

Updated: 9/13/021

### Troop Meetings, Activities/Programs, Health & Safety Practices

This guidance provided as of the edition date above. Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania (GSEP) may modify this document as guidance from the CDC, PA Health Department and local authority changes.

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 local and national directives.

Troop leaders should always consider the comfort level of their girls and families when making decisions related to troop meetings, activities, and trips. Consider the following:

- Regularly check and follow real-time local and national safety directives to make sure you are compliant with local regulations.
- Survey troop families for their comfort level attending in-person meetings and programs. Even if in-person meetings are not prohibited, some families may not be comfortable with a full return to in-person activities.
  - Be creative finding ways to accommodate these Girl Scouts so they can still participate as part of your troop.

This document provides COVID-19 health and safety guidance for Girl Scout volunteers. The guidance which follows is separated into three categories:

- Troop Meetings
- Activities and Programs
- Health and Safety Practices

### Troop Meetings

**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. Indoor meeting locations are allowable in compliance with the current PA State guidelines regarding capacity and continued mask wearing.

**Facility Rentals:** GSEP has resumed overnight rentals at our properties with certain restrictions. Please see the [Rent A Campsite](#) page for all details.

**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, group size)? Is the space cleaned between groups?

- Are restrooms open to the public?
- Are hand sanitizers and other hand washing products available?

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.

**Troop Meetings in the Home:** As always, GSEP strongly advises against meetings that take place in the home out of concern that there would be a greater risk of homeowner liability. Our strong recommendation is to refrain from in-home meetings.

\*If there are extenuating circumstances that make an at home meeting necessary, the following guidelines must be followed:

- The home must be the home of registered, background checked, council approved Volunteer.
- The troop leader must make the council aware of all individuals (children and adults) who will be present in the home at the time of the meeting,
- Girls may not meet in a home where a registered sex offender lives.
- 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.
- 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, tools or recreational apparatus that is deemed unsafe for girls, such as outdoor trampolines. The homeowner should provide supervision and any necessary safety regulations around the use of backyard playground equipment. 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.

**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 continue to 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 and the on the ready, should a second wave occur or shelter in place restrictions resume. Use the **Safety Activity Checkpoints for Virtual Meetings**, to guide your meeting plans.

**Troop Meeting Size:** The 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 in person meetings must continue to utilize social distancing practices and follow all preventive guidance (such as face coverings).

If you have a large troop, stay connected using the following 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.

## **Activities and Programs**

**Day trips and activities:** The guidance details here should be used with Safety Activity Checkpoints as you plan any day trips or special activities for your troop. 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 wipe downs in between uses for equipment at the gym. Make whatever appropriate accommodations that are necessary. For example, bring extra sanitizer or disinfectant wipes if none will be provided for public use at the activity location.

**Travel and overnight stays:** The timeframe for resuming travel will vary from state to state and even from county to county in some cases. Until further notice, all Troop Trip applications will be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis. 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.

*When planning ANY overnight trips of any length, please use the GSEP Extended Travel web to case application form found [HERE](#) for approval. Day trips and activities can continue to be approved at the Service Unit level.*

**Transportation (car-pooling):** 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 which means less than six feet apart. The risk increases when people are in a closed 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.

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:
  - 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.
  - 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](#)

**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, GSEP has approved travel by public transportation, follow these guidelines:

- 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.

## Health and Safety Practices

**Face Coverings (Masks): ALL GSEP members must wear face coverings (masks) for INDOOR in-person activities as well as OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES WHERE SOCIAL DISTANCING IS NOT POSSIBLE ( except for when sleeping, eating/drinking, or when engaging in water sports/boating).** 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, in this case the use of face shields is recommended.

**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, 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 meals.

**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.

**Pre-screening and Symptoms Check.** Prior to in-person troop meetings and activities, all participants should be screened to ensure:

- they are healthy and that they have not experienced symptoms that are associated with COVID-19 in the previous 72 hours;
- that they have not knowingly been in contact with someone that has exhibited symptoms or has been confirmed positive with COVID-19 or a person waiting to see if they are positive; and

- that they have not been to high-risk geographical regions particularly those regions that require a 14-day or otherwise specific quarantine period.

Note: The CDC defines “**close contact**” as follows:

- You were within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more.
- You provided care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19.
- You had direct physical contact with the person (hugged or kissed them)
- You shared eating or drinking utensils.
- They sneezed, coughed, or somehow got respiratory droplets on you.

If you are planning an event, you should complete the Pre-Screening and Symptoms Check step prior to each in-person gathering. The purpose of the forms is to implement and demonstrate this important safety step. If an attendee answers a question that would indicate a likelihood or a known possibility that they could be a carrier of the virus, they should be asked not to attend the gathering.

When completing the pre-screening questionnaire, be sensitive to the fact that girls may be experiencing symptoms that are similar but completely unrelated to COVID-19 and not contagious such as menstrual body aches, headaches, allergies, or a pre-existing condition. The goal is to keep the meeting safe from contagion and do the very best to ensure our girls are educated and healthy, not to make it unnecessarily difficult or uncomfortable for girls to gather safely.

**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 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, gloves, 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 at home 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.

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 contact the council in this situation. The Council member will instruct the volunteer to complete an Incident Report with an attached roster of all girls and volunteers involved in the activity and submit it to the council. Council staff will contact the volunteer if additional information is necessary.

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

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.