

In-Person Troop Meetings and Activities
Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Volunteers and Families
Edition Date: 04/01/2021

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. As of April 16, 2021, overnight activities are permitted. Troop volunteers 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.

Monitoring Local Guidelines

All troops should monitor local restrictions for gatherings, events, and travel. Restrictions can vary greatly from county to county, and even from town to town, and they frequently change. If the area in which your activity will take place is more restrictive, you must follow the local requirements. Regardless of local mandates, masks are required during all Girl Scout activity until further notice, unless outdoors and socially distanced.

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

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.

Troop Meeting Space – GSGCF Properties and Other Properties

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 customer care@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.

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

For anyone who is not comfortable meeting in person, we recommend utilizing virtual meetings 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.

Trip Planning

Girls should be involved in all stages of trip/travel planning. Utilize the [Tips for Troop/Group Leaders](#) document to help facilitate these conversations. Have open and honest conversations with troop members and families. All opinions should be heard and valued. Ensure all troop families are in agreement with the type of trip/travel being planned and are prepared to follow council guidelines, including mask wearing when not outdoors and socially distanced.

When arranging travel plans in advance, troops should plan ahead and create contingencies should there be a need to re-schedule, cancel, or shift to a virtual activity. For all planned trips, create a timeline and identify a final date when decisions must be made about whether or not to move forward with the planned trip. This decision should be made in a way that puts the *safety of our girls first*, followed by consideration of financial commitments, deadlines, or other factors.

Consider purchasing travel insurance. If you do, read all fine print to learn if COVID-19 or pandemic-related cancellation is covered, as it is often excluded. Decisions about whether or not to approve troop travel or proceed with planned council-organized travel will be based on health and safety guidance currently available in our jurisdiction, as well as guidance available in the destination jurisdiction.

Implement modifications to travel plans to make social distancing practical and to keep travelers from separate households socially distanced whenever possible. Sustained contact within less than six (6) feet for longer than ten (10) minutes within an enclosed area creates high risk for virus transmission. Work with girls and adults to mitigate these instances of close contact.

For travel that includes girls and adults from multiple households who must be in close proximity (for example, because they are sharing transportation or accommodations), additional precautions should be considered. For example, break the group up into smaller family-approved groups, or institute pre-trip quarantine and testing requirements to help ensure safety. These items should be in addition to pre-screening and symptoms checks that should take place before all in-person activities. Check the [CDC Domestic Travel Guidance](#) details about various types of travel, risk factors, and steps to mitigate risk.

Trip/Travel Approval Guidelines

Prior approval is required for travel and overnight activities that take place away from the troop's designated meeting place, including travel to council properties. Submit the [Day Trip and Activity Troop Travel Form](#) for all single day (no overnight) activities away from the designated meeting place at least two weeks in advance. Submit the [Overnight Troop Travel Form](#) for any trips that include at least one night of lodging at least two weeks in advance for in state travel and at least two months in advance for any travel out of state.

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.

Troop Camping, Travel, and Overnight Stays

If your troop is in agreement to travel, and understands the inherent risks, troop camping, travel, and overnight stays are permitted. No international travel is allowed at this time. Troops should continue to practice good hygiene and COVID-19 risk mitigation guidance while traveling. Girls and adults in separate households should travel separately when possible or in small family-approved groups that eat and participate in activities together, preferably outdoors. Please see the guidance for lodging, meals, and transportation for more detailed information.

Family Camping/Travel

Family camping or travel is a safer overnight experience because families have already been quarantined and exposed to each other. All adults participating in overnight Girl Scout activity must be a registered and background-checked member. Families are allowed to camp at public campsites, such as state parks. Only one household should camp per site and only one family should stay in other lodging areas, such as hotel rooms. Safety, hygiene, social distancing, and all COVID-19 protocols should still be followed. Families should stay in their own safe "pod" and wear masks anytime they are within 6 feet of other individuals outside of the family unit. All guidance regarding males from Safety Activity Checkpoints

must still be followed, including separate restroom facilities. For more information, see page 53 of [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#).

Lodging/Sleeping Quarter Guidelines

We recommend that sleeping arrangements be made so that members of different households are in separate quarters or in a separate space within the sleeping area. All girls and adults should sleep toe-to-toe rather than head-to-head. If necessary due to the layout of the space, individuals may also sleep head-to-toe. All lodging areas should be utilized at 50% capacity. Detailed information for sleeping quarters at our council properties is available. Volunteers must exercise caution when using non-council owned properties (hotels, campgrounds, state parks, etc.) to ensure proper spacing of at least 6 feet between individuals for sleeping is available. At no time should individuals outside of the same household share a bed, such as a queen or king size bed in a hotel room.

Tents designed for 2–6 persons should be restricted to individual members or members of the same household. Large tents designed for six or more individuals may be used with caution, at 25% capacity, ensuring that sleeping areas are a minimum of 6 feet apart. Tents should be spaced a minimum of 6 feet apart. Cabin/tent flaps should be rolled up (at least partially) at all times, unless weather or privacy does not permit. Masks should be worn at all times inside the lodging quarters until individuals are stationary and ready for sleep.

Meals

- Avoid situations that require diners to use shared utensils, such as buffets, salad bars, self-service, etc.
- Use "grab-n-go" services or boxed meals in which meals are pre-packaged or assembled on a tray for diners to retrieve.
- Maintain physical distancing between individuals while in line for meals.
- Dine outside or in open air facilities whenever possible.
- Space individuals out as much as practical (such as skipping every other seat) to ensure safe distancing while masks are off.
- Sanitize or wash hands before and after all meals and snacks.
- Use gloves when necessary for serving or preparing meals.

Transportation/Carpooling

Remember, sustained contact within less than 6 feet for longer than 10 minutes within an enclosed area creates a high risk for virus transmission, so be very careful with carpool decisions.

- Girls and adults should wear masks when inside of a motor vehicle.
- Keep car windows open, at least slightly, to circulate fresh air.
- Routinely disinfect the car handles, seats, and any touchable surfaces.
- Wash hands before and after the trip.
- Avoid eating/drinking while in the vehicle—instead plan meal/snack breaks where members can exit the vehicle and appropriately space themselves out when removing masks to eat/drink.

Public Transportation

Avoid public transportation whenever possible. Large groups of people gathered in an enclosed space for longer than 10 minutes is typical of most public transportation. These factors are known to increase transmission risk. Additionally, maintaining 6 feet social distancing is often difficult or impossible on public transportation. However, if it is not possible to avoid public transportation in your travel plans, you may

seek council approval. When applying for approval, be sure to take in to consideration the following specific safety guidelines for public transportation circumstances:

- Avoid peak hours.
- Allow extra time to wait and avoid crowded buses, subway cars, or capacity restrictions.
- Space out girls to avoid crowding (but be sure to use the buddy system).
- Consider grade level, age, and maturity level of girls.
- Always wear a mask.
- Obtain caregiver permission, and make sure they are aware of your plans.
- Clean hands before and after public transportation travel.

Additional Travel/Activity Considerations

- In bathroom facilities shared by members of more than one household, individuals should wear masks except while showering/brushing teeth. Adhere to any capacity requirements. Utilize every other sink/toilet whenever possible. Do not allow girls to congregate in restrooms.
- When using shared surfaces such as water coolers, sinks, tables, and door handles, encourage girls and adults to wash hands or use sanitizer before and after use.
- Encourage each participant to bring personal bottles of hand sanitizer to have readily available.

COVID-19 Vaccination

Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) strongly encourages individuals to receive the vaccine when able, but does not require vaccination for volunteers or members at this time. Deciding to receive a vaccine is a personal decision, and GSGCF encourages our staff and members to respect the privacy of fellow members and their families and should not inquire about their vaccination status. Parents/caregivers may certainly ask about the vaccination status of volunteers, but volunteers are under no obligation to disclose their personal vaccination status. Also, under no circumstances should a volunteer discuss the personal healthcare decisions of another volunteer or member with anyone.

For the protection of all members as well as the families and communities we serve, GSGCF will continue to practice, and encourage all members to practice, all CDC-recommended health and safety protocols, such as social distancing and wearing a mask, and regardless of whether or not an individual has received the vaccine.

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 6 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 6 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 suspended for the time being. Use your Girl Scout creativity to find a fun and meaningful substitute.

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 6 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-aider (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-aider. 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 6 feet apart.