

In-Person Troop Meetings and Activities COVID-19 Guidance for Volunteers Edition date: 8/12/2021

COVID-19 is an extremely contagious virus that spreads easily in the community. Take all reasonable precautions to limit potential exposure for girls, volunteers, and families.

Girl Scouts' number one priority is the safety and well-being of our members and the families and communities we serve. This guidance is intended to be used for volunteers in conjunction with Safety Activity Checkpoints and according to each council's individual state and local COVID-19 circumstances which remains fluid. This guidance is being provided as of the Edition Date above, during a time when a vaccine has not been made readily available. It is important that you continue to monitor local and federal guidelines and the other resources indicated below such as the [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#). GSUSA may, but is not obligated to, modify this guidance, from time to time, in its sole discretion.

Face Coverings Update:

Indoors: When people wear a mask correctly, they protect others as well as themselves. Consistent and correct mask use is especially important indoors and in crowded settings when physical distancing cannot be maintained. We are requesting that while our state is in a continual upsurge in Covid cases that all participants in Girl Scout activities, vaccinated or unvaccinated, wear a face covering when meeting indoors. If we see a significant decline in cases, then we will alter this recommendation, however at this time please take the recommended steps to protect each other.

Outdoors: In general, people do not need to wear masks when outdoors. However, particularly in areas of **substantial to high transmission**, people who are not fully vaccinated are encouraged to wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people who are not fully vaccinated.

Troop Meetings in the home. GSUSA suggests no meetings in the home out of concern that there would be greater risk of exposure to other family members. In certain exceptional situations and due to the current COVID-19 risk restricting public meeting options, councils may wish to evaluate in-home meetings on a case by case basis, particularly for those troops in rural areas who have regularly and successfully met in the home, have no elderly or immune compromised family members in the home, have been deemed safe beyond a final phase of re-opening and do not have access to a virtual or community-based location option. However, these complexities may be difficult to confirm and manage consistently which is why the recommendation, ideally, is to stay away from in-home meetings. If a council opts to permit in-home meetings, consider making it mandatory that volunteers get prior council approval. To assist with the council approval process, safety checkpoint considerations include:

- The home must be the home of registered, background checked, council approved Volunteer.
- Girls may not meet in a home where a registered sex offender lives.
- Some councils may require membership and background checks for all adults living in the home.
- The troop needs to be able to focus without disruptions from other household members.
- Animals should be kept in a place that is separate from the meeting space.
- Homeowners should consider any personal homeowner insurance implications. The Homeowner should ask their Homeowner's insurance carrier if there are any insurance exclusions regarding holding troop meetings at the home, in the event an accident or injury occurs.
- Council staff should confirm with their council's insurance broker that a Girl Scout volunteer homeowner would be covered under the council's General Liability insurance carrier, in the event an accident or injury occurs during the course of a Girl Scout meeting at the home.
- Weapons must be completely out of view and stored in a locked space.
- Medication, dangerous cleaning products, or any poisonous substance must be stored in a secure space out of sight, preferably locked.
- Meetings should ideally be held outdoors, perhaps in the back or front yard of the home (this is a COVID-19 specific precaution).
- Ensure that the Hygiene and Risk Mitigation and all other guidance in this document are followed. (this is a COVID-19 specific precaution)

Backyard Meetings. For back and front yard meetings, make sure that the grounds are completely safe for children. For example, be careful that pools are fenced or otherwise safely sectioned off. The same goes for any equipment or tools or recreational apparatus that is deemed unsafe for girls such as outdoor trampolines. Make sure that pets are kept separate from the girls meeting space. Ensure that both the troop leader and co-leader can see girls and monitor their whereabouts at all times. Maintain the use of the buddy system for errands or bathroom breaks. If the property is large, ensure that the meetings space is kept distinctly separate from non-members.

Troop Meeting Size. The current suggested maximum is ten people (eight girls and two unrelated adult volunteers). However, check your local restrictions for small gatherings. If more

restrictive than 10 people, follow the local restriction. Restrictions vary greatly from state to state, county to county, and even from town to town--and can frequently change. Similar to any in-person gathering, if a state allows more than ten to gather, utilize all social distancing practices and follow all preventative guidance (such as face coverings). For large troops, have volunteers stay connected with girls while waiting for a safe time for everyone to gather. Large troops are wonderful, so encourage them to stay together! Some ideas for volunteers:

- Host virtual troop meetings (see below).
- Gather up in smaller groups—such as age-level groups, patrols, or groups of girls with a particular badge they'd like to work on.

Large Gatherings. If your jurisdiction permits larger gatherings, confirm the number of people that are permitted and remind volunteers to allow for proper girl-to-adult ratios. It is strongly recommended to meet outdoors as opposed to indoors, and only when social distancing can be maintained. For more people or large gatherings, when the time is safely appropriate, follow the CDC guidelines: Large Gatherings and Community Events. Volunteers should get council prior approval before planning any gatherings of more than ten people. Council staff may consider larger group gatherings greater than 10 people after considering the norms in the local region. Answers to the following questions will help guide this decision:

- Has a successful final phase of re-opening been completed? (several weeks after)
- Do state and local law permit larger gatherings? How many people permitted?
- Have schools been re-opened for in-person classes?
- Is the event indoors or outdoors? (outdoors is safer than indoors provided social distancing is maintained)
- Can social distancing be maintained?
- Always follow CDC guidance and all GSUSA guidance available in this document pertaining to large in-person gatherings and/or hosting council events. Troop Meeting Space. Outdoor spaces where social distancing can be maintained are strongly recommended for meetings when the weather permits. Volunteers should get advance permission from the property owner or the jurisdiction that provides the location.

For meetings held at public facilities, volunteers should contact the facility ahead of time and ask:

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

Then, encourage volunteers to supplement any practices that are less ideal. For example, if the troop arrives after another user group, they should plan to bring sanitizing wipes to get the space ready for their troop. Another example: if faucets are manual, ask volunteers to take some time to show girls how to shut them off with a paper towel and to use paper towels for doorknobs whenever possible.

Virtual meetings. Meeting options may need to be flexible based on the fluid nature of COVID-19 risk. Troops that are able to run online meetings as needed (or wanted) should do so. GSUSA recommends maintaining a virtual to in-person ratio of at least 20/80, which means to maintain virtual troop meetings at least 20% of the time to keep tech skills and virtual meeting habits fresh. Use the Safety Activity Checkpoints for Virtual Meetings, to guide your meeting plans: [Virtual Troop Meetings](#).

Other helpful resources can be found [here](#).

Transportation (carpooling). It is imperative to take all safety precautions when girls are travelling in motor vehicles. If possible, girls from different households should not carpool. Coronavirus transmission risk is high when people are in close proximity, less than six feet apart. The risk increases when people are in a closed in area or indoors for longer than 10 minutes. When transporting girls, always space out the girls to avoid crowding, have girls wear a mask and keep the windows partially open to provide ventilation. Make sure parents are aware ahead of time if girls will be in a car together. Always, for every in-person event, meeting, or transportation arrangement, conduct the pre-screening process to ensure that coronavirus does not touch Girl Scout gatherings.

Individual parent drop-offs and pick-ups are also an option. Public transportation should be avoided and not encouraged. Remember:

- Girls and adults should wear masks when inside of a motor vehicle
- Keep car window opened, at least partially, to circulate fresh air.
- Consider the personal situation of your girls:
 - o Do they live with an immune compromised person that they can put at risk? If so, perhaps make other accommodations for her with her parents.
- Prescreen all passengers
 - o Have the families been isolating, and free from contagion? If so, the troop may essentially be a safe bubble.

Again, sustained contact within less than six (6) feet for longer than ten (10) minutes within an enclosed area creates high risk for virus transmission, so be very careful with carpool decisions. CDC guidance for ride shares and drivers for hire may be helpful as an additional reference when evaluating motor vehicle transportation or car-pooling: Ride Shares and Drivers for Hire (New) Public Transportation. Public transportation should be avoided whenever possible as large groups of people, indoors, for longer than ten minutes are typical of most public transportation which increases transmission risk. Also, maintaining six feet social distance is often difficult or impossible with public transportation. However, when public transportation cannot be avoided and your council has vetted and approved public transportation then your

council may approve it but only after communicating specific safety guidelines for public transportation circumstances:

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

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

Travel and overnight stays. As always, regardless of COVID-19 restrictions, volunteers must follow guidance in Safety Activity Checkpoints. For the foreseeable future, volunteers must seek council prior approval before planning any overnight activities and continue to practice the Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation guidance outlined in this document.

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

- Stay home if you are sick.
- Cough and sneeze into a tissue, throw the tissue in the trash, and wash or sanitize your hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Wash hands if you do touch.
- Volunteers, girls and parents should be reminded to make sure temperatures are taken prior to group interaction to confirm the individual is not running a fever and

temperature is a normal 98.6 degrees. Members with fever or temperature higher than 98.6 should skip the in-person gathering until their temperature is normal.

Personal contact. Hugs, handshakes, “high-fives,” and even activities like the friendship circle or squeeze can transmit COVID-19 from person to person. Refrain from these gestures for the time being. Create a safe way for girls and volunteers to greet and end meetings instead (like tapping elbows).

Singing. If you normally close your meetings with a song, make certain girls and adults are all wearing masks. Singing and shouting both project germs farther than talking, ask your girls to either hum their closing song, or sing quietly, and always, of course, with their masks on.

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

First Aid / CPR Training. Keep skills up to date for any emergency. Talk to your council about alternative methods of training that may be available during this time, such as on-line training. For the time period that that in-person training is not available, volunteers can receive on-line training with a council approved training provider. Once possible in your jurisdiction, have volunteers resume in-person skills assessment.

Disinfectants and Disinfecting. [Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces](#) and objects that are frequently touched (i.e., table tops, markers, scissors, etc.). Use a household cleaner, or see the [EPA’s list of effective cleaners](#) approved for use against COVID-19. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).

Household bleach is effective against COVID-19 for up to 24 hours when properly diluted. Check that the bleach is not expired and determine if it can be used on a given surface. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for application and proper ventilation. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.

To prepare a bleach solution, mix:

- 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water or
- 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water

See the [CDC's website](#) for more on cleaning and disinfecting community facilities.

FDA Warning. The FDA advised consumers (6/19/2020) not to use any hand sanitizer manufactured by Eskbiochem SA de CV in Mexico, due to the potential presence of methanol (wood alcohol), a substance that can be toxic when absorbed through the skin or ingested. FDA has identified the following products manufactured by Eskbiochem:

- All-Clean Hand Sanitizer (NDC: 74589-002-01)
- Esk Biochem Hand Sanitizer (NDC: 74589-007-01)
- CleanCare NoGerm Advanced Hand Sanitizer 75% Alcohol (NDC: 74589-008-04)
- Lavar 70 Gel Hand Sanitizer (NDC: 74589-006-01)
- The Good Gel Antibacterial Gel Hand Sanitizer (NDC: 74589-010-10)
- CleanCare NoGerm Advanced Hand Sanitizer 80% Alcohol (NDC: 74589-005-03)
- CleanCare NoGerm Advanced Hand Sanitizer 75% Alcohol (NDC: 74589-009-01)
- CleanCare NoGerm Advanced Hand Sanitizer 80% Alcohol (NDC: 74589-003-01)
- Saniderm Advanced Hand Sanitizer (NDC: 74589-001-01)

Methanol is not an acceptable ingredient for hand sanitizers and should not be used due to its toxic effects. Stay completely away from sanitizers containing methanol.

Consumers who have been exposed to hand sanitizer containing methanol should seek immediate treatment, which is critical for potential reversal of toxic effects of methanol poisoning.

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

Reporting and communicating a positive COVID 19 test. In the event of a COVID-19 positive test result, do NOT contact the parents or troop members. Promptly contact your council representative, **Angie Tinch in this situation at 859-490-9406**. A **council staff member** and NOT volunteers, will be responsible for:

- Confirming and tracing the positive tester,
- Contacting the parents of anyone who may have been exposed (or other volunteers),
- Notifying a facility or homeowner where a troop has met, and
- Alerting the state department of health.

Food, Dining and Snacks. Be careful when handling and serving food and have girls be careful with each other when eating. Safety recommendations for food, dining and snacks include:

- Encourage girls to bring their own foods to eat (bag lunch or dinner)
- Encourage girls not to share their food after having touched it, such as a bag of chips.
- Individually wrapped items are recommended.
- If providing snacks, especially if unwrapped, have one person, wearing gloves, hand out items to each person, such as with cupcakes or cookies.
- Use a serving spoon or scoop rather than reaching into a bag or bowl of snacks.
- Use a buffet line only if staffed with a safely protected server with mask and gloves.
- Avoid “serve yourself” buffets.
- Public dining only as permitted in your local jurisdiction.
- If serving family style, have one person, wearing clean gloves, serve everyone on clean plates
- Use disposable plates, forks, napkins, etc. when possible.
- Encourage girls to bring foods they can easily cook themselves (a prepacked foil pack) or hotdog for outdoor cooking.
- Ensure everyone handling food, those serving, girls, adults, wash hands (even if they will be wearing gloves) prior to any food prep or meals, following CDC handwashing guidelines.
- If sharing outdoor cooking utensils (roasting forks), they should be washed and sanitized between each use or bring enough utensils so that each person gets their own.
- Continue recommendation for 6 foot spacing during mealtimes.

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

Let other volunteers know that council staff, NOT volunteers, will notify parents and others about a positive test result and that the **tester’s identity is confidential.** Remember that girl and volunteer health information is private and strictly confidential and should be only shared on a need-to-know basis with a council staff member.