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## Returning to In-Person Troop Meetings and Activities Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Volunteers

This guidance provided as of the edition date above. Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania (GSEP) may modify this guidance as circumstances change.

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

The risk associated with COVID-19 pandemic continues to change as infection rates rise and fall in different areas. There may be regional differences or developments since this guidance was published. Continue to follow CDC and PA State directives. Discuss plans with families and fellow volunteers.

***GSEP does recognize that troops may feel safe and ready to meet in person. We encourage you to talk with all families in your troop and make decisions based on your most cautious family. In-person meetings must follow all PA state, local, and council guidelines/restrictions.***

**Use these questions and reminders to help decide how and when to return to in-person troop activities.**

**Troop Meeting Space:** Outdoor spaces where social distancing can be maintained are strongly recommended for meetings. Get advance permission from the property owner or the jurisdiction that provides the location.

**Facility Rentals:** GSEP offers some of our facilities for day rentals. For meetings held at public facilities, contact (or research) the facility ahead of time and keep in mind the following:

- Is the space cleaned, and are high-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?
- Are restrooms open to the public?
- What type of faucets / soap dispensers are available in the restroom (sensory or manual)?

Consider whether you can supplement any practices that are less ideal. For example, if you will arrive after another user group, plan to bring sanitizing wipes to get the space ready for your troop. Another example: if faucets are manual, take some time to show the girls how to shut them off with a paper towel. Use paper towels for doorknobs whenever possible.

Note: Do not assume public spaces are cleaned and sanitized. Arrive 30 minutes in advance and clean high-touch surfaces.

Meetings may not be held inside fitness centers, where a greater risk for contracting the virus may exist. Schools or churches may not permit outside groups on premises, so always check and confirm ahead of time.

**Troop Meetings in the Home:** GSEP strongly suggests no meetings take place in the home out of concern that there would be a greater risk of exposure to other family members and increased risk of homeowner liability. Our strong recommendation is to refrain from in-home meetings.

**Troop Meeting Size:** The current maximum capacity is dependent on current PA State regulations for all troop meetings and gatherings. This capacity must include the required adult volunteer ratio. Outdoor meetings are strongly encouraged. All meetings and gatherings require participants to wear masks and observe 6-foot social distancing. Continue to utilize all social distancing practices and follow all preventive guidance (such as face coverings).

If you have a large troop, you can also stay connected while you wait for a safe time for everyone to gather. Large troops are wonderful, so stay together! Some ideas:

- Host virtual troop meetings (see below).
- Gather in person in smaller groups—such as age-level groups, patrols, or groups of girls with a specific badge they'd like to work on.
- Masks should be worn at all times except in circumstances in which it is less safe to wear them than to not.

**Meeting/Activity Precautions:** As GSEP continues to follow the advice and guidance of public health experts from the CDC and state and local health authorities, we highly recommend troop activities consider outdoor activities, which present a lower risk of transmission than indoor activities (i.e., hiking, biking, swimming, creative outdoor games). We encourage you to match the behavior of the most cautious person such as wearing a mask and maintaining the recommended 6-foot social distance. In conjunction with GSUSA the standard [Girl Scout Safety Guidelines](#), follow the Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation in this document. Call ahead to the facility to confirm the facility is following [CDC](#) and [PA State Guidelines](#).

Make whatever appropriate accommodations that are necessary. For example, bring hand sanitizer if none is provided for public use at the activity location. Plan ahead to consider how to ensure activities are safe – for example: Consider how to instruct the girls to safely use public restrooms when available, wear masks during all in-person activities (except in swimming pools), consider hand washing and restroom options when outdoors, and avoid singing, which is a high-risk activity that can spread viral droplets over a farther distance than normal speech.

**Face Coverings:** Volunteers should remind girls that Girl Scouts wear face coverings (masks) for in-person activities 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 should plan to 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.

**Sharing:** Most forms of sharing are prohibited at troop meeting in the current environment to help ensure all girls can stay healthy and safe while being together and avoid the spread of the virus through surface contact. At all in-person gatherings, do not permit girls to share food or activity supplies. Food can be brought from home by each participant or limited to pre-packaged, individual serving size food which can be safely distributed without cross

contamination. Activity supplies should not be shared between the girls. As alternatives, supplies may be brought from home or each girl can have a unique personal supply kit which the leader safely stocks in advance and is used at each meeting.

**Food and Snacks:** Safety recommendations for food and snacks include:

- Encourage girls to bring their own food to eat (bag lunch or dinner).
- Do not allow girls to share their food.
- Prepackaged food items from a restaurant or caterer is recommended when lunch or dinner cannot be brought from home by each individual girl.

**Personal contact:** Hugs, handshakes, “high-fives,” and even activities like the friendship circle hand squeeze can transmit COVID-19 from person-to-person. Refrain from person-to-person contact for the time being. Create a safe, contactless way for girls and volunteers to greet each other and end meetings instead.

**Beyond the Troop Events:**

- Overnight trips are not permitted in order to maintain social distancing and remain in travel compliance with CDC, state and local authorities.
- Local day trips are permitted to participate in the above stated recommended outdoor activities, while maintaining social distancing and the wearing of masks.
- Trips within your community are encouraged. No carpooling is permitted.

**Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation:** Follow the [resources developed by credible public health sources such as the 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 the following guidance:

- 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 your face.
- 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 (approximately 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit). Members with fever or temperature higher than 100.4 should skip the in-person gathering until their temperature is normal.

**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.

**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. The Red Cross is currently offering an online [120 day certification extension](#) to ensure that leaders who have had recently expired certifications can stay certified. The 120-day certification enables an existing enrollee to extend their current American Red Cross certification by 120 days from the original certification expiration date. This extension certificate is for student or base level certificates from instructor-led and blended learning courses.

GSEP is partnering with HIS to offer our Blended Medic First Aid and CPR training virtually. This course will include online pre-work and then a Remote Skills Verification "ESV" through a live video conferencing call with one of our GSEP facilitators. HIS will ship all necessary products to the participant's home for the RSV. After the RSV is complete, participants will ship the products back to HIS. The cost for this training is \$85.00 and included both ways shipping and all requires supplies. This course will be available in GSEP's online program and events system.

**Disinfectants and Disinfecting:** [Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces](#) and objects that are frequently touched (i.e., table tops, door handles, 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 (1/3<sup>rd</sup> cup) bleach per gallon of water or
- 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water

**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. <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/drug-safety-and-availability/fda-updates-hand-sanitizers-methanol> See the [CDC's website](#) for more about cleaning and disinfecting community facilities.

**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 email [memberservices@gsep.org](mailto:memberservices@gsep.org) with the subject line "COVID-19 Positive test result" and provide your contact information and a brief description of details in your email. GSEP staff will guide you through completion of our GSEP Positive COVID-19 Test Report Form. Remember that member (girls, volunteers, and adult members) health information is private and strictly confidential and should only be shared on a need-to-know basis with a council staff member. The CDC along with local and State health officials will handle any necessary contact tracing and/or communication with anyone who may have been in close contact with the infected individual.

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