

Volunteer Essentials

2021–2022

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Adventure Ahead!

Girl Scout volunteers are community-builders, champions of fun, and role models for what it means to lead with your heart. And because of your support, Girl Scouts of all ages are emboldened to chase their dreams and make a positive impact in their communities and across the globe. Your mentorship and encouragement are powerful and make a difference—and your girls will carry that support throughout their lives. Thank you for all you do.

This guide is designed to support busy troop volunteers on the go. You can easily find what you need to get started on your Girl Scout journey and search for answers throughout the troop year.

Get started by browsing through these sections:

- All About Girl Scouts
- Engaging Girls and Families
- Troop Management
- Product Program
- Troop Finances
- Safety
- Coming soon: Post-COVID Guidance

New troop leader? We've got you covered. Check out the [*New Leader's Guide to Success*](#), a resource designed especially for you. Plus, council staff and volunteer coaches are ready to help throughout your first year and beyond!

Customer Support

Our Customer Support team is ready to assist you! We will do our best to answer questions, connect you to specific staff members and help you find important resources. Email us at customercare@girlscoutsgcnwi.org, call 1-855-ILOVEGS (855-456-8347) ext. 6313 or [chat with us online](#) from 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

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All About Girl Scouts

Girls' dreams are our dreams, and Girl Scouts is where they'll see the limitless possibilities ahead of them and aim for the stars—and reach them. Whether she's making a new friend on the playground, raising her hand in class, starting her own nonprofit, or advocating for climate justice, a Girl Scout builds a better world—just as Girl Scouts have been doing for over a century. And with programs in every zip code from coast to coast and across the globe, every girl can find her place in Girl Scouts and start creating the world she wants to see.

Who Can Join Girl Scouts—and How?

If you believe in the inherent power of girls to change the world and you're ready to be their champion, you belong with Girl Scouts.

Girl Scout volunteers are a dynamic and diverse group, and there's no one "type" of volunteer. Whether you're a recent college grad, a parent, a retiree, or really, anyone with a sense of curiosity and adventure (of any gender, who is 18 years or older and has passed their council's screening process), your unique skills and experiences and your mentorship can open your Girl Scouts' eyes to all the possibilities ahead of them.

All members are united by the values in the [Girl Scout Promise and Law](#), as well as by our extraordinary strengths as go-getters, innovators, risk-takers, and leaders. Each member also agrees to follow safety guidelines and pay the annual membership dues of \$25. Adults have the option to purchase a [lifetime membership](#) for \$400.

Girls at Every Grade Level

Girls can join in the fun at any grade level:

Girl Scout Daisy (grades K–1)	Girl Scout Cadette (grades 6–8)
Girl Scout Brownie (grades 2–3)	Girl Scout Senior (grades 9–10)
Girl Scout Junior (grades 4–5)	Girl Scout Ambassador (grades 11–12)

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience

Everything centers around the girl in Girl Scouts: Activities are girl-led, which gives girls the opportunity to take on leadership roles and learn by doing in a cooperative learning environment. [It's what makes Girl Scouts truly unique](#)—our program is designed by, with, and for girls.

Although girls may start building their leadership skills in school and on sports teams, [research shows](#) that the courage, confidence, and character they develop as Girl Scouts stay with them throughout their lives.

What girls *do* in Girl Scouting all fits within three keys: **Discover, Connect, and Take Action.**

- When Girl Scouts do exciting [badge activities](#), [earn a Girl Scout Journey award](#), attend an amazing program or event, or go camping, you are helping them *discover* who they are, what excites them, and what their talents are.
- Girl Scouts *connect* when they collaborate with others—their troop, leaders, or community experts—and expand their horizons. This helps them care about, support, inspire, and team with others locally and globally.
- With your guidance, your Girl Scouts will deepen their relationship with the world around them, and they’ll be eager to *take action* to make the world a better place.

As for how they do it? The Girl Scout Leadership Experience draws on three unique processes that help girls unlock their inner leader.

- *Girl-led* means Girl Scouts of every age take an active and age-appropriate role in figuring out the what, where, when, why, and how of all the exciting activities they’ll do. The girl-led process is critically important to the Girl Scout Leadership Experience—when girls actively lead and shape their experiences, they know their voices matter, they feel empowered to make decisions, and they stay engaged in their activities.
- Girl Scouts enjoy hands-on activities and *learn by doing*. Then, after reflecting on their activities, girls gain a deeper understanding of the concepts and skills the activities require.
- Through *cooperative learning*, Girl Scouts share knowledge and skills in an atmosphere of respect, teamwork, and collaboration as they work toward a common goal.

As a volunteer, you’ll draw on these Girl Scout processes as you lead girls of any age. Girl-led at the Daisy level will look very different from the Ambassador level, of course. What’s most important is that your Girl Scouts make decisions about the activities they do *together* and that they also make choices *within* that activity. As they learn from their successes and failures and gain a major confidence boost, all girls have the opportunity to lead within their peer groups. By the time girls are Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors, they’ll be using the leadership skills they’ve developed to take more ownership of their activities, mentor younger Girl Scouts, and take action to make the world a better place.

One last tip about following these processes: 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 Girl Scouts don’t have to fill their vests and sashes with badges. What matters most is the fun and learning that happens as they make experiences their own, so 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 your troop hadn’t factored in? No matter an activity’s outcome, you can amplify its impact by encouraging your girls to reflect on their latest endeavor.

Reflection is the necessary debrief that reinforces what the girls learned. As your Girl Scouts explore the “whats” and “whys,” they’ll 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 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*. 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 did 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 your Girl Scouts can test their skills and be unafraid to fail.

Keep in mind that good progression drives success for your troop. We've outlined some suggestions that will help you determine when your girls are ready for their next [outdoor challenge](#), [their next troop trip](#), or [their next cookie-selling challenge](#).

Inclusion

Girl Scouts has a strong commitment to inclusion, equity, and diversity, and we embrace girls of all abilities and backgrounds into our wonderful sisterhood.

Inclusion is at the core of who we are; it's about being a sister to every Girl Scout and celebrating our unique strengths. Part of the important work you do includes modeling friendship and kindness for your girls and showing them what it means to practice empathy. Here's how you can nurture an inclusive troop environment.

Equal Treatment: Girl Scouts welcomes all members, regardless of race, ethnicity, background, cognitive or physical abilities, family structure, religious beliefs, political beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, and socioeconomic status. When scheduling, planning, and carrying out activities, carefully consider the needs of all Girl Scouts involved, including school

schedules, family needs, financial constraints, religious holidays, and the accessibility of appropriate transportation and meeting places.

Whether you're a parent/caregiver or Girl Scout troop leader, offering a safe space for your girl to talk about important issues is vital. [Review the GSGCNWI Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, and Access webpage for resources as you navigate discussions.](#)

The National Program Pillars

Girl Scouts lead their own adventures and team up with their fellow troop members to choose the hands-on activities that excite them most. Our program focuses on [four areas \(pillars\) that form the foundation](#) of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience:

- [Outdoors](#): When Girl Scouts embark on outdoor adventures, they learn to confidently meet challenges while developing a lifelong appreciation of nature.
- [Science, technology, engineering, and math \(STEAM\)](#): Whether they're building a robot, developing a video game, or studying the stars, Girl Scouts become better problem-solvers and critical thinkers through STEM activities and learn how they can use STEM to help others. and learn how they can use STEM to help others. At GSGCNWI, we include an A for arts in STEM to make STEAM. We believe creative thinking and aesthetics are an important part of science, technology, engineering, and math.
- [Life skills](#): Girl Scouts discover they have what it takes to become outspoken community advocates, make smart decisions about their finances, and form strong, healthy relationships—skills that inspire them to accept challenges and overcome obstacles, now and always.
- [Entrepreneurship](#): By participating in the Girl Scout Cookie Program or fall product program or by earning one of the new entrepreneurship badges, girls spark their curiosity, confidence, and innovation as they learn the essentials of running their own businesses and how to think like entrepreneurs.



[The Volunteer Toolkit](#) provides inspiring ideas so you can engage your troop in a mix of activities all year long. For example, if you want to take your troop outside when doing a badge activity, look for the evergreen icon, which tells you that activity can be taken outdoors, or the globe icon, which lets you know you can bring a global perspective to the activity.

The Important Difference Between Journeys and Badges

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 such as bullying, media literacy, design thinking, or environmental stewardship. They'll do hands-on activities, connect with experts, and take the reins on age-appropriate Take Action projects. 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, such as how to make a healthy snack, build and test a toy race car, or take great digital photos. 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 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 STEAM.

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. [To check out our council guidelines and procedures on Highest Awards, visit our website.](#)

[Learn more about local Take Action and community service opportunities.](#)

Traditions, Ceremonies, and Special Girl Scout Days

Time-honored traditions and ceremonies 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:

- Juliette Gordon Low's birthday or Founder's Day, October 31, marks the birth in 1860 [of Girl Scouts of the USA founder Juliette Gordon Low](#) in Savannah, Georgia.
- [World Thinking Day](#), February 22, 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.
- Girl Scouts' birthday, March 12, commemorates the day in 1912 when Juliette Gordon Low officially registered the organization's first 18 girl members in Savannah, Georgia.

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 [traditions, ceremonies, and special Girl Scout days](#).

Highest Awards

As your Girl Scouts discover the power of their voices, they'll want to take on an issue that's close to their hearts 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.

- [The Girl Scout Bronze Award](#) can be earned by Juniors; the prerequisite is one Junior Journey and its associated Take Action project. The Bronze Award is earned by the group. [Watch a short training video on how to earn the Bronze Award](#).
- [The Girl Scout Silver Award](#) can be earned by Cadettes; the prerequisite is one Cadette Journey and its associated Take Action project. The Silver Award can be earned by an individual girl or by a small group (of no more than four). [Watch a short training video on how to earn the Silver Award](#).
- [The Girl Scout Gold Award](#) can be earned by Seniors and Ambassadors who have completed either two Girl Scout Senior/Ambassador level Journeys and the associated Take Action projects OR earned the Silver Award and completed one Senior/Ambassador level Journey. Our council also requires Gold Award training. [You can find upcoming trainings on our program registration website](#).

Did you know that a Gold Award Girl Scout is entitled to enlist at a higher paygrade when she joins the U.S. military? A Gold Award Girl Scout's achievements also prime her for the fast track when it comes to college admissions and make her an outstanding candidate for academic scholarships and other financial awards.

Girl Scouts are eligible to earn any recognition at the grade level in which they are registered. Any Girl Scout is eligible to earn the Gold Award even if she joined Girl Scouts for the first time in high school.

[Read all about our local Gold Award Girl Scouts and how they're doing their part to make the world a better place.](#)

For some major inspiration, consider inviting a local Gold Award Girl Scout to speak to your troop about how she took the lead and made a difference. You'll be inspired when you see and hear what girls can accomplish as leaders—and by the confidence, grit, problem-solving, time and project management, and team-building expertise they gain while doing so!

Girl Scout Travel and Destinations

Girl Scouts try new things and see the world with new eyes, both inside and outside of their usual troop meetings. As COVID-19-related travel restrictions are lifted across the globe and you and your troop feel safe doing so, you may be excited to explore the world again as a troop.

Traveling as a Girl Scout is a more engaging experience than traveling with family, school, or other groups because [girls take the lead](#). They'll make important decisions about where to go and what to do and take increasing responsibility for the planning of their trips, all while growing their organizational and management skills—skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

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. And 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 their councils organize or participating in our travel program, [Destinations](#).

Each year, GSGCNWI hosts trips following the travel progression. From as early as Brownies joining a You-and-Me trip to national trips to Colorado and international adventures to the WAGGS World Centres, we invite girls to join their fellow Girl Scouts in the fun!

[Learn more about GSGCNWI Travel on our webpage.](#)

Book One of Our Council Properties

Get started close to home. For your next troop outing, reserve one of our council properties!

[Browse our properties »](#)

Planning Ahead for Adventure

All guidelines in our *Volunteer Essentials* are subject to change as new information or changes noted by federal or state health agencies regarding the spread of COVID-19 emerge. [Please review and stay updated with our COVID-19 guidelines, which require all volunteers to take all reasonable precautions to limit potential exposure for girls, volunteers, and families.](#)

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](#) can walk you through the entire process.

[Adult volunteers, visit gsLearn for training and resources on troop travel.](#)

[Be sure to read our GSGCNWI Troop Travel Resource, a comprehensive guide for trip leaders to help their troop plan their own trip!](#)

Safety First

If you're planning any kind of trip—from a short field trip to an overseas expedition—the “Trips and Travel” section of [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) is your go-to resource for safety. 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. You'll also want to refer to the COVID-19 guidelines in *Safety Activity Checkpoints* as well as any COVID-19 guidelines for your destination.

[The Trip and Travel Application](#), required for all day trips and overnight trips, also outlines all the basic safety details you will need to review prior to any trips or travel.

Note that extended travel (more than three nights) is not covered under the basic Girl Scout insurance plan and will require additional coverage. [Requests for insurance can be made through the council using this form.](#)

Girl Scout Program Connections

It's easy to tie eye-opening travel opportunities into the leadership training and skill building your girls are doing in Girl Scouts! When it's safe to travel together, girls can use their creativity to connect any leadership *Journey* theme into an idea for travel. For example, girls learn where their food comes from in the *Sow What?* Journey. That would connect well with a 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](#), [Coding for Good](#), and, of course, [all the financial badges](#) that help girls budget and earn money for their trips.

Want to include Girl Scout traditions into your trip? Look no farther 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.

And if your troop is looking to stay closer to home this year? Ask your council about council-owned camps and other facilities that can be rented out. For your next troop outing, reserve one of our council properties!

[Browse our properties »](#)

As your Girl Scouts excitedly plan their next trip, remember to limit your role to facilitating the girls' brainstorming and planning, never doing the work for them. Share your ideas and insight, ask tough questions when you have to, and support all their decisions with enthusiasm and encouragement!

Engaging Girls

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

It sounds simple, but just 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!

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.

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

Girl Scout Brownies	
At the Girl Scout Brownie level (second and third grade), girls . . .	This means . . .
Have lots of energy and need to run, walk, and play outside.	<i>Taking your session activities outside whenever possible.</i>
Are social and enjoy working in groups.	<i>Allowing girls to team up in small or large groups for art projects and performances.</i>
Want to help others and appreciate being given individual responsibilities for a task.	<i>Letting girls lead, direct, and help out in activities whenever possible. Allow girls as a group to make decisions about individual roles and responsibilities.</i>
Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.	<i>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.</i>
Need clear directions and structure and like knowing what to expect.	<i>Offering only one direction at a time. Also, have girls create the schedule and flow of your get-togethers and share those at the start.</i>
Are becoming comfortable with basic number concepts, time, money, and distance.	<i>Offering support only when needed. Allow girls to set schedules for meetings or performances, count out money for a trip, and so on.</i>
Are continuing to develop their fine motor skills and can tie shoes, use basic tools, begin to sew, and the like.	<i>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.</i>
Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.	<i>Girls might like to create a play about welcoming a new girl to their school or to tell a story through dance or creative movement.</i>
Know how to follow rules, listen well, and appreciate recognition of a job done well.	<i>Acknowledging when the girls have listened or followed the directions well, which will increase their motivation to listen and follow again!</i>
Girl Scout Juniors	
At the Girl Scout Junior level (fourth and fifth grades), girls . . .	This means . . .
Want to make decisions and express their opinions.	<i>Whenever possible, allowing girls to make decisions and express their opinions through guided discussion and active reflection activities. Also, have girls set</i>

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

Girl Scout Cadettes	
At the Girl Scout Cadette level (sixth, seventh, and eighth grades), 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.	<i>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.</i>

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.	<i>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.</i>
Can be very self-conscious—wanting to be like everyone else but fearing they are unique in their thoughts and feelings.	<i>Encouraging girls to share, but only when they are ready. 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.</i>
Are beginning to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults at school and at home.	<i>Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions and allowing them to experience “fun failure,” which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.</i>

Girl Scout Seniors	
At the Girl Scout Senior level (ninth and tenth grades), 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.	<i>Asking girls to explain the reasoning behind their decisions. Engage girls in role-play and performances, where others can watch and offer alternative solutions.</i>
Have strong problem-solving and critical thinking skills and are able to plan and reflect on their own learning experiences.	<i>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.</i>
Spend more time in peer groups than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.	<i>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.</i>
Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality.	<i>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.</i>

Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures—from home, school, peers, work, and other sources.	<i>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.</i>
Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults at school and at home.	<i>Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience "fun failure," which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.</i>

Girl Scout Ambassadors	
At the Girl Scout Ambassador level (eleventh and twelfth grades), 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.	<i>Inviting girls to develop stories as a group and then individually create endings that they later discuss and share.</i>
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.	<i>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.</i>
Spend more time with peers than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.	<i>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.</i>
Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality.	<i>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.</i>
Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures—from home, school, peers, work, and other sources.	<i>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.</i>

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 “fun failure,” which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.

Creating a Safe Space for Girls

A safe space is where girls feel they can be themselves, without explanation or judgment. As a volunteer, the environment you create is just as important as the activities girls do; it's the key to developing the sort of group that girls want to be part of! Cultivate a space where confidentiality is respected and girls can express their true selves.

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. You'll also need to show them that you won't betray their confidence.

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

You'll also find conflict resolution activities in some of the Journeys, such as the Amaze Journey for Cadettes or the Mission Sisterhood Journey for Seniors.

If a conflict persists, be sure you explain the matter to your volunteer support team. If the supervisor cannot resolve the issues satisfactorily (or if the problem involves the supervisor), the issue can be taken to the next level of supervision and, ultimately, to your council staff member if you need extra help.

We will do our best to answer questions, connect you to specific staff members and help you find important resources. Email us at customercare@girlscoutsgsgcnwi.org, call 1-855-ILOVEGS (855-456-8347) ext. 6313 or [chat with us online](#) from 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Just click on the Chat Now button!

GSGCNWI Official Bullying Policy

GSGCNWI is committed to 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 with an environment free from all forms of unlawful or unwelcome harassment, hostility, and bullying; and therefore, it will not be tolerated.

This policy includes physical violence as well as intimidation, stalking, coercion, display of weapons, threats, and talking or joking about harassment or hostility, whether in person or

through some other means of communications such as writing, telephone, voice mail, electronic mail, or any form of social media.

According to the US Department of Health and Human Resources, “bullying” is defined as aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength, typically repeated over time. Cyberbullying is bullying that occurs online. Whether cyberbullying occurs in email, a text message, an online game, or on a social networking site, it is prohibited. This includes rumors or images posted online where other people may see them. GSGCNWI will cooperate with police, schools, and other organizations that share our values who are attempting to enforce laws, regulations, and rules regarding cyberbullying regardless of the potential punishment.

Anyone, regardless of volunteer or member status, who violates this policy and/or refuses to abide by this policy, is prohibited from holding volunteer positions with GSGCNWI and from attending Girl Scout activities, events, and meetings. Any volunteer who engages in or encourages bullying is subject to release from their volunteer position.

Communicating Effectively with Girls of Any Age

Make sure your words and intentions create 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 shoulds”) 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 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 your council 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 young adults reinforces that their opinions matter and that they deserve respect.

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.

Remember to LUTE: Listen, Understand, Tolerate, and Empathize

Try using the LUTE method to thoughtfully respond when a girl is upset, angry, or confused.

Listen: Hear her out, ask for details, and reflect back what you hear; try “What happened next?” or “What did she say?”

Understand: Show that you understand where she's coming from with comments such as, “So what I hear you saying is . . .” or “I understand why you're unhappy,” or “Your feelings are hurt; mine would be, too.”

Tolerate: You can tolerate the feelings that she just can't handle right now on her own. Let her know that you're there to listen and accept how she is feeling about the situation. Say something like: “Try talking to me about it. I'll listen,” or “I know you're mad—talking it out helps,” or “I can handle it—say whatever you want to.”

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 “guide on the side”—a partner, a coach, or a mentor, not a “leader.”
- Ask girls what rules they need for safety and what group agreements they need to be a good team. When girls take the lead in establishing group rules, they're more likely to stick to them!
- 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—understanding that “speaking up” may look different for each girl. For some girls, it might mean sharing their ideas in front of the entire group; for others that could mean submitting a written response or contributing as part of a 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). See the “report concerns” section below to understand the guard rails.

When Sensitive Topics Come Up

It's an amazing feeling when your Girl Scouts 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 parents and received guidance from your council.

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.

Girl Scouts of the USA does not take a position or develop materials on issues relating to human sexuality, birth control, or abortion. We feel 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.

Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana has been, and always will be, committed to serving a diverse membership of girls and adults. It is our policy not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability unrelated to the individual's ability to perform designated volunteer duties, national origin, citizenship, marital status, or economic status.

[View our council's full inclusion and accommodation policy.](#)

Whether you're a parent/caregiver or Girl Scout troop leader, offering a safe space for your girl to talk about important issues is vital. [Review the resources on our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion page as you navigate discussions.](#)

Parents/caregivers make all decisions regarding their girl's participation in Girl Scout program that may be of a sensitive nature. As a volunteer leader, you must get written parental permission for any locally 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 organizers or other volunteers who may be familiar with the content) what will be presented, and follow your council's guidelines for obtaining written permission.

For activities not sponsored by Girl Scouts, find out in advance (from organizers or other volunteers who may be familiar with the content) what will be presented and [obtaining written permission through a Permission to Participate in Sensitive Issues Discussion form.](#)

Report Concerns

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 parent/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 your council will guide you in addressing these concerns.

Contact a staff member at your Girl Scout council to find out how to refer the girl and her parent/guardian to experts at school or in the community. Contact Customer Support, customercare@girlscoutsgcnwi.org, or call 1-855-456-8347, ext. 6313.

Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana has Trauma-Informed Practices training on [gsLearn](#) for more information.

Share your concern with the girl's family if this is feasible.

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
- Unexplained injuries such as bruises, burns, or fractures
- Avoidance of eye contact or physical contact
- Excessive fearfulness or distrust of adults
- Abusive behavior toward other children, especially younger ones

Engaging Families

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

Kick the Year Off Right by Engaging Parents and Other Caregivers

When families step up and play an active part in troop life, your troop can shine its brightest! Plus, girls feel a special sense of pride when their families take part and show interest in the things they are doing.

What Is a Parent and 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. Check out council resources in Meeting with Parents on [gsLearn](#).

Why Hold a Meeting?

[Kicking off each year with a parent and caregiver meeting](#) sets the troop up for success.

Outlining clear expectations, building a team, and engaging parents in the Girl Scout experience is a great way to start off on the right foot. When parents are involved, leaders have support, the troop has a plan, and girls benefit! The meeting helps:

- Families understand what Girl Scouting can do for their girl.
- Families and leaders identify ways they will work as a team to support the troop.
- Families and leaders agree about what the troop pays for and what families pay for individually.
- You fill key troop positions—you never know which parent will make an awesome assistant leader or troop cookie manager.
- Families know how the troop will communicate things like upcoming events or schedule changes.
- Families learn about uniforms, books, and other important basics.

Check out our step-by-step guide and “Parents & Caregivers Meeting Outline” on the Volunteer Toolkit. This 60- to 90-minute meeting will make all the difference in the year ahead.

Another meeting you don’t want to miss is the **Cookie Program Girl & Family Meeting** in the Volunteer Toolkit. Just like the parent and caregiver meeting at the beginning of the year, this meeting is your chance to share what girls gain through the cookie program, outline expectations, and find the support you need for a successful cookie season. The cookie program is a team effort and you’ll want to get families on board!

For even more tips on working with troop families, check out Girl Scouts’ [Tips for Troop Leaders hub](#).

How to Keep Parents and Other 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 parents say no one had communicated expectations around involvement with their girl’s troop is so troubling. Parents may have many talents, but they’re certainly not mind readers! If you’re nervous about getting turned down, don’t be. Sure, a few parents 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. Loop back, follow up, and ask again!

Make Sense of “Why”

Explain that not only does the whole troop benefit with extra help from parents and other caregivers, 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 daughters that they are a priority in their parents’ 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 parents and other 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 parents and other caregivers 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 parents 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 parents in the loop on what the girls are doing and learning during each meeting, and encourage them to let their daughters “be the experts” at home, explaining or teaching the new skills they've learned. You can get everyone in on the fun and keep Girl Scouts strong at home by sharing the [family badge guides on the Volunteer Toolkit](#).

Troop Management

Leadership is more than “being in charge” or having a title; it's recognizing that you're part of a team and understanding that team's needs and interests. Here's how you'll do that with your troop!

Your Role as a Volunteer

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience is based on three keys—discover, connect, and take action—but it's not just for your troop! As a Girl Scout leader, you'll embark on your own leadership journey as you help girls develop the vital leadership skills they'll use to make the world a better place. Here are a few basic concepts that outline what leadership means in Girl Scouting.

Leadership is teaching your Girl Scouts:

- That they can do and be anything!
- That they are decision makers and should own their decisions.
- How to live the Girl Scout Law by modeling it for them.

As a leader, see yourself as a coach who:

- Advises, discusses, and cheers on your troop, not as a teacher with a planned lesson or activity.
- Ensures each member understands and can carry out their responsibilities within the troop.
- Encourages Girl Scouts to build their skills and their ethics.
- Gives more responsibilities to the girls as they grow and develop.

It's important to remember that:

- You cannot know everything that your Girl Scouts might ever want to learn.
- You'll explore and learn alongside your girls and grow your confidence in the process.
- You're not expected to know everything about Girl Scouting, but you should know where to go for information—and to ask for help when you need it.

Your Responsibilities as a Girl Scout Troop Leader/Assistant Leader

Your responsibilities include:

- Accepting the [Girl Scout Promise and Law](#).
- Understanding and coaching the three keys to leadership that are the basis of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience: discover, connect, and take action.
- Sharing your knowledge, experience, and skills with a positive and flexible approach.
- Working in a partnership with your Girl Scouts so that their activities are girl-led and that they learn by doing, individually and as a group. You'll also partner with other volunteers and council staff for support and guidance.
- Organizing fun, interactive, girl-led activities that address relevant issues and match girls' interests and needs.
- Providing guidance and information regarding Girl Scout group meetings with troop families on a regular and ongoing basis through a variety of tools, including email, phone calls, newsletters, blogs, other forms of social media, and any other method you choose.
- Processing and completing registration forms and other paperwork, such as permission slips.
- Communicating effectively and delivering clear, organized, and vibrant presentations or information to an individual or the group.
- Overseeing with honesty, integrity, and careful record-keeping the funds that girls raise.
- Maintaining a close connection to your volunteer support team as well as your council.
- Facilitating a safe experience for every Girl Scout.
- To prepare for your role as leader, visit [gsLearn](#) to find all required training.

Planning for 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—from 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 parents and caregivers.

Use these questions to guide your conversation with your assistant/co-leader and troop support volunteers or co-leader before discussing these topics with parents and 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.
- Which components of the uniform will families need to purchase? Which uniform components will the troop provide for each girl?
- 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?
- How will we keep troop activities and decisions girl-led? Use the Volunteer Toolkit 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? Which channels will we use to keep families in the loop? Effective communication [will help set expectations](#) and clarify parent/ caregiver responsibilities.
- 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 a Meeting Place

What makes a great meeting space? It depends on your troop, but 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 and chairs 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.

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 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.

Accessibility: Your space should accommodate girls with disabilities as well as parents with disabilities who may come to meetings.

Need a few talking points to get started? Try:

"I'm a Girl Scout volunteer with a group of [number of girls] 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 leadership—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]."

Please review and stay updated with our COVID-19 guidelines, which require all volunteers to take all reasonable precautions to limit potential exposure for girls, volunteers, and families.

Virtual Meetings

If your group or troop can't meet in person or hold a traditional meeting, there are so many ways to bring the power of Girl Scouting home! Meeting virtually can be a fun, engaging option for your troop.

Before setting up a virtual meeting, you'll want to:

- Partner with troop families to make sure the girls are safe online.
- Select a meeting platform that allows families who may not have internet access to call in.
- Think about logistics: work with the girls to set up ground rules; consider how you'll incorporate in-person meeting traditions in your virtual space and how you'll keep the meeting on track.
- Talk with families on how to keep activities girl-led if your girls will be completing them from home.

And don't worry if your girls want to use a web or social platform you're not as familiar with, because you'll learn alongside them! For more tips on successful virtual meetings, check out the For Troop Leaders section of Girl Scouts at Home. Visit gsLearn to find an entire section of Virtual Troop Resources or the For Troop Leaders section of GS at home.

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. Though the ideal troop size is 12 girls, we recommend that groups be no fewer and no larger than:

- Girl Scout Daisies: 5–12 girls
- Girl Scout Brownies: 10–20 girls
- Girl Scout Juniors 10–25 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, registered adult volunteers. (Double-check the volunteer-to-girl ratio chart 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 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.

Registering Girls and Adults in Girl Scouting

Every participant (girl or adult) in Girl Scouting must register and become a member of Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA). GSUSA membership dues are valid for one year. Membership dues cannot be transferred to another member and are not refundable.

Preregistration for the upcoming membership year occurs in the spring. Girls are encouraged to register early to avoid the fall rush. Early registration allows for uninterrupted receipt of forms and materials from the council, helps girls and councils plan ahead, and gets girls excited about all the great stuff they want to do as Girl Scouts next year. Girl Scout grade level is determined by the current membership year beginning October 1.

[Lifetime membership](#) is available to anyone who accepts the principles and beliefs of the Girl Scout Promise and Law, pays the one-time lifetime membership fee, and is at least 18 years old (or a high school graduate or equivalent). Volunteers with ten or more years of service can become lifetime members at the discounted young alum rate.

Adding New Girls to Your Troop

Growing your troop is a great way to share the power of the Girl Scout experience and [there are many ways to get the word out](#), like hanging posters at your girl's school, using social media to reach families in your community, or including your troop in your council's Opportunity Catalog or Troop Catalog. You can also find recruitment materials on our [Recruitment Resource Page](#).

[Girl Scout Champions](#) play a vital role in helping to spread the word about how awesome it is to be a Girl Scout! GS Champions introduce Girl Scouts to new girls and adults within their own communities whether it be hosting local events, sending information to schools, or just bringing flyers and brochures to libraries. GS Champions have the power to educate their community about how both girls and adults can join Girl Scouts in the Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana areas!

We need inspiring volunteers (like you!) to spread the word about joining Girl Scouts to girls and families, and to help place new members in troops.

Contact Martha Sternickle at 224-207-9227 or msternickle@girlscoutgcnwi.org with any questions.

Creating an Atmosphere of Acceptance and Inclusion

Girl Scouts is for every girl, and that's why we embrace girls of all abilities and backgrounds with a specific and positive philosophy of inclusion that benefits everyone. Each Girl Scout—regardless of her socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, physical or cognitive ability, sexual orientation, primary language, political belief, or religion—is an equal and valued member of the group, and groups reflect the diversity of the community.

We believe inclusion is an approach and an attitude, rather than a set of guidelines. Inclusion is about belonging, everyone being offered the same opportunities with respect, dignity, and celebration of their unique strengths. It's about being a sister to every Girl Scout! You're accepting and inclusive when you:

- Welcome everyone and focus on building community.
- Emphasize cooperation instead of competition.
- Provide a safe and socially comfortable environment
- Teach respect for, understanding of, and dignity toward all Girl Scouts and their families.
- Actively reach out to Girl Scouts and their families who are traditionally excluded or marginalized.
- Foster a sense of belonging and community as a respected and valued peer.
- Honor the intrinsic value of each person's life.

The Basics of Inclusion is a required training for leaders in [gsLearn](#).

Whether you're a parent/caregiver or Girl Scout troop leader, offering a safe space for your girl to talk about important issues is vital. [Review the resources on our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access page as you navigate discussions.](#)

If you have questions about accommodating an individual girl, [email us at \[atcustomercare@girlscoutsGSGCNWL.org\]\(mailto:atcustomercare@girlscoutsGSGCNWL.org\)](#), call 1-855-ILOVEGS (855-456-8347) ext. 6313 or [chat with us online](#) from 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Just click on the Chat Now button!

As you think about where, when, and how often to meet with your group, consider the needs, resources, safety, and beliefs of all members and potential members. Include the special needs of any members who have disabilities or whose parents or caregivers have disabilities. But, 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.

If you want to find out what a girl with a disability needs to make her Girl Scout experience successful, simply ask them or their parent or caregiver. If you are open and honest, they'll likely 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 Scout 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 sculpture, find out if a Girl Scout who is with visual impairment might be given permission to touch the pieces.
- If an activity requires running, a Girl Scout who is unable to run could be asked to walk or do another physical movement.

Focus on a person’s abilities—on what they *can* do rather than on what they cannot. In that spirit, use people-first language that puts the person before the disability.

Say . . .	Instead of . . .
She has a learning disability.	She is learning disabled.
She has a developmental delay.	She is mentally retarded; she is slow.
She uses a wheelchair.	She is wheelchair-bound.

When interacting with a girl (or parent/caregiver) with a disability, consider these tips:

- When talking to a Girl Scout with a disability, speak directly to her, not through a family member or friend.
- It’s okay to offer assistance to a Girl Scout 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 someone’s wheelchair is invading their space and is considered annoying and rude.
- When speaking to a Girl Scout who is hearing impaired and using an interpreter, speak to the person themselves, not to the interpreter.
- When speaking for more than a few minutes to someone who uses a wheelchair, place yourself at eye level.
- When greeting someone 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 can be registered as closely as possible to their chronological ages. They wear the uniform of that grade level. Make any adaptations for the Girl Scout 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 twenty-first year, and then move into an adult membership category.

Getting Support for Your Troop

Just as your Girl Scouts rally around each other for support, you'll also have a dedicated Girl Scout support team, consisting of council staff and passionate volunteers just like you. Your support team, which may be called a service unit at your council, is ready to offer local learning opportunities and advice as well as [answer your questions](#) about the Girl Scout program, working with girls, product sales, and so much more.

Before you hold your first troop meeting with girls, consider the support and people resources you'll need to cultivate an energizing troop experience. Parents, friends, family, and other members of the community have their own unique strengths and can provide time, experience, and ideas to a troop, so get them involved from the very beginning as part of your volunteer troop team. This team is made up of troop leaders (like you) and troop committee volunteers.

Your [troop committee volunteers](#) are the extra set of eyes, ears, and hands that help the troop safely explore the world around them. Depending on your troop's needs, they can play a more active role—for instance, someone can step up as a dedicated troop treasurer—or simply provide an occasional helping hand when you need to keep a meeting's activity on track.

If a parent or caregiver isn't sure if they can commit to a committee or co-leader role, encourage them to try [volunteering in a smaller capacity](#) that matches their skill set. Just like your young Girl Scouts, once troop parents and caregivers discover they can succeed in their volunteer role, they'll feel empowered to volunteer again. [Check out our website for short-term and other volunteer opportunities.](#)

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

[The Volunteer Toolkit](#) 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 Volunteer Toolkit saves you time and energy so that you can focus on having fun with your Girl Scouts.

With the Volunteer Toolkit, 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 parents/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 attendance at meetings and their troop's badge and Journey achievements.
- Add council or custom events to the troop's calendar.
- Submit troop's finance reports (depending on the council's process).
- Easily locate both national and local council resources, such as *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.

Parents and 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 (depending on the council's process).

[Login to the Volunteer Toolkit \(VTK\)](#) »

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](#) on the Girl Scouts of the USA website 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.

Customer Support Contacts

Our Customer Support team is ready to assist you! We will do our best to answer questions, connect you to specific staff members and help you find important resources. Email us

at customercare@girlscoutsGSGCNWI.org, call 1-855-ILOVEGS (855-456-8347) ext. 6313 or [chat with](#) us online from 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Just click on the Chat Now button!

To inform us of an emergency situation after regular business hours, please call 877-870-5823.

Newsletters/Communication

To stay connected with our council and updated on important news, special events, and experiences for girls of all ages, visit our website.

For more relevant information and updates from GSGCNWI, make sure the email address listed in your [My Account profile](#) is current and that you're opted in to receiving our emails.

[We post member stories, program updates, and pertinent information on the GSGCNWI blog-- subscribe to keep up!](#)

Follow Us on Social Media

Stay in touch with the GSGCNWI community by following us social media! Ask us questions, share your Girl Scout stories, and learn all about amazing opportunities and experiences for you AND your girls!

[Twitter](#)
[Instagram](#)
[Facebook](#)
[LinkedIn](#)

Taking Advantage of Learning Opportunities

We know that when you have the knowledge and skills you need to manage your girls, both you and your troop will thrive. Contact your council to ask about ongoing learning opportunities that will help you grow your skills and confidence.

Our council is proud to offer online trainings and events that empower volunteers with the knowledge, skills and confidence to deliver fun, safe and meaningful Girl Scout experiences. [Visit our website to learn more.](#)

[The resources on our Volunteer Resources page will also come in handy during your first Girl Scout year and beyond.](#)

Knowing How Much You're Appreciated

What begins with Girl Scouts speaking up at a troop meeting can go all the way to speaking in front of their city council for a cause they champion—and they'll have your support to thank for that. Your volunteer role makes a powerful difference. Thank you for all you do.

Just as you'll receive support throughout your volunteering experience, when you reach the end of the term you signed up for, you'll talk with your support team about the positive parts of your

experience as well as the challenges you faced, and you'll discuss whether you want to return to this position or try something new. The end of your troop year, camp season, overseas trip, or series/event session is just the beginning of your next adventure with Girl Scouts!

If you're ready for more opportunities, be sure to let your council support team know how you'd like to be a part of girls' lives in the future—whether in the same position or in other, flexible ways. Are you ready to organize a series or event? Take a trip? Work with girls at camp? Work with a troop of girls as a yearlong volunteer? Share your skills at a council office, working behind the scenes? [The possibilities are endless and can be tailored to fit your skills and interests.](#)

Volunteer Appreciation Month

Without our passionate and dedicated volunteers, there would be no Girl Scouting. That's why we celebrate National Volunteer Month every April! And get ready to crank up the party as we ring in National Girl Scout Leader's Day on April 22.

Girl Scouts also celebrates National Volunteer Week, which falls during the third week of April. What can we say—we love our volunteers!

[Our Council's Adult Recognition and Awards details can be found online.](#)

Girl Scout Participation in Activities with Other Scouting Organizations

The decision by Boy Scouts of America (BSA) to open the Boy Scout program to girls has fundamentally altered the nature of the relationship between BSA 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 may now create certain risks or challenges for Girl Scouts. For this reason, councils are encouraged to avoid joint recruiting and/or joint participation in community events or activities.

Marketplace Confusion

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 we take care 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.

Protecting Use of Girl Scout Materials

Girl Scout materials are intended for the exclusive use of Girl Scouts and are protected as the intellectual property of Girl Scouts of the USA. Materials include but are not limited to: Girl Scout logo, tag lines, and/or program and badge requirements.

Girl Scout Cookie Program and the Fall Product Program

Learning to think like an entrepreneur? Developing business smarts? Getting to know customers and building lasting relationships? There's so much more to that box of Thin Mints®.

Whether they participate in the [Girl Scout Cookie Program or the Girl Scout Fall Product Program](#) (or both!), everything your Girl Scouts learn prepares them to take on the world. Plus, Girl Scout Cookie proceeds stay local in your community to power amazing year-round experiences—experiences that broaden their worlds and spark their sense of wonder.

All guidelines in our *Volunteer Essentials* are subject to change as new information or changes noted by federal or state health agencies regarding the spread of COVID-19 emerge. [Please review and stay updated with our COVID-19 guidelines, which require all volunteers to take all reasonable precautions to limit potential exposure for girls, volunteers, and families.](#)

Five Essential Skills

Girl Scouts as young as five develop five essential skills through the Girl Scout Cookie Program—skills that will help them be successful today and throughout their lives:

- *Goal setting:* Girls learn to create a plan to reach their goals.
- *Decision making:* Girls learn to make decisions on their own and as a team.
- *Money management:* Girls learn to create a budget and handle money.
- *People skills:* Girls find their voice and up their confidence through customer interactions that build relationships.
- *Business ethics:* Girls learn to act responsibly and honestly, both in business and in life.

But building their business know-how isn't just tied to the cookies themselves! Girl Scouts at any level can continue honing their entrepreneurial skills by earning the [Cookie Business badges](#), [Cookie Entrepreneur Family pin](#), and the [Financial Literacy badges](#) year over year.

Before your cookie bosses open shop, be sure to check out these [helpful troop leader resources](#) that will empower you to:

- Manage your troop's funds.
- Learn how girls participate in money earning.
- Discover how your troop can reach its financial goals.
- Plan activities to help her earn cookie pins and badges
- Understand just how much your girls are capable of by grade level and [how their entrepreneurial skills progress](#).

Girl Scout Cookie History

What started with Girl Scouts selling home-baked cookies to raise money grew into enlisting professional bakers in 1936 to handle the growing demand—and the rest is history. Explore [Girl Scout Cookie History](#) to find out how cookies have helped build generations of female entrepreneurs and leaders who make the world a better place.

Where Cookie Proceeds Go

After paying for the cost of cookies and materials, [Girl Scout Cookie proceeds stay local](#) and help councils 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.

Your council will provide a breakdown of how cookie program proceeds support Girl Scout activities locally. Please share this information with girls and their families so everyone understands that product program sales make it possible for your Girl Scout council to serve girls.

Troop members share in the proceeds from a successful product program; proceeds aren't distributed to individual girl members. Girls, however, may be eligible for rewards and credits that they put toward council-sponsored camps, programs, and Girl Scout swag. The council plan for rewards applies equally to all girls participating in the product program activity. [Visit our website](#) for more information about individual rewards and troop proceeds locally.

The Girl Scout [Blue Book of Basic Documents](#) specifies that:

"All money and other assets, including property, that are raised, earned, or otherwise received in the name of and for the benefit of Girl Scouting must be held and authorized by a Girl Scout council or Girl Scouts of the USA. Such money and other assets must be used for the purposes of Girl Scouting." —"Ownership of Assets," [Blue Book of Basic Documents](#) (April 2020), page 21

Making s'mores under the stars, creating a lasting impact on your community, or ordering supplies for an eye-opening STEM project—there are limitless ways to put troop proceeds toward dynamic Girl Scout experiences! There are a few things, however, that don't qualify for "purposes of Girl Scouting," for instance, using troop proceeds to purchase memberships in or uniforms for another organization. We encourage all councils to remind their volunteers of this policy in order to protect the all-girl environment and to avoid diversion of Girl Scout funds.

Your Council's Role

When you are set up for success, you are better able to set up your girls for success! That's why every year, your council provides trainings, guidelines, and procedures for conducting the Girl Scout Cookie Program and fall product program, and determines how the proceeds and product rewards system will be managed. [Check our website](#) to find the answers you need as well as local trainings and resources.

Each council also selects the vendors of its choice to provide the products for their product programs. Two commercial bakers are licensed by Girl Scouts of the USA to produce Girl Scout Cookies: [Little Brownie Bakers](#) and [ABC Bakers](#). You can also [Meet the Cookies](#) and find additional info on cookie varieties, including nutritional details.

Councils also work with vendors to offer magazine subscriptions, nut and candy products, and more for the fall product program. These companies are [Ashdon Farms](#), [Trophy Nut](#), and [M2 Media group](#). Each provides online tools and activities for girls to download. [Magazine selection and sales may take place online—check with your council for more details.](#)

Your Role

You play an exciting role in giving your Girl Scouts opportunities to practice the five skills as they learn how to think like entrepreneurs. Some of the things you'll do include:

- Get girls excited about the opportunities to support the troop (but allowing their participation to be voluntary).
- Support both [competitive and apprehensive cookie bosses](#), helping all your girls set meaningful goals for themselves.
- [Fostering partnerships with each Girl Scout's family](#) to ensure cookie season success, whatever that may look like for her. The [Creating Cookie Success](#) and [Coaching Your Budding Businesswoman](#) resources will help you build a positive partnership with girls and families, and the [Cookie Entrepreneur Family pin](#) is designed to help families support girls' growth at home.

Not only can girls sell individually, both in-person and using the online tools provided by each vendor, they can also participate in group booth sales during product programs. Your local council has additional guidance and processes to market and ensure every booth is in a safe and appropriate location.

As your Girl Scouts grow, your role will evolve from a hands-on one to providing oversight and support where needed. No matter their ages, remember that *volunteers and parents/caregivers do not sell the product*. Your role is to encourage your girls and let their entrepreneurial spirit soar. Learning by doing is exactly how your girls develop the business savvy and communication skills that will [empower them to reach any goals they set for themselves](#)..

Another critical task for each troop is to establish a clear accounting system for all proceeds and product during the programs. It's up to you to make sure that money is spent wisely, that excellent records are kept (remember to keep copies of all receipts in a binder or folder), and that all product is tracked. For older girls, your job is to oversee their work as they learn to keep impeccable records. Be sure to attend product program orientation or training so you are aware of the systems and helpful tools available.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program and the fall product program can be exhilarating and busy times during the troop year, but you're never alone in your efforts! You can reach out to your service unit product program manager when you're feeling stuck, or you can [build a cookie team](#) to provide the support your troop needs.

Product Program Safety

Safety is the top priority while selling Girl Scout Cookies and other products. Volunteers, families, and girls should be familiar with and practice the safety guidelines outlined in local program resources as well as those available in the [troop leader resources](#) section of girlscoutcookies.org and in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.

Selling Cookies Online

Will your troop use the [Digital Cookie® platform](#) to manage its cookie business? Check the specific guidelines provided by each cookie vendor before participating. Before girls use their Digital Cookie or Smart Cookie site, they should partner with their families to learn how to safely run their business online.

A few more online safety practices to keep in mind:

- The Girl Scout Cookie Program is a girl-led program, so online marketing and sales efforts should always be led by a Girl Scout, 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.**](#)
- Girls, volunteers and parents must review and adhere to the [**Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge**](#), the [**Digital Cookie Pledge**](#), the [**Supplemental Safety Tips for Online Marketing**](#), 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).
- 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 and Smart Cookie platforms. For copies of terms and conditions, please contact GSUSA, ABC, or M2 as needed.
- 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 Buddy System

Using the buddy system, the troop is divided into teams of two. Each Girl Scout is responsible for staying with her buddy at all times, warning her buddy of danger, giving her buddy immediate assistance if safe to do so, and seeking help if needed. Girls are encouraged to stay near the group or buddy with another team of two so that in the event someone is injured, one person cares for the patient while two others seek help.

Preparing for Your Girl Scout Cookie Booth

All guidelines in our *Volunteer Essentials* are subject to change as new information or changes noted by federal or state health agencies regarding the spread of COVID-19 emerge. **Please review and stay updated with our COVID-19 guidelines, which require all volunteers to take all reasonable precautions to limit potential exposure for girls, volunteers, and families.**

Cookie booths—that is, cookie pop-up sales in areas with lots of foot traffic—are a fun way for Girl Scouts to connect with their community and practice their sales pitch with new customers. Booth locations must be approved by councils, facilitated within council jurisdiction, and participants must follow all council guidelines with regard to setting up, running, and taking down a booth.

Loop Sites

Cookie sites held within the "Chicago Loop" (Chicago Ave. on the north, Roosevelt on the south, Morgan on the west, Lake Michigan on the east) are earmarked for our council loop site program.

Troops cannot secure any booth site within the above mentioned boundaries at any time during our cookie program. If a troop has a direct connection to a building, please call the Product Program Helpline for more information, 855-ILOVEGS (456-8347), ext. 6722.

Create a great cookie booth experience for your Girl Scouts by:

- Using your best judgment in setting up cookie booths in locations that will be open, accessible, and safe for all Girl Scouts and potential customers.
- Choosing a high traffic area—this could be your local supermarket, mall, or park—where you'll maximize the number of visitors to your booth.
- Checking out your booth site ahead 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.
- Respecting the surrounding businesses by making sure your booth isn't blocking a store entrance or exit.
- Encouraging your Girl Scouts to unleash their creativity—and work on their advertising skills—to make colorful signs and booth decorations that potential customers can't resist! Remind girls to be polite and to have their sales pitch ready for interested customers.

And keep in mind:

- A minimum of two volunteers (at least one of whom is a registered Girl Scout volunteer with the required background check) and one Girl Scout should be present at the booth at all times. With two or more volunteers, you'll have adequate booth coverage if the girls need to be accompanied to the restroom.
- If your Daisies are still learning how to make correct change, help them handle money as needed. But remember that girls make all sales at the booth!
- Changing your cookie booth hours or location? Keep your customers in the loop and update your baker's Digital Cookie or Smart Cookie system with the new details. All scheduled booths are available on the Cookie Finder App ([iOS](#) or [Android](#)).
- Certain locations may be inappropriate for younger Girl Scouts 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-appelling 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 booth locations at such locations.

For more tips to make your booth a success, check out our [Cookie Booth Essentials](#). For additional information about setting up a booth and safety and security suggestions, consult your council guidelines.

Cookie Donation Programs

Cookies also help girls make a big impact in their community! Your council may have an established cookie donation program where customers can purchase cookies that will be donated to an organization by your council. Cookie donations are not only a great talking point for girls to share with their customers—they're also a thoughtful way to show girls how cookies can help them give back.

With cookie donations, remember that:

- All cookie donation programs must be approved by your council.
- Donated cookies must stay within the council jurisdiction unless your 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 councils or jeopardize the integrity of the Girl Scout brand.

Handling Product Complaints

Girl Scout Cookies are well loved and for good reason—it has always been the practice of Girl Scout councils and the bakers to guarantee customer satisfaction with their delicious cookies. If a customer is not satisfied with the quality of their cookies for some reason, they can contact the baker via the phone number printed on the side of the cookie package.

Troops should notify their council if they are aware of any customer dissatisfaction.

Recognizing Cookie Sellers in the Media

Focusing on entrepreneurial outcomes has always been the focus of the Girl Scout Cookie Program. 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 organization will continue to recognize dynamic cookie entrepreneurs for various achievements tied to the Girl Scout Cookie Program and through their participation in Girl Scouts.
- 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.

Troop Finances

With your guidance, your Girl Scouts will learn money skills that will serve them throughout their lives. Your Girl Scout troop will 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 council-sponsored product program activities (such as the Girl Scout Cookie Program), group money-earning activities (council approved, of course!), and any dues your troop may charge.

Remember that all funds collected, raised, earned, or otherwise received in the name of and for the benefit of Girl Scouting belong to the troop and must be used for the purposes of Girl Scouting. Funds are administered through the troop and do not belong to individuals.

The Managing Troop Finances course in [gsLearn](#) is a great resource.

Establishing a Troop Account

No matter how much your troop plans on saving or spending, you'll need a safe place to deposit your troop dues, product program proceeds, and other funds. If you've stepped up to lead an existing troop, you may inherit a checking account, but with a new troop, you'll want to open a new bank account.

Here are a few helpful tips you can take to the bank:

- Be sure to find a bank that has free checking and low fees.
- Designate a "troop treasurer," that is, one person who is responsible for troop funds and for keeping a daily account of expenditures.
- Ensure your account comes with a debit card that you can use during activities or trips. These transactions are easier to track at the end of the year.
- Be prepared like a Girl Scout, and make sure another troop volunteer has accessible a debit card for the troop account in case the main card is lost.
- Handle a lost troop debit card the same way you would a personal debit card: cancel it immediately.
- Keep troop funds in the bank before an activity or trip and pay for as many items as possible in advance of your departure.

Follow your council's financial policies and procedures for setting up an account: [start by submitting a Bank Account Submission Form](#). Council-sponsored product program activities have specific banking and tracking procedures.

Troop Disbanding and Unused Troop Funds

When a troop disbands, any unused Girl Scout money left in the account becomes the property of the council. Troop funds are not the property of any individual member.

Before disbanding, ask your girls how they want to pay it forward: they may decide to donate any unused funds to their service unit, to another troop, or to pay for Girl Scout activities.

Activities can also include purchasing materials to support another organization through Take Action projects.

Please note: all unused troop funds can be mailed via check to the Chicago GSGCNWI Gathering Place. The troop number must be listed.

20 S. Clark St., Suite 200

Chicago, IL 60603

Fax: 312-750-0718.

Shop Extension: 6366

[Fill out the Disbanding Troop Form to begin the process of closing the troop.](#)

Closing the Troop Account

When closing a troop account, be sure all checks and other debits have cleared the account before you close it. Remember, you may have to close the account in person. Turn remaining funds over to a council staff member.

[View the GSGCNWI financial policies and procedures.](#)

[Take a look at the Managing Troop Finances course in gsLearn.](#)

Money-Earning Basics for Troops

Troops flex their financial muscles in two distinct ways:

- The Girl Scout Cookie Program and other sales of Girl Scout–authorized products (such as calendars, magazines, or nuts and candy) organized by your council. All girl members are eligible to participate in two council-sponsored product program activities each year with volunteer supervision: the cookie program and one other council-authorized product program. Please remember, volunteers and Girl Scout council staff don't sell cookies and other products—girls do.
- Group money-earning activities organized by the troop (not by the council) that are planned and carried out by girls (in partnership with volunteers) and that earn money for the group.

Fill out the [Troop Money Earning application to request approval for additional money-earning activities.](#)

Participation Guidance

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

- Voluntary participation
- Written permission of each girl's parent or guardian
- 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 program activities

- Observance of local ordinances related to involvement of children in money-earning activities as well as health and safety laws
- Vigilance in protecting the personal safety of each girl
- Arrangements for safeguarding the money

Additional Guidelines

Keep these specific guidelines—some of which are required by the Internal Revenue Service—in mind to ensure that sales are conducted with legal and financial integrity.

- 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 sales ranges set by councils and may not be based on a dollar-per-dollar calculation.
- Troops are encouraged to participate in council product programs as their primary money-earning activity; any group money earning shouldn't compete with the Girl Scout Cookie Program or other council product programs.
- Obtain written approval from your council before a group money-earning event; most councils ask that you submit a request for approval. [GSGCNWI requires that you submit a request for approval.](#)
- Girl Scouts discourages the use of games of chance. Any activity which could be considered a game of chance (raffles, contests, bingo) must be approved by the local Girl Scout council and be conducted in compliance with all local and state laws.
- Girl Scouts' [Blue Book](#) policy forbids girls from the direct solicitation of cash. Girls can collect partial payment toward the purchase of a package of Girl Scout Cookies and other Girl Scout-authorized products through participation in council-approved product program donation programs.
- Girl Scouts forbids product demonstration parties where the use of the Girl Scout trademark increases revenue for another business, such as in-home product parties. Any business using the Girl Scout trademark or other Girl Scout intellectual property must seek authorization from GSUSA.
- Group money-earning activities need to be suited to the ages 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 according to council procedures.
- In the event that a volunteer has a bad debt exceeding 45 days after they have received notification, said volunteer will be immediately removed from her/his position by the council and will be sent to collections.
- The project cannot be carried out during the blackout months of October, January, February and March.
- The Girl Scout Cookie Program and other council-sponsored product sales are designed to unleash the entrepreneurial potential in your girls. From there, your troop may decide to earn additional funds on its own. [Again, paperwork and approval are needed before any additional fundraising is considered.](#)

Sample Money-Earning Activities

- Collections/Drives 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 a high tea or a build-your-own-taco bar, related to activities girls are planning (For instance, if girls are earning money for travel, they could tie the meal to their destination).

Service(s)

- Service-a-thon (people sponsor a girl doing service and funds go to support a trip or other activity)
- 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

Please be aware:

- GoFundMe and other crowdsourced funding platforms are not permitted.
- The project must not endorse any business or involve the sale of commercial items.
- The project cannot include a game of chance (raffle, drawing, silent auction) or direct solicitation of cash.
- Items from Good Will, Savers, and other resale shops cannot be resold.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program and other council-sponsored product programs are designed to unleash the entrepreneurial potential in your girls. From there, your troop may decide to earn additional funds on its own.

Help Your Troop Reach Its Financial Goals

We get it—there's something exciting about opening that first case of Girl Scout Cookies. However, before your girls take part in all the cookie program fun, it's important they have a clear plan and purpose for their product program activities. As a volunteer, you have the opportunity to facilitate girl-led financial planning, which may include the following steps for the girls:

1. *Set goals for money-earning activities.* What do girls hope to accomplish through this activity? In addition to earning money, what skills do they hope to build? What leadership opportunities present themselves?
2. *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).
3. *Determine how much the group needs to earn.* Subtract expenses from available income to determine how much money your group needs to earn.

4. *Make a plan.* The group can brainstorm and make decisions about its financial plans. Will cookie and other product programs—if approached proactively and energetically—earn enough money to meet the group’s goals? If not, which group money-earning activities might offset the difference? 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.
5. *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 an application for approval from your council and submit it along with the budget worksheet the girls created.
6. Obtain written approval by the council at least 4 weeks prior to the event. Money-Earning Activity | [English Online](#) | *Para someter en español, comuníquese con Lupe Santos, 855-ILOVEGS, extensión 9259 para obtener asistencia.*
7. *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 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!

Financial Management and Product Program Abilities by Grade Level

As with other Girl Scout activities, girls build their financial and sales savvy as they get older. Every girl will be different, but here you’ll find some examples of the abilities and opportunities for progression of girls at each grade level.

Girl Scout Daisies

The approved, registered volunteer handles money, keeps financial records, and does all group budgeting.

Parents/guardians may decide they will contribute to the cost of activities.

Girls can participate in Girl Scout Cookie activities and other council-sponsored product programs.

Daisies are always paired with a volunteer when selling anything. Girls do the asking and deliver the product, but volunteers handle the money and keep the girls secure.

Girls should be given the opportunity to practice identifying money and counting back change with an adult during each transaction.

Girl Scout Brownies

The approved, registered 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) with guidance from their volunteer(s).

Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product programs.

Girls may decide to pay dues to contribute to the cost of activities.

Girl Scout Juniors

The approved, registered 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 based on their 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, if they are pursuing it.

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 programs.

Girls carry out budgeting, planning, and group money-earning projects.

Girls budget for extended travel, Take Action projects, and leadership projects.

Girls may be involved in seeking donations for Take Action projects with council approval.

Girls keep their own financial records and give reports to parents and group volunteers.

Girls budget for Take Action projects, including the Girl Scout Silver or Gold Awards, if they are pursuing them.

Fundraising

Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana (GSGCNWI)

The council's fund development department works with board members, individuals, alumnae,

volunteers, family foundations, corporations, foundations, government entities, organizations and United Way partners to raise funds and awareness for Girl Scouts locally.

Funding sources include, but are not limited to, Family Partnership gifts, public and private gifts and grants, United Way allocations, product program revenue and program fees. Council funding provides council-wide programs, training, support, facilities, maintenance and efficiently run Girl Scout activities.

GSGCNWI is a non-profit entity recognized by the IRS as a tax-exempt charitable organization. As a charitable organization, our council can accept tax-deductible donations made to the council and provide donors with the necessary donor acknowledgment.

While a troop is a part of the council, a troop or service unit does not qualify as a non-profit organization with a unique charitable identification number.

Troop

Troop dues are a main source of income for the troop treasury. Each troop sets its own timeline for collection based on its needs and plans for the year. Earnings from the Girl Scout Cookie and fall product programs, as well as troop money-earning activities, help the treasury grow.

Money belongs to the troop as a whole; it is not distributed to individual girls. Money is held in a troop bank account. Troop money supports activities planned by Girl Scouts in partnership with trained adult leaders. The money is often used for service project materials, field trips, badge work, craft supplies, and recognition.

Troop and Service Unit Procedures

- *Solicited Cash Contributions:* Per GSUSA's Blue Book of Basic Documents, girl members may not engage in any direct solicitation for money. Adult members in their Girl Scout capacities may not solicit financial contributions for purposes other than Girl Scouting. Adults may engage in combined fundraising efforts authorized by the Girl Scout council and in which the local council is a beneficiary.
- *Unsolicited Cash Contributions:* When a troop, group or service unit receives an unsolicited cash contribution, the gift should be directed to the council for deposit and acknowledgment. In a given membership year, GSGCNWI will return 100% of all gifts directed to a troop, up to a maximum of \$100 per girl member. In a given membership year, GSGCNWI will return 100% of all gifts directed to a service unit, up to \$1,000. Gifts beyond these maximums will be handled on a case-by-case basis with the individual donor.
- *Solicited In-Kind Contributions:* If a troop, group or service unit is intending to solicit an in-kind donation with an estimated value of \$500 or more, they must secure approval from the council prior to soliciting the contribution. Please contact our fund development department at 312-912-6345 or by sending an email to funddevelopment@girlscoutsgcnwi.org.
- *Matching Contributions Based on Volunteer Hours:* GSGCNWI will return 100% of the matching volunteer hour donation to the designated troop and/or service unit.

To ensure appropriate distribution and acknowledgement of contributions directed to a troop or service unit, check memo lines and descriptive information must include "Disburse to Troop [XYZ] or SU [XYZ]." Once the funds are verified as received, a request will be made for the appropriate funds be disbursed to the troop leader.

Please allow up to four weeks of processing time after council receives the funds and the request is submitted. Note that many companies do not distribute funds immediately and can take up to three months to send the funds to council.

Please contact the GSGCNWI fund development at 312-912-6345 or [by email](#) if you or someone you know plans to participate, or has participated, in an employee-hour matching program or is expecting unsolicited cash contributions. Additional troop and/or service unit funding issues, specific to our council, will be handled on an individual basis.

Council Philanthropy

Family Partnership

Family Partnership is the community of members, families and alumnae that support our council. One hundred percent of the funds raised through Family Partnership stay within our communities and help ensure that families across our council can access financial help when they need it the most.

Thanks in part to Family Partnership generosity, last year we awarded nearly \$160,000 in financial assistance to girls and troops. These funds allowed girls who needed an extra financial boost to become Girl Scouts, attend camp, participate in our unique programs, and have the exceptional experiences that are part of the Girl Scouts experience.

How to Support Family Partnership

Please consider sharing your love of Girl Scouts with a Family Partnership donation in any amount that is important to you. Your support will ensure that any girl can have transformative Girl Scout experiences, just like the Girl Scouts in your life.

Gifts can be made online by credit card when you register for membership or [directly on our website](#). You are also welcome to send a gift in the mail to Fund Development at 20 S. Clark Street, Suite 200, Chicago, IL 60603.

Thank you in advance for the time, talent and treasure you give to our council and Family Partnership. We truly appreciate your support! If you have any questions or comments, please contact Fund Development at 312-912-6345 or [by email](#).

Working with Sponsors and Other Organizations

Local sponsors can help councils power innovative programs for Girl Scouts. Community organizations, businesses, religious organizations, and individuals may be sponsors and may provide group meeting places, volunteer their time, offer in-kind donations, provide activity materials, or loan equipment. Encourage your girls to celebrate a sponsor's contribution to the troop by sending thank-you cards, inviting the sponsor to a meeting or ceremony, or working together on a Take Action project.

For information on working with a sponsor, contact [GSGCNWI Fund Development](#), which can give you guidance on the availability of sponsors, recruiting guidelines, and any

council policies or practices that must be followed. We may already have relationships with certain organizations or may know of some reasons not to collaborate with certain organizations.

When collaborating with any other organization, keep these additional guidelines in mind:

Avoid Fundraising for Other Organizations

Girl Scouts are not allowed to solicit money on behalf of another organization when identifying themselves as Girl Scouts by wearing a uniform, a sash or vest, official pins, and so on. This includes participating in a walkathon or telethon while in uniform. However, you and your group can support another organization through Take Action projects. 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."

Steer Clear of 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.

Avoid Selling or Endorsing Commercial Products

A commercial product is any product sold at a retail location. Since 1939, girls and volunteers have not been allowed to endorse, provide a testimonial for, or sell such products.

Safety in Girl Scouting

The emotional and physical safety and well-being of Girl Scouts is our top priority. [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) outlines the Safety Standards and Guidelines used in Girl Scouting, which apply to *all* Girl Scout activities.

For current COVID-19 guidelines, check your local council’s version of *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.

All volunteers should review the *Safety Activity Checkpoints* manual when planning activities with girls in order to manage safety and risk in Girl Scout-sanctioned activities.

In [*Safety Activity Checkpoints*](#), you’ll find:

- Girl Scout Activity Safety Standards and Guidelines with requirements for adult supervision, permission slips, preparation, field trips and overnight trips, and other vital information
- Activities that are not permitted by Girl Scouts of the USA and actions that girls and volunteers should not take
- Policies surrounding chartered aircraft trips and aviation
- First-aid and overall health information you’ll need from the girls
- Standards for well-being and inclusivity, including working with Girl Scouts with disabilities and ensuring emotional safety
- A breakdown of specific activities—such as camping, internet use, and water sports—and their individual safety checkpoints

Following the Safety Standards and Guidelines is an Activity-at-a-Glance chart which details two critical points to keep in mind:

- Age-appropriate activities and participation by grade level
- Whether prior approval from your council is required before girls participate in a specific activity

Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need

From camping weekends to cookie booths, adult volunteers must always be present to ensure their Girl Scouts have fun and stay safe, no matter their grade level.

Not sure just how many adults you’ll need for your activity? The following chart breaks down the minimum number of volunteers needed to supervise a specific number of Girl Scouts; councils may also establish maximums due to size or cost restrictions, so be sure to check with them as you plan your activity.

	Group Meetings		Events, Travel, and Camping	
	Two unrelated approved and registered volunteers (at least one of whom is	One additional volunteer to each additional:	Two unrelated approved and registered volunteers (at least one of whom is female)	One additional volunteer to each additional:

	female) for up to this number of girls:		for up to this number of girls:	
Girl Scout Daisies (grades K-1)	12	1-6	6	1-4
Girl Scout Brownies (grades 2-3)	20	1-8	12	1-6
Girl Scout Juniors (grades 4-5)	25	1-10	16	1-8
Girl Scout Cadettes (grades 6-8)	25	1-12	20	1-10
Girl Scout Seniors (grades 9-10)	30	1-15	24	1-12
Girl Scout Ambassadors (grades 11-12)	30	1-15	24	1-12

Girl Scouts Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana Volunteer Policies and Procedures

Effective October 2021

We are excited to have you as a Girl Scout volunteer. We look forward to your contributions! Please familiarize yourself with Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana's

volunteer policies and procedures, which guide and protect your status as Girl Scout volunteers and help our council provide a safe, rewarding experience for all members.

Volunteers are to observe all policies and procedures found in this document.

Read all our [Volunteer Policies & Procedures \[PDF\]](#) or see the breakdown below.

All guidelines in our Volunteer Essentials are subject to change as new information or changes noted by federal or state health agencies regarding the spread of COVID-19 emerge. Please review and stay updated with our COVID-19 guidelines, which require all volunteers to take all reasonable precautions to limit potential exposure for girls, volunteers, and families.

Human Relations Statement Policy

Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana is committed to engaging girls in a lifelong leadership development journey that empowers them to take action in making the world a better place. Volunteers are essential to the strength and capacity of the Girl Scout Movement and are essential partners in achieving the goals of the council. The council will strive to promote an atmosphere in which relationships are characterized by dignity, honesty, courtesy, respect, and equitable treatment.

Membership Policy

Girl Scouts of the USA is a membership organization. All adults participating in the Girl Scout Movement should be registered members of Girl Scouts of the USA and pay the annual membership dues, except those who are lifetime members or who are working in a temporary advisory or consultative capacity. Financial aid is available.

Nondiscrimination Policy

It is the policy of Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age (over 40), disability unrelated to the individual's ability to perform designated volunteer duties, national origin, citizenship, marital status, or economic status.

Eligibility and Placement Policy

Each volunteer is assigned on the basis of ability to perform in the volunteer position, volunteer and council need, ability and willingness to attend training, and qualifications for membership in the Girl Scout Movement. Every effort will be made to place volunteers in positions that meet both their needs and interests and the needs of the council.

Volunteers shall be Girl Scout adult members and complete a criminal background check. Criminal background checks are performed to maintain a safe environment for girls and adults. Volunteers are required to renew their criminal background check every three (3) years.

Assignment and Approval Procedure

Prior to volunteering in any capacity with Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana, all adults must be eligible to serve as volunteers. Eligible volunteers are those adults who have completed the volunteer screening process and have been approved to volunteer.

Reappointment Procedure

Operational volunteers will be appointed for a term of one year. Reappointment will be based on past performance, adherence to council and Girl Scouts of the USA policies, standards and procedures, support of the Girl Scout Mission and council goals.

Training Policy

Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana strives to develop each person's ability to effectively perform her or his assignment(s) in the Girl Scouts. In pursuit of this endeavor, orientation and/or training for all volunteer assignments is provided.

A volunteer is expected to participate in any training necessary for her or his position. Failure to complete training programs may be a basis for release or cause for non-reappointment to the current position. Check [gsLearn](#) for training for your volunteer position.

- At least one registered adult in a troop/group leadership role must complete the Girl Scout Welcome Session before their first assignment
- At least one registered adult in a troop/group leadership role must complete required training before or within 30 days of the first troop meeting. Required trainings are listed once you access [gsLearn](#)
- It is required that adults in positions of troop/group leadership whose group will be changing grade levels participate in training for the new level available in [gsLearn](#)

Training Procedures

Volunteer training opportunities are offered in a variety of formats including online, webinar, face-to-face and, blended learning, which combines eLearning with a face-to-face skills session.

For any training facilitated by a trainer – for example, webinar, face-to-face or blended learning:

- Pre-registration for training is required
- Some courses, such as first aid and outdoor education, have fees to cover the cost of supplies and certifications. Participants have to pay in full when registering for the course
- A waiting list will be established for courses that exceed the maximum capacity Registration deadlines are indicated on the Learning Portal
- Participants will receive a course confirmation to remind them of their registration no later than 48 hours prior to the training
- Children cannot be accommodated at training events due to insurance considerations

The cost for volunteer training is considered a troop expense and can be covered by troop treasury funds. Partial financial aid may be available for training courses that have a fee. Please complete the [Adult Development financial aid application](#) found on our website and submit it for approval.

Cancellations

In-person courses may be canceled due to low registration or inclement weather. Registered participants will be notified by email if the course is canceled due to low registration. In the case of emergency or inclement weather, you will be notified by telephone. Only those registered for a course can be notified if a course is canceled.

Performance Appraisal Policy

Volunteers will be provided with the opportunity for a regular review and feedback. Standards of performance shall be established for each volunteer position, in accordance with council goals.

Confidential Policy

Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana respects the right to individual privacy of each registered Girl Scout member. Information obtained by Girl Scouts, its staff and/or volunteers may only be used by and for Girl Scouts for the purpose of Girl Scout activity and should not be used for any other organization or solicitation.

Child Abuse Reporting Policy

Any time volunteers have reasonable cause to believe that a Girl Scout minor may have been abused or neglected, they may file a report with the appropriate state's department of children and family services. Girl Scout volunteers are considered permissive reporters, and although not required by law to file such reports, are encouraged to do so.

Volunteers are required to send an email to customercare@girlscoutsgsgcnwi.org any time a report has been sent to the department of children and family services, or any time there is reasonable cause to suspect that child abuse or neglect of a Girl Scout minor has occurred.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse Procedures

If a volunteer has any reason to believe that a Girl Scout minor is being abused or neglected, they may file a report with the appropriate state's department of children and family services. If in Illinois, call 800-252-2873. If in Indiana, call 800-800-5556. This call may be made from any Girl Scout office if desired.

Cyberbullying and Social Media Usage Policy

The Council is committed to 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 with an environment free from all forms of unlawful or unwelcome harassment, hostility and bullying; and therefore, it will not be tolerated.

This policy includes physical violence as well as intimidation, stalking, coercion, display of weapons, threats, and talking or joking about harassment or hostility, whether in person or through some other means of communications such as writing, telephone, voice mail, electronic mail, or any form of social media.

According to the US Department of Health and Human Resources, “bullying” is defined as aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength, typically repeated over time. Cyberbullying is bullying that occurs online. Whether cyberbullying occurs in email, a text message, an online game, or on a social networking site, it is prohibited. This includes rumors or images posted online where other people may see them. GSGCNWI will cooperate with police, schools, and other organizations that share our values who are attempting to enforce laws, regulations, and rules regarding cyberbullying regardless of the potential punishment.

Anyone, regardless of volunteer or member status, who violates this policy and/or refuses to abide by this policy, is prohibited from holding volunteer positions with GSGCNWI and from attending Girl Scout activities, events, and meetings. Any volunteer who engages in or encourages bullying is subject to release from their volunteer position.

Finance Policy

Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana is responsible for ensuring that all money earned or received in the name of Girl Scouting within its jurisdiction is used for Girl Scout purposes. All money received becomes the property of Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana and not of individuals.

Custodianship of such funds is the responsibility of designated registered adult members, in conformity with council-established policies, standards, and procedures. Girl Scout volunteers must abide by mandatory policies, standards, and procedures set forth by GSUSA publications, as well as those found in Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana’s volunteer policies.

Service Unit and Troop Financial Reports Procedures

By July 30 of each year, troops are required to submit an annual financial report through the Finance tab of the Volunteer Toolkit, accompanied by a reconciled bank statement, including a detailed cash report or software program report of their choice, to track monthly financial transactions. Troops are encouraged to keep detailed records and receipts for one year following each membership year in their possession.

By July 30 of each year, Service Units are required to submit a detailed cash report and an annual financial report accompanied by a bank statement. The Service Unit Detailed Cash Report and Annual Financial Report can be found in [gsLearn](#).

Bad Debt Procedures

In the event that a volunteer has a bad debt exceeding 45 days after they have received a notification, said volunteer will be immediately removed from their position by the council and will be sent to collections. Volunteers with bad debts may also be subject to legal action.

Disbanded Troop Procedures

A troop disbands when the members decide not to reregister or stop meeting during or at the close of the membership year. Money accumulated by the troop bank account always belongs to the troop and not to individual girls. Troops that are disbanding must complete the following steps:

- Notify the service unit manager
- Troop decides how to use any existing funds
- Complete and submit the Annual Financial Report in the Finance tab of Volunteer Toolkit.
- [Complete the Disbanding Troop form](#)
- All remaining funds not used by the troop must be transferred to the council. Make checks payable to Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana; Memo: Disbanding Troop XXXXX. Mail to any Gathering Place, ATTN: Customer Care
- Close out the troop bank account after all outstanding checks have cleared

Adults Handling Finances Procedures

All adults handling money must be approved volunteers with no financial restrictions. This includes, but is not limited to, troop cookie managers, troop fall product managers, service unit cookie managers, service unit fall product managers, service unit treasurers, troop treasurers, and troop support volunteers. Volunteers should deposit funds on a regular basis within 48 hours of receipt.

Volunteers who accept responsibility for troop finances of any kind are responsible for the girls' funds. The volunteer must be able to provide receipts, bank statements, signed permission slips, etc. to show where and how their Girl Scout funds were used and provide balances due.

Troop Bank Account Procedures

All troops are required to hold their Girl Scout funds in a bank account. The bank account is to be opened in the name of Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana, Troop Number XXXXX. There are to be minimally two (2) signers on the account. No signer on the account may be a Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana employee. This account will use the federal tax identification number 36-3871241. The address on the account must be that of one of the signers. Bank statements are to be sent to the home address of a person registered with the troop, not to the Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana.

Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana recommends establishing an account with BMO Harris Bank. The council has been able to establish a mutually beneficial partnership with BMO Harris Bank that provides many benefits to troops that open a business account, such as, waiving account fees. Troops select one of two letters that is submitted to the bank when opening or modifying a bank account. Your service unit manager or troop support specialist will

advise you on bank account activity, troop financial reporting and use of sales tax exemption forms.

Troop Money-Earning Procedures

All Girl Scouts are expected to participate in Girl Scout product program activities to cover their expenses. These programs include the Fall Product Program and the Girl Scout Cookie® Program. If Girl Scouts need additional money to support program activities and have completed the two council-wide product program activities, they may apply for an additional money-earning activity. Any group money-earning activities may not compete with the Girl Scout Cookie Program or other council product programs selling times. This black-out period is for October, January, February, and March.

[Girl Scouts need to complete a Money-Earning Application](#) for activities beyond council-sponsored programs. See additional Money-Earning Basics online in Volunteer Essentials. Girl Scout members in troops and individual girl members participating in the Girl Scout Silver Award, the Girl Scout Gold Award, or travel activities will follow the same procedures outlined above to secure permission for additional money-earning activities.

Council Shop Check Acceptance Procedure

We only accept personal or troop checks. Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana reserves the right to refuse or accept any check. Information on the check must be preprinted by a financial institution and have a valid check number. It must include the person's name, the address of the person, the phone number and troop number. We do not accept temporary or starter checks, two or three-party checks, checks drawn on foreign banks, or payroll checks.

A state-issued driver's license, state-issued ID card, or US Passport must be shown upon request. If an ID is requested, the information must match the preprinted information on the check. The customer whose name is printed on the check by the financial institution must be present.

Checks should be presented for the exact amount of purchase only. No cash back. By writing a check to us for payment you authorize us to withdraw the full amount of the payment from your checking account by the standard deposit of your check, or utilizing Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) if we choose. In the event that a check is returned from the bank unpaid for any reason and funds are available in your account, we reserve the right to Utilize Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) to withdraw the full amount of the check, plus our \$25 fee, directly from your account. There is a \$25 return check fee for insufficient funds.

Product Program Procedures

Payments Due to the Council

Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana will use Automated Clearing House (ACH) electronic funds transfers for money due from the troop to the council for both product programs. ACH is an electronic network for financial transactions. It is the safe and secure system through which funds are transferred electronically (sweep), to make payments and/or collect funds. The ACH system uses the bank routing number and bank account number to identify accounts to be debited.

Troops are required to deposit all money received as a result of their product program into their troop bank accounts a minimum of one week prior to the scheduled sweep transaction date.

Troops who have insufficient funds in their troop bank accounts to cover the total amount due to the council at the time of the sweep are responsible for all bank fees incurred as the result of insufficient funds.

Troops may occasionally receive a returned check written by a customer from their bank due to non-sufficient funds (NSF). Troops will need to email a copy of the NSF check to Product Program and the following steps will then take place:

- Product Program will update Nut-e/eBudde to reflect the loss of sales and payments
- GSGSGCNWI will refund the cost of any bank fees to the troop
- GSGSGCNWI will pursue collections of the NSF check

Counterfeit Money

The council strongly recommends that troops, including girls and their parents, not accept any bill larger than a \$20 (twenty) when taking payments for Girl Scout products. If an individual decides to accept a \$50 or \$100 bill, they accept full responsibility for any that may turn up as counterfeit.

We also strongly recommend that troops purchase a counterfeit bill detector pen to use at booth sites (available at many office supply stores and on the Internet). This is another opportunity for an entrepreneurial lesson for our Girl Scouts.

Reporting Product/Money Loss

Girl Scout volunteers and anyone accepting responsibility for Girl Scout products and payments are responsible for making restitution and providing supporting paperwork to the council or to the troop

In the case of fraudulent activity such as theft of product and/or money, product damage due to negligence, carelessness, fire, flood or Acts of God, there is still a responsibility.

The following steps must be taken in reporting the incidents mentioned above:

- A police report must be filed within 24 hours of the occurrence,
- A copy of the police report including the details below must be submitted to the Girl Scout council within 48 hours of the occurrence:
- Date and time Location Troop number
- Full name of the volunteer
- Details of the incident including the amount of cookies and/or money involved

Submission of the above conditions and information does not absolve the person who incurred the loss. The persons who incurred the loss or incident are expected to submit said loss through their insurance provider to make restitution to the troop or council. The Girl Scout council reserves the right to review each occurrence or incident separately. We will take into consideration the circumstances surrounding each case.

Guidelines for Conduct Policy

Girl Scout volunteers may not consume or use alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs or be under the influence of same at any council-owned property or at any function where girls are in attendance. In addition, performing volunteer duties while under the influence of illegal drugs and/or alcohol is prohibited. The use of alcohol may be permitted at council-approved functions with the prior approval of special events staff.

Adults who accompany troops or groups must not smoke in the presence of minors at Girl Scout activities. Smoking is not permitted at council-owned sites except in designated areas.

Possession of firearms by adults in any Girl Scout activity or in any way affiliated with a Girl Scout program activity where children are present, shall not be permitted, unless otherwise dictated by law and/or a council-approved activity.

Program and Safety Policy

Leaders/Advisors must obtain written parent/guardian consent for every girl that may want to participate in any activity that is held at a different place or time from the regularly scheduled meeting. The regularly scheduled meeting place by definition includes the outside property where the troop meets.

Parent/Guardian consent to participate shall also be obtained if an activity involves unusual risk and/or sensitive issues as defined in Safety Activity Checkpoints, even if conducted at the regularly scheduled meeting time and place.

A certified first aider must be present during an overnight or camping trip and as specified by Safety Activity Checkpoints. A registered adult must be present who has appropriate council approved training or skill competency, as determined by the council, for the specific event or trip.

Program and Safety Procedures

All Safety Activity Checkpoints are to be adhered to during any troop/group activities including trips, meetings, overnights, camping and extended trips. Safety Activity Checkpoints are available online at girlscoutsGSGCNWI.org/forms.

If troops/groups are leaving the regular meeting site or are meeting at a time and location different from the regular group meeting, parents/guardians must be informed in writing prior to departure. [Permission slips for each outing or trip, or the multi-use permission slip](#), must be signed by a parent/guardian.

Additional permission slips signed by a parent/guardian are required for topics that may be sensitive in nature as outlined in Safety Activity Checkpoints. A Sensitive Topics Permission Form can be found at girlscoutsgcnwi.org/forms. Single use or multiple activity permission forms are available.

At least two unrelated volunteers, one who is female, must be present at all times. Each troop/group is to have a minimum of one position-trained volunteer or designee present at all times. Additional volunteers are required as chaperones according to ratios outlined in Safety Activity Checkpoints. These volunteers are to be registered as Girl Scouts and approved volunteers.

Male volunteers may accompany a Girl Scout group on an overnight. Be sure the following procedures are followed:

- When camping on council property, be sure the Property Registrar (312-416-2500 ext. 6371) is made aware so that the property manager may be informed of male volunteers accompanying the troop/group
- One member of the leadership team must be an unrelated female
- Separate sleeping accommodations and hygiene facilities must be arranged
- Girl Scout leaders are expected to exercise care and good judgment to ensure a safe and appropriate environment for the girls

Camp Arrival and Departures Procedures

All camp participants must adhere to camp check-in and check-out. Detailed procedures will be sent with your rental confirmation.

Check-in procedures may vary by campsite. Participants must have a complete roster to give the property manager. All vehicles must be parked in the parking lot. Parking on the grass is prohibited. Only one vehicle can be designated as the emergency vehicle for hospital type of emergencies and can travel to the campsite.

Camp participants should inform the property manager of the time they will be leaving the camp. Plan to spend one hour cleaning the indoor and outdoor space(s) used by your troop/group. Do not leave the camp without the approval of check-out from the property manager. The adult in charge must be on the property the entire time that troops/groups are on the property.

Product Program Participation Procedures

All Girl Scouts members are expected to participate in the fall product and cookie programs. In addition to providing an opportunity for girls to earn funds to support troop/group activities, product program funds offset the cost of volunteer training, girl program, and administrative support to troops and service units.

Cancellations and Refunds Procedures

Council Sponsored Activities

If the council cancels an activity or event for any reason, troops or families will receive a full refund. Programs may be canceled due to low enrollment. If a program does not meet the minimum girls required by the registration close date, the program will be canceled. Participants will be notified of the cancellation via email on the Monday prior to an in-person program and approximately two days prior to a virtual program. Council events and activities run rain or shine unless there are safety concerns that prompt the council to issue a cancellation notice.

For virtual programs, the number of registered participants will be based on individuals who registered and paid (where applicable) for the program.

Refunds will be made as follows:

- No refunds issued on pre-purchased tickets. Prices are subject to change
- No refunds are given within two weeks of a program
- You may swap participants up to the day of the event
- Refunds will not be given for programs or events \$5 or less
- You may receive a credit on your program registration account for future experiences
- Refunds will not be given for deposits on council-sponsored trips
- Refund requests must be made in writing to reghelp_events@girlscoutsgcnwi.org prior to registration deadline
- Girl and adult membership registration is non-refundable
- Participants choosing not to attend will not be issued a refund

Deadlines and Min/Max Requirements

Once registration begins, programs will be filled on a first-come, first-serve basis. Registration will continue until the program has reached the maximum number allowed or the registration deadline, which varies depending on the program. Programs may be canceled if the stated minimum is not met; all programs are subject to change or cancellation. A waiting list is created for programs that have reached capacity. To be placed on the waiting list select “Add to Wait List” in the program registration system.

Girl Scouts GCNWI day and resident camp and site rentals have a separate refund and cancellation policy.

Membership

Membership fees are non-refundable.

Troop Camping

If a troop needs to cancel for any reason, cancellation must be made by email to property@girlscoutsGSGCNWI.org.

- The \$25 per site application fee for camp property rentals is non-refundable
- In the event of cancellation, GSGSGCNWI will refund 50 percent of fees paid excluding the \$25 per site application fee
- In the event of rescheduling a rental, GSGSGCNWI will transfer fees paid excluding the \$25 per site application fee to a new reservation made within the same membership year

Council Shop Return and Exchange Procedures

Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana will accept your return or exchange of unworn, unwashed, unaltered merchandise within 60 days of the original purchase. Merchandise may be returned or exchanged at any of our Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana locations, provided they are open. Returns with a receipt will be credited via the original payment method. Items without a receipt will only be accepted for exchange at the current retail price or in-store credit. All clearance and Joliet outlet store merchandise are final sale and cannot be returned or exchanged. Pre-assembled uniforms are not returnable or exchangeable.

Conflict Resolution Policy

The conflict resolution process is based on the fundamental values of respect for the individual and fairness. The policy exists so members of the organization can air their grievances and have avenues to resolving them.

All volunteers may use the conflict resolution procedure. Every volunteer may expect a fair resolution of her/his dispute without fear of jeopardizing her/his volunteer status. The initiation of the conflict resolution procedure will not restrict the council from taking immediate and appropriate action with respect to the volunteer.

Conflict and Grievance Resolution Procedures

Volunteers are encouraged to voice concerns they have in order to find a resolution to those concerns. GSGCNWI recognizes the importance of resolving conflicts and grievances in a timely manner and ensuring fairness for all individuals involved.

Often times, “grievance” and “conflict” are used interchangeably when discussing issues. Because each of these is unique, they are addressed separately to better serve the needs of the individuals involved. All conflict and grievance resolutions will be guided by the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

Conflict Resolution Procedures

Conflict resolution procedures are implemented when an individual expresses a conflict with another individual. GSGCNWI encourages individuals to, first, reach out to the person with whom they have a conflict in order to share perspective and remove any misunderstandings.

Often-times, a discussion, with the intent of seeking understanding, can simply be the solution. GSGCNWI will also work to ensure confidentiality if the individual requests it; however, confidentiality, oftentimes, limits an investigation of a situation.

GSGCNWI favors a mediation approach to conflicts where the individuals retain the power to come to a mutually beneficial agreement through a facilitated discussion. The facilitator is usually a volunteer, staff member or third party. An individual can follow these steps to resolve conflict:

- The individual is strongly encouraged to discuss the situation face-to-face with the person with whom they have a conflict to seek understanding, remove all possible

misunderstandings, share viewpoints, and diffuse a situation with a peaceful resolution. If that does not resolve the issue, proceed to next step

- The parties should jointly discuss the situation with the volunteer or staff supervisor to assist in finding a resolution mutually benefitting all parties involved. If this does not resolve the issue, proceed to next step. If the issue is not resolved by this point, the individuals may escalate the issue to the director of volunteer services or vice president of member and mission engagement

Grievance Procedures

Grievance procedures may be implemented when a volunteer expresses concern with the application of the council's policy, procedure, practice or decision. Filing a grievance will not guarantee a reversal of the application of the council's policy, procedure, practice or decision, but provides a forum for further discussion and review.

A volunteer may express a concern by discussing the concern with her/his volunteer or staff supervisor.

The volunteer and their volunteer or staff supervisor will strive to find a solution or mutual understanding of the expressed concern. The expressed concern will also be shared with the appropriate department for consideration, review, or possible future implementation.

Transportation Policy

Volunteers operating motor vehicles transporting Girl Scouts must be at least 21 years of age and hold a valid driver's license.

- Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana requires that buses used to carry Girl Scouts must have insurance in accordance with current minimum amounts as determined by the council. A copy of the current insurance certificate must be on file at the corporate office confirming this information
- Volunteers transporting Girl Scouts must carry appropriate insurance in accordance with state laws. All activity insurance regulations, as stated in policies carried by the council or GSUSA, must be followed
- Companies used for renting or leasing cars, buses, vans, or other vehicles to transport Girl Scouts must provide a certificate of insurance listing the Girl Scouts as an additional insured entity. This certificate must be approved by the Girl Scout's insurance carrier prior to transporting any Girl Scouts
- In passenger cars, vans and trucks used during Girl Scout activities, each passenger must have their own seat belt. The State laws of Illinois and Indiana regarding passenger restraint systems, including booster seats, must be followed at all times

Transportation Procedure

All volunteers driving Girl Scout members must be at least 21 years of age, must be a registered member of Girl Scouts and have a volunteer background check screening with no driving restrictions on file. Volunteers should refer to Safety Activity Checkpoints on transporting girls.

Resignation Policy

In order to maintain professionalism and support an effective transition of responsibilities, volunteers are encouraged to give at least two (2) weeks' notice when they are resigning from their assignment. Written notification of resignation is to be provided to the volunteer's immediate supervisor.

Termination Policy

Although it is anticipated that a volunteer's activities with the council shall be mutually rewarding, situations may arise that make it necessary to release an individual from a volunteer position. Reasons for termination may include, but are not limited to:

- Abuse, neglect, mishandling, or mistreatment of girls or adults
- Inability to perform the assignment
- Excessive absence or tardiness
- Misappropriation of funds or outstanding debt
- Unsatisfactory completion of objectives or failure to take corrective action
- Conviction of a felony during volunteer service
- Discrimination regarding race, color, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age (over 40), disability unrelated to the individual's ability to perform designated volunteer duties, religion, or economic status
- Failure to maintain strict confidentiality when handling sensitive or privileged information
- Violation of Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana and/or Girl Scouts of the USA policies
- Actions not consistent with the Girl Scout Movement

Termination Procedures

The termination process supports the Termination Policy and exists to ensure consistency and fairness. Request for a volunteer's termination can be initiated by volunteers, non-volunteers or staff and must be made to the director of volunteer services. Termination requests should generally follow a coaching and corrective action process unless extenuating circumstances exist. When it is deemed necessary to possibly terminate a volunteer, the council will adhere to the following steps:

- The director of volunteer services or designee will have a discussion with the volunteer to explain why there is concern about the volunteer's performance/actions
- The director of volunteer services or designee will conduct an investigation into the issues to determine if the termination is warranted
- The director of volunteer services or designee, in certain circumstances, may assign a team of volunteer representatives from throughout council to convene in order to evaluate the facts. If convened, the volunteer representatives must act only on the basis of substantiated information and involve only those directly involved in the fact-gathering and decision-making process. They may also meet with the participants as a group to seek clarity

- When the facts indicate that release or termination is necessary, the volunteer will be notified of the decision

All termination proceedings shall remain strictly confidential. The council reserves the right to notify relevant GCNWI persons. Termination does not terminate membership with Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.

Whistleblower Policy

Purpose

Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana (GSGCNWI) requires all directors, officers, employees, volunteers and contracted vendors (hereafter referred to as “stakeholders”) to observe high standards of professional and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities. These individuals must comply with all applicable laws and regulations, and practice the Girl Scout Law and Promise in fulfilling their responsibilities.

This policy establishes procedures for the reporting of:

- concerns regarding accounting or auditing activities
- the commission of unlawful acts such as corruption, bribery, theft or misuse of council property, fraud, coercion, willful omission to perform duty
- gross misconduct or gross inefficiency
- any condition that may significantly threaten the health or safety of girl members, volunteers, employees or the public

Reporting in Good Faith

GSGCNWI encourages all stakeholders to promptly report any action or suspected action in violation of our ethical standards using the procedures established by this policy. Stakeholders reporting a known or suspected violation must do so in good faith, without malice to GSGCNWI or any individual, and have reasonable grounds for believing that a violation of our standards has occurred.

Failure to report a suspected violation or to act in good faith may result in corrective action up to and including termination of services provided by the stakeholder.

No Retaliation

This Whistleblower Policy is intended to encourage and enable stakeholders to raise concerns within GSGCNWI prior to seeking resolution outside the organization. With this goal in mind, no stakeholder who in good faith reports a suspected violation, or cooperates in the investigation of a suspected violation, will suffer harassment, retaliation, or be subject to adverse employment, volunteer or vendor consequences as a result of their efforts to comply with this policy.

Moreover, retaliation against a stakeholder who has reported a suspected violation in good faith is grounds for corrective action up to and including termination of services provided by the stakeholder.

Reporting Procedures

Serious concerns relating to financial reporting, unethical or illegal conduct, should be reported via any one of the avenues listed below. The variety of options provided is intended to offer flexibility for the complainant and the ability to report to parties not implicated in the complaint.

Employees

- Discuss the concern with your immediate supervisor, manager, or department head
- Discuss the concern with a member of the Human Resources team

Directors

- Discuss the concern with the Board Chair
- Discuss the Concern with the CEO or a member of the executive team

Volunteers

- Discuss the concern with your volunteer supervisor or service unit manager Discuss the concern with your primary staff liaison

Vendors

- Discuss the concern with your primary contact within GSGCNWI
- Or-

All employees, directors, volunteers and vendors may make use of our third-party reporting service via any the following avenues:

- Toll Free Telephone Hotline: 877-472-2110 (English speaking U.S. and Canada) 800-216-1288 (Spanish speaking North America)
- Email: reports@lighthouse-services.com (complainant must identify name of the company)
- Fax alternative for written documents: 215-689-3885 (please be sure to use company name)
- Web: lighthouse-services.com (click on Report Incident link). Username: GSGCNWI and Password: juliette

Complaint Handling Procedures

The action taken will depend on the nature of the concern. Initial inquiries will be made to determine whether an investigation is appropriate and the form that it should take. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation.

Regardless of whether the concern was reported to GSGCNWI staff or through the third-party service, the complainant will receive acknowledgment that the concern was received. The final disposition of all complaints received will be reported and reviewed by the Audit Committee of the Board of Directors.

Confidentiality

Reports of suspected violations and investigations pertaining thereto, will be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct a full investigation and cooperate with law enforcement authorities. Disclosure of such information to individuals not involved in the

investigation will be viewed as a serious disciplinary offense and may result in corrective action up to and including termination of services provided by the stakeholder.

GSGCNWI strongly encourages stakeholders to identify themselves when reporting suspected violations in order to facilitate investigation of the matter. However, reports may be made anonymously in writing or by voice message to the VP of HR or through the third-party reporting service. Please note that while anonymous allegations will be investigated to the extent possible, consideration will be given to the prudence of continuing such investigations based on the likelihood of confirming the alleged facts or circumstance.