



Returning to In-Person Troop Meetings and Activities in Phase 4 (NY), Green Phase (PA) Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Volunteers

Edition Date: 8/26/2020

This guidance is intended to be used by volunteers in conjunction with Safety Activity Checkpoints and according to New York, Pennsylvania and local COVID-19 circumstances which remain fluid. This guidance is being provided as of the Edition Date above, during a time when a vaccine has not been made readily available. You must continue to monitor local and federal guidelines and other resources indicated below such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). GSNYPENN may modify this guidance from time to time.

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 real-time local and [national](#) directives. Discuss plans with families.

Current directives include:

- Avoid close contact. Put distance (6 feet) between yourself and others.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a face cover when around others. Everyone should wear a cloth face cover. The cloth is not a substitute for social distancing.
- [Routinely clean and disinfect all surfaces](#) and objects that are frequently touched.
- Monitor your health.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Wash hands often.

Use these questions and reminders to help decide how and when to return to troop activities.

Troop Meeting Size. The current suggested maximum is 10 people (8 girls and 2 unrelated adult volunteers). However, [check your local restrictions](#) for small gatherings. If more restrictive than 10 people, follow the local restriction. Restrictions vary greatly from state to state, county to county, and even from town to town—and can frequently change. If a state allows more than 10 to gather, utilize all social distancing practices and follow all preventative guidance (such as wearing face coverings). Get clearance from GSNYPENN before planning any gatherings of more than 10 people.

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

Some ideas:

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

Large Gatherings. If your jurisdiction permits larger gatherings (NYS is currently at 50 people and PA is currently at 25 indoor and 250 outdoor), confirm the number of people that are permitted and allow for proper girl-to-adult ratios. It is strongly recommended to meet outdoors as opposed to indoors, and only when social distancing can be maintained. For more people or large gatherings, when the time is safely appropriate, follow CDC guidelines for [Large Gatherings and Community Events](#).

Obtain pre-approval from council before planning any gatherings of more than 10 people. Council staff may consider larger group gatherings greater than 10 people after considering the norms in the local region.

Answers to the following questions will help guide this decision:

- Has a successful final phase of re-opening been completed? (several weeks after)
- Do state and local laws permit larger gatherings? How many people are permitted?
- Have schools been re-opened for in-person classes?
- Is the event indoors or outdoors? (outdoors is safer than indoors provided social distancing is maintained; indoor spaces must allow for distancing and cannot be above 50% capacity)
- Can social distancing be maintained?

Always follow CDC and all GSUSA guidance available in this document on large in-person gatherings and/or hosting council events.

Troop Meeting Space. Outdoor spaces where social distancing can be maintained are strongly recommended for meetings when the weather permits. 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 less than ideal practices. 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.

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

Troop Meetings in the Home. At this time GSNYPENN will not approve meetings in the home out of concern that there would be a greater risk of exposure to other family members.

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. Sustained contact within less than 6 feet for longer than 10 minutes within an enclosed area creates high risk for virus transmission, so be very careful with carpool decisions. Once a county or region is fully past its final re-opening stage, if carpooling is deemed necessary, please contact council for guidance.

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 at [Virtual Troop Meetings](#). As with in-person meetings, all virtual meetings with girls should have at least two unrelated adults in attendance.

We have a short “Going Virtual” series to help leaders, available on [gsLearn](#). Additional helpful resources can be found at [Girl Scouting at Home](#).

Day Trips and Activities. Until further notice, seek prior approval by completing the [Troop/Group Activity Application](#) for all day trips and activities outside the standard troop meeting day, time or location. In conjunction with Safety Activity Checkpoints, follow the same guidance as Troop Meetings and Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation in this document. Call ahead to the facility or vendor to confirm that they are following CDC and state health department guidelines. If an 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 necessary and appropriate accommodations. For example, bring extra sanitizer or disinfectant wipes if none will be provided for public use at the activity location.

Travel and Overnight Stays. Overnight trips are not permitted until after the home state, county, town, region or the destination are successfully past its final phase of re-opening. The timeframes will vary from state to state and even from county to county in some cases. As always, contact GSNYPENN for prior approval before planning any overnight stays, follow guidance in Safety Activity Checkpoints and continue to practice the Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation guidance outlined in this document for the foreseeable future.

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

Signs should include:

- 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 before group interaction to confirm the individual is not running a fever and temperature is a normal 98.6 degrees. Members with fever or temperature higher than 98.6 should skip the in-person gathering until their temperature is normal.

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

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

First Aid/CPR Training. Keep skills up-to-date for any emergency. Talk to your council about alternative methods of training that may be available during this time.

Disinfectants and Disinfecting. [Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces](#) and objects that are frequently touched (i.e., tabletops, 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 (1/3 cup) bleach per gallon of water or
- 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water

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

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

The FDA has identified the following products manufactured by Eskbiochem:

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

- CleanCare NoGerm Advanced Hand Sanitizer 75% Alcohol (NDC: 74589-009-01)
- CleanCare NoGerm Advanced Hand Sanitizer 80% Alcohol (NDC: 74589-003-01)
- Saniderm Advanced Hand Sanitizer (NDC: 74589-001-01)

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

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

Face Coverings. Volunteers should remind girls that Girl Scouts wear face coverings (masks) not only to protect themselves but to protect others. Face coverings are a civic responsibility and a sign of caring for the community. Girls can bring their own face coverings. Have disposable masks on hand for those who need them. Volunteers can teach girls [how to handle their face coverings](#) so that the coverings are effective. Should a girl or volunteer be unable to wear a mask, due to medical condition, contact GSNYPENN for guidance on how best to handle this exceptional circumstance.

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 GSNYPENN in this situation.](#)

Council staff, NOT volunteers, will notify parents and others about a positive test result and that the identity of the positive case 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.

A designated council staff member—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
- Alerting the state department of health

Contact the GSNYPENN Emergency Line at 1.855.213.8555, option 4:

- Identify who you are
- Explain the nature of the emergency: positive COVID-19 test
- Provide a contact number for yourself and we will call you back immediately
- Incident Response Lead is Christina Verratti, Director of Membership Support: office 315.698.9400 x2129, email cverratti@gsnypenn.org, cell 315.723.8849

Refer any and all media inquiries to GSNYPENN. Media must be referred to Jaime Alvarez, Senior Director of Marketing & Communications, at 315.698.9400 x2049 office, 315.263.5957 cell or jalvarez@gsnypenn.org.

Permission Slips. An [annual permission slip](#), including acknowledgement of coronavirus risk, must be completed for all Girl Scout participants each membership year. Complete the form now (summer 2020) for summer participation and again in October 2020 for the new member year.

Food, Dining and Snacks. Be careful when handling and serving food and have girls be careful with each other when eating.

Safety recommendations for food, dining and snacks include:

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

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