

Returning to In-Person Troop Meetings and Activities

Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Volunteers

Edition date: 1/31/22

This guidance is being provided as of the Edition Date above. Girl Scouts of the Chesapeake Bay may modify this guidance, from time to time as circumstances change.

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

The 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. Discuss plans with families.

Important Information Regarding All Girl Scout Activities

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

- Stay home if you are sick.
- Cough and sneeze into a tissue, throw the tissue in the trash, and wash or sanitize your hands. • Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Wash hands if you do touch.
- Volunteers, girls and parents should be reminded to make sure temperatures are taken prior to group interaction to confirm the individual is not running a fever and temperature is a normal 98.6 degrees Members with fever or temperature higher than 98.6 should skip the in-person gathering until their temperature is normal.

Prescreening and Symptoms Check: Volunteers planning events should complete the pre-screening and symptoms check at the beginning of each in person gathering or meeting. Ensure to have a working touch free thermometer on hand. All participants present (girls and parents entering any premises or attending) should be screened to ensure they are healthy and that they have had 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 and that they have not been to high-risk geographical regions particularly those regions that require a 14-day quarantine period. [Click here for Attendee COVID-19 Screening Form Example.](#)

Girl Scout Activity Occupancy Guidelines

GSCB events will continue to follow CDC mask wearing guidelines. Please check with your state guidelines and meeting place for mask wearing requirements of the venue.

CDC Mask Recommendations: CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status. ***This means for all Girl Scout activities held indoors mask wearing is required regardless of vaccination status.***

State Guideline Quicklinks:

[Delaware](#)

[Maryland](#)

[Virginia](#)

Volunteer awareness. Volunteers should be encouraged to remain educated about risks associated with the pandemic, including that COVID-19 is an extremely contagious virus that spreads easily in the community, and even fully vaccinated individuals can transmit the virus to unvaccinated individuals. Volunteers should take all reasonable precautions to limit potential exposure for girls, themselves, and their families. Councils should highlight this important message in a way that promotes awareness, preparedness, health, and community service. These are important times to be a safety-minded Girl Scout and demonstrate Girl Scout values.

Councils should emphasize the importance of regularly checking and following real-time [local](#) and [national](#) safety directives, and of surveying families for their comfort level with in-person troop meetings.

For every in-person meeting, volunteers should:

- Use pre-screening forms that include a symptoms check;
- Ensure that girls and adults wear a mask;
- Hold meetings outdoors rather than indoors whenever possible;
- Ensure that attendees maintain 6 feet distance;
- Ensure that attendees wash hands frequently;
- Discourage girls from touching their faces;
- Carry disinfectant and hand sanitizer and make sure girls are using them as appropriate; and
- Ask girls bring their own snacks and supplies whenever possible, limiting or eliminating communal food and supplies.

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.

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

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

Then, 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 girls how to shut them off with a paper towel. Use paper towels for doorknobs whenever possible.

Schools or churches may not permit outside groups on premises, so always check and confirm ahead of time.

Troop Meetings in the home: Girl Scouts of the Chesapeake Bay (GSCB) continues to recommend that troops and groups do not meet in a volunteer's home. However, due to regularly scheduled meeting locations not allowing public access, we recognize that a volunteer's home may be the only available space.

After discussing various scenarios with GSCB's insurance carrier and broker, we ask volunteers to adhere to the following protocol as these guidelines greatly minimize personal liability:

- Parents and/or guardians have filled out the GSCB Liability Waiver and troop leaders have confirmed receipt of waivers of those in attendance to all events and activities.
- Adults attending all events and activities have filled out the GSCB Liability Waiver and troop leaders have confirmed receipt of waivers of those in attendance.
- Meetings spaces are designated and separate from any other individuals living in the home, with separate bathroom facilities. In the instance that this protocol cannot be met, meetings should take place at times when any other individuals are not home.
- Two unrelated volunteers are always present.

The homeowner has made certain there is no access to items such as, but not limited to:

- Trampolines;
- Alcoholic Beverages;
- Tobacco Products;
- Firearms or other weapons;
- Pornographic Material; and
- Prescription Medications.

Other potential exposures at a private residence are such things as pets, pools, other water access, and high-risk activities.

- Should activities, such as swimming, take place at the home, Girl Scout Safety Activity Checkpoints must be followed.
- Pet access should be restricted.
- Should there be a pet in the home, volunteers should review girl health history forms for such illnesses including, but not limited to allergies and asthma.

The homeowner recognizes and understands that there is an increased risk for personal items to be damaged by girls attending troop meetings. Any damaged items will be the responsibility of the homeowner to replace.

Proof of homeowner's insurance will be provided to GSCB Additional questions or concerns are sent to

MemberCare@cbgsc.org

Transportation: Individual parents drop off and pick up their own girls from meetings. Carpooling and public transportation should be avoided, where possible, to maintain social distancing.

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

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

First Aid Supplies: First aid supplies should include COVID-19 prevention items including hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol), tissues, disposable facemasks, thermometers, prescreening checklists 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.

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

Travel and overnight stays: All travel and overnight trips should be considered based on the location of the activity and follow the appropriate CDC guidelines. In conjunction with Safety Activity Checkpoints, follow the same guidance as Troop Meetings, Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation guidance, and complete required prescreening as outlined in this document. It is important to note that many states have additional [CDC youth specific programming guidelines](#).

For Camp programming such as but not limited to encampments, troop overnights, etc. please review the following and have an established plan for your event:

- Camps who are accepting campers from various geographic regions (e.g., community, city, town, county) should communicate that information to families.
- Align mats or beds so that campers and staff sleep head-to-toe at least 6 feet apart.
- Monitor and enforce social distancing and healthy hygiene behaviors throughout the day and night.
- [Clean and disinfect](#) bathrooms regularly (e.g., in the morning and evening, after times of heavy use)
- Encourage volunteers and campers to avoid placing toothbrushes or toiletries directly on counter surfaces.
- Identify an isolation room or area to separate anyone who exhibits COVID-like [symptoms](#). If the camp has a nurse or other healthcare provider designated, they should use [Standard and Transmission-Based Precautions](#) when caring for sick people. See: [What Healthcare Personnel Should Know About Caring for Patients with Confirmed or Possible COVID-19 Infection](#).
- Volunteers and campers with [symptoms](#) (fever, cough, or runny nose) at camp should immediately be separated. Individuals who are sick should be cared for following [CDC Guidance for caring for oneself and others](#) who are sick.
- Volunteers and campers who have had [close contact](#) with a person who has [symptoms](#) should be separated, and follow [CDC guidance for community-related exposure](#). If symptoms develop, individuals who are sick should be cared for following [CDC guidance for caring for yourself or others who are sick](#).
- If a person becomes sick and needs to be transported, establish procedures for safely transporting them. If you are calling an ambulance or bringing someone to a healthcare facility, try to call first to alert them that the person may have COVID-19.

Cookie Booths. *Masks are required for all cookie booth participants.* Volunteers should be encouraged to think about the structure of booths, including building in a protective barrier to minimize airborne exposure, and to try to enable contact-free payments so girls can maintain a safe distance from customers. For example, cookie tables could be placed vertically instead of horizontally so there is greater distance between girls and customers and reach tools could be used to hand cookies to customers. First-aid and personal protective equipment, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant should be in supply and easily accessible.

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

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

To prepare a bleach solution, mix:

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

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

Face Coverings (Masks): Unless your state and local governmental health authority has announced otherwise, all girls and adult volunteers should wear masks indoors during in-person gatherings and wear masks outdoors when in close proximity with others who do not live in the same household.

Masks may not be necessary when you are outside by yourself away from others, or with people from the same household. However, some areas may have mask mandates so always check the state, city, or county rules for the location you will be in.

See: [CDC Cloth Face Cover Guidance](#).

The ease on mask wearing recently announced by the CDC which suggests resuming all activities as they were prior to Covid-19 pertains primarily to fully vaccinated individuals, *not all individuals*.

Since the vaccine has not been received by all individuals nor is it available for children under 5 years of age, the guidance for councils is to wear a mask in accordance with the specific parameters as outlined by state and local jurisdictions and supplement that guidance with CDC recommendations if needed.

There may be certain situations where masks are not necessary such as where solitary events are taking place outdoors (e.g., waterskiing, archery, horseback riding). For snow skiing, wear a mask when on lifts or lift lines or at the lodge but when skiing - the mask can come down if needed.

Some girls or volunteers may not be able to wear masks due to medical conditions. Councils should have an established protocol for handling such scenarios. It may be appropriate to require a doctor's note. Troops should inform families so they are aware if there is a member who will participate without wearing a mask due to medical exception. Volunteers should be instructed to contact their council for guidance on how best to handle these exceptional circumstances.

Reasonable accommodations should be made for people with disabilities that prevent them from safely wearing a mask. When a medical exemption from wearing a mask is on file, the recommendation is that the individual use a face shield. Several councils are already providing extra face shields, having them on hand as they would extra masks, for those situations.

Girls can bring their own face coverings (or face shields if they cannot wear a mask). Council staff and volunteers should have extra disposable masks and face shields on hand for those who need them. Volunteers can teach girls

[how to handle their face coverings](#) so that the coverings are effective.

Some further guidance for mask wearing and the effectiveness of double masking can be accessed here:
[Use Masks to Help Slow Spread | CDC](#)

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

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

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