



## COVID-19 Guidance for [Girl Scout Volunteers](#) Troop Meetings, Activities/Programs, Health & Safety Practices Edition Date: September 20, 2021

Girl Scouts' number one priority is the safety and well-being of our members and the families and communities we serve. Please contact GSNYPENN to confirm our policies and any relevant current federal, state, and local COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions in your area. Your council is your first source for information on COVID-19 specific guidelines and restrictions for your Girl Scout activities.

Volunteers should always follow the guidance of their local council. 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 change in response to risk factors. You must continue to monitor local and federal guidelines and other resources indicated below, such as the [Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC). GSNYPENN may modify this guidance from time to time.

COVID-19 is an extremely contagious virus that spreads easily in the community and risk is fluid. Accordingly, the guidance provided here does not supersede more recent government guidance or restrictions. Council staff will continue checking regularly for changes to guidelines that apply in our communities.

### Current directives include:

- Unvaccinated individuals should avoid close contact; put a distance of at least three (3) feet between yourself and others.
- All individuals should cover their mouth and nose with a cloth face cover\* when around others inside or outdoors where physical distancing is not possible. (see **Face Coverings** section below)
- Routinely clean and disinfect all surfaces and objects that are frequently touched.
- Monitor your health.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Wash hands often.

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

- Before planning in-person meetings and events, survey families for their comfort level. Even if it is allowed in your area, families may not be comfortable with a full return to in-person activities.
- Regularly check and follow real-time local and national safety directives to ensure you're compliant with local regulations.

This document provides COVID-19 health and safety guidance for Girl Scout volunteers. The guidance which follows is separated into 4 categories:

- Meetings and Gatherings
- Activities and Programs
- Health and Safety Practices
- Reporting a Contact/Incident

## Meetings and Gatherings

**Troop Meeting Size.** Troops may resume meeting in accordance with the Safety Activity Checkpoints. Council approval is *not required* for troop meetings.

**Troop Meeting Space.** Get advance permission from council, property owner or the jurisdiction that provides the location; follow Safety Activity Checkpoints.

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.

**Troop Meetings at Home.** At this time, GSNYPENN will not approve meetings inside a place of residence.

**Backyard Meetings.** For back and front yard meetings, make sure that the grounds are completely safe for children. For example, pools must be fenced or otherwise safely sectioned off. The same goes for any equipment or tools or recreational apparatus that is deemed unsafe for girls such as outdoor trampolines. Make sure that pets are kept separate from the girls' meeting space. Ensure that both the troop leader and co-leader can see girls and monitor their whereabouts at all times. Maintain the use of the buddy system for errands or bathroom breaks. If the property is large, ensure that the meeting space is kept distinctly separate from non-members. "Backyard" meetings must be pre-approved by council.

To assist with the Home Safety Checklist, safety checkpoint considerations include:

- The home must be the home of registered, background checked, council-approved volunteer.
- Girls may not meet at a property where a registered sex offender lives.
- GSNYPENN requires background checks for all adults living at the premises.
- The troop needs to be able to focus without disruptions from other household members.
- Animals should be kept in a place that is separate from the meeting space.
- Homeowners should consider any personal homeowner insurance implications. The homeowner should ask their homeowner's insurance carrier if there are any insurance exclusions regarding holding troop meetings at the home, in the event an accident or injury occurs.
- Weapons must be completely out of view and stored in a locked space.
- Medication, dangerous cleaning products, or any poisonous substance must be stored in a secure space out of sight, preferably locked.
- Meetings must be held outdoors, in the back or front yard of the.
- Ensure that the Hygiene and Risk Mitigation and all other guidance in this document are followed (this is a COVID-19 specific precaution).

**Troop Meetings on Council Premises.** GSNYPENN takes reservations for troops and SUs to use council properties. All safety guidelines must be adhered to in accordance with CDC, state, and local health authorities

and as outlined in this document. Troop meetings on council premises, as with normal Girl Scout programs, should abide by Safety Activity Checkpoints in terms of 2 unrelated adult volunteers, adult-to-girl ratios, etc.

Our rentable spaces are available for troop/group overnight reservations. Visit [Doubleknot](#) and select Property Reservation.

**Virtual Meetings.** Troops may need (or want) to run online meetings as part of being flexible to the troop's needs and fluidity of the COVID-19 virus. Use the Safety Activity Checkpoints for Virtual Meetings to guide your meeting plans. As with in-person meetings, all virtual meetings with girls should have at least 2 unrelated adults in attendance.

- We offer a short [Going Virtual](#) series to help leaders.
- Other helpful resources can be found at [Girl Scouting at Home](#).
- We offer discounted access to gsZoom licenses. To opt-in or learn more, [click here](#).

**Gatherings.** It is recommended that troops/groups host gatherings where physical distancing can be maintained. Troop/group gatherings should be planned in accordance with Safety Activity Checkpoints, COVID-19 risk mitigation guidelines and require individuals to wear face coverings.

Council gatherings of 50 or more people, scheduled **on or after October 1, 2021**, will require that individuals who are not fully vaccinated provide the event coordinator with a negative screening test for SARS-CoV-2 within 3 days (72 hours) of the event.

At this time, it is strongly recommended that SUs and troops follow the same guidelines for gatherings of 50 or more people.

### [Activities and Programs](#)

**Day Trips and Activities.** GSNYPENN is only requiring Troop/Group Activity Application for activities involving an overnight stay, a high-risk activity, or travel of more than 200 miles roundtrip from your normal meeting place. Plan day trips and activities using the Safety Activity Checkpoints, along with the 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 activity or sporting equipment is being provided, ask the provider if they wipe down supplies/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 stay.** Volunteers must submit a Troop/Group Activity Application for all overnight activities and continue to practice the Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation guidance outlined in this document.

If the families of your troop are in agreement to travel, and understand the inherent risks, overnight camping and travel is allowed with the following stipulations:

Troop/Group Activity Application approvals must be completed. As with all in-person activities, all mitigation guidance outlined here should be implemented; for example, follow the guidance in the section for Volunteer Awareness and for Pre-screening and Symptoms Check.

When making decisions about whether or not to approve troop travel or proceed with planned council-organized travel, GSNYPENN staff will use all current health and safety guidance available in your jurisdiction as well as the destination jurisdiction to ensure the safety of girls. You can access a summary of restrictions by state [here](#). Also, check all guidance provided by the [CDC specific to travel](#), and, for international travel, check U.S. Department of State Travel Advisories. Be sure to check CDC and Department of State advice with respect to U.S. or international travel.

Current GSNYPENN COVID-19 guidelines must be followed. All families must be informed of GSNYPENN's COVID-19 guidelines and recommendations for travel (shared in this document).

The following measures are to be taken:

- GSNYPENN recommends all individuals be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.
- Overnight Girl Scout trips scheduled **on or after October 1, 2021**, will require that individuals who are not fully vaccinated provide the group/trip leader with a negative screening test for SARS-CoV-2 within three (3) days (72 hours) of travel.
- Implement modifications to travel plans that make social distancing practicable; for example, unvaccinated travelers from separate households practice social distancing. Again, sustained contact within less than six (6) feet for longer than ten (10) minutes within an enclosed area creates high-risk for virus transmission.
- For travel that includes girls and adults from multiple households who must be in close proximity (e.g., sharing transportation or accommodations), we recommend breaking the group up into smaller cohorts, in addition to the pre-screening and symptoms checks, which should take place before all in-person activities.
- Prior to departure, wellness checks must be made on all travelers including an assessment as to current symptoms of illness or exposure to a positive person during the last three (3) days. If any of the questions are answered in the affirmative, that individual may not go on the trip.
- GSNYPENN currently recommends shared sleeping quarters should be a minimum of six (6) feet between beds, with the understanding individuals are fully vaccinated and/or showed no symptoms within three (3) days of travel. Sleeping quarters must also be in accordance with Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- Masks **MUST** be worn at all times by individuals, except when eating, drinking, sleeping or physically distanced outdoors.
- Continue daily health/temperature screening while on the trip.
- Handwashing and hand sanitizing stations must be made available at all times.
- GSNYPENN's Annual Permission Form with COVID-19 Waiver of Liability must be signed for all participants.
- Additional insurance must be purchased for non-members. *(Please note: only GSNYPENN members may participate in an overnight troop or SU trip.)*

Although travel plans are often arranged several months in advance, recognize that the COVID-19 risk is still fluid; it can and may change, and contingencies should be planned ahead of time for re-scheduling, cancelling, or pivoting to a virtual activity. For all planned trips, create a timeline and identify a drop-dead date when decisions must be made about whether or not to move forward with the planned trip, based primarily on the safety of our girls, along with financial commitment deadlines and/or other factors. You should also consider purchasing travel insurance but be sure to read all fine print and ask questions to ensure COVID-19 or pandemic-related cancellation is covered; it is often excluded.

**Domestic Travel.** Check [CDC Domestic Travel Guidance](#) during COVID-19 for the various types of travel, risk factors, and steps to mitigate risk. Another additional resource to examine is the [Educator Travel Toolkit](#) created by the Student Youth Travel Organization (although this resource was created for trips planned with a tour provider, the suggestions are more broadly applicable.) Recommendations from this guide include: consider purchasing travel insurance (be sure to understand if the policy has COVID-19 or pandemic exclusions); plan to bring 1-2 adults beyond the ratio-required number of adults, and to pre-book an extra accommodation space, in case it is necessary to isolate a traveler from the rest of the group.

CDC recommends delaying travel until you are [fully vaccinated](#), because travel increases your chance of getting and spreading COVID-19. In addition to the travel guidelines above, follow all local and CDC recommendations for domestic travel.

**International Travel:** For planned international travel, continue to monitor all guidance from the CDC and Department of State. You can register a planned [trip](#) with the Department of State to receive updates when advisories change. You can also check COVID-19 trends over time for select countries by checking the Council on International Educational Exchange's (CIEE) [Health Risk Index Report](#).

**Transportation (Carpooling).** It is imperative to take all safety precautions when girls are traveling in motor vehicles. COVID-19 transmission risk is high when people are in close proximity, less than six (6) feet apart. The risk increases when people are in a closed-in area or indoors for longer than ten (10) minutes. When transporting unvaccinated girls and adults, always space out the passengers to avoid crowding, have all individuals wear a mask, and keep the windows partially open to provide ventilation. Make sure parents are aware ahead of time if girls will be in a car together. Always, for every in-person event, meeting, or transportation arrangement, conduct the prescreening symptoms check to ensure that coronavirus does not touch Girl Scout gatherings. Individual parent drop-offs and pick-ups are ideal. Public transportation should be avoided and not encouraged, unless fully vaccinated.

CDC guidance for rideshares and drivers for hire may be helpful as an additional reference when evaluating motor vehicle transportation or car-pooling: Ride [Shares](#) and Drivers for Hire.

**Public Transportation.** Public transportation should be avoided and not encouraged, unless fully vaccinated, as large groups of people, indoors, for longer than ten (10) minutes are typical of most public transportation which increases transmission risk and maintaining six (6) feet of social distance is often difficult or impossible with public transportation. However, when public transportation cannot be avoided:

- Avoid peak hours
- Allow extra time to wait and avoid crowded buses or subway cars or capacity restrictions
- Space out girls to avoid crowding (but keep to the buddy system)
- Consider grade level, age and maturity level of girls
- Always wear a mask
- Obtain parental or legal guardian permission, make sure they are aware
- Clean hands before and after public transportation travel

**Cookie Booths.** To be determined closer to the program start date.

### [Health and Safety Practices](#)

**Vaccinations for girl members, staff, and volunteers.**

- **Girl Members.**

- Vaccine and vaccine exemption laws with respect to COVID-19 will likely focus on public and private school attendance initially and more directly than they may for recreational youth organizations. Therefore, when the vaccine becomes available for children, it is best to proceed with the same approach as the laws apply to school attendance. If in doubt, check with your council on specific vaccination guidance for your area.
  - COVID-19 vaccines are now available for children age 12 and up, but not expected to become available for all children before the end of 2021. GSNYPENN will stay abreast of state regulations and protocols practiced in public schools and use that information to inform our policies.
  - If you have any questions about the obligation to communicate a girl's non-immunization with other troop parents, contact GSNYPENN and council staff will obtain the appropriate local legal guidance. Absent specific federal or state laws that speak directly to the COVID-19 vaccine and communicating non-immunization with parents of youth groups, the guidance is to follow the standard and protocol as it pertains to school attendance.
- **Adult Volunteers.**
    - Based on the current regulatory landscape, volunteers are strongly encouraged to voluntarily vaccinate but they are not required to do so.
    - You can access FAQs regarding vaccinations here: [COVID-19 Vaccination FAQs](#).
  - **Council and Camp Staff.**
    - GSNYPENN strongly encourages all council staff members to become vaccinated when the vaccine is available to them, council staff are under no obligation to disclose their personal vaccination status. Under no circumstances should one staff member discuss the personal healthcare decisions of another staff member with anyone. Currently, unvaccinated staff members are required to provide a weekly, negative screening test for SARS-CoV-2.

**Volunteer Awareness.** Always remember that COVID-19 is an extremely contagious virus that spreads easily in the community. It is important to take all reasonable precautions to limit potential exposure for girls, volunteers, and families. GSNYPENN provides these guidelines to promote awareness, preparedness, health and community service. It is an important time to be a safety-minded Girl Scout and demonstrate Girl Scout values. It is also important to regularly check and follow real-time local and national safety directives and to survey your girls' families for their comfort level with respect to returning to troop meetings.

For every in-person gathering, remember:

- Conduct verbal (yes/no to all) pre-screening (see **Pre-Screening and Symptoms Check** section below)
- All girls and adults wear masks
- Maintain physical distance
- Wash hands
- No touching the face
- No sharing utensils, disinfect shared supplies, disposable items are best
- Carry disinfectant and make sure girls are using it as appropriate

**Pre-Screening and Symptoms Check.** Prior to in-person troop meetings and activities, all participants should be screened to ensure they are healthy and that they have had not experienced symptoms 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.

At this time, GSNYPENN is recommending a verbal acknowledgement to the following:

- Has participant been in close contact in the past 10 days with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19?
- Been notified by your medical provider or a local government official to remain home because of COVID-19 in the past 10 days?
- Tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 10 days?
- Had a fever of 100.0 or greater now or in the past 10 days?

Note: The CDC defines "close contact" as follows:

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

**Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation.** 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 twenty (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.

Council has created a set of predesigned signs for your use.

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

**Singing.** If you normally close your meetings with a song, make certain girls and adults are all wearing masks. Maintain distancing and ask your girls to either hum their closing song, or sing quietly, and always, of course, with their masks on.

**First Aid Supplies.** Troop first aid supplies should include COVID-19 prevention items including hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol), hydrogen peroxide wipes, 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.

**First Aid/CPR Training.** Keep skills up-to-date for any emergency.

**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.).

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

**FDA Warning.** The FDA has advised consumers not to use certain hand sanitizers due to unsafe ingredients. The CDC provides an updated list of products that should never be used. Be sure to check FDA updates on hand sanitizers consumers should not use and stay away from products deemed unsafe.

**Face Coverings.** All girls and adults wear masks during indoor, in-person gatherings. 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.

When outdoors and physically distanced, unvaccinated individuals are not required to wear a face covering. Children may remove face coverings outdoors but must continue to maintain social distancing rules. Vaccinated individuals do not need to wear masks nor social distance when outdoors with the Girl Scout group.

Some girls or volunteers may not be able to wear masks, due to medical conditions such as asthma. Should a girl or volunteer be unable to wear a mask, due to a medical condition, contact GSNYPENN for guidance on how best to handle this exceptional circumstance. 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. Again, volunteers should contact council staff for guidance.

**Permission Slips.** The Annual Permission/Health Form, including acknowledgement of coronavirus risk, must be completed for all Girl Scout participants each membership 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:

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



**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 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.

### [Reporting a Contact/Incident](#)

**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. All 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. There are laws and regulations governing sharing of health data.

**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, at 315.698.9400 x2129 office, [cverratti@gsnypenn.org](mailto:cverratti@gsnypenn.org) or 315.723.8849 cell.

Refer any and all media inquiries to GSNYPENN. Media relations lead is Jaime Alvarez, Senior Director of Marketing & Communications, at 315.698.9400 x2049 office, 315.263.5957 cell or [jalvarez@gsnypenn.org](mailto:jalvarez@gsnypenn.org).

### [Additional Information](#)

[CDC One-Stop-Shop Toolkit](#). The page offers an array of topics and specific COVID-19 guidance. The site is updated regularly.

### [NYS Covid-19 Guidance](#)

### [PA Covid-19 Guidance](#)