

## **COVID-19 Guidance for Girl Scout Volunteers Troop Meetings, Activities/Programs, Health & Safety Practices Edition Date: March 2, 2022**

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 CDC, state, and local COVID-19 guidance which changes in response to risk factors. Monitor local and federal guidelines and other resources indicated below, such as the CDC's [Use and Care of Masks](#) and [COVID-19 Community Level](#) webpages. GSNYPENN may modify council 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:**

- Check and follow local [community levels](#) and recommended prevention steps in your area. Note: masking and vaccination requirements may vary from business to business.
- Individuals should not attend any Girl Scout events when experiencing any COVID-like symptoms or if they've been recently exposed and are unvaccinated.
- Review GSNYPENN travel guidelines prior to planning any Girl Scout overnights.
- Routinely clean and disinfect all surfaces and objects that are frequently touched.
- 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.
- Check and follow local [community levels](#) and recommended prevention steps in your area.

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, Including Travel
- Health and Safety Practices
- Reporting a Contact/Incident

### **Meetings and Gatherings**

**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.

**In-Person Meetings and Gatherings.** Troop/group gatherings should be planned in accordance with Safety Activity Checkpoints, COVID-19 risk mitigation guidelines and local and national safety directives.

Individuals should not attend any Girl Scout events when experiencing any COVID-like symptoms or if they've been recently exposed and are unvaccinated.

### **Activities and Programs**

**Day Trips and Activities.** GSNYPENN requires 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.

Call ahead to the facility or vendor to confirm their COVID-19 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, follow COVID-19 risk mitigation guidelines, and local and national safety directives.

If the families of your troop are in agreement to travel, and understand the inherent risks, overnight camping and travel is allowed. Troop/Group Activity Application approvals must be completed.

The following measures are encouraged:

- GSNYPENN's Annual Permission Form with COVID-19 Waiver of Liability must be signed for all participants.
- GSNYPENN encourages participants to test for COVID-19 prior to attending overnight activities to help prevent spread to others; at-home test kits are acceptable.
- Prior to departure, wellness checks should be made on all travelers. If there are signs of fever, cough, shortness of breath, or [other symptoms](#) of COVID-19, that individual should not go on the trip.
- GSNYPENN recommends shared sleeping quarters should be a minimum of six (6) feet between beds. Sleeping quarters must also be in accordance with Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- Continue wellness checks while on the trip.
- We recommend bringing along self-tests for individuals to self-administer, should symptoms arise; caregiver permission required.
- Make handwashing and hand sanitizing stations readily available.
- Additional insurance must be purchased for non-members. (*Please note: only GSNYPENN members may participate in an overnight troop, SU or council 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. 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.

**Domestic Travel.** Check [CDC Domestic Travel Guidance](#) during COVID-19 for the various types of travel, risk factors, and steps to mitigate risk. 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](#), including:

- If traveling by air, check if your airline requires any testing, vaccination, or other documents.
- Prepare to be flexible during your trip as restrictions and policies may change during your travel.

**International Travel: GSNYPENN requires all members participating in international travel be fully vaccinated.** 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](#).

As of December 6, 2021, all air passengers, regardless of vaccination status, must show a negative COVID-19 test taken no more than 1 day before [travel to the U.S.](#)

**Cruise Ship Travel. GSNYPENN requires all members participating in cruise ship travel be fully vaccinated.** Cruise ship travel is not a zero-risk activity. The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads easily between people in close quarters onboard ships and the chance of getting COVID-19 on cruise ships is high, even if you are up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines. GSNYPENN recommends choosing a cruise ship that has chosen to participate in the [CDC's COVID-19 Program for Cruise Ships](#).

**Public Transportation.** [Wearing a mask over your nose and mouth is required](#) on planes, buses, trains, and other forms of public transportation traveling into, within, or out of the U.S. and while indoors at U.S. transportation hubs such as airports and stations. Travelers are not required to wear a mask in outdoor areas of a conveyance (like on open deck areas of a ferry or the uncovered top deck of a bus).

### **Health and Safety Practices**

**Vaccinations for Girl Members, Council Staff, and Volunteers.** [COVID-19 vaccines](#) are effective at preventing you from getting sick. [COVID-19 vaccines](#) are highly effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalizations, and death. You can access the most recent FAQs regarding vaccinations on our dedicated response page, [gsnypenn.org/covid19](https://gsnypenn.org/covid19).

- **Girl Members.**
  - GSNYPENN will stay abreast of state regulations and protocols practiced in public schools and use that information to inform our policies.
  - Girl members traveling internationally or traveling by cruise ship with Girl Scouts must provide the group leader with proof that they are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.
- **Adult Volunteers.**
  - Volunteers are strongly encouraged to voluntarily vaccinate but they are not required to do so.
  - Adult volunteers traveling internationally or traveling by cruise ship with Girl Scouts must provide the group leader with proof that they are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.
- **Council and Camp Staff.**
  - GSNYPENN requires all council staff members to be vaccinated now that the vaccine is available to them.
  - Council and camp staff must provide proof that they are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

**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. Consider the CDC's guidance on [How to Protect Yourself and Others](#), for tips on mitigating risk of COVID-19. 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.

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

**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. 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.).

**Face Coverings.** It is always acceptable for girls or adults to wear masks and they should feel emotionally safe in their choice. Have disposable masks on hand for those who need them. Again, follow local and national health and safety 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.
- 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.
- If serving family style, have one person, wearing clean gloves, serve everyone on clean plates.
- 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.

**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.

### **Reporting a Contact/Incident**

**Reporting and Communicating a Positive COVID-19 Test. If a troop member tests positive for COVID-19,** tell close contacts that they may have been exposed. An infected person can spread COVID-19 starting 48 hours (or 2 days) before the person has any symptoms or tests positive. By letting close contacts know they may have been exposed, we are helping to protect everyone.

The message below can be used to alert attendees/caregivers by phone or email. Customize, as needed, for your specific event/situation.

Dear parents,

A member of our troop who was present at our troop meeting on *(date)* has since tested positive for COVID-19. The individual did not have obvious symptoms at the time of the meeting. *(Note: state if the individual remains asymptomatic.)*

Based on current guidelines, any unvaccinated attendees who were less than 3-6 feet from the individual for a total of 15 minutes (or unmasked) should quarantine for 5 days and monitor for

symptoms, and all those in close contact should wear a well-fitting mask for 10 days. *(Note: Let families know “I have already contacted those who were determined to be in close contact” if it is relevant or communicate **“No one in our troop was determined to be in close contact.”**)*

Please be aware of and monitor for changes in health status and, should symptoms present, test for COVID-19 and choose to isolate.

At our meetings, we practice COVID-19 mitigation by *(state what your troop is doing to mitigate risk)*.

If you have any questions (other than the name of the positive individual, which I cannot and will not share), please feel free to reach out to me.

Best regards,

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Council support staff can assist with drafting your communication and answer any additional questions.

**For additional guidance and support, contact Christina Verratti, Director of Membership Support, at 315.915.8976 voice/text or email [cverratti@gsnypenn.org](mailto:cverratti@gsnypenn.org).**

**Refer any and all media inquiries to GSNYPENN. Media Relations Lead is Jaime Alvarez, Senior Director of Marketing & Communications, at 315.275.2251 office, 315.263.5957 cell or [jalvarez@gsnypenn.org](mailto:jalvarez@gsnypenn.org).**

#### **[Additional Information](#)**

**[CDC COVID-19 Guidance](#)**. The page offers an array of topics and specific guidance. It is updated regularly.

#### **[NYS COVID-19 Guidance Repository](#)**

#### **[Responding to COVID-19 in PA](#)**

#### **[COVID-19 Quarantine and Isolation Guidance](#)**