



Creating a Sense of Belonging at Girl Scouts of Western Ohio

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion 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 every one – has the opportunity to be her best self in Girl Scouts.



What do we know about creating a sense of belonging at Girl Scouts?

The 2023 Girl Scout Stewardship report reported that individuals who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) feel as though they are at the periphery of Girl Scouting. We've listed the three focus areas identified in the report and ideas on what adults can do.

Focus Areas

Girl Scouts Rituals and Norms –

Service Units, troops, World Thinking Day, Cadettes, a Friendship Circle oh my! Our Girl Scout traditions are important, but sometimes it can seem like we're speaking our own language. Sometimes we unintentionally make new Girl Scouts, girls and adults, feel left out by using Girl Scout 'jargon'.

Volunteer adults make all the difference!

Because the Girl Scout experience is almost entirely dependent on volunteer leaders, a volunteer troop or service unit leader must have an inclusivity mindset to ensure all girls feel as though they belong in Girl Scouts.

Let the girls lead.

Girls are ready to fully embrace their peers so every girl can be her best self. Don't let fear of addressing these issues stop us from fostering a sense of belonging in our service units and troops.

What can adults in Girl Scouts do?

- Limit the use of Girl Scout jargon, especially in situations where there are new girls and adults.
- When introducing a new tradition or word, be sure to explain what it is to the entire group.
- Create an environment where girls and adults feel comfortable asking questions. Leaving enough time in your meeting for questions, ask people individually if they have questions or create a 'parking lot' for anonymous questions.
- Ask girls, caregivers or volunteers to complete a 'get to know you' form at your first troop or service unit meeting. Collect information such as accommodations that are needed to fully participate, holidays they observe and dietary restrictions; then take these into consideration when planning activities.
- Make an effort to learn everyone's name. If there are a lot of new people, consider name tags. For girls, this can even be a troop activity!
- Consult the "Holidays and Observances" calendar at gsw.org/diversity the "Volunteer Resources" to watch out for key observances for girls in your troop as you plan the troop year.
- Set the tone at the beginning of the Girl Scout year by asking girls in your troop how they'd like to ensure every feels like Girl Scouts is a place she belongs.
- Girl Scouts offers programs that helps girls learn about and respect other cultures. Consider letting girls select one of these programs as you plan your year. (See examples like the "Celebrating Cultural Richness" patch program, Interactive Dancing program at the Cultural Centre of India, World Thinking Day at Bowling Green State University, or Autism Speaks Program)

