

Returning to In-Person Troop Meetings and Activities
Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Volunteers and Families
Edition Date: 10/1/2020

Girl Scouts of Gulfcoast Florida (GSGCF) may modify this guidance from time to time as circumstances change. This guidance is being provided as of the Edition Date above.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to change as infection rates rise and fall in different areas. There may be regional differences or developments since this guidance was published. Members, volunteers, girls, and families are required to follow the guidelines provided in this document and the local and [national](#) directives while participating in Girl Scouting.

Acknowledgement of Receipt and Understanding

GSGCF members acknowledge COVID-19 is an extremely contagious virus that spreads easily through person-to-person contact in the community. Everyone must take all reasonable precautions to limit exposure for girls, volunteers, families, and the community. As with any social activity, participation in Girl Scouts could present the risk of contracting COVID-19. While Girl Scouts of Gulfcoast Florida takes every safety and preventative precaution, in no way can we guarantee that COVID-19 infection will not occur through participation in Girl Scout program activities.

Volunteers and families should use this guidance to help decide how and when to participate in Girl Scout activities. At this date, no overnight activities are permitted. Leaders should share these guidelines with troop families, and make a collaborative decision with families based on comfort level, accessibility, and desired level of engagement.

Volunteers and families should assess their ability to comply with required guidelines. If girls and adults cannot comply with guidelines, troop activities should remain virtual at this time.

In-Person Service Unit Meetings, Troop Meetings, and Activities

As of October 1, 2020, in-person Girl Scout meetings and one-day activities may continue—at the discretion of all participants involved. All guidelines outlined in [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) must be carefully adhered to in conjunction with CDC, state, and local health guidance and directives. We encourage meetings and activities to take place outdoors or, if not possible, in locations that are larger and have good ventilation. Large troops may choose to gather up in smaller groups, such as age-level groups or patrols. No overnight activities are permitted until further notice.

Troop Meeting Space – GSGCF Properties and Other Properties

On October 1, 2020, reservations are available at GSGCF properties for in-person Girl Scout troop meetings and one-day activities—at the discretion of all participants involved. All guidelines outlined in [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) must be carefully adhered to in conjunction with CDC, state, and local health guidance and directives. We encourage meetings and activities to take place outdoors or, if not possible, in locations that are larger and have good ventilation. Contact customercare@gsgcf.org for information on how to request troop meeting or activity space.

For other locations, get advance permission and information from the property owner or the jurisdiction providing the meeting space. For meetings held at public facilities, contact the facility ahead of time and ask:

- Is the space cleaned, and touch surfaces (such as tabletops, light switches, and chairs) sanitized, at least daily?
- Who else uses the space (how often, what size is the group)? Is the space cleaned between groups?
- What type of faucets/soap dispensers are available in the restroom (sensory or manual)?

Then, consider whether you can supplement any practices that are not ideal. For example, if you will arrive after another user group, plan to bring sanitizing wipes to get the space ready for your troop. Another example: if faucets are manual, take some time to show girls how to shut them off with a paper towel. Use paper towels for doorknobs whenever possible. Do not assume spaces are cleaned and sanitized. Arrive in advance and clean high-touch surfaces. Meetings are prohibited in fitness centers or gyms because the atmosphere in sports facilities can aerosolize, making them a higher risk for contracting the virus.

All troops resuming in-person troop meetings must inform their Member Engagement Specialist of the date, time, location, and frequency of meetings before the first meeting takes place. If an updated certificate of liability is required, this can be requested by contacting customercare@gsgcf.org.

Transportation (Carpooling)

Carpooling and public transportation should be avoided whenever possible to maintain social distancing. If carpooling is necessary, all individuals must wear a mask for the duration of the trip. All individuals should sanitize their hands and high touch surfaces, such as door handles and seat belts, prior to entry and exit. When feasible, driving with the windows open for increased ventilation is recommended.

Troop Meetings in Personal Residences

In order to help facilitate troop meetings when many meeting locations, like schools, churches, and community centers are closed or highly restricted, GSGCF is permitting troops at all levels to meet at approved personal residences. Volunteers who wish to host meetings in their homes must have an approved [Troop Meeting Place Agreement for Personal Residences](#) on file, adhere to the directions noted in these guidelines, and follow all standard safety ratios and requirements for leading a troop. GSGCF and GSUSA suggest that no meetings be held in personal residences out of concern that there would be greater risk of exposure to other family members. Volunteers and troop families should carefully consider the situation.

Virtual Meetings

We recommend utilizing virtual meetings as needed throughout the troop year to keep troops connected and maintain their Girl Scout experience, and to keep tech skills and virtual meeting habits fresh. Use the Volunteer Toolkit and [Safety Activity Checkpoints for Virtual Meetings](#) to guide your meeting plans. Continuing to offer virtual options during in-person troop and service unit meetings for participants who are not able or comfortable to participate in person is suggested.

Day Trips and Activities

In conjunction with [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#), follow the same guidance as outlined in the **Troop Meetings** and **Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation** sections in this document. Call ahead to the facility or vendor to confirm that they are following CDC and state health department guidelines. If activity or sporting equipment is being provided, ask the provider if they wipe down equipment in between uses. Make whatever appropriate accommodations that are necessary. For example, bring extra sanitizer if none will be provided for public use at the activity location.

Overnight Stays and Travel – Domestic and International – Are Restricted Indefinitely

Overnight activity and domestic and international travel remain suspended until further notice. Only one-day activities and trips will be reviewed for approval. We will continue to evaluate this guideline with updates from CDC, GSUSA, and the State of Florida. Please continue to work with GSGCF before planning any travel and overnight stays.

Face Coverings Are Required

Face coverings are a civic responsibility and a sign of caring for the community. Volunteers should remind girls that Girl Scouts wear face coverings (masks) not only to protect themselves, but also to protect others. Girls can bring their own face coverings. Have disposable masks on hand for those who need them. Volunteers can teach girls [how to handle their face coverings](#) so that the coverings are effective. Some girls or volunteers may not be able to wear masks due to medical conditions, such as asthma. Contact us for guidance on how best to handle these exceptional circumstances as they arise.

Members may remove their mask if they are able to safely and consistently maintain social distancing of at least six feet from all other participants. Caution should be used when facilitating meetings or activities, as the monitoring of participants to maintain consistent social distancing is the responsibility of the volunteer(s) in charge of the meeting or activity. Should you feel you are not able to consistently social distance, participants should wear their mask at all times. Members engaging in rigorous outdoor activity may remove their mask if they are able to safely and consistently maintain social distancing of at least six feet from all other participants.

Sharing

Do not share activity supplies and food at troop meetings and activities to help ensure all girls can stay healthy and safe while being together, and to avoid the spread of the virus through surface contact. At all in-person gatherings, do not permit girls to share food or activity supplies. Food can be brought from home by each participant, or limited to prepackaged, individual serving size food for distribution without cross contamination. Activity supplies may be brought from home, or each girl can have a unique personal supply kit used at each meeting.

Personal Contact

Create a safe, contactless way for girls and volunteers to greet and end meetings so you can maintain social distance requirements. Unfortunately, hugs, handshakes, “high-fives,” and activities like the friendship circle or squeeze can transmit COVID-19 from person to person and are prohibited.

Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation

Follow the resources developed by credible public health sources, such as CDC or the local public health department. Share these resources with girls and volunteers and ensure that they are practiced during meetings and activities. Place signs in the meeting or activity space to remind girls and volunteers to engage in [everyday preventive actions](#) to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Signs should include:

- Stay home if you are sick.
- Wear a mask to protect yourself and others.
- Maintain six feet social distance from others that are not members of your household.
- Cough and sneeze into a tissue, throw the tissue in the trash, and wash or sanitize your hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Wash hands if you do touch.
- Members with fever or temperature higher than 98.6 should stay home and must skip the in-person gathering until their temperature is normal. Volunteers, girls, and parents/caregivers should be reminded to make sure temperatures are taken prior to group interaction to confirm the individual is not running a fever and temperature is a normal 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit.

Volunteers, girls, and parents/caregivers should not come to the activity if they become sick with COVID-19 symptoms, test positive for COVID-19, or have been exposed to someone with symptoms or someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 within the last 14 days.

Restrooms

Most public restrooms will regulate the number of people using the restroom at the same time, depending on the size. If there is no regulator or sign, have volunteers ensure girls take appropriate turns to maintain social distancing and that they wear their masks in the restrooms. It is ideal to have automatic flushers and sensory faucets to wash hands. If these are not available, girls and adults should get in the habit of using tissue or paper towel to open doors and latches, touching as little as possible. If the restroom is large, have girls use every other stall and avoid using stalls with a person in the stall next to them at the same time. Restrooms and toilets are normally fraught with germs, and more so now considering the contagion of coronavirus.

First Aid Supplies

Troop first aid supplies should include COVID-19 prevention items, including hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol), tissues, disposable facemasks, and disinfectants. Trash baskets or bags should be supplied for meeting and activity spaces, if not already available. Make sure that the trash baskets (or bags) are easily accessible for girls. Disposable or no-contact thermometers may be added to supplies if available and not cost-prohibitive. However, parents/caregivers should be checking temperatures and allowing their girl(s) to join group activities only when temperatures are normal.

First Aid/CPR Training

As outlined in [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#), a first-aid (member certified in First Aid/CPR/AED) is not required for troop meetings. Day trips and activities taking place at a location that does not provide first aid services on site will require the troop to provide a first-aid. Keep skills up-to-date for any emergency. Online-only courses are not permitted under Volunteer Essentials. Hybrid classes are permitted so long as the skills evaluation portion of the course is administered in person by a certified instructor. Before registering for any class, please consult GSGCF to be sure the course will meet GSUSA requirements.

Disinfectants and Disinfecting

[Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces](#) and objects that are frequently touched (such as table tops, markers, and scissors). Use a household cleaner, or see the [EPA's list of effective cleaners](#) approved for use against COVID-19. Follow the manufacturer's instructions (such as concentration, application method, and contact time) for all cleaning and disinfection products. Household bleach is effective against COVID-19 for up to 24 hours when properly diluted. Check that the bleach is not expired and determine if it can be used on a given surface. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. See the [CDC's website](#) for more on cleaning and disinfecting guidance. To prepare a bleach solution, mix: 5 tablespoons (1/3 cup) bleach per gallon of water, or 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water

As of June 19, 2020, the FDA advised consumers not to use any hand sanitizer manufactured by Eskbiochem SA de CV in Mexico due to the potential presence of methanol (wood alcohol), a substance that can be toxic when absorbed through the skin or ingested. See the [CDC's website](#) for more on cleaning and disinfecting guidance.

Reporting and Communicating a Positive COVID-19 Test

In the event of a positive COVID-19 test result, the troop leader will submit the [COVID-19 Exposure Reporting Form](#) with the roster of all girls and volunteers involved in the activity. A council staff member will send an email to the parent/caregiver of any girl who may have been exposed, to volunteers, and to the facility, maintaining the confidentiality of the individual(s). Girl and volunteer health information is private and strictly confidential.

Thank you for doing your part to keep our Girl Scouts of Gulfcoast Florida community safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are stronger together, even when we are six feet apart.