chapter 6:
Finances

How do girls become financially empowered women? Through the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE), that's how! Your Girl Scout troop should 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 Girl Scouts of Western Ohio-sponsored product program activities (such as the Girl Scout Cookie Program), group money-earning activities (Girl Scouts of Western Ohio approved, of course!), and any dues your troop may charge. With your guidance, girls will learn key money skills that will serve them throughout their lives.

Who should be managing troop funds?

Managing troop funds includes deciding how to spend the money, being a signer on the troop checking account, managing or helping a troop's participation in the Fall Product Program or Cookie Program, helping at cookie booths, or handling troop money in any way.

Troop funds are managed by:

- **Troop leaders and troop assistants:** Only registered and approved volunteers (unrelated and not in the same household) in these two roles can handle or manage troop funds and at least one of the volunteers needs to be a troop leader. Approved volunteers who will be handling the troop finances, will need to review our Troop Financial Management handout as part of their training. Approved volunteers who will be handling the troop finances will need to complete Troop Start-up Training (troop leaders) or Financing the Fun training (troop assistant). For checking account procedures, visit gswo.org/finances.
- **Girls:** Involve the girls as much as their grade level and skills/abilities allow. After all, it's the troop's money!

Troop leaders and troop assistants are responsible for the proper accounting and management of troop funds. Should mismanagement be reported, a troop financial audit may occur, and the signers on the account may be held accountable for any lost or stolen funds and overdraft fees. Following the policies in this chapter will prevent mismanagement and ensure a successful troop experience. Troop finance training is available on our website at gswo.org/finances.

Please note: The following policies and procedures for finances and fund management apply to the money-earning and management of all Girl Scouts groups, including, but not limited to, troops and service units.

Establishing an Account

Girl Scout troop **nonprofit checking accounts** are required to have at least two approved volunteer signers (one troop leader and another approved volunteer who are unrelated and not in the same household) on the account. New troops are required to complete required training (in order to receive bank letter) and to establish a troop bank account within 30 days of the first meeting. Any troop earning and spending money is required to have a bank account set up. The Girl Scout leader and at least one other approved volunteer must visit the bank together and complete the forms

required to open a new checking account. One signer will hold the checkbook/debit card(s), while the other receives the statements or has access to the account through online services (this procedure safeguards girls' monies).

New troops need to establish a nonprofit bank account so they are ready to deposit money, such as group dues and/or money from Product Programs or group money-earning activities.

Consider these best practices when working with a group account:

- Keep group funds in the bank before an activity or trip, paying for as many items as possible in advance of your departure.
- Use debit cards during the activities and trips and keep all receipts.
- Handle a lost group debit card the same way you would a personal debit card: cancel it immediately.
- One signer is in charge of daily accounting and holding the debit card/checkbook, while the other signer is responsible for receiving monthly statements (online or mail, keeping all receipts for troop financial records) and reviewing them monthly.

Please note:

- Individual members of Girl Scouts MAY NOT open or maintain a Girl Scout checking account. This arrangement does not support the council's compliance with IRS requirements.
- At any time, caregivers may ask to see the troop finances, such as receipts or bank statements.
- If you're taking over an existing group and becoming a signer on an existing checking account, some banks may require a letter from GSWO to remove a previous signer and add new signers.
  - If you are becoming a new signer on the account, you will need to complete Financing the Fun training on gsLearn and contact Customer Care to receive your GSWO bank letter.

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio Approved Bank

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio's standard requires all troops to open a nonprofit checking account. The council's recommended bank for troop accounts is Fifth Third Bank. If you do not have a Fifth Third bank within a reasonable distance from your troop meeting place, another bank can be used. However, if a troop account is not at a Fifth Third, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio cannot provide support for any issues that you may have with your account, and ACH deposits/withdrawals may take longer. There are many benefits to banking with Fifth Third. Meet with a banker to discuss which options are best for you. Our partnership allows us to manage financial resources more efficiently and does not require volunteers to have a third signer on the account.

Record Keeping

One critical task for each troop is to keep excellent records and establish a clear accounting system for all money earned and spent. As a troop leader or troop assistant, you're in charge of making sure money is spent wisely, excellent records are kept (keeping copies of all receipts in a binder or folder), and all income and expenses are tracked (income examples: dues, troop proceeds from Product Program. Expense examples: earned recognitions, troop meeting activities, field trips, events, and troop trips). For older girls, your role is to coach them in managing the troop's finances as they learn impeccable record-keeping.

- All troop money earned and received needs to be appropriately secured and deposited into the troop account within three days of receipt and should never be held in a personal checking account.
- **Troop funds cannot be used for personal use. Personal funds and troop funds should never co-mingle.**
- Anytime the troop spends or receives money or money/product exchanges hands for any reason, a receipt should be provided and kept on record.
- Receipts for all transactions need to be kept for a minimum of two years.
- It is critical that all authorized signers are in communication with the other before spending funds in the account to cover the amount of the transaction before writing a check or making a purchase with a debit card. This will safeguard against overdrawn accounts and bouncing checks.
- Take into consideration delays in posting transactions to the bank account.
- All troop expenses should be paid for with a troop check or the troop debit card.
- Blank checks should never be pre-signed, and debit cards should never be used by anyone other than the person they are issued to and only for troop expenses.
- Cash withdrawals should only be made if absolutely necessary—i.e. cookie booth change, tips for taxi or hotel services. Anything paid or purchased with cash must be documented with a receipt.
- Volunteers who have paid out of pocket for troop expenses cannot reimburse themselves. Reimbursement may only come from the other signer on the account when a receipt showing the expense is provided.
- Funds acquired for money-earning projects must be reported and accounted for by the troop while following all council policies and procedures.

Note: Troops should consistently share troop financial information with caregivers and girls. Records (receipts, bank statements, and finance reports) must be kept for a minimum of two years.

- At any time, caregivers or the council may request troop financial records.
- Girl Scouts of Western Ohio has the right to audit troop and service unit accounts and request statements and proof of receipts should misuse/mismanagement of funds be suspected or occur. Please know that Girl Scouts of Western Ohio will make a decision based on the best outcome for the girls, and this can take up to four weeks or longer, depending on the situation. This may result in the responsible volunteers being determined ineligible to serve as volunteers.

Completion of a Troop Financial Report/Bank Information Form

All Girl Scout troops are required to submit information regarding the troop's finances annually as part of the appointment and reappointment process. All troops, including new troops, must complete a final Troop Financial Report and submit a copy of their bank statement by June 30 each year. The Troop Financial Report form can be accessed, completed, and submitted online at the council website by going to gswo.org/troopfinances. If you need additional assistance, contact Customer Care.

Having a Troop Financial Report on file that includes the names of two registered and approved volunteer signers is required for the following:

- Reappointment of the troop leaders
- Approval of troop trip forms
- Participation in the Girl Scout Product Program
- Access to financial assistance

In addition, all financial transfers to troops/groups or service units, including refunds, financial assistance, and cookie proceeds will be made electronically using the bank account information on the **GSWO Bank Information Form**. This form can be found at gswo.org/bankinfoform.

- **New Troops**
  - New troops are required to submit a GSWO Bank Information Form within 30 days of opening a checking account.
  - End-of-year troop financial reports should include all financial information up to the date of your last bank statement.
- **Returning Troops**
  - At the beginning of each Girl Scout year, troop leaders are responsible for making sure their account is up to date, and the GSWO Bank Information Form is completed with that information.
  - The Troop Financial Report should begin on the date your previous report ended and include information up to the date of your last bank statement. The troop finance form is required annually, even if the bank information does not change. It can be found in the Volunteer Toolkit.

Earning Troop Funds

Helping girls decide what they want to do and coaching them as they earn and manage money to pursue their goals is an integral part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE). Your Girl Scout troop/group plans and finances its own activities, with your guidance. At the same time, the girls learn many valuable skills that serve them throughout their lives.

Girl Scout groups are funded by a share of money earned through a council-sponsored Product Program (such as the Girl Scout Cookie Program), council-approved group money-earning activities and any fees (dues) your group may charge. This is in addition to the $25 annual membership dues that go to the national organization (GSUSA).
Money earned by the girls is for the benefit of all girls in the troop and should be spent in the year the funds are earned unless the troop has a long-range plan for spending the funds. It is important to note that the funds belong to the troop as a whole. Per IRS guidelines for charitable organizations, troops are prohibited from keeping individual girl accounts. All funds expended should benefit all girls in the troop.

- **Individually Registered Members/Juliettes and Girl Scout Funds**

  Individually registered members (IRM) or Juliettes are individuals participating in Girl Scouts. IRMs/Juliettes are welcome to participate in our council-sponsored Product Programs and all activities that we offer. However, IRMs/Juliettes are not allowed to have their own bank account as this does not support the council's compliance with IRS requirements. Also, they will not receive actual money from our council-sponsored Product Programs. They will receive Digital Dough that they can use for membership, council-sponsored activities, events, or camp, and at our council store. Digital Dough is issued based on a scale correlating to the number of packages or items a girl sells during the Product Programs.

Money Payment Apps

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio recognizes that more and more payments are occurring electronically and through various means. We have updated our policies for troop and service unit bank accounts and the use of Third-Party Service Organizations (TSO) such as Pay Pal, Venmo, Square (etc.) for volunteers.

TSOs, or money payment apps, are to be set up under Girl Scouts of Western Ohio's tax ID when being used for Girl Scouting purposes. If you cannot use our tax ID number, you will want to consider a different payment app. Troop bank accounts are to be directly linked as the depository bank for these apps. Girl Scout funds should not be deposited into personal bank accounts prior to being deposited into the Girl Scout account.

Three other items to consider when determining which app you may want to use:

1. **Fees:** You will want to consider the fees for using the app. We want to make sure that we are utilizing girls' funds as best as possible, and the app should charge minimal fees for use or should put the fee on the person making a payment to the troop or service unit. All fees should be accounted for on the group's annual finance report.
2. **Documentation:** You will need to be able to account for and show records of all incoming and outgoing funds through any app that you use. If an audit on the troop or service unit account occurs, you will need to be able to prove all transactions that did occur through the app or the signers on the account could be responsible for any funds that are not accounted for.
3. **Support:** Girl Scouts of Western Ohio cannot provide support if a troop or service unit runs into an issue with the app itself. You will need to resolve any issues directly with the vendor.

Below are examples of money payment apps that could be used to collect funds for troop or service unit accounts. These platforms or apps allow troops or service units to set up accounts under our tax ID number. Setting up a money payment app account not under our tax ID number can make you subject to the tax law changes outlined below. (Please see Tax law changes below for further details).

- **Digital Cookie/M2:** These are the platforms that GSWO recommends using during the product programs. Any fees are paid for by GSWO.
- **Square:** Common app used during the product programs to collect funds. Fees do apply.
- **PayPal:** Popular app for collecting funds for dues, events or trips by a troop/group. Fees do apply.

When using a third-party app, it is at your own discretion.

Please Note: Venmo should NOT be used as a money payment app for Girl Scouting purposes, as they do not allow multiple accounts under the same tax ID number. See tax law changes below.

- **Tax law changes effective January 1, 2024:**

Due to tax law changes effective 1/1/2024, you may receive a 1099-K for payments received for product programs or other caregiver payments (dues, events, etc.) for your troop from a money payment app when using a personal account and not an account set up under GSWO's tax ID number. If you are using a money payment app with GSWO's tax ID, then you should not receive a 1099-K.

Volunteers may choose to use a personal money payment app, such as a Venmo account that they use for multiple purposes, and they would receive a 1099K if the total amount paid to them from all sources equals $5,000 or more in a calendar year. The volunteer has the option to identify the money is not for the sale of products and is a reimbursement; however, this does not preclude them from receiving a 1099K.

If a parent is using their personal money payment app, we recommend they indicate Girl Scout-related payments are 'reimbursements' and keep separate records to verify these amounts, should they be issued a 1099K. Additionally, they should consult their local tax advisor when preparing their personal tax return.

Making Decisions about Managing Money with Girls in the Troop

Teaching girls about money management and empowering them to make good financial decisions is part of troop financial management. Since girls are choosing their own Girl Scout experiences, they can also make decisions on the resources that support their Girl Scout adventure.

Consider the following as you guide them in the best management of their troop funds:

- **What is the grade level of the troop, and how much understanding do they have of money and bank accounts?** (Girl Scout Daisies will have adults handle their troop finances; Girl Scout Brownies understand that things cost money and will begin to have an understanding of what is needed to achieve their goals.)
- **What are the goals of the troop?**
- **What are the girls learning by the way that the troop funds are managed?**
- **What do they need to learn?**
- **If girls join the troop or leave the troop, how will the funds be managed?**

  1. If a girl leaves Girl Scouts, the funds remain the property of the troop.

  2. If a girl transfers to another troop, a portion of the funds will follow her. This is an important discussion to have with the girls in the troop, focusing on fairness and equitable reward. **If the troop decides not to transfer funds when a girl joins another troop a detailed statement as to the reasons why must be provided to the director of regional services within two weeks of the girl transferring.**

Consider the questions above to help determine the best way to manage the troop funds. Below are two common troop money management techniques utilizing a troop checking account.

- **The Common Pot:** (This technique is used mostly with younger troops: however it will work with all grade levels.) The Common Pot technique is when all earned money goes into the troop's "common pot" and the funds will be drawn from equally for all girls. This is often how a new troop begins in their money management and then progresses to a more in-depth management system.
- **Tracked Money with a Common Pot:** This is used by troops who are planning more complicated, expensive activities like a trip to Savannah, attending Troop Adventure Camp, or if girls have individual goals as well as troop goals. This technique allows for a percentage of the money earned to go into the troop "common pot" for troop activities and an additional percentage to be tracked for each girl to individually save for a long-term troop activity or a council-sponsored activity. The troop, as one body, still makes decisions about how the money should be spent. The money, even when tracked for individual girls, is never the property of an individual girl.

Helping Girls Reach Their Financial Goals

It's important that the girls have a clear plan and purpose for their troop funds. One of your opportunities as a volunteer is to facilitate girl-led financial planning, which may include the following steps for the girls:

- **Set goals for money-earning activities.** What do girls hope to accomplish through this activity? In addition to money-earning activities, what skills do they hope to build? What leadership opportunities present themselves?
- **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).
- **Determine how much the group needs to earn.** Subtract expenses from available income to determine how much money your group needs to earn.
- **Make a plan.** The group can brainstorm and make decisions about its financial plans. Will participation in the Cookie Program and Fall Product Program earn enough money to meet the group's goals? If not, which group money-earning activities might offset the difference in anticipated expense and anticipated income? 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.

- **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 the Group Money Earning and Project Funding Form (gswo.org/formsanddocs) and submit it to their community development manager along with the budget worksheet the girls created.

Reviewing Financial and Sales Abilities by Grade Level

As with other activities, girls progress in their financial and sales abilities as they get older. Below are some examples of the abilities of girls at each grade level.

- **Girl Scout Daisies**
  - The troop volunteer handles money, keeps financial records, and does all group budgeting.
  - Caregivers may decide they will contribute to the cost of activities.
  - Girls can participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall Product Program.
  - Girl Scout Daisies are always paired with an adult when selling anything. Girls do the asking and deliver the product, but adults handle the money and keep the girls safe.
- **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).
  - Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored Product Programs.
  - Girls may decide to pay dues.
- **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 on the basis of 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.
- **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 sales.
  - Girls carry out budgeting, planning, and group money-earning projects.
  - Girls budget for extended travel either individually or as a troop.
  - Girls budget for Take Action projects and leadership projects, which can include Girl Scout Silver and Gold Award.
  - Girls may be involved in seeking donations for Take Action projects, with council approval.
  - Girls keep their own financial records and give reports to caregivers and group volunteers.

Money-Earning Basics

Groups earn money for their troop in two distinct ways:

- Product Program: Girls can participate in two council-sponsored Product Programs each year: the Girl Scout Cookie Program and the Fall Product Program. All girl members, including Girl Scout Daisies and Juliettes (individually registered members), are eligible to participate in council-sponsored Product Programs with volunteer supervision. Please remember: volunteers and Girl Scout Council staff don't sell cookies and other products—girls do.
  - – A troop's primary money-earning activity should be the Girl Scout Product Programs (however, it is not a requirement).

- Troop/Group Money-Earning: Activities organized by the group (not by the Council) that are planned and carried out by girls (in partnership with adults) and that earn money for the group.
  - Any troop/group money-earning projects cannot take place during council-sponsored Product Programs (Fall Product and Cookie Program)
  - Troop money-earning projects need written approval from the council before a group money-earning activity. Submit the Money Earning/Funding Approval Form (gswo.org/formsanddocs) to the community development manager.

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

- Voluntary participation
- Caregiver permission to participate
- 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 activities
- Observance of local ordinances related to the involvement of children in money-earning activities, as well as health and safety laws
- Vigilance in protecting the personal safety of each girl (see the next chapter on Safety)
- Arrangements for safeguarding the money

There are a few specific guidelines—some required by the Internal Revenue Service—that ensure that sales are conducted with legal and financial integrity. To that end, consider the following reminders and cautions:

- 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 sale ranges set by councils and may not be based on a dollar-per-dollar calculation.
- Girls cannot participate in games of chance, pledge events (like walk-a-thons), and product demonstration parties.
- Girl Scouts cannot endorse products or businesses. This includes third-party fundraisers such as restaurant nights.
- Girl Scout Blue Book policy forbids girls from the direct solicitation of cash. Girls can collect partial payment towards the purchase of a package of Girl Scout Cookies and Girl Scout Fall Product Program products through participation in council-approved Product Program donation programs e.g. Cookie Share.
- Girl Scouts forbids the use of the Girl Scout trademark to increase revenue for another business (for example: In-home product parties). Any business using the Girl Scout trademark must seek authorization from GSUSA.
- Troop/Group money-earning activities need to be suited to the age 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 while following council procedures.
- Decisions about how money will be earned and spent should be made by the girls in the troop and communicated in writing to caregivers.
- No account may be set up in a girl's name that is replenished through troop funding efforts or donations. No matter what accounting method is used, money earned by girls in Girl Scouting is the property of the troop.
- Money donated to the troop may not personally benefit one member of the troop.

Other Money-earning Activities may Include:

- **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 high tea and a dinner inspired by international cuisines.
- **Service(s):**
  - Service-a-thon (people sponsor a girl doing service; funds go to support trip)
  - 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
  - Car wash
  - Bottle and can recycling
  - Yard or garage sale
  - Books for resale
- **Entertainment**
  - Talent Show

The best way to earn money for your group is to start with the Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall Product Program, from there, your group may decide to earn additional funds on its own.

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 part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. 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!

Troop Dues

Troop dues are an option for to cover the costs of snacks, supplies, and other materials used by the girls at regular meetings and at girl activities. Troop dues are meant to supplement Cookie and Fall Product Program activities. NO girl shall be denied membership in a troop or have her participation restricted based on her lack of ability to pay troop dues. When setting the amount of troop dues, the fees should be decided on by all members, and consideration should be given to the income levels of all of the girls in the group. Any collected troop dues should be documented and deposited into the troop account within three days of collection.

Collaborating with Sponsors and Other Organizations

Sponsors help Girl Scout Councils ensure that all girls in the community have an opportunity to participate in Girl Scouting. Community organizations, businesses, religious organizations, and individuals may be sponsors and may provide Girl Scout meeting places, volunteer their time, provide activity materials, or loan equipment. The council or your troop or service unit may already have relationships with certain organizations, or may know of some reasons not to collaborate with certain organizations. Volunteers must obtain permission before seeking financial support from a sponsor. If your group or service unit has a sponsor, the sponsor's contribution can be recognized by sending thank-you cards composed by the girls, inviting the sponsor to a meeting or court of awards, or working together on a service project. The contribution should also be reflected in the troop's financial records and report.

When collaborating with any other organization, follow these guidelines:

- **Do not participate in fundraising for other organizations:** Girl Scouts are not allowed to solicit money on behalf of another organization. This includes participating in a walkathon or telethon while in uniform.
- If the girls decide to do so, the troop can support another organization through Take Action projects or by making a donation from your troop's account.
- **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."**
- **Do not participate in 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. Do not sell, endorse, or promote commercial products:

  A "commercial product" is any product sold in a retail establishment or by direct sales (home parties, demonstrations, etc.). Since 1939, girls and volunteers have not been allowed to endorse, provide a testimonial for, or resell products made by another company.

Solicitation and Contributions for Troops and Service Units

Adult members in their Girl Scout capacities may not solicit financial contributions for purposes other than Girl Scouting. Adult members may engage in combined fundraising efforts authorized by Girl Scouts of Western Ohio and in which Girl Scouts of Western Ohio council is a beneficiary.

Girl members may not engage in any direct solicitation for money except for Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors, who may solicit philanthropic donations to their councils of cash or in-kind goods for Girl Scout Gold Award projects. Please see the Gold Award Money Earning section below for more information. In addition, girls must abide by Girl Scouts of Western Ohio's policies and procedures with regard to this matter.

- Prior permission must be obtained from the Girl Scout center before adults are allowed to solicit donations on the behalf of a Girl Scout troop/group. The Girl Scout troop/group must submit the Project Funding Approval Form along with a budget plan and budget for the proposed project.
- Crowdfunding sites are not allowed to be used by service units or troops for money earning. An exception to crowdfunding sites would be for Girl Scouts of Western Ohio Family Giving and must be set up through the council.
- Girl Scouts cannot endorse products or businesses. This includes third-party fundraisers such as restaurant nights.

Donations & Grants

As a not-for-profit organization, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio must follow all IRS guidelines for a 501c3 organization. All Girl Scout groups (troops) and service units are an extension of the council, including the council IRS not-for-profit status. Therefore, all group and service unit finances are considered assets of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio. In order to ensure compliance with IRS and audit guidelines, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio has the following policies regarding donations and grants from individuals and organizations to Girl Scouts groups or service units.

- **Donations**
  - Girls may not directly solicit funds from individuals or organizations. This includes no solicitation for donations during Girl Scout Cookie Booths and no donation jars on tables.
  - Troops and service units may receive a donation from any one individual or organization for no more than $250 during the membership year (single donation or cumulative). The funds may be used at the troop's discretion.
  - For in-kind donations to troops and service units, please use the thank you letter found at gswo.org/inkind to acknowledge the donor's contribution.
  - Any donation amount over $250 must be turned into a Girl Scout center and will be held in a general fund until a detailed budget is submitted outlining how the funds will be used. Use the Money Earning/Funding Approval Form to complete the detailed budget.
  - Letters of acknowledgment will only be sent by Girl Scouts of Western Ohio for amounts over $250.
  - All donations must be reported in the troop/service unit's annual financial report.
- **Grants**
  - Girls may not directly solicit funds from individuals or organizations.
  - Individual troops and service units may not solicit grants or financial donations from foundations or corporations.
  - Troops and service units may receive up to $250 during a membership year from companies that offer volunteer matching grants. These funds are to be used for special service projects conducted by the service unit, day camp, or troop. In order to receive these funds, troops and/or service units must receive prior permission, submit a Project Funding Approval Form to the director of regional services, and have a current financial report on file with the Girl Scouts center.
- **Exceptions**

An exception to the above guidelines is made if Girl Scout volunteers work for companies offering small grants or employee matching donations (up to $1,000) for special projects and nonprofit groups supported by their employees. These funds may be requested for special service units, day camps, or troop/group projects (such as a large service project) with prior permission of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio. Prior approval includes contacting your director of regional services and completing a Money Earning/Funding Approval Form. This form must also include a detailed budget of how the funds will be spent. In addition, the company issuing the donation/grant should complete a Donor Form and include it with the check.

Gold Award Money Earning

Money-earning activities for Senior and Ambassador Girl Scouts pursuing their Gold Award are similar to fundraising for other troop activities, except it is used for the girl's project and not the group. The individual girl should submit a Troop/Group Money-Earning Project Form (gswo.org/formsanddocs) to their program support contact for approval of fundraisers beyond the Girl Scout Fall and Cookie Product Programs. Girls may also choose to designate funds from the Girl Scout Product Programs for Highest Awards projects if the troop votes to allocate a portion of troop funds to a girl's project.

Funds acquired through money-earning projects or donated to Girl Scouts for a Gold Award project via sponsorships, crowdfunding, or a grant must be deposited into a Girl Scout-affiliated bank account (for example, troop account) and must follow council reporting procedures.

- **Donations & Grants**

  Senior and Ambassador Girl Scouts can solicit donations of funds, supplies, and materials for their Gold Award project from community members, organizations, and businesses. Funds donated must be deposited into an approved Girl Scout bank account (for example, a troop account). If donors are requesting a letter of acknowledgment, the funds must be turned in to a regional Girl Scout Center using a Girl Scout Donor form attached to the check specifying the name of the girl and that the donation is for her Gold Award project. Letters of acknowledgment will only be sent for amounts over $250.
  All grant applications for Gold Award projects must be vetted and approved. Girls must contact the Highest Awards support staff for their region and provide project-specific details needed for the application at least 3 weeks prior to the grant submission deadline.

- **Crowdfunding**

  Gold Award Girl Scouts are the only girls eligible to use crowdfunding as a fundraiser for their project needs. Girls may use only the crowdfunding site managed by Girl Scouts of Western Ohio. The council will oversee all crowdfunding for Gold Award projects through this organization, and girls must fill out additional paperwork and follow specific guidelines for their projects to be included on the site. Girls should contact their region's Highest Award support staff prior to submitting their Gold Award Proposal for more information on this option.

Leadership Changes

Since records and other property belong to the troop, not an individual, they should be passed along to the next leader within 30 days of a change in leadership. If a disbanding troop's girls are placed in multiple troops, the disbanding troop's treasury may be pro-rated to each new troop based on the number of transferring girls and the financial decisions made by troop members.

Troops must follow the council's process for troop checking account signers. Until the new bank signer gets added to the account, all existing bank signers will continue to have access to troop funds. If there is a problem adding and removing a volunteer at the bank, please contact Customer Care to get a letter to make these changes.

> **Reminder: When debit card holders are no longer involved with the troop, the debit card should be canceled immediately with the bank. Whenever there is a change of signers on the account, the password to online access must be changed.**

Disbanding a Troop and Closing a Checking Account

When a troop decides to disband and/or is not reregistering for the upcoming membership year, they must follow the procedures below:

- Unregistered members and non-viable troops (less than 5 girls and 2 adults) cannot spend troop funds. Troop funds must be spent prior to disbanding and by the end of the current Girl Scout year (September 30).
- Be sure all checks and other debits have cleared the account.
- If you have funds remaining that need to be turned into council, we recommend you get a cashier's check written to Girl Scouts of Western Ohio.

- Close the troop bank account. This is necessary to ensure no new fees are incurred on the troop account that the signers would be responsible for.
- A final Troop Financial Report must be completed within 60 days of disbanding. Answer the disbanding questions on the report, noting that this is a "closed account." (Be sure to include the account number.)
- When the troop account is closed, submit the final finance report form with the bank statement showing the closed status to the council. The troop's debit card/checkbook should now be shredded.
- Any supplies purchased with troop funds should be given to the service unit, another troop, or returned to a Girl Scout center.

If a girl(s) is/are moving from the disbanding troop to another troop:

- The girl's portion of the funds will be divided equally based on the girls continuing into a new troop. (Example: $500 remains in the account, and only 5 out of 6 girls are moving to a new troop. $100 per remaining girl will be sent to the new troop). All funds must be transferred prior to completing the final finance report.
- The individual girl's badge record should be given to the girl for her future reference and use.
- If none of the girls choose to remain active in Girl Scouts, the remaining funds must be returned to the Girl Scout Council for use in the Financial Assistance Fund.
- Girl Scout money left in accounts when groups disband becomes the property of the council. Cash should NEVER be given directly to girls or their families for personal use.

- **Important**

Money or monetary items (i.e. gift cards) may not be given to individual girls or adults. Money in the troop bank account belongs to the troop. Money earned is never the property of an individual girl or adult. Disbanding troop funds that do not follow girls continuing in Girl Scouts are supporting girls with financial needs and need to be turned over to the council.

Service Unit Bank Accounts

Service units maintain bank accounts to support the events planned within the service unit. Service units may not raise money for the service unit. Events should be designed so that fees for the activity cover the expenses. There may be times when an event brings in additional money that was not expected. This excess is to be used to offset the cost of other events.

Some service units host family giving events and collect money to donate to the GSWO Family Giving Campaign. If this is done, the event should be clearly identified as an opportunity to raise money for the organization. Those paying for the event must know what money is going to the campaign and must be informed about family giving.

Service units may be eligible to receive an allocation from GSWO based on their current balance and use of previous allocation funds. These funds are to be used to offset indirect costs of program activities like printing, the overall administration of the service unit, and volunteer appreciation. Service units must complete a Service Unit Financial Report by June 30 and are required to provide bank account information, and utilize a preferred bank unless prior approval for extenuating circumstances has been received by the director of regional services.

The management of service unit bank accounts must follow the policies found in this chapter, including, but not limited to, adhering to the policy requiring two non-related volunteer signers on the bank account and the account must be at a council-approved bank.

For additional information on managing service unit funds, see Service Unit Treasury Guide. Connect with your community development manager for a copy.

Financial Assistance

Financial assistance is provided to individual applicants based on specific financial needs and the applicant's compliance with the financial assistance philosophy for membership and programmatic activities.

Financial Assistance-Membership

- Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is committed to ensuring all girls and adult volunteers who want to participate in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, follow the Girl Scout Promise, and accept the Girl Scout Law, are welcome. No girl or adult volunteer will be prevented from participating in Girl Scouting due to financial barriers.
- Membership subsidy is provided to individual girls and adult volunteers based on their specific family financial needs. Financial assistance may only be requested by caregivers or individual adult volunteers based on individual /family needs. Troop leaders may not request financial assistance for the troop or on behalf of troop members.
- Membership subsidy is available on a limited basis to adult volunteers. Assistance is available to an adult in a volunteer role who is needed to meet volunteer requirements or the girl/adult ratio (e.g. troop leader). Financial assistance will be considered for additional adult volunteers when there is a specific financial need and the volunteer has agreed to an active volunteer role with the troop.
- Each year, Girl Scout troops/groups are encouraged to designate a portion of their troop funds for the annual membership dues.

Membership Financial Assistance Guidelines

- **Girls:** Caregivers of girls requesting financial assistance complete the standard online registration process. If the family is unable to pay the membership fee, they can select financial assistance on the payment screen. The person registering the girl will receive a notification when the financial assistance is applied.
- **Required Adult Volunteers (Troop Leaders):** An adult requesting financial assistance for membership completes the registration process and may request financial assistance if they are unable to pay the fee and they are in a role required for the troop or group.
- **Other Adult Volunteers:** If the adult volunteer is not in a required volunteer role, (e.g. troop assistant), she/he/they may still be eligible for financial assistance if she/he/they has a specific financial need and they are committed to an active volunteer role with the troop. The adult volunteer completes the standard registration process and requests financial assistance. She/ he will be sent a form where additional information can be provided, confirming financial need and volunteer commitment. Decisions about financial assistance for volunteers in roles that are not required are made on an individual basis.

Financial Assistance —Girl Uniforms

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is committed to ensuring that all girls have the opportunity to participate in Girl Scouting and feel like they belong! While uniforms are not required for Girl Scout participation, we recognize that in some circumstances, having a uniform facilitates girls' sense of belonging.

Girl Uniform Financial Assistance Guidelines:

- Uniform financial assistance is provided to individual girls based on their specific family financial needs.
- Uniform financial assistance must be requested by the individual caregiver; assistance may not be requested by the troop leader on behalf of the girl.

- Uniform financial assistance is only available for girls registered in the current membership year.
- Preference will be given to girls who are part of groups/troops that have opted to purchase uniforms, but the individual girl is unable to afford the uniform expense.
- Caregivers are required to contribute $5 towards their girl's Girl Scout Uniform; the total uniform assistance cannot exceed $35.
- Uniform financial assistance is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Search "Financial Assistance" on gswo.org and complete a short online form to request uniform financial assistance. Or ask your staff council support person for more information.

Financial Assistance—Camp/Program Activities

Philosophy: Girl Scout events and activities will result from girl-adult planning that allows Girl Scouts adequate time to prepare troop or group money-earning projects that will support the girls' choice of activities. Financial assistance is granted to individual applicants who have a specific and distinct financial need. All applicants are to contribute some portion to the activity cost.

Camp/Program Activities Financial Assistance Guidelines

- Applicant must be a currently registered member.
- Requests are to be on current forms.
- Financial assistance is available on an individual basis. Troops/groups are not eligible for financial assistance.
- Individual girls may request financial assistance for events/activities/opportunities within Girl Scouts. These include: council-sponsored events, service unit events, summer camp opportunities (both council and volunteer-led), troop trips, destinations/getaways, and council-sponsored trips.
- Financial assistance applications should indicate that the request is based on the financial need of the individual applicant.
- Requests should indicate that the applicant has participated in event planning and money-earning with other troop members over a period of time based on the guidelines.
- Adults are eligible to apply for financial assistance for troop activities and council-sponsored adult education opportunities ONLY when the participation of that adult is required to ensure that Safety Activity Checkpoints are fulfilled.
- If most or all members of a troop must request financial assistance to participate in a troop activity, it may be an indication that further troop planning is needed. If a troop does not meet its financial goals, adjustments should be made to the activities themselves or the projected timetable.
- Forms must have complete information in order to be reviewed.
- A current Troop Finance Report must be on file for troop members to be eligible for financial assistance.

Girl Scout leaders must review financial assistance philosophy and guidelines with caregivers and encourage caregivers to submit the request form online (gswo.org/financialassistance).

Camp/Program Financial Assistance- Responsibilities of Leaders

If individual girls within a troop wish to apply for financial assistance for a program opportunity, the leader will:

- Ensure that the financial assistance philosophy and guidelines are followed.

- Turn in the completed application form to the appropriate Girl Scouts center. Forms must be received one month prior to the date of the event or activity, except for activities with a budget over $200 per person, which must be turned in three months prior to the event.
- Ensure that caregivers and troop sections are filled out entirely, including the caregiver's signature.

- **Caregiver Instructions:**

  – Review financial assistance philosophy and guidelines.

  For a troop activity, complete the required sections and return them to the Girl Scout leader; the leader must complete the Girl Scout leader section of the Financial Assistance Request Form. For girls who are either registered as individual members or requesting assistance for a non-troop activity, the caregiver must complete the caregiver sections of the form, including a caregiver signature.

Camp/Program Notification of Financial Assistance Status

Girl Scout leaders and/or caregivers will be notified of the financial assistance amount received or any questions or concerns within three weeks of their receipt at the Girl Scout center.

- **Notification letters will indicate:**

  – Problems/concerns that must be addressed before further action can be taken

  – Action taken regarding financial assistance

  – Other individuals receiving a copy of the letter

- **Financial Assistance will be made through an electronic transfer of funds whenever possible, including:**

  – To the troop checking account for all troop activities

  – Directly to the appropriate department for all Girl Scouts of the USA, Destinations, or Girl Scouts of Western Ohio activities

Chapter 7:
Safety

Knowing Your Responsibilities

The emotional and physical safety and well-being of Girl Scouts is our top priority. Safety is a partnership between volunteers, caregivers, and girls. Every adult in Girl Scouting is responsible to ensure a safe space for all. Below are core safety guidelines that are to be followed:

- **Responsibilities of the Volunteer: Girl Scout 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 on the council website: gswo.org and in the Volunteer Toolkit under the resource tab. Read the checkpoints, follow them, and share them with other volunteers, caregivers, 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 registered in supervisory roles (i.e., troop leader or troop assistant) present at troop meetings and any Girl Scout activity. Additional volunteers may be necessary depending on the size, age, or abilities of the girls. See pages 82-83 (for more on the girl/adult ratio. At least one lead volunteer in each group must be female. Adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old (and not eligible to be an Ambassador Girl Scout) and approved by Girl Scouts of Western Ohio.

  3. **Get caregiver permission.** When an activity takes place outside the normal time and place, or a topic is discussed that could be considered sensitive, advise each caregiver of the details of the activity and obtain permission for girls to participate. (See Permission Slip on council website).

  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 Girl Scouts of Western Ohio's guidelines for reporting concerns about abuse or neglect that may be occurring inside or outside of Girl Scouting (found later in this chapter).

  5. **Be prepared for emergencies.** Work with girls and other adults to establish and practice procedures for emergencies related to weather, fire, lost girls/adults, and site security. Always keep handy a well-stocked first-aid kit, girls' 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, at least 21 years of age, and have a good driving record, a valid license, and a registered/insured vehicle. Insist that everyone is in a legal seat, and always wears their seat belt, and adhere to state laws regarding booster seats and requirements for children in rear seats.

  7. **Ensure safe overnight outings.** Prepare girls to be away from home by involving them in planning, so they know what to expect. Do not have men sleep in the same space as girls and women. During family or caregiver-girl overnights, one family unit may sleep in the same sleeping quarters in program areas.

  8. When **caregivers are staffing events**, girls should remain in quarters with other girls rather than in staff areas.

  9. **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 or on Girl Scout property unless participating in a council-approved marksmanship program.

10. **Create an emotionally safe space.** Adults 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.

11. **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

12. **Promote online safety.** Instruct girls never to put their full names or contact information online, engage in virtual conversation with strangers, or arrange in-person meetings with online contacts. On group websites, publish girls' first names only and never divulge their contact information. Teach girls the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge located on GSUSA's website and have them commit to it.

13. **Keep girls safe during money-earning activites.** Girl Scout cookies and other council-sponsored product programs are an integral part of the Girl Scout program. During Girl Scout product 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 programs and efforts.

• Responsibilities of Caregivers

You want to engage each caregiver to help you work toward ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of girls. Clearly communicate to caregivers that they are expected to:

- Provide permission for their girls to participate in Girl Scouting as well as provide additional consent for activities that take place outside the scheduled meeting place, involve overnight travel, involve the use of special equipment, and/or cover sensitive issues.
- Make provisions for their girls to get to and from meeting places or other designated sites in a safe and timely manner and inform you if someone other than the caregiver will drop off or pick up the child.
- Provide their girls with appropriate clothing and equipment for activities or contact you before the activity to find sources for the necessary clothing and equipment.
- Follow Girl Scout safety guidelines and encourage their children to do the same.
- Assist you in planning and carrying out program activities as safely as possible.
- Participate in caregiver meetings.
- Be aware of appropriate behavior expected of their girls and themselves, as determined by the council and you.
- Assist volunteers if their girls have special needs or abilities and their help is solicited.

• Responsibilities of Girls

Girls who learn about and practice safe and healthy behaviors are likely to establish lifelong habits of safety consciousness. For that reason, each Girl Scout is expected to:

- **Assist** you and other volunteers in safety planning.
- **Listen** to and follow your instructions and suggestions.
- **Learn** to "think safety" at all times and to be prepared.
- **Identify** and evaluate an unsafe situation.
- **Know** how, when, and where to get help when needed.

Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need (Ratio)

Girl Scouts girl/adult ratios show the minimum number of registered and approved volunteers (*i.e.*, adults) needed to supervise a specific number of girls. These supervision ratios were devised to ensure the safety and health of girls—for example, if one adult must respond to an emergency, a second adult is always on hand for the rest of the girls.

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

For example: If you're meeting with 17 Daisies, you'll need three volunteers, at least two of whom are unrelated* (in other words, you and someone who is not your sister, spouse, caregiver, or child) and at least one of whom is female. This is determined as follows: for up to 12 Daisies, you need two adults and one more adult for each six additional girls. Since you have 17 girls, you need three adults (2+1). If, however, you have 17 Cadettes attending a group meeting, you need only two unrelated adults, at least one of whom is female, since the chart shows that two adults can manage up to 25 Cadettes.

In addition to the girl/adult ratios, please remember that volunteers must be at least 18 years old and council-approved.

Have a multi-age level troop? Always follow the girl/adult ratio based on the youngest girls in the troop. This means if you have a troop of 12 girls that are a combination of Daisy/Brownie girls, you need to meet the Girl Scout Daisy ratios.

Non-Girl Scout children in attendance: Any non-Girl Scout children attending a Girl Scout activity must be supervised by an additional adult who is **not** responsible for girl-adult ratio.

***Unrelated is defined as not biologically or legally related to, not residing in the same household, and not romantically involved. **Note: Girl adult ratio guidelines apply for all online and virtual activities.**

Safely 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 Girl Scouts of Western Ohio staff with full details and don't proceed without approval. Remember, the safety of girls is your most important consideration.

- **Safety Activity Checkpoints**

You should always refer to the Safety Activity Checkpoints before planning activities. These can be found on the council website or in the Volunteer Toolkit under resources. If Safety Activity Checkpoints do not exist for an activity you and the girls are interested in, be sure to check with Girl Scouts of Western Ohio before making any definite plans with the girls in your group. A few activities are allowed only with written council pre-approval and only for girls 12 and over, while some are off-limits completely. See Safety Activity Checkpoints, because most activities require having an expert on hand to help girls learn an activity.

Things to keep in mind:

- **Does the person have documented training and experience?** She or he should have documented experience for the activity in question, such as course completion certificates or cards, records of previous training to instruct the activity, and letters of reference.
- **What does she or he need to be able to do?** This person should have the knowledge and experience to make appropriate judgments concerning participants, equipment, facilities, safety considerations, supervision, and procedures for the activity. At the very least, she/he/they should be able to give clear instructions to girls and adults, troubleshoot unexpected scenarios, and respond appropriately in an emergency. Verify that program providers are operating within Girl Scout safety standards and with proper insurance coverage.

Note - You must get written pre-approval from the council for girls ages 12 and older who will:

- Use firearms for target shooting. (See Sport Shooting and Marksmanship section of Safety Activity Checkpoints)
- Take trips on waterways that are highly changeable or uncontrollable. (See Whitewater Rafting in Safety Activity Checkpoints)

Warning: When activities involve unpredictable safety variables, they are not permitted as Girl Scout activities. These include but are not limited to:

- Bungee jumping
- Flying in privately owned planes, helicopters, or blimps
- Hang-gliding
- Untethered hot-air ballooning
- Hunting
- Snowmobiling
- Riding a motorbike
- Riding electric scooters
- Using outdoor trampolines
- Parachuting or skydiving- **this does not include simulated skydiving and zero-gravity rooms.**
- Parasailing
- Paintball tagging
- Riding all-terrain vehicles (ATVs)
- Stunt skiing
- Zorbing
- Fireworks: no person can use or possess fireworks on council-owned or operated properties or while involved in Girl Scout-related activities.

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. Remember that skill levels decline when people are tired, hungry, or under stress.

Also, activities can be used as opportunities for building teamwork, which is one of the outcomes of the Connect key in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE). Please keep in mind that activities need to be inclusive of all girls in the group as much as possible.

Caregiver Permission

Remember that every time a group meets at a time and location different from the regular group meeting, you must use a **permission slip**—even if the girls are responsible for getting to that location on their own. Permission slips give caregivers the "who, what, when, where, and why," so that they can decide whether their girl can participate in an event or go on a trip. A signed permission slip permits you to include the girl in the activity and provides you with up-to-date emergency contact information.

Girl Release to Authorized Person

Girl Scout volunteers shall release girls only to persons authorized by the parent or caregiver. The troop leaders will maintain the Girl Scout release information and will update it annually.

Community Program Providers and Safety

Some activities can carry a greater risk than others, which creates a greater potential for serious injury to the participant. Therefore, it is important that these activities be conducted with companies or organizations that offer such activities in a safe manner. Horseback riding, hayrides, and canoeing are examples of hazardous activities with the potential for serious injury to the participants.
Girl Scouts of Western Ohio will only do business with those organizations that operate within government and Girl Scout safety guidelines and that carry insurance to protect themselves from the legal liability of their operations. Coverage provided by the program provider must be the primary payer in the event of a loss. Girl Scout troops are encouraged to verify that program providers are operating within Girl Scout Safety Standards and with proper insurance coverage.

Incident Accident Reports

Accidents do happen, and other issues do occur. If there is an injury, car accident, or another situation that you feel needs to be reported to Girl Scouts of Western Ohio that occurs while participating in Girl Scout activities of any kind, you will want to fill out the incident accident form found on our website (gswo.org/formsanddocs). This form needs to be filled out and submitted within 24 hours of the incident or accident. Once it is submitted, a staff member will reach out to follow up with all Girl Scout parties involved.

Certificate of Insurance

When obtaining a location for a meeting place, service unit event, or troop event, some sites will request a certificate of insurance. This is a copy of our council insurance coverage and can be provided by Girl Scouts of Western Ohio. A Certificate of Insurance can be requested through Customer Care or by filling out the Request for Certificate of Insurance form found on our Forms and Documents page at gswo.org/insurancerequest. Please allow two weeks to process this request.

If calling Customer Care to obtain the Certificate of Insurance, please have the following information ready:

- Name of Facility
- Physical and mailing address (if different)
- Date and type of activity
- Facility email address and phone number
- Contact information of the person requesting the certificate

Certificates of Insurance can be emailed out directly to the location contact within two weeks of your call or request.

Contracts and Agreements

In order to protect the legal and safety interests of girls, volunteers, and the council, written agreements and contracts may only be signed by the director of regional services or other designated paid staff members.

Hold Harmless Agreements

If a program provider or other organization requires the signing of a Hold Harmless Agreement, a copy of it will be requested and reviewed by one or more of the following: program manager/team leader, director of regional services, or director of program and partnerships.

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. This is the reason that all adults and girls are required to be registered members. Non-registered caregivers, tagalongs (brothers, sisters, friends), and other persons are not covered by the basic plan.

This insurance coverage is not intended to diminish the need for or replace family health insurance. When $140 in benefits has been paid for covered accident medical or dental expenses, any subsequent benefits will be payable only for expenses incurred that aren't compensable under another insurance policy. If there is no family insurance or healthcare program, a specified maximum of medical benefits is available.

Additional activity insurance is required for Girl Scouts taking extended trips and for non-members who participate in Girl Scout activities. There are a few options available. These plans are secondary insurance that the council offers to cover participants taking part in any council-approved, supervised Girl Scout activity. Additional insurance coverage is available for any Girl Scout activity that involves non-Girl Scouts or lasts longer than three days and two nights.

- **Requesting Additional Insurance**

  A Request for Purchase of Additional Insurance form must be completed and submitted to the Finance Department at the Cincinnati Girl Scout Center at least four weeks prior to the event date. This form must be accompanied by a check payable to United of Omaha for the amount owed for the additional insurance. There is a $5 minimum. Incomplete forms without checks attached and checks less than $5.00 will not be accepted.

  The Request for Purchase of Additional Insurance form is available on the council website at gswo.org/formsanddocs. Mailing instructions are on the form.

- **Summary of Girl Scout Insurance Plans**

  A printed brochure from United of Omaha with a complete description of all the features of each insurance option can be requested from your Girl Scout service center. The information provided below is a high-level summary only.

	Plan 1 Accident Insurance Basic Coverage	Plan 3P Accident plus Sickness Insurance	Plan 3PI Accident plus Sickness Insurance for International Trips	International Inbound Accident plus Sickness Insurance for Girl Guides/ Girl Scouts Visiting the USA
Eligibility	All Member and Nonmember participants of Girl Scout sponsored/ supervised events	All Member and Nonmember participants of Girl Scout sponsored/ supervised events	All Member and Nonmember participants of Girl Scout sponsored/ supervised events	Councils who are hosting Girl Guides/Girl Scouts visiting the United States.
Coverage (any approved and supervised Girl Scout Activity)	No Event duration time frame.	No Event duration time frame.	No Event duration time frame.	Coverage provided 24 hours a day for Girl Guides/Girl Scouts visiting the USA, including travel directly to and from the insured's home and the USA.
Premium Rates	The cost is paid by Girl Scouts of the USA.	The cost is $0.70 per participant per calendar day or portion thereof.	The cost is $1.17 per participant per calendar day or portion thereof.	The cost is $3.30 per person per calendar day.

Transporting Girls

How caregivers decide to transport girls between their homes and Girl Scout meeting places is each caregiver'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 in mind the following:

- Every driver must be a registered and 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.
- 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/adult ratios must be followed. Care should be taken so that a single car is not separated from the group for an extended length of time.
- 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/adult ratios must be followed.

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 that carries 12 or more passengers must be a professional driver who possesses a commercial driver's license (CDL). **Note:** you must check with Girl Scouts of Western Ohio to determine specific rules about renting large vehicles. **Fifteen passenger vans are not permitted to be used to transport girls.**

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 even if there is no cost associated with the rental. Such agreements must instead be signed by the person designated by the director of regional services and be leased on behalf of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio.
- If Girl Scouts of Western Ohio 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.
- When leasing a bus, the driver must be an employee of the bus company.
- The bus company must provide a certificate of insurance. The minimum limits of liability on any leased bus/van must be at least $1,000,000 per occurrence for bodily injury and property damage. If interstate highway travel is planned, there must be:
  - $5,000,000 per occurrence for bodily injury and property damage.
  - The certificate of insurance and leasing agreement must be submitted to the director of regional services or their designee for review and approval.
  - Obtain caregiver permission for any use of transportation outside of the meeting place.
- Check the Volunteer Driving Policy (p. 88) to make sure you are following accepted practices when using private transportation; this ensures that both you and Girl Scouts of Western Ohio are protected by liability insurance in the event of an accident.

Ridesharing/Ride-Hailing Services Policy

The use of ride-sharing/ride-hailing companies, such as Uber or Lyft, are not permitted for any Girl Scout function. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio does not permit girls or volunteers to utilize these services while traveling to, from, or during Girl Scout activities.

Volunteer Driver Policy

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is always committed to providing a safe and quality program for girls in the community. While Girl Scouts of the USA provides the principles and standards for health and safety, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is responsible for developing local guidelines and procedures. **In addition to Safety Activity Checkpoints, the following policies have been established to encourage the safe operation of vehicles and to address insurance issues when personal and/or leased vehicles are used for Girl Scout activities:**

- All drivers must have a valid state driver's license, be 21 years old, be covered by auto insurance, be in compliance with state law, and have been driving for at least five years. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is not responsible for the physical damage to a personal vehicle.
- Drivers must be registered and approved troop leaders or troop assistants or appointed service team members who have reviewed our Transporting Girls handout found at gswo.org/formsanddocs
- Girl Scout leaders should verify annually that all drivers are registered members who have completed the screening process to become a troop leader or troop assistant, have a valid driver's license, and a current auto insurance policy. Girl Scout leaders are not required to maintain a copy of these documents. Girl Scout leaders should ask drivers to verify that their driving record complies with the guidelines below or to simply decline to be a driver.
- Drivers on troop trips* should be informed that they may be asked to submit a copy of their driver's license for a driver record check with the Troop Trip & Activity Notification Form that is submitted to your Girl Scout center.

*** See Girl Scouts of Western Ohio Troop Trip Procedures (pages 90-94) for more information on trip requirements.**

• What this Means for Troops

While you are getting girls registered this fall, it is a great opportunity to get adults to register who want to drive as well. That way, you will be ready and compliant with the policy when your trips come around! Troops/groups should plan early to make sure they have enough time for adult drivers to become registered members and complete the volunteer application process.

If a driver's record contains one of the following violations within the past three (3) years, he/she/they is ineligible to serve as a troop driver:

- Driving under the influence of alcohol/drugs
- Failure to stop/report an accident
- Reckless driving/speeding contest
- Driving while impaired
- Making a false accident report
- Homicide, manslaughter, or assault arising out of the use of a vehicle
- Driving while license is suspended/revoked
- Careless driving
- Attempting to elude a police officer

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio's insurance carrier has provided the following chart to determine whether an individual is eligible to serve as a troop driver. Should a driver's record fall outside of the acceptable number of accidents or violations, according to the chart below, that individual is required to personally and privately decline any requests to drive for a Girl Scout activity.

Number of violations within the past 3 years	Number of "at-fault" accidents within the past 3 years			
	0	1	2	3
0	Yes	Yes	No	No
1	Yes	Yes	No	No
2	Yes	No	No	No
3	No	No	No	No
4	No	No	No	No

Checklist for Drivers

When driving Girl Scouts, take the following precautions and ask all other drivers to do the same:

- Ensure all drivers are adults at least 21 years old.
- All drivers have read the Transporting Girls handout, which can be found on our website gswo.org/formsanddocs.
- 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.
- Always wear your seat belt and insist that all passengers do the same. Girls under 12 must ride in the back seats.
- 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 earbuds 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, plan stopping places along the way. When planning longer trips, arrange for relief drivers.

Automobile Accidents

In the event of an accident, leaders:

- Take necessary steps to protect the lives and health of everyone involved.
- Report the accident to the authorities and to Girl Scouts of Western Ohio using the emergency number if the accident is after hours. The emergency number is at the beginning of this book or can be found later in this chapter.
- Contact caregivers to inform them about the accident and their girl's status.
- Comply with the instructions of the police and any other emergency personnel.
- Do not assume or admit fault. Liability should only be determined after a thorough investigation.
- The owner's vehicle insurance is the primary applicable insurance payer.
- The minimum state liability insurance coverage must be in effect, and evidence of such must be provided and carried in the vehicle. NOTE: Minimum requirements may not be adequate under all circumstances; each driver should consult his/her/their insurance company to be sure that the coverage is sufficient for Girl Scout activities.
- Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is not responsible for the physical damage to a personal vehicle.
- In case of injury or death, please refer to the policy under "What to do if..." found in this chapter.

Public Transportation

Public transportation includes trains, subways, buses, ferries, and airlines. Public transportation is regulated, which makes it preferable to chartered vehicles, but this mode of transportation is not without challenges. The biggest challenge with any public transportation is staying together as a group, so be sure everyone has directions and a map, and always designate a meet-up area if anyone gets separated. Girls also need to be vigilant for criminals, both those who might do them bodily harm and those who are interested in stealing their money, jewelry, and electronic devices. Prepare girls for their exciting journeys on public transportation; they'll have an adventure they'll remember for years!

Troop Trips & Travel Safety

- **Troop Trip Procedures**

  Before most trips, you and the girls will need to obtain council permission. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio has instituted a Volunteer Driver Policy (under Transporting Girls) that must be followed by all drivers who will be driving children on troop trips. The troop leader is the person responsible for making sure all drivers are in accordance with this policy. Your troop must have completed and turned in a Troop Financial Report form for the previous year to be approved to go on a troop trip. If you have any questions about whether a Troop Financial Report form has been turned in, please call Customer Care at the Girl Scout Center.

  You must complete the Troop Trip and Activity Notification Form on gswo.org for all activities and trips that are over 100 miles from your meeting location.

  Note: A Troop Trip and Activity Notification Form must be completed for ALL high-risk activities regardless of the distance traveled.

The online troop trip form is the easiest to use. The Troop Trip and Activity Notification Form can be found on the council website at gswo.org/formsanddocs. Completing the form will help volunteers and girls think through the financial and safety processes so they are prepared for a great experience! The trip approval for the following types of trips is automatic once you have submitted the form AND have taken the required training(s) for your type of trip:

- **High-Risk Activities:** all high-risk activities when all Safety Activity Checkpoints are met. To determine if an activity is considered high risk, consult Safety Activity Checkpoints or call council.
- **Day Trips (over 100 miles from meeting location)**
- **Overnight Trips (over 100 miles from meeting location)**

Trips less than 100 miles from your meeting place that are not high risk do not require council notification. Leaders should still take the training and have permission slips and health forms.

Trips and activities that take place at council-owned properties do not require the Troop Trip Notification Form. Troops must instead complete the Site Reservation Request form or reserve the property on Checkfront.

Type/Length of Activity/Trip	Turn in the form no later than
Trips less than 100 miles	No form needed
High-risk activities	1 month prior
Day/Overnights over 100 miles	1 month prior
Extended Trips (5 or more nights)	6 months
International Trips and travel outside of the continental U.S.	No less than 6 months. Contact your program manager as soon as you begin discussing this type of trip.

• Training Requirements

Type of Trip	Required Training
Day activity/trip, high-risk activity, overnight less than five nights	Troop Trips Travel Training
Overnights at council-owned camp	Lodge Camp Training *
Trips that include camping and outdoor skills	Troop Camp Training *
Extended (more than five nights) and international	Contact your program manager*

*** Troop Trips and Travel Training is a pre-requisite to all additional trainings.**

• Extended/International Travel

Extended trips (5 or more nights) and travel outside the continental United States require additional paperwork and approval from the Program team. Contact your program and partnership manager as soon as you begin planning this type of activity.

• Involving Chaperones

To determine how many volunteer chaperones the girls will need with them on the trip, see the adult-to-girl ratios. As you ask for chaperones, be sure to look for ones who are committed to:

- Registering as a member and completing a criminal background check (must be a council-approved volunteer)
- Being a positive role model

- **Sleeping Arrangements**

On trips where male volunteers are part of the group, it is not appropriate for them to sleep in the same space as girl members. Men may participate only if separate sleeping quarters and bathrooms are available for their use. In some circumstances, such as a museum or mall overnight with hundreds of girls, this type of accommodation may not be possible. If this is the case, the girl/adult ratio is adjusted accordingly to ensure men are not sleeping or supervising the girl's sleeping area. Always avoid having men sleep in the same area as girls and women, but during family or caregiver-girl overnights, one family unit may sleep in the same quarters in program areas.
Always ensure the following:

- Each participant has her own bed. Caregiver permission must be obtained if girls are to share a bed.
- Girls and adults do not share a bed.
- When possible, adults should not sleep in the same area as girls; however, if an adult female does share the same sleeping areas as girls, there should be one other adult female present.

Tips for Girls Traveling Alone

If a Girl Scout Cadette, Senior, or Ambassador will be traveling alone at any part of a trip, use the opportunity to help her feel comfortable with and capable of being on her own. Always talk first with her caregivers to assess her maturity and ability to handle herself, and have her caregivers complete an emergency form. If she is flying, also discuss the possibility of booking a nonstop flight to make her trip less stressful, and ask caregivers to contact the airline, who will make special arrangements for any unaccompanied minor. With the girl herself, develop a trip plan, discuss hotel security and safety, talk about avoiding excess communication with strangers, not wearing a name tag, and avoid exposing money or other items (such as cell phones, iPads, or tablets) that are attractive to pickpockets.

Traveling with Girls

Girls love trips. Girl Scouts is a great place for girls to learn how to plan and journey out on a trip. For example, Girl Scout Daisies with no or little travel experience can begin with a discovery walk. As girls grow in their travel and planning skills, they progress to longer and more distant trips.
Here are some examples of the progression of events and trips:

- **Short trips to points of interest in the neighborhood (Daisies and older):** A walk to the nearby garden or a short ride by car or public transportation to the firehouse or courthouse is a great first step for Daisies.
- **Day trip (Brownies and older):** An all-day visit to a point of historical or natural interest (bringing their own lunch) or a day-long trip to a nearby city (stopping at a restaurant for a meal)—younger girls can select locations and do much of the trip planning, while never being too far from home.
- **Overnight trips (Brownies and older):** One (or possibly two) nights away to a state or national park, historic city, or nearby city for sightseeing, staying in a hotel, motel, or campground. These short trips are just long enough to whet their appetites, but not so long as to generate homesickness.
- **Extended overnight trips (Juniors and older):** Three/four nights camping or a stay in a hotel, motel, or hostel within the girls' home region (the Upper Midwest). Planning a trip to a large museum—and many offer unique opportunities for girls to actually spend the night on museum grounds—makes for an exciting experience for girls.

- National trips (Cadettes and older): Travel anywhere in the country, often lasting a week or more. Try to steer clear of ordinary recreational trips girls might take with their families and consider those that offer some educational component, such as incredible cities, historic sites, and museums around the country. This often means no cruises unless they incorporate community service or travel to different cities and historic sites.

- International trips (Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors): Travel around the world, often requiring one or two years of preparation; when girls show an interest in traveling abroad, contact your local service center to get permission to plan the trip and download the Global Travel Toolkit found at girlscouts.org. Visiting one of the five World Centers is a great place to start, but also consider traveling with worldwide service organizations. Recently, girls have traveled to rural Costa Rica to volunteer at an elementary school, to Mexico to volunteer with Habitat for Humanity, and to India to witness the devastation of poverty in urban areas.

Travel Progression Checklist for You

If your group is thinking about travel, consider first whether the girls are mature enough to handle the trip. In determining a group's readiness for travel, assess the group's:

- Ability to be away from their caregivers and their home
- Ability to adapt to unfamiliar surroundings and situations
- Ability to make decisions well and easily
- Previous cross-cultural experiences
- Ability to get along with each other and handle challenges
- Ability to work well as a team
- Skills and interests
- Language skills (where applicable)

Staying Safe During the Trip

Also, be sure to discuss the following items with the girls and their caregivers before you leave on any trip (you may also want to put this information in writing and have girls sign it):

- Who her buddy is—and how the buddy system works
- What to do if she is separated from the group, whether by accident or because of a crime
- What to do if she loses something significant: money, passport, luggage
- How to report a crime
- Ability to get along with each other and handle challenges
- Ability to work well as a team
- Skills and interests
- Language skills (where applicable)
- What to do if emergency help is needed
- How to perform basic first-aid procedures
- How to deal with a large crowd (if applicable)
- What to do in the event of a crime
- What behaviors you expect—and what consequences exist for not living up to those behaviors

Travel Security and Safety Tips

Share these safety tips with girls before you leave on any trip that involves a stay at a hotel, motel, hostel, or dormitory:

- Always lock the door behind you, using the deadbolt and the chain or anchor.
- Do not open the door for strangers; if hotel staff is at the door, call the front desk to confirm.
- Don't shout out or display your room number when in the presence of strangers.
- Never leave jewelry, cameras, electronics, cash, or credit cards in your room.

- Never leave luggage unattended in a public place (the hotel lobby, airport, or train station).
- When arriving at the hotel, locate emergency exits and share them with others.
- Keep a small flashlight on your bedside table, along with a small bag with your room key, wallet, passport, and cell phone.
- Take the flashlight and bag with you if you must leave the room in an emergency.
- If a fire alarm goes off, get out as quickly as possible without stopping to pack your suitcase. Before leaving your room, feel the door. If it is warm, do not open it. Stay in your room and stuff towels around the door. Call the hotel operator immediately. If the door is cool, proceed slowly out the door, looking for flames or smoke. Repeat these instructions for any door you encounter.
- Also, contact the front desk to clear out any minibars or refrigerators in girls' rooms, ensure that inappropriate movies are not accessible through TVs, and disallow any long-distance calls from being placed from girls' rooms. Alert the hotel management that underage girls are staying in the hotel and ask them to contact you if any girls are out of their rooms after bedtime.

What to do if...

- **There is an accident**

Although you hope the worst never happens, you must observe council procedures for handling accidents and fatalities. At the scene of an accident, first, provide all possible care for the injured person. Follow established council procedures for obtaining medical assistance and immediately reporting the emergency. To do this, you must always have on hand the names and telephone numbers of council staff, caregivers, and emergency services such as the police, fire department, or hospital.

After receiving a report of an accident, council staff will immediately arrange for additional assistance at the scene, if needed, and will notify caregivers, as appropriate. If a Girl Scout needs emergency medical care as the result of an accident or injury, first contact emergency medical services, and then follow council procedures for accidents and incidents. Your adherence to these procedures is critical, especially with regard to notifying caregivers. If the media is involved, let council-designated staff discuss the incident with media representatives. In the event of a fatality or other serious accident, the police must be notified, and a responsible adult must remain at the scene. In the case of a fatality, do not disturb the victim or surroundings and follow police instructions. Do not share information.

> **Council-wide Emergency Phone Number: 513.619.1398**

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 any accidents, illnesses, or unusual behaviors to adults 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 above.
- Establish and practice procedures for weather emergencies. Know the type of extreme weather to expect in your area (e.g. tornadoes, hurricanes, and lightning).
- Establish and practice procedures for such circumstances as fire evacuation, lost persons, and building security issues. Every girl and adult 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.

Emergency Care

The following actions must be taken by the troop leadership in the event of an incident, accident, or emergency during any Girl Scout activity, not just on council-owned sites.

- Secure services of trained medical professional or first-aider on site and give priority to providing all possible care to the victim(s).
- Permit no disturbance the to victim(s) or surroundings.
- Retain a responsible adult at the scene.
- Secure doctor, ambulance, and/or police. You are responsible until the police assume responsibility.
- Caregiver notification: report nature of the emergency, condition of the victim, and secure caregiver wishes regarding:
  - Medical treatment
  - Hospitalization transportation
  - Personal attendance
- Council notification. After notifying caregivers and emergency authorities, council staff must be notified of any serious accident or injury. Please use the emergency phone number to contact a council staff member.
- Exercise care that any statement made orally or in writing reflects only the facts of the incident.
- Statements should only be made to the family, the authorities, medical personnel, and the appropriate paid staff members. (The director of marketing and communications handles all media releases.)
- Only designated paid staff or council representatives may speak for the council.
- File an Incident/Accident Report Form within 24 hours of an injury. This can be found at gswo.org/formsanddocs.

First Aid/CPR

Emergencies require prompt action and quick judgment. For activities outside of their regular meeting space, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio requires 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 the American Safety & Health Institute. These certifying agencies have various authorized providers, including local fire departments, State Highway Patrol, area hospitals, YMCAs, etc., where Girl Scout volunteers can attend a course.

> **Caution: First Aid/CPR training that is available entirely online does not satisfy Girl Scout 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. An adult volunteer who is first aid certified is required anytime a troop leaves their regular meeting place.

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.

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 the overnight 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 caregiver 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 Girl Scouts of Western Ohio's emergency phone number (found at the beginning of this book and in this chapter) and troop emergency telephone numbers. Girl Scout activity insurance forms, caregiver consent forms, and health histories may also be included. Girl and Adult Health History Forms contain personal and private information and must be kept private. It is recommended to keep the forms in a closed envelope with the first aid kits.

Computer/Online Safety

- **Understand the Girl Scout Internet 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 gswo.org/internetpledge). The girls should also take a copy of the pledge home and go over it with their caregivers. Both the girl and her caregivers 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 adults 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.
- Always have the caregiver's permission when using pictures of girls on a website. This is especially important if the girl is under 13 years old.
- Ensure that websites do not show the personal email addresses of girls, but use a troop, group, or adult's email.
- Do not post addresses of group meeting places, dates and times of meetings, events, or trips on a website. Instead, an adult 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 adult oversight and be screened prior to posting live.

• Safety in Technology-Based Sales

Girl Scouts use the internet for a variety of reasons, including the online marketing and sale of approved Girl Scout-related products. Below are some key points to keep in mind for all online sales and marketing:

- Girls must read, understand, and accept the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge prior to conducting any online sales or marketing activities, which is available in Safety Activity Checkpoints under the Computer Internet Safety Pledge.
- Girls may send email messages to alert friends and relatives about product programs and accept customer commitments via email.
- Social media sites may be used to market product; however, all applicable GSUSA and council guidelines must be followed.
- Girls writing product emails or announcements online should sign with their first names only, their troop number or name, and their council name. Personal emails or street addresses of girls should never be used. Instead, use one of the following:
  1. A blind return address account where the girl's name or personal email is not revealed to the customer and is instead hosted on a secure site.
  2. A group account, which is monitored by an adult.
  3. A volunteer's email account, which is supervised by that adult.
- Girls should never arrange in-person meetings with new contacts they've made online.

For Digital Cookie, there are additional, specific guidelines, some of which are:

- Girls must read and accept the Girl Scout Digital Cookie Pledge before they can participate in Digital Cookie.
- Volunteers must read and accept the Digital Cookie Terms and Conditions for Volunteers before they can participate in Digital Cookie.
- Girls may only post about their participation in Digital Cookie on social media, which allows them to restrict access to friends and family (e.g. Facebook).
- Caregivers must approve the content of a girls' Digital Cookie webpage before it goes live.
- For girls under 13 years old, a caregiver must manage the girl's website and be responsible for all content. In other words, girls under 13 are not allowed to post anything to their websites; it must be done by their caregiver.
- Girls should always make in-person deliveries accompanied by a caregiver or designated adult.

For additional information and guidance, please see the Girl Scout Cookie/Council-Sponsored Product Program:

- Safety Activity Checkpoints, Computer/Online Use: Safety Activity Checkpoints, the Digital Cookie Terms & Conditions for Girl Scouts, Terms & Conditions for Caregivers and Terms & Conditions for Volunteers.

Reporting Abuse

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio has a zero-tolerance policy for any form of physical or sexual abuse. We are committed to providing a safe environment for girls and volunteers. Our zero-tolerance policy applies to all Girl Scout volunteers, girls, staff, families, and community participants.

- Any person who has been convicted or pled no contest to a crime involving any form of physical or sexual abuse or any person who is listed on the sexual offender registry may not be a Girl Scout volunteer in any role.
- In addition, any person who is under investigation for these crimes may not be a Girl Scout volunteer while under investigation.
- Anyone convicted of an act of abuse or sexual abuse cannot participate in Girl Scout activities.
- If a Girl Scout has a member of their household convicted of abuse or sexual abuse, girls may not meet in the home where this person resides.
- **Note:** ALL volunteers are required to complete Child Protection Training within 30 days of registering or starting their troop. Any volunteer who has not completed may not be responsible for girls including girl-adult ratio and troop activities.

If a Girl Scout member learns of an incident of suspected abuse, a report must be made to child abuse hotlines for either Ohio or Indiana. Girl Scout volunteers and staff are mandatory reporters.

All Ohio Counties	**All Indiana Counties**
855.642.4453	1.800.800.5556

- Mandatory reporters are individuals who, due to their profession or volunteer role, are legally required to report observed or suspected abuse.

You Witness or Experience 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. All states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have statutes identifying persons who are required to report suspected child abuse to an appropriate agency. Therefore, if you witness or suspect child abuse or neglect, whether inside or outside of Girl Scouting, follow Girl Scouts of Western Ohio's guidelines for reporting your concerns to the proper agency within your state.

For additional information, please check the following resources:

- **U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Child Welfare Information Gateway:** https://www.childwelfare.gov/
- **How to Report Suspected Child Maltreatment:** childwelfare.gov/topics/responding/reporting/how/
- **Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect:** childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/manda.pdf

Child Abuse

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio expects all staff (volunteer and paid) to adhere to the following standards regarding reporting suspected child abuse and conduct when in contact with girls.
Volunteers and paid staff members are expected to recognize the signs and symptoms of child abuse or neglect and report incidents immediately to the local county children's agency. Once an incident

has been reported to the appropriate agency, it is the staff member's responsibility to also inform his/her/their manager.

Volunteers and paid staff members are prohibited from harassing or threatening harm to a child's health or well-being, which occurs through sexual abuse or exploitation, non-accidental physical touching, mental harassment, injury, or maltreatment in any form.

Guidelines for Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

- **What is child abuse?**

  Non-accidental injuries by a caregiver, caretaker, or other adult (often by an adult known to the child) which cause or creates a substantial risk of harm to the child.

- **Physical abuse:**

  Abuse represents an act against the child; health or safety is at risk.

  - **Appearance:** Bruises, welts, lacerations, and abrasions; clustered marks, burns; skeletal injuries; head injuries. Consider the number, location, and stages of healing, or an explanation not consistent with injury.
  - **Behavior:** Fearful of physical contact; poor relationships; reports injury by caregivers or caretaker.

- **Sexual abuse:**

  Any act of a sexual nature upon or with a child, which may be for the sexual gratification of the perpetrator or a third party.

  - **Appearance:** Usually there is no outward sign; may have torn, stained, or bloody underclothing; sexually transmitted diseases; pregnancy.
  - **Behavior:** Child relates incidents of touching or other behavior that makes the child feel embarrassed, confused, or unsafe; behaves in an abnormally seductive manner with friends or adults; fire-setting; abuse to animals; bed-wetting; nightmares; poor peer relationships; eating disorders; fear or reluctance towards a caretaker, family member, or friend; difficulty walking or sitting.

- **Emotional abuse:**

  Chronic attitude or acts that interfere with the psychological or social development of a child.

  - **Appearance:** Few visible clues; obesity or anorexia; hives; rashes.
  - **Behavior:** Bed-wetting; poor peer relations/withdrawal; cruel behavior; fire setting; substance abuse; excessive risk-taking; behavioral extremes.

- **What is neglect?**

  Failure to provide basic needs (physical care/supervision, safety, education, love) which places the child in a dangerous situation and usually occurs over a period of time.

  - **Appearance:** Chronic uncleanliness or poor hygiene (lice, scabies); body odor; squinting; unsuitable clothing or missing key articles of clothing; untreated injury; left alone.
  - **Behavior:** Excessive sleepiness; begging; stealing or delinquency; chronic hunger; substance abuse; assumes the role of caregiver; reports no caretaker in the home; excessive school tardiness or absence.

Child Abuse and Neglect FAQ

- **What if I am unsure?**

  If (as a volunteer or paid staff member) you are unsure, contact the local children's services agency to describe the situation. Do not investigate. Even if you are unsure, make the call.

- **How do I report?**

Reports can be made by telephone or in person, and the individual making the report can do so anonymously. Any report is confidential. A report can be made immediately by telephone to the local children's services intake phone numbers for the 32 counties served by Girl Scouts of Western Ohio.

- **What information should I give?**

Reports should include:

1. The names and addresses of the child and their caregivers or person(s) having custody of such child, if known.
2. The child's age and the nature and extent of the child's injuries, abuse, or neglect, including any evidence of previous injuries, abuse, or neglect.
3. Other information that might help in establishing the cause of the injury, abuse, or neglect.
4. Record the name of the intake worker who takes the report and note the date that the report is made.

- **Is this confidential?**

Yes. Do not share this information with anyone other than the local children's services agency, your manager, or director of regional services within Girl Scouts of Western Ohio or their designate.

- **What happens next?**

Any volunteer or paid staff member participating in good faith in the making of the report or any volunteer leader or paid staff participating in a judicial proceeding resulting from the report, by statute, is immune from civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be incurred or imposed as a result of such actions.
Any report made under this section of the statute is confidential, and any volunteer or paid staff member who permits or encourages the unauthorized dissemination of the report's contents is guilty of a misdemeanor in the fourth degree.

- **Does someone at Girl Scout of Western Ohio need to know?**

Although reports may be made anonymously, immediately inform Girl Scouts of Western Ohio of any reports of suspected abuse or neglect involving either adults or youth in Girl Scouting made to the local children's services agency intake office by using the following procedure:

- **Providing a written report** to the director of regional services or their designate no later than 24 hours after making a report to the local children's services. This report should include your name, address, and telephone number (as the person who made the report to the local children's services agency), the date of the report, and the name of the person to whom the report was made at children's services.
- **Action by the local children's services agency:** The local (county) children's services agency will make a decision regarding the need for immediate investigation of each report referred to it and determine the circumstances surrounding the injury, abuse or neglect, the cause thereof, and the person or persons responsible.

Legal Reference: O.R.C. 2151,421 and I.C. 31-6-4-3(a)(1) through 31-6-4-3(a)(5)

Report Child Abuse

All Ohio Counties	All Indiana Counties
855.642.4453	1.800.800.5556

Registered Sex Offenders

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio asks all troop leaders to use publicly accessible tools and resources to monitor for registered sex offenders in and around troop meeting places. Visit the United States Justice Department's National Sex Offender Public Website at nsopw.gov to search in your area. Also, don't hesitate to reach out to local law enforcement for information or assistance in keeping your girls

safe. Keeping the non-emergency number of local law enforcement on hand is a great safety practice! Please contact your Girl Scouts Center directly to report a registered sex offender residing near your troop meeting place and receive support in notifying caregivers and ensuring girls' safety.

Please note: Girl Scouts of Western Ohio's volunteer screening practices are in place to ensure that anyone with criminal charges related to sexually based offenses, child endangerment or neglect, and other violent crimes are not eligible for volunteer approval. Anytime a volunteer or volunteer applicant is found to be ineligible for volunteer approval, appropriate service unit and troop volunteers are notified. When the details of ineligibility present clear and present danger to girls or adults, specific details will be made available, and council staff will provide support to help ensure everyone's safety and well-being.

Any individual who is classified as a registered sex offender may not participate in or be present at any Girl Scout activities. Girl Scouts does not have jurisdiction to prohibit a sex offender's presence in a public place where a Girl Scout activity may occur, such as a zoo or public sporting event; however, the individual registered as a sex offender will not be permitted to participate in the Girl Scout-specific activity. Any knowledge of a sex offender's participation or presence at any Girl Scout meeting or event should be reported to council staff immediately.

Health & Wellness

Health Histories (Including Examinations and Immunizations)

Girl/Adult Medical History and Release Forms must be completed and updated annually (gswo.org/formsanddocs). Troop leaders are responsible for maintaining these records throughout the year and should always have health histories with them when working with girls. This includes meetings, trips, and other outings. Please keep in mind that information from a health examination is confidential and may be shared only with people who must know this information (such as the girl herself, her caregiver, and a health practitioner). HIPPA laws require that confidentiality be maintained at all times.

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

It is important for you to be aware of any medications a girl may take or allergies she may have. Girl and Adult Health History Forms contain personal and private information and must be kept private. It is recommended to keep the forms in a closed envelope with the first aid kits.

Keep in mind the following:

- Medication, including over-the-counter products (ex. Tylenol, Ibuprofen, and Melatonin), must never be dispensed without prior written permission from a girl's custodial caregiver (Girl Scouts of Western Ohio can provide the necessary form).
- 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 caregiver 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 caregivers is always a good idea.
- **Communicable Diseases**

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is committed to providing a safe, secure environment in which girls and adults can interact. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is further committed to protecting girls and adults suffering from chronic illness or communicable disease, as well as protecting others with whom they interact. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio restricts services to those with communicable diseases only to the extent of what is specifically recommended by the county health department or if the individual displays behavior that puts others at risk.

• Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions

The use of non-pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs) during meetings, events and trips is the first line of defense against communicable diseases, including Covid-19. The more these NPIs are used together or layered, the safer everyone will be.

- **Screening - Pre, Initial, Ongoing, Post Purpose:** Raise health awareness, identify early illness symptoms
- **Hand Hygiene – Soap/Water Purpose:** Decrease virus/bacterial on hands
- **Face Masks – Cloth, Disposable Purpose:** Minimize sharing of respiratory secretions
- **Cohorting – Pod, Family, Village Purpose:** Limit exposure; Improve contact tracing. Recommend 8-15 per pod
- **Sanitizing – Frequently, High Touch Area Purpose:** Decrease virus/bacterial on shared surfaces
- **Ventilation – Outdoors, Fans, Screens, Filters (AC) Purpose:** Promote air circulation
- **Physical Distancing – Spray Paint, Duct Tape, Staggering Purpose:** Separate from others

• Head Lice

Head lice are one health and safety issue that is more prominent in the spring and summer. Head lice are tiny insects that live on the heads of humans; they are hard to see, lay eggs (called nits), and feed on human blood. Head lice CAN transfer from one person to another. Because of that, any girl or adult with head lice SHOULD NOT attend any Girl Scout events until the issue has been resolved.

• Prevention:

In order to prevent the transferring of head lice, teach your troop that they should not share items such as:

- Hairbrushes and combs
- Hats and clothes
- Hair clips and hair bands
- Pillows

• Screening and Treatment:

If lice are present in the school district, troop leaders may want to conduct head checks before troop trips and overnights. Leaders can also work with caregivers to educate them on how to screen for lice before sending their girls to a Girl Scout activity. If leaders or other troop volunteers are doing the screening, they should screen all girls. Please ensure privacy on the issue, making sure that, above all else, the girls' health and well-beings are being protected. Visit cdc.gov for more information about lice screening and treatment.

Action Steps if Lice Are Found: Girl Scouts of Western Ohio uses the same broad standards that school districts use when girls attend Girl Scout events or activities, including:

- If a girl has active lice, they will be sent home and treated before returning to the troop meeting.
- If a girl has nits only, the child is allowed to stay for the remainder of the troop meeting, but the girl must be treated for lice and be lice-free before attending another session.
- During overnight events, girls will be sent home with nits and eggs and cannot return until treated.

• Caregiver Notification

All caregivers of girls in the troop should receive notification letting them know that nits or lice were found on a member of the troop and action taken by the troop leader. Care should be taken not to single out any girl. Caregivers of girls found carrying lice or nits should be notified about what was found and recommended action.

Refer caregivers to the CDC or local health department for support. They should also be notified that if nits or lice are found at the next troop meeting, their girl will be sent home.

- **Bed Bugs**

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio's highest concern is always for the health, safety, and well-being of our members and families. With the increased media attention that the pest known as a "bed bug" has been receiving, plus its increase in population in the state of Ohio, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio has implemented the following procedures at all camp facilities. These practices should be implemented when participating in any Girl Scout trips or overnights with girls.

- **Bed Bug Procedures for Home, Trips, and Overnights**

Leaders, please share this information with your families prior to a trip or overnight. We are asking that you do your part in bed bug prevention not only for our facilities, but for your homes, cars, and communities. We are asking you to follow these universal precautions:

- If you suspect you've been in contact with bed bugs, dry all clothing and bedding in a dryer at high heat for 30 minutes prior to a trip or overnight. This would kill any bed bugs that may be present. Place clothes and bedding directly into a large garbage bag after heating. Twist the top closed, loop the twisted length over, and secure it with a tie, rubber band, or string.
- Once you've placed items in large garbage bags and secured them, label each bags with masking tape with the girl's name.
- During trips or overnights, girls will keep their belongings in the garbage bags to minimize the possibility of hitchhiker bed bugs.

Learn more about bed bugs at the following links: epa.gov/bedbugs

Girl Scout Voices Count

Girl Scout Voices Count is a national survey of Girl Scouts, parents/caregivers, troop leaders, and service unit volunteers conducted each year by Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA). The survey results help our council and GSUSA improve national and local programming, support volunteers, and help girls grow so they may have the best possible Girl Scouting experience.

The survey collects information and feedback from girls and adults in Girl Scout councils nationwide and worldwide. This scope of data allows GSUSA to:

- Understand similarities and differences between the needs and interests of all Girl Scout groups, regions, councils, etc.
- Improve programs and services, making the Girl Scout experience more engaging, inclusive, and hands-on.
- To make Girl Scouts better for everyone!

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio cares about your experience and wants to hear from you! When the survey link arrives in your inbox this spring, take a few moments to complete the survey so your voice will count!

If you have any questions, reach out to our Customer Care team at 888.350.5090 or customercare@gswo.org.

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.

This insert provides updates to Volunteer Essentials, Summer 2024 version. Please keep it with your printed copy of the Volunteer Essentials Updates booklet and the printed book. Or, for a complete view of Volunteer Essentials, scan the QR code or visit gswo.org/volunteeressentials.

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