



Introduction: Standard Safety Guidelines

Safety Activity Checkpoints (SAC) provides the standard safety guidelines for Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA) and **Girl Scouts of Virginia Skyline Council's** approved activities.

GSUSA, local councils, and other units holding a credential—including USA Girl Scouts Overseas (USAGSO)—shall be responsible for seeing that all activities are planned and carried out in a manner that considers the health, safety, and general well-being of all participants in accordance with these standard safety guidelines.

Throughout *Safety Activity Checkpoints*, several individual activities, such as Paddling and Rowing, Climbing and Adventure, and Target Sports, are categorized under related sections to provide continuity as well as grade level and skill progression information.

In this section, *Introduction: Standard Safety Guidelines*, you will find GSUSA's standard safety guidelines, by topic, **which apply to all Girl Scout activities**. *Please read and become familiar with all topics in this section.*

Standard Safety Guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the specific, individual activity's safety checkpoints along with reasonable common-sense adjustments to ensure a safe and positive experience for Girl Scout members. The intent of providing these standard safety guidelines is to establish a checklist for success and to foster confident leadership.

Adult Supervision

The adult supervision rule at Girl Scouts is a strict standard that requires that whenever girls meet, either in person or virtually, there must be *at least* two registered, approved adult volunteers who are unrelated (for example: not a sibling, spouse, domestic partner, parent, child, or anyone who would be considered a family member) and who do not live in the same residence, with a minimum of one who is female. Troop leaders must always be adults. Youth or youth members are not permitted to substitute for adult supervision. This rule applies to every Girl Scout gathering including troop meetings (in person and virtual), day trips, camp, sleep away travel, events, activities, and projects. **There are no exceptions to this rule.**

There are specific adult-to-girl ratio requirements for Girl Scout troop meetings as compared to events outside of the regular Girl Scout troop meeting, such as outings, activities, camping, and travel. Activities and travel outside of the regular troop meeting require more adult supervision.

Adult-to-Girl Ratios for Troop Meetings

The adult-to-girl ratio for Troop Meetings means *a minimum* of two registered, approved, adult volunteers who are unrelated, including one female, must be present at troop meetings for up to this number of girls:

- 12 Girl Scout Daisies
- 20 Girl Scout Brownies
- 25 Girl Scout Juniors

- 25 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 30 Girl Scout Seniors
- 30 Girl Scout Ambassadors

With one extra registered, approved, adult volunteer for every additional:

- 1-6 Girl Scout Daisies
- 1-8 Girl Scout Brownies
- 1-10 Girl Scout Juniors
- 1-12 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 1-15 Girl Scout Seniors
- 1-15 Girl Scout Ambassadors

Adult-to-Girl Ratios for Outings, Activities, Camping and Travel

The adult-to-girl ratio for outings, activities, camping, and travel means a minimum of two registered, approved, adult volunteers who are unrelated, including one female, must be present for up to this number of girls:

- 6 Girl Scout Daisies
- 12 Girl Scout Brownies
- 16 Girl Scout Juniors
- 20 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 24 Girl Scout Seniors
- 24 Girl Scout Ambassadors

With one extra registered, approved, adult volunteer for every additional:

- 1-4 Girl Scout Daisies
- 1-6 Girl Scout Brownies
- 1-8 Girl Scout Juniors
- 1-10 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 1-12 Girl Scout Seniors
- 1-12 Girl Scout Ambassadors

Some high-adventure activities may require more adult-to-girl supervision than stated above. For those activities, the individual activity's safety activity checkpoints will provide the specific adult-to-girl supervision ratios. Remember, some activities are less safe for younger members, particularly Daisies and Brownies. Younger Girl Scout members may not be permitted to participate based on their age, as appropriate, and this will be specified on the individual activity's safety activity checkpoints. In cases where younger girl participation is an option, but only under certain conditions, this is indicated on the first page of the individual activity's safety activity checkpoints.

Note: For mixed-grade level troops (Multi-Level Troops), always use the adult-to-girl ratio for the lowest grade level in the troop. For example, if the troop consists of Daisies and Brownies, the Daisy adult-to-girl ratio should be followed.

Council Approval Requirement. On the first page of each individual activity's safety activity checkpoints, you will see a field indicating whether your Girl Scout council requires you to have prior council approval to perform the activity. Council prior approval is required for those activities that are rated as high risk by Girl Scouts' national insurance carriers. A council may approve an activity once for the duration of the year or require individual approval each time the activity takes place. This is a council decision as local norms and laws vary from state to state. The two council approval requirement types are:

- **Required.** You must check with your Girl Scout council for prior approval before taking girls.
- **Not Required.** You do not need to check with your Girl Scout council for prior approval.

Prior to solidifying girl-led plans, submitting requests for council approval, paying for activities and/or allowing girls to participate, volunteers must do the following:

- Read Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints to learn more about activities that spark girls' interest for their program grade-level abilities.
- Guide girls to plan well in advance. Add a couple of months' time to the planning timeline when girls are considering a high-risk or high-adventure activity.
- Consult council right away for clarification and to determine whether activity can be deemed approved if not listed in the Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- Find out what they'll need (e.g., a certified lifeguard for swimming, swim test, vendor approval, instructor credibility verification, safety gear, and/or council approval/trip permission.)
- Check approved vendor lists for approved vendors (high-adventure, horse stables, charter buses.)
- Refer to the current Council P1 Policy and Safety Activity Checkpoints to know when an Activity/Trip Permission (2129) must be completed for council approval.

Council P1 Policy: Activity/Trip Permission Form #2129 must be completed for any activity or trip which involves the following:

- a. Day or overnight trips that include non-registered individuals (tag-a-longs)
- b. Day or overnight trips outside of the council
- c. Any trip of 2 nights/3 days or more
- d. Trips outside of the continental United States
- e. Camping activities, including backyard camping, outdoor cooking, campfires, and cabin camping
- f. Programs that include human sexuality and related health issues
- g. Activities that present a greater risk than usual to participants (High Adventure)

When council approval is required, submit the Activity/Trip Permission (2129) to info@gsvsc.org using the timeline outlined below.

Activity/Trip Permission (2129) submission and processing timeline*:

Four (4) weeks processing is required for local field trips within in-council boundaries and activities that do NOT require vendor approval. Refer to the above P1 policy as to when local field trips require council approval. This includes high risk activities, camping (even if on council property), or programs that include human sexuality or related health issues.)

Six (6) weeks processing is required for trips out-of-council boundaries but within the state of Virginia or any activities requiring vendor* approval based on Safety Activity Checkpoints. (This includes high risk activities, camping, or programs that include human sexuality or related health issues.)

Eight (8) weeks processing is required for trips out-of-state but within the continental US and for stable vendor approvals.

Twelve (12) weeks processing is required for international trips outside of the continental US, including Alaska, Hawaii, and US territories and/or cruises.

Twenty-four (24) months in advance of intended international travel dates and prior to girl-led planning, [Intent to Travel for International Trips \(#2279\)](#) form must be submitted and approved

by council. This form is a notification of international travel and allows time for council to assign an international travel mentor and provide required GS 203 International Trip training. Intent to Travel form **DOES NOT** provide approval for international trips. For first-time Girl Scout international trips, allow **thirty-six (36) months** for planning. Some trips take longer to plan, adjust accordingly.

Note: *Timeline includes vendors that are council approved and activities are listed in the approved **Safety Activity Checkpoints**. If vendors are not on the approved vendor lists or activities are not in the **Safety Activity Checkpoints**, please contact the council right away! Girls may need to adjust their activity selections or activity date.

“It’s Not Girl Scout Approved” – It’s Not a Good Idea! Occasionally, a Girl Scout volunteer, to support the girls in the activities they would like to participate in, will decide to tell the girls and families that they will do the activity “as friends, and not as a Girl Scout troop or group” rather than find an approved vendor or modify the activity to comply with all safety guidelines. Then the girls in the active troop/group, supervised by the Girl Scout volunteers, engage in the activity together, and the supervising adults choose not to follow policies and procedures established in Volunteer Essentials and in Safety Activity Checkpoints. Not only does this put volunteers at risk for release and permanent disqualification as a volunteer for Girl Scouts, but this could also jeopardize the girls’ safety and puts both the Council and the volunteer(s) at legal risk, because courts may look beyond the words to the actions (the girls in the troop/group, supervised by the Girl Scout volunteers, engaged in the activity together). It may also expose the volunteer to some personal liability if there is an accident, injury or incident that might have been avoided had the volunteer followed Girl Scout safety guidelines. It is important to note that Girl Scout insurance does not cover participants in unapproved or non-sanctioned Girl Scout events, activities, or travel experiences. Girl Scout funds may not be used for unapproved or non-sanctioned Girl Scout events, activities, or travel experiences.

Training Requirements. Each Safety Activity Checkpoint will list required training and any training prerequisites. Before beginning to discuss or plan activities with girls for field trip outings, overnights, camping, hiking, backpacking and travel experiences away from the regular meeting place, volunteers must complete required GSUSA leadership training, Virginia’s Mandated Reporter training, as well as the council-specific program-related courses. Some courses are only available online in gsLearn (Girl Scout online learning management system) or virtually, while other courses are only available in a classroom or outdoor in-person setting. See specific Safety Activity Checkpoints and Council website for required training details.

Adults must be registered as Girl Scout members to access gsLearn courses. Volunteers must log into their [MY GS/MY ACCOUNT](#) to activate a gsLearn learner account. gsLearn is where all adult training records are maintained at the council. After account activation, volunteers may self-enroll in online courses by searching the Content Library in gsLearn. For GSUSA purposes, each course in gsLearn is listed by council code (281) and the title of the course, i.e., 281 GS 201 Trips and Overnights.

Ensure Council has copies of your Girl Scout training records and required certifications on file under Achievements and/or External Achievements in gsLearn. Otherwise, council permission approval may be delayed. In-person, council-specific, program-related courses are facilitated by volunteer council trainers. To register for an in-person course, check the [GSVSC event calendar](#). If you do not find a specific in-person course on the GSVSC Event calendar, [complete this online form request](#). Allow 4-6 months to organize an in-person course per request.

Activities Not Listed in Safety Activity Checkpoints. In a challenging, learn-by-doing environment like Girl Scouts, it is only natural that Girl Scout members will sometimes want to take part in activities that are not specifically addressed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*. If safety checkpoints are not provided

for a specific activity in *Safety Activity Checkpoints* the first step is always to contact your Girl Scout council to make sure your council approves of the activity.

Be sure to have a plan or process in place for addressing and handling requests for activities that are not specifically listed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*. When considering activities not specifically listed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*:

- **Consult with your Girl Scout council for clarification and approval before taking girls.** Your Girl Scout council may or may not permit the activity. If your council does approve the activity, they may direct you to a specific vendor or facility or advise you to stay away from other vendors or facilities.
- Investigate whether the activity is similar to another activity and if the safety activity checkpoints for that activity can easily translate and apply to an approved activity, then follow those checkpoints.
- Consider whether the proposed activity requires any additional expert supervision or special certification for the instructor.
- As with approved activities, think about the quality of the experience in terms of how participation ties to Girl Scouts Five Outcomes, the long-term positive outcomes Girl Scout members receive in Girl Scouting.

Selecting an activity to do with Girl Scout members. When considering what types of activities to do with girls, whether specifically listed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints* or not, be thoughtful and intentional when selecting the activity and be mindful of the long-term positive outcomes that Girl Scout members receive through Girl Scouting. Think about how participating in the activity ties to at least one of Girl Scouts Five Outcomes. Girl Scouts has proven to help girls thrive in 5 ways:

Strong Sense of Self

Girls have confidence in themselves and their abilities and form positive identities.

Positive Values

Girls act ethically, honestly, and responsibly and show concern for others.

Challenge Seeking

Girls take appropriate risks, try things even though they might fail and learn from their mistakes.

Healthy Relationships

Girls develop and maintain healthy relationships by communicating their feelings directly and resolving conflict constructively.

Community Problem Solving

Girls contribute to the world in purposeful and meaningful ways, learn how to identify problems in the community, and create “action plans” to solve them.

Activities chosen should work towards intentionally helping Girl Scout members be successful in these key areas. As part of the planning process, consider how and why the activity selected connects to Girl Scouts Five Outcomes. Make it girl led by sharing these outcomes with them and engaging them in the activity selection and planning process.

Infectious Disease Safety for Girl Scouts

The health and safety of our members is always Girl Scouts’ highest priority. Recognize that health and safety guidance will evolve as the risk of an infectious disease communicable disease outbreak or transmission changes over time.

Being prepared to adjust for changes in risk levels and the federal, state, and local protocols concerning a pandemic or epidemic is something we will all need to continue to manage carefully and factor into plans as appropriate.

Recognize that state and local rules concerning infectious disease safety will vary from place to place. Safety regulations will also change as the risk of transmission changes. Be sure to stay current on what is required in your region but also consider that troop members may reside in different areas with different sets of safety parameters to abide by. A good way to ensure you are following the proper government guidance is to follow the practices as established in local public schools.

Girl Scouts has provided Infectious Disease guidance specific to the topics that touch our lives in Girl Scouts. Your Girl Scout council's Infectious Disease guidance is the first place to go for health and safety practices in Girl Scouting. Should there be another pandemic or epidemic, guidance would be posted on our council's website and shared in our Girl Scout communications to all members.

Remember, always make sure that your planned activity complies with all federal, state, and local government health authorities at your locations and also where the activity will take place. For a variety of reasons during a pandemic or epidemic, there may be situations where your council's guidance is more strict than state or local guidance. If that is the case, either choose the rules that are most strict or contact your Girl Scout council for clarification.

When not being impacted by a pandemic or epidemic, Girl Scouts use a commonsense approach to health and safety. Before participating in Girl Scouting activities, members are to undergo health checks at home for any symptoms such as fever of 100.4 (or need for fever-reducing medications) chills, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, stomach aches, nausea, or vomiting. Members with any of these symptoms or in need of fever-reducing medication must stay home until fully recovered.

Have an Emergency Action Plan (EAP)

Keeping to the Girl Scout motto, "Be Prepared," proper preparation is the key to success. An important thing to consider, before taking Girl Scout members on a trip or to an activity, is an Emergency Action Plan (EAP). Volunteers can review their troop's EAP with girls as a learning experience for them, to the extent it makes sense according to their age and maturity.

For the adult volunteer, it is important to think about and document an EAP for troop meetings and activities to ensure you are prepared in the event of an accident or injury. When creating an EAP, think through scenarios of what can go wrong, such as physical injury, severe weather, fire, intruder, missing person, or sudden illness. This basic step is invaluable. The key elements included in an effective risk management plan are:

Identify the type of emergency.

- **Medical:** a member becomes suddenly ill.
- **Accidental Injury:** a member is hurt during an activity.
- **Weather related crisis or challenging environment** as with backpacking. *Always pay attention to weather so that the activity can be rescheduled if there is a severe storm or weather-related risk.*
- **Fire or fire ban,** become aware of all entrances and exits, and alternative exit routes. Have an alternate plan for outdoor cooking or campfires if a fire ban is in place.
- **Missing or lost member.**
- **Active Shooter, terrorism, or theft,** always be aware of surroundings, make note of entrances, exits, places to hide or escape, or tools used to fight in extreme situations. Take extra

precautions when traveling to avoid lodging or sites in areas with increased reports of violence, drug-related, or other serious crimes.

Mitigate and minimize the damage, injury, or time element in seeking help. Make sure to know how far the activity is from the nearest Emergency Medical Service (EMS).

- If EMS is **more than 30 minutes away**, an Advanced First Aider should always be present, preferably with Wilderness First Aid (WFA) or Wilderness First Responder (WFR) credentials.
- If EMS is **less than 30 minutes away**, a General First Aider should be present with Girl Scout members.
- If **more than 200 people at an event**, an Advanced First Aider should be added to the General First Aider for every 200 girls.
- **Make sure emergency response vehicles can access the area where the activity is being held.** If an emergency vehicle cannot access the site, notify either local EMS, park services, or other authorities ahead of time and tell them where you will be, what you will be doing, and how many members are with you.

Respond. Having confirmed the properly trained first aiders are present:

- **Immediately engage the first aider** to the accident scene involving an illness, accident, or injury.
- **Notify and coordinate the arrival of emergency medical services or law enforcement.**
- **Contact all relevant parties:**
 - parents or legal guardians,
 - council staff,
 - law enforcement, and
 - property owner or facility manager.

Key Components of an Effective Emergency Action Plan

- **Contact List.** A chart, table, or simple list for all participants, including adults, with parent and legal guardian contact phone numbers as well as key emergency phone numbers, in addition to 911, such as the nearest hospital, medical center, law enforcement office or emergency transportation.
- **Roles and Responsibilities.** A pre-determined and established emergency role assignments showing who does what in the event of an emergency. For example, the leader stays with Girl Scout members while the co-leader calls for help and coordinates the arrival of emergency services and notifies the parents, or vice versa. Agree on this ahead of time so that you are calm and prepared if the worst occurs. Also think through what you will do if the injured person is one of the adults.
- **Exit Strategy.** Become aware of all emergency exits and/or evacuation plans beforehand. Identify and communicate alternative exit routes with all present.
- **Meeting Place.** Determine and communicate a pre-agreed upon meeting place (designated spot) in the event the group becomes separated, or a Girl Scout member should become lost.
- **Communication Method.** Have a method of emergency communication that works. If camping or backpacking, consider a whistle or horn as an emergency call out. Make sure to inform Girl Scout members that this is the sound of an emergency. When they hear this sound, they know to go to the designated spot. If there is cell service at the activity site, save all contact names and numbers, including those for the appropriate authorities, in your mobile phones before the activity takes place.

Activity Preparation. Communicate with your Girl Scout council and girls' parents/guardians about the activity, including details about safety precautions and any appropriate clothing or supplies that

may be necessary. Follow council procedures for activity approval, certificates of insurance, and guidelines about girls' general health examinations. Girls are key to activity planning. Keeping their grade level abilities in mind, encourage them to take proactive leadership roles in organizing details of the activity.

Review Safety Activity Checkpoints with Instructors. Prior to planning any activity, Standard Safety Guidelines and the individual activity's safety activity checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor/outfitter, facility, camp, or your Girl Scout council as appropriate to determine if the safety checkpoints can be complied with. Take any questions or issues with safety compliance to your Girl Scout council for guidance and next steps. ***Never proceed with activities when compliance of safety is in question.***

Itinerary and Key Contacts. Give an itinerary to a contact person at home. Call the contact person upon departure and return. Create a list that includes Girl Scout members' parent/guardian contact information, council contacts, and emergency services contacts. Keep this list on hand or post in an easily accessible location. Emergency and parent contact information should be saved to an adult's mobile phone on the trip and be provided to the contact person at home.

Safety Gear. Safety gear includes clothing and equipment members will need to safely take part in the activity. These items are necessary to ensure safety. Always opt to take the safety equipment offered by an organization or facility, even if it is not specifically listed in the individual activity's safety activity checkpoints. If the facility offers helmets, always accept the use of helmets, and have members wear them.

Required Gear. Required gear simply means activity specific gear necessary to participate in the activity. For example, for skiing, members will need skis, boots, and poles, or otherwise plan for rental equipment.

Additional Gear. Additional gear may include items that support a safe and healthy outdoor learning experience. These are items that often make the experience more comfortable. Recommended items, based on Girl Scout experience, include:

- layers of clothing for wintertime or activities on or by the water or mountains, where temperatures or wind can change dramatically within a short period of time,
- sunglasses, sunscreen, hat, sun visor, lip balm,
- change of clothes for water related activities or those involving dirt or mud, such as spelunking,
- comfortable shoes and socks if hiking or spending long days outside in order to prevent ticks and blisters,
- watch, compass, and map(s),
- insect repellent,
- towels for waterfront, pool, and paddling activities,
- bottle of drinking water, healthy snacks, and
- backpacks (Girl Scout members carry their own gear and supplies).

Always take additional gear into consideration when planning an outdoor activity or trip in addition to the safety gear required for the specific activity.

Instructor Credibility. Always verify instructor knowledge, experience, and maturity. Ensure the volunteers or onsite instructors possess the proper skills, knowledge, training, and certification, or documented experience required to meet your council's guidelines and as outlined in the individual activity's safety activity checkpoints for the approved activity.

With respect to instructing and safeguarding children, maturity level and years of experience can positively impact the support needed for volunteers to safeguard Girl Scout members. For example,

while the legal definition of an adult lifeguard is 18, qualified lifeguards of 21 years of age are preferred whenever possible. Take any questions or issues with instructor knowledge, experience, maturity, or credential compliance to your council for guidance and next steps. Never proceed with activities when credibility is in question.

Visiting and Participating Adults. Occasionally, friends and family members join Girl Scout outings or trips, or experts in a subject may be invited to troop meetings to help work on badges. Verify with your Girl Scout council any specific requirements when adults attend Girl Scout gatherings such as background checks for participating adults or episodic volunteers including specific background check requirements for adults who will regularly or periodically attend Girl Scout gatherings, have shared oversight over members, participate in an overnight stay, handle money, or drive youth members.

Council Adult Participation Policy A5: Adult participants attending a Girl Scout (girl) program, trip, or overnight should be registered Girl Scout members and have a cleared background check on file with GSVSC prior to their participation in these Girl Scout activities.

Council Policy Procedures:

- Adult participants attending a one-day Girl Scout event that is a father-daughter, mother-daughter, ceremonial event and is an event open to the public would not require adult membership and a background check. These adults would not be considered part of the adult-to-girl ratio for troop/group girl supervision.
- Prior to departure, troop leaders are required to discuss council policies and GSUSA guidelines with adults serving as chaperones and drivers.
- Girl Scout membership and eligible background check on file with council is required before adults may stay at troop meetings and/or participate with girls in field trips, overnights, campouts, cookie booths, or other travel experiences, etc.

Vendor Approval. When volunteers do not hold the required certifications to lead activities, there is the option of using a vendor or outfitter to instruct high-adventure or equestrian activities and/or use a charter bus to transport girls and volunteers. As per Council Policy P12, all vendors must be on the council's approved vendor lists for high-adventure, horse stables, and charter buses.

Council Policy P12: Horse stables, high-adventure vendors and charter bus companies must go through an approval process to ensure that they meet safety and insurance guidelines before use by Girl Scouts.

Vendor Approval Timelines:

- *Please allow 4 weeks to obtain vendor approval for expired vendors.*
- *Please allow 6 weeks to obtain vendor approval for new vendors within council boundaries or in-state vendors.*
- *Please allow 8 weeks to obtain vendor approval for stables and out-of-state.*
- *Please allow 12 weeks to obtain vendor approval for out-of-country vendors.*

Note: *Vendor approvals are never guaranteed. Approval timelines are a best practice and are impacted by vendors' responsiveness to requests. Approvals are solely dependent on vendors' willingness to comply with GSUSA Safety standards and insurance requirements. At any time, vendors may request to be removed from the approved vendors lists or will be removed at council's discretion due to safety concerns. If vendors are not on the approved vendor lists, please contact council right away! Girls may need to adjust their activity selections.*

General Insurance. Commercial general liability insurance protects the Girl Scout organization. The facility or vendor that hosts your troop event (for example, a riding stable, a hotel, or a bus company) should carry general liability insurance and auto liability insurance when motor vehicles are involved. A facility that carries valid general liability insurance has almost always been examined for risk by its Safety Activity Checkpoint Guidelines

insurance carrier. If a facility or vendor does not carry general liability insurance, it's a red flag. It may not be safe, so it would be best to select another facility or vendor.

When your Girl Scout council requires you to provide documented evidence of insurance, ask the facility for a certificate of insurance for your records. Be aware that some places either do not or cannot provide a certificate of insurance to all customers, only provide a certificate of insurance when a group is very large, or if the group plans to pay a certain amount in advance. Still, the conversation will give you an idea of whether the facility is adequately insured, and you can consult your council representative for next steps.

When planning to use a written contract with a facility or when considering a new vendor, remember to consult with your Girl Scout council for the proper insurance requirements and to see if your council uses an approved vendor list. Check to confirm the certificate of insurance you will be obtaining validates the insurance limits outlined in your contract or agreement before submitting a contract to your council for signature.

Backyard Camping: Backyard camping is *only* allowable at volunteer's homes. Volunteer homeowners must consider any personal insurance and liability implications. The volunteer must ask their personal homeowner's insurance carrier if there are any insurance concerns with troop members backyard camping at the home. The volunteer will need to provide evidence of a general liability insurance; a minimum of \$500,000 up to 1 million of general liability insurance depending on the risk of planned activities.

Activity Accident Insurance. GSUSA sponsors Activity Accident insurance with Mutual of Omaha for all Girl Scout members. This insurance is intended to be a supplemental accident injury coverage to cover out-of-pocket medical expenses for those injured during a Girl Scouts supervised event, activity, troop meeting, or trip. There are four categories of coverage:

Basic Plan 1. The Basic Plan 1 automatically covers Girl Scout members and non-members, who are invited to participate, and are injured during the Girl Scout sponsored and supervised activity or trip.

Basic Plan 1 will pay the first \$140.00 of medical expenses plus any out-of-pocket medical expenses that are not covered under the injured person's personal (or family) medical insurance, such as out-of-network charges or large deductibles or ambulatory services.

If the injured person does not have medical insurance, the Basic Plan1 will drop down to cover medical expenses from dollar one.

Note: Most situations within Girl Scouts are covered by the automatic Basic Plan 1 which covers *accidental bodily injury*. Accidental bodily injury would include exposures like a tick bite or food poisoning, for example, as long as the incident is reported as an accident or incident to your council at the time it occurs.

Plan 3P. Accident plus Sickness: Plan 3P covers the same as Basic Plan 1 *plus sickness coverage*. Sickness coverage must be purchased separately and is intended as an option for extended, long-distance trips.

Plan 3PI. Accident plus Sickness for International Trips: Plan 3PI coverage is needed for international trips. It provides accident plus sickness coverage for trips outside of the USA. The Basic Plan 1 will not cover international trips, so it is necessary to purchase Plan 3PI when taking Girl Scouts on international travel.

International Inbound Accident plus Sickness. Accident plus Sickness coverage for Councils who are hosting Girl Guides/Girl Scouts visiting the United States from out of country.

When planning activities and trips, consult with your Girl Scout council to see if extra activity accident insurance is needed. Submit [Request For Girl Scout Activity Insurance \(#2136\)](#) to info@gsvsc.org and payment to council to obtain additional accident activity insurance with Mutual of Omaha. Contact Customer Care at 540-777-5100 for payment. Allow **4 WEEKS processing** time prior to date of camp, trip, event, series, or program activity. If applicable, the 2129 Activity/Trip Permission must be approved prior to purchase of Girl Scout Activity Insurance.

Leave No Trace. Girl Scouts has a long tradition of leaving an area better than we found it. Search the web for tips on environmental responsibility and remember our principle of [Leave No Trace](#). Doing so will teach Girl Scout members responsibility and safeguard your troop and local Girl Scout council from complications or issues involving the use of public property.

Emergency Preparation. Familiarize yourself with basic first aid, emergency response requirements, and other precautions. Know how far away and where emergency medical and law enforcement services are located. Understand your surroundings in relation to the closest medical facility or hospital. Also, familiarize yourself with the forms of emergency communication and emergency transportation options that are available.

Weather Conditions. Always monitor the weather in the days preceding an activity or trip. Check the local weather report on the day of the trip. For circumstances in which forecasted weather could be a risk to safety, consider scheduling alternatives and options. In the case of severe wind, lightning, hail, ice, snowstorm, flood warnings due to heavy rain, or a hurricane or tropical storm, make contingency plans for itineraries and transportation. Reschedule the event if the weather report is severe. Adhere to public safety announcements concerning staying indoors or evacuating the area. In extremely hot weather, do outdoor activities in the morning and late afternoon hours and, during the hottest time of day, stay in a shaded area or inside with air conditioning. On extremely hot days, it is important to plan for easy access to plenty of drinking water to prevent heat exhaustion and dehydration. If extreme weather or temperature conditions prevent a trip, be prepared with a backup plan or alternative activity.

Buddy System. For trips and activities, it is helpful for members of similar age to pair up as partners. Each Girl Scout member is responsible for staying with their buddy throughout a trip or activity. A buddy can warn their partner of danger, lend a helping hand, or get immediate assistance when the situation warrants it. All Girl Scout members are encouraged to stay near the group so if someone is injured or not feeling well, there are others, including an adult, close by to seek help.

Permission Slips. Annual permission slips are parental or legal guardian consent forms for attendance at regular troop meetings throughout the year. If annual permissions are practiced in your council, in addition to specific activity permission slips, volunteers should keep copies of all permission forms for all Girl Scout members.

Day Trips and Activities. It is imperative to secure a signed permission slip from a child's parent or guardian for any trip or special activity outside the troop meeting space. This applies to all Girl Scout members under the age of 18. Always keep a copy of these permissions.

In most cases, one parental consent or one legal guardian is legally acceptable. However, there may be circumstances regarding a custody situation or a standard in your council where dual parental consent is required. For international trips, written consent is generally required from both parents/legal guardians. If there is a question about single versus dual parental or dual guardian consent, consult your Girl Scout council and they can consult local or state laws for specific local guidance.

Overnight Trips. Prepare Girl Scout members to be away from home by involving them in planning the activity or event so they know what to expect. On trips where male volunteers are part of the group, it is not appropriate for them to sleep in the same space as girl members. Always support and maintain an

all-girl atmosphere for sleeping quarters. Men may participate only when separate sleeping quarters and bathrooms are available for their use. Men should not be in a situation where they must walk through girls' sleeping quarters to enter or exit their sleeping quarters or access restrooms. In some circumstances, such as a museum or mall overnight, with hundreds of girls, this type of accommodation may not be possible. If this is the case, men do not supervise girls in the sleeping area of the event and the adult-to-girl ratio is adjusted accordingly.

An exception is made for family members during events such as parent-daughter or family overnights, where one family may sleep together in an area specifically designated to accommodate families. Also please make note of the following:

- Each participant has her own bed.
- Parent/guardian permission must be obtained if girls who live in different family households are to share a bed.
- Youth members and adults do not share a bed; some councils make exceptions for family members.
- It is not mandatory that an adult sleep in the sleeping area with youth members.
- If an adult female does share the sleeping area, there must always be at least two unrelated adult females present.
- During family overnights, such as stadium tent camping or service unit camporees, there is to be a clearly designated family sleeping/camping area separate from the Girl Scout troop/group camping area. Remind girls they may only sleep with members who live in their family household when sleeping in the designated family sleeping/camping area.

Airbnb, VRBO and HomeAway. See [Travel/Trips Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) for specific safety checkpoints when utilizing Airbnb, VRBO and HomeAway. There are specific steps that must be followed when utilizing these privately owned property rentals, steps that are not necessarily taken with traditional commercially owned and operated properties such as hotels.

Modeling the Right Behavior. Adult volunteers should adhere to the Girl Scout Promise and Law. When spending time with Girl Scout members or representing Girl Scouts, do not consume alcohol, smoke, vape, or use foul language. Always obey the law, for example, by not talking on a phone or texting while driving.

Girl Scouts of Virginia Skyline Council requires girls and parents/guardians to complete a Code of Conduct prior to participating in Girl Scouting:

Troop/Group Meetings:

- [Code of Conduct for GIRLS in Troops/Groups \(#1124\)](#)
- [Code of Conduct for ADULTS in Troops/Groups \(#1125\)](#)

Travel/Trips:

- [Code of Conduct for GIRLS for Programs & Trips \(#1122\)](#)
- [Code of Conduct for ADULTS for Programs & Trips \(#1123\)](#)

Drugs and Alcohol. Volunteers and adults may not purchase, consume, possess or be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs/substances, prescription drugs, or over-the-counter medications which impair performance or judgment while participating in Girl Scout sanctioned activities, in the presence of Girl Scout members, while conducting Girl Scout business, or in Girl Scout branded clothing. Alcohol or any substance which may impair one's judgment must never be used by volunteers, adult members, or any other adult in the presence of a youth member, or immediately prior to a Girl Scout activity with your troop.

Alcoholic beverages may be served to and consumed by adults of legal age at Girl Scout events, when youth members are not present, and when approved by the council's Board of Directors or the council's Chief Executive Officer.

Youth members are not permitted to attend events where alcohol is being served and consumed. However, with prior council approval, youth members may be permitted to attend functions at locations where alcohol is incidentally being purchased by adults and then taken away to be consumed elsewhere, away from youth members. For example, a council may approve an event taking place at an arena, stadium, theme park, movie theater, or places where alcoholic beverages are sold at a concession stand and taken away to be consumed. Youth members may never consume alcohol while participating in Girl Scouting, even when traveling internationally where the legal drinking age may be lower.

Firearms. Firearms and/or weapons are prohibited at any Girl Scout activity and on Girl Scout owned or leased property except when in the possession of a sworn officer of the law, council-authorized property staff, a certified instructor, licensed wildlife control personnel, and/or trained adult while conducting a council approved Girl Scout program activity. Volunteers and adults do not carry ammunition or firearms in the presence of Girl Scout members, unless given special permission by your council for target sport activities.

Online Safety. Instruct all Girl Scout members never to put their full names, location or contact information online, engage in virtual conversations with strangers, or arrange in-person meetings with online contacts. On group websites, publish first names only and never divulge their location or contact information. Teach members the [Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge](#) and ask them to read it, understand it, discuss it, and commit to following it.

Money Earning Activities. Safety is an important consideration during money earning activities, including Girl Scout Cookie Program sales and other council sponsored product sales. During Girl Scout product sales, you are responsible for the safety of Girl Scout members, money, and products. In addition, a wide variety of organizations, causes, and fundraisers may appeal to Girl Scouts to serve as their labor force. When representing Girl Scouts, members cannot raise money for other organizations, participate in money earning activities that represent partisan politics, or are not Girl Scout approved product sales and efforts. It is imperative that Girl Scouts do not partake in anything that can be construed as unrelated business income. This is essential to protect our organization's 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. If there is a questionable circumstance, consult your Girl Scout council.

Council Policy VF6: Troops/groups may seek approval for additional money-earning activities after they have participated in both council-sponsored product sales. The Girls Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) *Blue Book of Basic Documents* and *Volunteer Essentials* provide guidelines which must be followed for additional money-earning activities.

Council Policy Procedures:

- Product sales program dates begin with the first date of order-taking and end with the final date of booth sales.
- Troops/groups are permitted to conduct no more than five additional money-earning projects per year. Such public money-earning projects should not take place during the time of the product sale programs. Troops/groups may carry out money-earning activities directed towards our internal Girl Scout members' audience during the product sales (such as at the GSVSC Annual Meeting or at Open Council Dialogue meetings or program events for troops).
- All money-earning projects should be reported in the annual troop/group finance report and include the income and expenses of such projects.
- Individually registered girls who are earning money for a Silver or Gold Award project need to follow the same policies as troops/groups. Since there is no finance report for

individually registered girls, she will need to report all income and expenses within her award report.

- If money-earning projects are carried out without council approval, the proceeds will be forfeited to the council and/or the troop/group will be unable to participate in the next product sale cycle (Fall Product Program and Cookie Program).

Council Policies & Procedures. Council policies are board-approved rules and regulations that volunteers must follow when carrying out Girl Scout-sanctioned activities or trips. Council procedures are the supplemental steps that clarify council processes for each policy. It is the responsibility of volunteers to ensure they are keeping up with Girl Scout advancements and changes that may occur in council policies & procedures. Changes are communicated in Girl Scout e-newsletters, Virtual Service Unit Roundtables, Service Unit Talking Points, Service Unit Meetings, and Virtual Town Halls, as well as in our required Girl Scout training online or in person. You may view or download a copy of GSVSC Policies (#1366) from the www.gsvsc.org website.

Volunteer Essentials. A key resource for volunteers in Girl Scouting is *Volunteer Essentials*. While *Safety Activity Checkpoints* focuses on safety guidance and parameters, *Volunteer Essentials* addresses an array of topics such as Engaging Girls and Families, Troop Management, Product Program, Troop Finances, and the Leader's Guide to Success. All Girl Scout volunteers are instructed to review, understand, and practice the principles and standards in both *Volunteer Essentials* and *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.

Understanding Which Activities Are Not Permitted

After being thoroughly investigated, some activities are clearly classified as “not permitted.” Each sport or activity on the “not permitted” list is evaluated annually with respect to safety factors, council feedback, insurability, and accident history. These activities pose a high risk of bodily injury, require extensive prior experience to safely participate, or may require a driver's license such as ATVs. Activities with a poor accident history based on loss data gathered from various industries are not approved and therefore “not permitted.” The purpose of prohibiting certain activities is first and foremost to protect Girl Scout members, but also to safeguard the financial and reputational well-being of your council and the Girl Scout organization.

GSUSA does not approve, endorse, or provide safety checkpoints for “not permitted” activities.

The following activities are in the not permitted category:

- Bungee jumping
- Flying in privately owned planes, helicopters, or blimps
- Hang-gliding
- Untethered hot-air ballooning
- Hunting
- Snowmobiling
- Riding a motorbike
- Riding electric (motorized) scooters
- Using outdoor trampolines
- Parachuting or outdoor skydiving
- Parasailing
- Paintball tagging
- Riding all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), which include Jet Skis, Motor Bikes, and Snow Mobiles
- Stunt skiing
- Zorbing

Bungee Jumping. Bungee jumping is not highly regulated for safety or consistent in terms of facilitation from one place to the next. It is an activity that carries a significant risk of bodily injury. Most insurance companies that have access to the accident history of bungee jumping have deemed this activity high risk and dangerous.

Hang Gliding, Parasailing, Zorbing, Parachuting/Skydiving, and Untethered Hot Air Ballooning are sports that also have inconsistent safety regulations, inconsistency of facilitation, and specific insurance implications or exclusions. These are activities that carry a significant risk of bodily injury. Insurance carriers with knowledge of these activities, from a loss experience perspective, view them as a high safety risk, meaning they see frequent and/or severe accidents associated with these sports.

Privately Owned Aircraft. Flying in a privately owned aircraft is a very clear exclusion under GSUSA and (most) councils' commercial general liability insurance policies. In the event of an incident involving an aircraft accident, your council would be financially liable for potential liability and resulting lawsuits. Even with a specific non-owned aviation liability policy (if your council purchases this type of policy, which it may not), a private plane is a separate and distinct insurable interest (compared to a professional chartered aircraft tour). In other words, even under non-owned aviation insurance, privately owned and/or operated planes are often excluded.

Outdoor Trampolines. Outdoor trampolines, particularly those with stilted metal frames, pose a high risk of injury. The activity can result in sprains and fractures in the arms or legs—as well as potentially serious head and neck injuries. The risk of injury is so high in the case of children that the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly discourages the use of trampolines at home. Outdoor trampoline park injuries are also an area of emerging concern. Indoor trampolines in a confined padded indoor facility with higher supervision are far safer, but still not recommended for children under six years old. For reference see: [AAOS: American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons](#).

Paintball Tag. Paintball tag is offered in specialized parks where participants shoot pellets of paint at each other throughout an obstacle course, woods, or maze. The pressure used in a paintball gun is quite strong. When hit by a paintball pellet, a person is certain to experience some pain, swelling, and perhaps a bruise or welt for a couple of days. Shooting someone with a paintball pellet is likely to cause a minor injury but has the potential to cause a more serious injury to eyes, mouth, ears, and throat. For these reasons, paintball tag is prohibited. Target paintball shooting, however, is permitted.

Hunting. Hunting is a sport that requires handling firearms in the wilderness, high maturity levels, and the availability of expert guides. Shooting accidents are common during hunting trips. This is also a sport which rarely, if ever, is presented as an activity that members are interested in.

Jet Skis, Motor Bikes, ATVs, Snow Mobiles and Electric Scooters. Jet skiing, motor biking, and riding snow mobiles, ATVs, and electronic (motorized) scooters are prohibited due to the extremely high incidence of serious injury involved. Most insurance carriers are not comfortable with these activities due to poor accident history. Insurance companies require that an operator hold a valid driver's license. Adults and children riding on the back of motor bikes and jet skis as passengers are exposed to a high risk of serious injury with no active opportunity to actually learn the skill.

Chartered Aircraft Trips and Aviation

Chartered small aircraft trips require prior council approval for every flight. This activity is permitted only with trip specific council prior approval. The safety factors involving chartered aircraft, equipment and pilots are transparent and readily verifiable, unlike private aircraft. Confirm with your council ahead of time that chartered aviation participation is covered under your council's general liability policy or non-owned aviation liability insurance policy. Again, these policies will almost always exclude privately owned aircraft.

Your council will confirm that the aviation company has evidenced proper insurance showing at least one million dollars aviation liability insurance and five million dollars umbrella. It is strongly recommended that your council consult with their insurance broker and/or GSUSA Risk & Insurance for assistance when vetting insurance issues and implications.

Tethered Hot Air Ballooning. Some outdoor parks may offer the opportunity to learn the skill of hot-air ballooning in a relatively safe and controlled environment utilizing a tethered hot air balloon. Consult with your council so they can check their general liability insurance or non-owned aviation liability policy to determine if this activity is covered. A hot air balloon is an aircraft and viewed the same as small planes or helicopters from an aviation risk perspective. Therefore, the same standard applies—professionally chartered and tethered hot air balloon rides will be considered, but private hot air balloons will not—private hot air balloons are not permitted.

Other Actions Girls and Volunteers Should Not Take

For legal reasons, there are other activities that Girl Scout members and volunteers are not permitted to participate in while representing Girl Scouts. Avoiding these will preserve the integrity of our organization. These include:

- endorsement of commercial products or services,
- solicitation of financial contributions for purposes other than Girl Scouting, and
- participation in political campaigns or legislative activities unless the legislative activity has been specifically council approved.

First Aid

Make sure at least one adult member who is certified in Adult and Pediatric/Child First aid, CPR and AED accompanies the troop/group to all activities. Ensure the first aider's certification corresponds with the age-level of the youth being supervised and the individual activities. Adult and Pediatric CPR/AED courses teach how to respond to breathing and cardiac emergencies to help victims –adults (about 12 years and older) and pediatric (infants and children up to 12 years of age). Adult care can be given to children who are 8 years old and 55 lbs. Pediatric AED pads should *only* be used on children under 8 years of age who weigh less than 55 lbs.

What To Do If There Is an Accident

Although you hope the worst never happens, you must observe council procedures for handling accidents and fatalities. At the scene of an accident, first provide all possible care for the injured person(s). Follow established council procedures for obtaining medical assistance and immediately reporting the emergency. To do this, you must always have on hand the names and telephone numbers of council staff, parents/guardians, and emergency services such as the police, fire department or hospital. Check with your council for emergency contact information and keep your emergency action plan current with the appropriate contact information.

Your council may either have specific emergency contact information, a 24-hour emergency number, or both. Be sure to reach out to them for their preferred method of contact. If a Girl Scout needs emergency medical care as the result of an accident or injury, first contact emergency medical services, and then follow council procedures for accidents and incidents. You will need:

- the exact time and location of the incident,
- a description of the incident,
- the names of the people involved, and
- the names of any witnesses.

After receiving a report of an accident, council staff will immediately arrange for additional assistance at the scene, if needed, and will contact parents/guardians, as appropriate. Your adherence to these procedures is critical, especially with respect to notifying parents or legal guardians. If the media is involved, let council designated staff discuss the incident with media representatives.

In the event of a fatality or other serious accident, the police must be immediately notified. A responsible volunteer must remain on the scene the entire time. In the case of a fatality, do not disturb the victim or surroundings and follow police instructions. Do not share information about the accident with anyone but the police, your council, and, if applicable, insurance representatives or legal counsel.

Add GSVSC Emergency number: 540-598-0974 to your mobile phone contacts.

Within 48 hours of an incident (behavioral), accident, injury, illness, or crisis, submit an [Incident Report \(#1089\)](#) to ceo@gsvsc.org. Keep printed copies of the #1089 incident report in your first aid kit.

When Someone Needs Emergency Care

Girl Scout members need to receive proper instruction in how to care for themselves and others in emergencies. They also need to learn the importance of reporting any accidents, illnesses, or unusual behaviors during Girl Scout activities to adult volunteers. You can help members by keeping the following in mind:

- Know what to report.
- Establish and practice procedures for weather emergencies.
- Know the type of extreme weather to expect in your area (tornadoes, hurricanes, and lightning). Consult with your council for the most relevant information for you to share with Girl Scout members.
- Establish and practice procedures for such circumstances as fire evacuation, lost persons, and building security issues. Every Girl Scout member and adult volunteer must know how to act in these situations. For example, you and your Girl Scout members, with the help of a fire department representative, should design a fire evacuation plan for meeting places used by the group.
- Assemble a well-stocked first aid kit that is always accessible. First aid administered in the first few minutes can make a significant difference in the severity of an injury. In an emergency, secure professional medical assistance as soon as possible, normally by calling 911, and then administer first aid, if appropriately trained.

First Aid/CPR

Girl Scouts require that at least one adult volunteer be certified in Adult and Pediatric/Child First Aid, CPR, and AED. If youth being supervised are over the age of 8 and 55 lbs., then Adult-only First Aid, CPR, and AED certifications would suffice. Official documentation of First Aid, CPR, and AED certifications must be on file with the council to assist with activity/trip permission approvals. Volunteers can add and update documentation of official certifications in the External Learning Achievements area in gsLearn. You can take advantage of first aid/CPR training offered by organizations such as:

- American Red Cross
- National Safety Council
- EMP America
- American Heart Association
- American Safety and Health Institute (ASHI)
- Medic Solo
- Other sponsoring organizations approved by your council.

If, through the American Red Cross, National Safety Council, EMP America, or American Heart Association, you have a chance to be fully trained in first aid and CPR, doing so may make your activity planning go a little more smoothly.

Caution. Internet first aid/CPR/AED training that is offered entirely online does not satisfy Girl Scouts' requirements. Hands only" CPR is also not an acceptable certification. Such courses do not offer enough opportunities to practice and receive feedback on your life-saving techniques. If taking a course not offered by one of the organizations listed in the previous paragraph, or taking any course that has online components, get approval from your support team or council prior to enrolling in the course to ensure you are using a council approved vendor and that an online training is acceptable.

First Aiders

General First Aider. A general first aider is an adult volunteer who has taken Girl Scout approved first aid and CPR training that includes specific instructions for adult and pediatric CPR, first aid, and AED (Automated External Defibrillator) training that, minimally, includes a face-to-face, hands-on skill checks for:

- checking a conscious victim,
- checking an unconscious victim,
- Adult & Pediatric CPR,
- Adult & Pediatric conscious choking,
- controlling bleeding, and
- sudden illness.

Advanced First Aider. An advanced first aider is an adult with general first aid certification and additional health, safety, or emergency response expertise. For example, a physician, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner, registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, paramedic, military medic; wilderness training, certified lifeguard, or emergency medical technician (EMT).

The individual activity's safety activity checkpoints will always tell you when a first aider needs to be present. Since activities can take place in a variety of locations, the presence of a first aider and the qualifications they must have are based on the remoteness and scope of the activity. For example, if you take a two-mile hike in an area that has cell phone reception and service along the entire route and EMS (Emergency Medical Services) is within 30 minutes away, the first aider will not need to have knowledge of Wilderness First Aid. If, on the other hand, you take the same two-mile hike in a more remote area with no cell phone service and where EMS is more than 30 minutes away, the advanced first aider must have knowledge of Wilderness First Aid (see the chart below).

Access to EMS	Minimum Level of First Aid Required
Less than 30 minutes	General First Aid
More than 30 minutes*	Advanced First Aid or Wilderness First Aid (WFA) or Wilderness First Responder (WFR)

**Although a Wilderness First Responder is not required, it is strongly recommended when traveling with groups in areas that are greater than 30 minutes from EMS.*

It is important to understand the differences between a first aid course and a wilderness rated course. Although standard first aid training provides basic incident response, wilderness rated courses include training on remote assessment skills, as well as emergency first aid response, including evacuation techniques to use when EMS is not readily available.

Note: *The presence of an advanced first aider is required at resident camp. For large events—200 people or more—there should be, in addition to a regular first aider(s), one advanced first aider for every 200 participants. The following healthcare providers may also serve as advanced first aiders for large groups: physician, physician’s assistant, nurse practitioner, registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, paramedic, military medic, and emergency medical technician.*

First Aid Kit

Make sure a general first aid kit is available at your group meeting place and accompanies Girl Scout members on any activity (including transportation to and from the activity). Please be aware that you may need to provide this kit if one is not available at your meeting place. You can purchase a Girl Scout first aid kit, you can buy a commercial kit, or you and the Girl Scouts can assemble a kit yourselves. The American Red Cross offers a list of potential items in its [Anatomy of a First Aid Kit](#) (note that the American Red Cross’s suggested list includes aspirin, which you will not be at liberty to provide without direct parent or guardian permission). You can also customize a kit to cover your specific needs by including flares, treatments for frostbite or snake bites, and the like.

In addition to standard contents, all kits should contain council and emergency telephone numbers (which you can get from your council contact). Girl Scout activity insurance forms, parent consent forms and health histories may also be included.

Overall, Health, Well Being and Inclusivity

Health History Form. Girl Scout councils require an annual health history form to be completed and signed by one parent/guardian for every Girl Scout and kept on file with the troop leader.

Follow council guidelines to comply with this requirement. The form should reflect any significant medical conditions, behavioral concerns, health issues, or allergies, and be updated each year. The form can also reflect any over the counter medication that a Girl Scout is not permitted to take, if there are any.

If parents send medication on trips or activities, it should be in its original labeled container and controlled and administered by one designated adult. Health history forms can be shared with the site, camp physician, or nurse ahead of time.

Always keep a current and signed health history form for each Girl Scout member with you when traveling. Your council may require an updated mid-year health history for overnight trips. For physically demanding activities, such as water sports, horseback riding, or skiing, an additional current health history form may be obtained to make sure all adults are aware of any current medical conditions or special needs. Councils will retain all health history forms in accordance with state record retention requirements and laws.

Health history forms are required for adults participating in troop, service unit, or council-sponsored activities so volunteers and staff can adequately prepare, accommodate, and/or respond in the event of a medical emergency.

Health Exams and Health Exam Forms. Council requires a health exam for international travel. Always follow your council’s guidelines with respect to health exams. The health exam needs to have been completed within one year of the last date of the trip in order for Girl Scout members to participate. Council requires a current health exam for adult volunteers who participate in international travel; be sure to ask your council about their health exam policy. A health exam must be given by a licensed physician, a nurse practitioner, a physician’s assistant, or a registered nurse. The medical provider must sign the health exam form.

For large events or trips longer in duration, such as resident camp or a weeklong trip to a ranch, the designated health professional at the trip location is responsible for collecting all health history forms for members and adults.

Health exam forms and health history forms are to be shared only with designated health professionals and council staff or volunteers responsible for coordinating them. All health and medical information are private (by law) and must not be shared or publicly available, so keep forms safe and secure. Only share information on a need-to-know basis.

Councils will retain all health exam forms in accordance with individual state record retention requirements and laws.

Vaccination and Immunization. Issues or questions with respect to vaccination exemption periodically arise with activity and trip participation. Vaccine exemption laws vary by state and focus on public and private school attendance more directly than they do for youth organizations. Therefore, it is best to obtain local and state legal guidance and proceed in accordance with the state law as it applies to school attendance. A general overview of state laws regarding school immunization exemption is provided and annually updated on the [National Conference of State Legislatures website](#).

If you have any questions about your obligation to communicate a Girl Scout member's non-immunization with other troop parents, contact your Girl Scout council for legal guidance as privacy laws may apply. Absent state laws that speak directly to vaccines and communicating non-immunization with parents of youth groups, the guidance is to follow the standard and protocol as it pertains to school attendance.

Mosquitoes, Ticks, and Lyme's Disease Prevention. Mosquitoes, ticks, and insect bites are an inherent risk to any warm weather outdoor activity. Ensure parents and guardians are aware of the need to have their children properly covered, preferably with closed shoes and light-colored clothing and socks. It is important to advise parents, guardians and Girl Scout members of this risk and the safety precautions they should take. The understanding that your troop or council cannot be held responsible for tick bites, can be reinforced with a waiver reference on a permission slip.

An excellent source for learning more is the [Tick and Lyme disease prevention section of Up to Date](#).

To learn more about using insect repellent safely, visit the Environmental Protection Agency website at [Repellents: Protection against Mosquitoes, Ticks, and Other Arthropods](#). To learn more about safely using DEET directly on the skin and on children, check out [EPA DEET](#).

Emotional Safety. Adults are responsible for making Girl Scouts a place where girls are as safe emotionally as they are physically. Protect their emotional safety by creating a team agreement and coaching girls to honor this agreement. Team agreements typically encourage behaviors like respecting diverse opinions and feelings, resolving conflicts constructively, avoiding physical and verbal bullying or clique behavior, practicing fairness, and showing positive, respectful, and helpful communication with others.

Physical or Sexual Abuse. Physical, verbal, emotional, sexual abuse or assault of girls or adults is forbidden. Sexual pressure, sexual advances, improper touching, sexual communication, such as text messaging, and sexual activity of any kind with Girl Scout members is not tolerated. If you witness or experience any behavior of this nature, notify appropriate council staff immediately. Incidences of abuse of any kind will result in immediate council intervention. Volunteers are responsible for following their council's guidelines for reporting any direct information or concern around physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse with respect to girls.

- [Redwoods: Preventing Peer-to-Peer Child Sexual Abuse](#)
- [Redwoods Micro-Learning: Preventing Peer-to-Peer Abuse Through Supervision](#)

- [Redwoods Micro-Learning: Identifying Blind Spots in Bathrooms](#)

See **Council policies A4 and A7** regarding specifics of anyone convicted or found guilty (regardless of prosecution) of child abuse, sexual crimes, and/or being a sex offender, registered or otherwise. If council learns a volunteer or employee shares a household or has a relationship with a sex offender, registered or otherwise, this would be reasons for immediate release and permanent disqualification as a volunteer or a staff member for the council.

Violence, Bullying, and Stalking. Violence, bullying, or stalking are also not tolerated in Girl Scouts. Violence occurs when young people intentionally use physical force or power to threaten or harm others. Bullying (or cyberbullying) is a form of violence that is an unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Stalking is a pattern of repeated and unwanted attention, harassment, or contact that is directed at a specific person that would cause a person to fear for the person’s safety or the safety of others; or suffer substantial emotional distress. Volunteers should become familiar with the signs, risk factors, and preventive measures against these types of behaviors. If you witness or experience any behavior of this nature, notify the appropriate council staff for guidance. The CDC provides excellent resources on this topic, including:

- [CDC Youth Violence](#)
- [Stopbullying.gov](#)
- [CDC Bullying](#)
- [CDC Youth Violence Prevention](#)
- [SPARC: Stalking Definition and FAQs](#)
- [SPARC: Stalking Awareness Videos](#)

Child Abuse. All states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have specific laws which identify persons who are required to report suspected child abuse to an appropriate agency. Therefore, if you witness or suspect child abuse or neglect, whether inside or outside of Girl Scouting, always notify the appropriate council staff immediately and follow your council’s guidelines for reporting your concerns to the proper agency within your state. For more information, please review these available resources:

- [U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Child Abuse and Neglect](#)
- [U.S. Department of Health & Human Services: How to Report Child Abuse and Neglect](#)
- Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect: [Mandatory Reporters](#)
- [CDC Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention](#)

Girl Scouts of Virginia Skyline Council (GSVSC) requires volunteers to complete Virginia Mandated Reporter Training and upload their certificate of completion in gsLearn. Training is assigned to every volunteer’s learner dashboard in gsLearn.

Mental Health and Safety. As an adult volunteer overseeing the activities and behaviors of young girls, and similar to child abuse, you may witness other signs of harmful tendencies such as self-harm. Self-harm can take a physical form such as cutting, burning, bruising, excessive scratching, hair pulling, poisoning, or drug use. Other tendencies of self-harm are suicidal ideations that can be expressed verbally or with the written word. Another harmful expression involves harm to others which can be detected verbally or with physical aggression. If a situation of this nature is observed or comes to your attention in any form, always notify an appropriate council staff member immediately and follow your council guidelines with respect to next steps. The CDC provides informative guidance around identifying and responding to harmful behaviors: [Self-Directed Violence and Other Forms of Self-Injury](#) and also a section on at-risk youth [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\) Youth at Risk](#).

Include Girl Scout Members with Disabilities. Girl Scouts is committed to making reasonable accommodations for any physical or cognitive limitations. Talk to Girl Scout members of all abilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. Always be sure to contact the location, facility, and/or instructors to ensure they are able to accommodate those with disabilities. For more information visit [Disabled World](#). Whenever possible, the individual activity's safety activity checkpoints will provide additional resources specific to that sport or activity. Be sure to reference these resources when planning to include a Girl Scout member with a disability. Our goal is to include all girls with a desire to participate.

Equity. In addition to physical and social-emotional disabilities, consider the history, culture, and past experiences of the Girl Scout members in your troop that could affect their ability to equally participate in an activity. Work with members and families to understand how an activity is perceived. Ensure that all Girl Scout members and their families feel comfortable and have access to whatever is needed to fully participate, such as proper equipment, prior experiences, and the skills needed to enjoy the activity.

Transporting Girl Scouts

How parents decide to transport Girl Scouts between their homes and Girl Scout meeting places is each parent's individual decision and responsibility.

For planned Girl Scout field trips and other activities, in which a group will be transported in privately owned vehicles, arrange qualified drivers, and ensure:

- Every driver must be a registered, background checked member (approved adult volunteer) at least 21 years old, and have a safe driving record, a valid license, and a registered/insured vehicle and meets council standards and policies for driving and transporting girls.
- Girl Scout youth members never drive other members to, from or during activities or field trips.
- If a group is traveling in one vehicle, there must be at least two unrelated, registered background checked members (approved adult volunteers) in the vehicle, one of whom is female.
- If a group is traveling in more than one vehicle, each additional vehicle must consist of at least two unrelated, adult drivers and chaperones that are registered background checked members (approved adult volunteers), one of whom is female.

Plan for Safe Driving

- Review and implement the standards in the [Checklist for Drivers](#), later in this section.
- Share the [Checklist for Drivers](#) with all drivers, in advance.
- Build possible delays into your schedule. Allowing time for traffic or other delays will help prevent urgency and stress, which can be dangerous when driving.
- Provide directions for each vehicle.
- For driving trips of more than a few hours, plan a stop where all cars can meet and gather. This will avoid having drivers follow too closely or worry about being separated from the group.
- Anticipate stops every couple of hours, for drivers to rest and refresh. Let drivers know they can stop more often, if needed.
- Arrange for relief drivers if drive time will last 6 hours or more.
- In each vehicle, there should be a first aid kit, and the permission and health history forms for each person in that car.

Borrowing or Renting Vehicles. When borrowing or renting vehicles, drivers may rent cars or minivans in their own names, without council staff signature. Make sure the car is adequately insured; consult the driver's auto insurance company. Know who is responsible for damage to, or loss of, the

vehicle. Be sure the vehicle is used only for Girl Scout purposes, as non-related use can compromise coverage.

Council Policy A2: Registered Girl Scout volunteers in leadership roles in troops/groups are authorized to sign contracts for renting passenger vehicles. Such vehicles may be obtained from a licensed rental agency, car dealer, church, or other organization having such a vehicle available for use for an approved Girl Scout activity.

To avoid surprises, read rental agreements to be familiar with the terms of the agreement and to be sure you comply with the terms. For example, in many cases the minimum age of drivers is 25, and the maximum age is often under 70.

Chartered Vehicles. Chartered vehicles, such as buses, are contracted, usually with the driver or operator, for a group's exclusive use. Volunteers may not sign contracts for charters, even if there is no cost. Contact your council to request approval and signature.

Council Policy P12: Horse stables, high-adventure vendors and charter bus companies must go through an approval process to ensure that they meet safety and insurance guidelines before use by Girl Scouts. A list of charter bus companies (#2148) may be found on the council website (www.gsvsc.org, Forms & Documents). To have a charter bus company added to the list, contact the council, and allow enough time for approval processing (same as vendor approval).

Taxis and ride sharing services, including Uber and Lyft, may be used with these guidelines:

- **An adult should ride in each vehicle** with Girl Scout members when multiple vehicles are being used.
- **Wait for your ride in a safe place.** For taxis, when possible, call (or ask your hotel to call), rather than hailing from the street. Use a taxi stand at airports. Stand away from traffic while waiting.
- **For taxis**, check that the taxi is appropriately marked.
- **For ride-sharing services:**
 - Check that the vehicle's license plate, make and model match what is shown in the app.
 - Compare the app's photo with the driver. Ask for their name and be sure it matches the app.
 - Ask, "who are you here to pick up?" They should have your first name, but no other information about you.
- **If you feel uncomfortable for any reason, do not get in the vehicle.** If you become uncomfortable, end the ride. Report your experience to the taxi service or ride-sharing app.
- **Send your in-town trip contact the name of the driver and your destination.** Most apps have a sharing feature for this purpose.
- **Do not share information about the group or where you are staying to any strangers.**
- **Each passenger must wear a seat belt.**
- **Enter and exit curbside.**
- **In foreign countries**, consult a local expert about how best to call for taxis or rides. Reputable practices vary.

Recreational vehicles, campers, and trailers, whether privately owned or rented, may be used if the driver has the appropriate training and license for the vehicle. Passengers must use seat belts when the vehicle is in motion and may not ride in a trailer or in the bed of a truck.

Vans Designed for 15 Passengers. Volunteers are not encouraged to operate 15 passenger vans as the design of the vehicles makes them inherently unsafe for the average non-professional driver. For

atypical circumstances, when another option is impossible, make sure to follow this checklist before driving Girl Scout members in a van designed for 15 passengers:

- Prior council approval must be obtained.
- The van was built in 2013 or later.
- Driver assistance technology has been installed.
- Insurance is valid. Check with the auto insurance company to confirm.
- All other safety measures are in place; see the [Checklist for Drivers](#).
- No gear is loaded on top, or heavy gear in the back of the van.
- The driver has the appropriate license in the state(s) where the van will be driven. This type of van may need a commercial driver's license.

ACCEPTABLE VANS: In order of preference, are as follows: Ford Transit Low Roof, Nissan NV 3500, Ford Transit Medium Roof. High-capacity vans must be manufactured after 2011 and be equipped with the following safety features: Electronic Stability Control, Tire Pressure Monitoring, Side Curtain Airbags and Center Aisle. Council approval must be obtained.

UNACCEPTABLE VANS: The following vans do not meet our safety criteria and should not be used by volunteers: Ford E-350, Chevrolet Express 3500, GMC Savana, Ford Transit High Roof, and Mercedes Benz Sprinter 2500. *These rules do not apply to commercial or professionally operated services such as airport shuttles. Professionally operated commercial vans designed for 15 passengers are permitted.*

Commercial and common-carrier transportation is available to the public. They include buses, trains, airlines, ferries, and similar modes of transportation. In the United States, these are regulated and can be considered safe. Girls can compare fares and schedules and make decisions with adult support.

When traveling internationally, consider the transportation options available in the host country and determine safety and accessibility specific to the location.

Checklist for Drivers

When driving a car, RV, or camper, take the following precautions and ask all other drivers to do the same:

- Ensure all drivers are volunteers at least 21 years old.
- Only adult volunteers transport Girl Scout members.
- Never transport Girl Scout members in flatbed or panel trucks, in the bed of a pickup, or in a camper-trailer.
- Keep directions and a road map in the car, along with a first aid kit and a flashlight. Note that some GPS apps may stop functioning if there is no cell service.
- Check your lights, signals, tires, windshield wipers, horns, and fluid levels before each trip, and recheck them periodically on long trips.
- Load gear appropriately. Heavy objects and luggage can affect vehicle stability and handling. Avoid overloading, especially on the top or back of any vehicle.
- Keep all necessary papers up to date including, but not limited to, your driver's license, vehicle registration, any state or local inspections, and insurance coverage.
- Wear seat belts and insist that all passengers do the same. Each person must have their own, fixed seatbelt, and must wear it at all times while the vehicle is in motion.
- Girl Scout members under 12 must ride in the back seats. Use car seats and boosters as required by your state.
- Follow the best driving safety practices:
 - keep at least a two-car-length distance between you and the car ahead of you,

- do not talk or text on a cell phone or other device,
- do not use ear buds or headphones, and
- turn your lights on when your windshield wipers are on.
- Know what to do in case of breakdown or accident. It is smart to have reflectors, a flashlight, a few tools, and a good spare tire.
- Take time to familiarize yourself with any new or rented vehicle.
- Take a break when you need it. The volunteer in charge of your trip will plan occasional stops, but it is ok to pull over to a safe place whenever you are too tired to continue. Relief drivers are planned for long drives.
- Do NOT drive when you are tired or taking medication that makes you drowsy.

Check with your council for any other specific guidelines or requirements they have.

Troop Meeting Space

Always choose a safe meeting space. Consider the age range and the type of activities you want to engage in when selecting a location or facility for your troop meetings. A meeting place needs to provide a safe, clean, and secure environment that allows for the participation of all Girl Scout members. You might consider rooms at schools, libraries, houses of worship, community buildings, childcare facilities, and local businesses for your meeting location. For teens, you can also rotate meetings at coffee shops, bookstores, and other places girls enjoy spending time. Below are a few points to keep in mind as you consider meeting locations:

- **Accessibility.** Be sure the space can accommodate Girl Scout members with disabilities, as well as parents with disabilities who may come to meetings.
- **Allergen-free.** Ensure pet dander, smoke, and other common allergens will not bother susceptible members during meetings.
- **Availability.** Be sure the space is available for the day and the entire length of time of your troop meetings.
- **Communication friendly.** Be sure your cell phone works in the meeting space or there is a land line for emergencies. Internet access is helpful.
- **Cost.** The space should be free to use. However, you may wish to develop a partnership with the facility and provide them with community service (e.g., flower planting in the spring at the entrance, or a clean-up day for the grounds) or offer a donation toward maintenance or utilities.
- **Facilities.** Sanitary and accessible restrooms and toilets are critical.
- **Resources.** Determine what types of furnishings come with the room and ensure the lighting is adequate. A bonus would be a cubby or closet where you can store supplies.
- **Safety.** Ensure the space is safe, secure, clean, properly ventilated, heated (or cooled, depending on location), free from hazards, and has at least two exits that are well-marked and fully functional. Also check to see if a first aid kit and equipment (e.g., portable defibrillator), smoke detectors, and a fire extinguisher are on site.
- **Size.** Make sure the space is large enough to accommodate the whole group and all planned activities.

Can we meet in a private home? No. Council does not allow troop meetings in private homes for the following reasons:

- Girl Scout members may not meet in a home where a registered sex offender resides. Insufficient means to require membership and background checks for all adults living in or having access to the home.
- Troop members need to be able to focus without disruptions from other household members. The tendency to relax supervision/oversight can also increase risks of peer-to-peer abuse among Girl Scouts and/or unsupervised household members.

- Insufficient ability to ensure animals will be kept in a place that is separate from the meeting space. Some Girl Scout members may have allergies and fears related to animals. Pet bites and attacks are serious and could potentially end with a pet being confined or destroyed.
- Homeowners would be liable for any personal insurance implications. Troop meetings in the home will NOT be covered by the council's liability insurance carrier.
- Insufficient ability to ensure weapons medications, cleaning products, or any poisonous substances will be properly stored in a secure space, out of sight, and securely locked.