



**Updated 09/25/2020**

## **Returning to In-Person Troop Meetings and Activities Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Volunteers**

This guidance provided as of the edition date above. Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta (GSGATL) may modify this guidance as circumstances change.

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

The risk associated with 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 and fellow volunteers.

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

**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 (or research) the facility ahead of time and keep in mind the following:

- Is the space cleaned, and are high-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?
- Are restrooms open to the public?
- What type of faucets / soap dispensers are available in the restroom (sensory or manual)?

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

Note: Do not assume public spaces are cleaned and sanitized. Arrive 30 minutes in advance and clean high-touch surfaces.

Meetings may not be held inside 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:** GSGATL does not permit meetings to take place inside the home out of concern that there would be a greater risk of exposure to other family members and increased risk of homeowner liability. Outdoor meetings in back yards or similar outdoor spaces are permitted with appropriate social distancing.

**Troop Meeting Size:** The current maximum is 20 people (including adult volunteers) for indoor troop meetings and small gatherings. The maximum for outdoor meetings and gatherings is 30 people, including the required adult volunteer ratio. Outdoor meetings are strongly encouraged. All meetings and gatherings require participants to wear masks and observe 6-foot social distancing. If local guidelines are more restrictive, follow the local restriction. Continue to utilize all social distancing practices and follow all preventive guidance (such as face coverings).

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 person in smaller groups—such as age-level groups, patrols, or groups of girls with a specific badge they'd like to work on.
- Masks should be worn at all times except in circumstances in which it is impractical. For example, while eating or swimming, masks may be removed.

**Transportation:** Individual parents should drop off and pick up their own girls from meetings and day trips. Carpooling and public transportation are not permitted to maintain social distancing.

**Virtual Meetings:** Meeting options may need to be flexible based on the fluid nature of COVID-19 risk and the possibility of limited meeting locations. Troops that are able to run online meetings may choose to do so. Even when in-person meetings are possible, consider using in-person events to supplement ongoing virtual gatherings. GSGATL recommends maintaining a virtual to in-person ratio of at least 50/50 which means maintain virtual troop meetings at least 50% 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.

Here are other [helpful resources](#).

**Troop Activities:** As GSGATL continues to follow the advice and guidance of public health experts from the CDC and state and local health authorities, we recommend troop outdoor activities (i.e., hiking, biking, swimming, creative outdoor games), which present a lower risk of transmission than indoor activities. Attached to this document is a COVID-19 activity list with guidance indicators of which activities can be done safely in the current phase of our State's COVID-19 restrictions. In addition, attached is a COVID-19 non-comprehensive venue list that is pre-approved by council staff. Utilize these as starting points in planning your activities. In choosing a Troop activity, carefully consider the following:

- Does the activity require each person to utilize personalized equipment belonging to the venue?
- Is the equipment being used by your group being sanitized after each use? Is it the type of equipment that can be sanitized?
- Is the venue staff sanitizing after each group?
- Does the venue require reservations to limit the overall number of patrons in a space?
- Is the venue requiring masks to be worn?
- Are you satisfied with the venue's frequency of sanitizing?
- Is this an activity requiring council approval?
- Are you visiting a venue with many high - touch surfaces in which staff are unlikely to be able to sanitize prior to the arrival of your group?
- Is the venue performing temperature checks?
- Is the venue requiring social distancing?
- Is hand sanitizer readily available?
- Are restrooms maintained and clean?

Although Indoor and outdoor venues should be following CDC, State and Local COVID-19 guidelines, it is imperative in planning Troop activities that you perform comprehensive safety due diligence in choosing a venue. Choose venues in conjunction with [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#), and follow the same guidance as [Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation](#) in this document. Call ahead to the facility to confirm the facility is following [CDC](#) and [Georgia Department of Public Health](#) guidelines. Make whatever appropriate accommodations that are necessary. Bring extra sanitizer if none will be provided for public use at the activity location. Be sensitive to and plan ahead in how to ensure activities are safe. Consider how to instruct the girls to safely use public restrooms when available, wear masks during all in-person activities (except in swimming pools), consider hand washing and restroom options when outdoors, and avoid singing, which is a high-risk activity that can spread viral droplets over a farther distance than normal speech.

**Face Coverings:** Volunteers should remind girls that Girl Scouts wear face coverings (masks) for in-person activities 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 should plan to teach girls [how to handle their face coverings](#) so that the coverings are effective. Some girls or volunteers may not be able to wear masks, due to medical conditions such as asthma. Contact the council for guidance on how best to handle these exceptional circumstances as they arise.

**Sharing:** Most forms of sharing are prohibited at troop meeting in the current environment to help ensure all girls can stay healthy and safe while being together and avoid the spread of the virus through surface contact. At all in-person gatherings, do not permit girls to share food or activity supplies. Activity supplies should not be shared between the girls. As alternatives, supplies may be brought from home or each girl can have a unique personal supply kit which the leader safely stocks in advance and is used at each meeting.

**Food and Snacks:** Safety recommendations for food and snacks include:

- Encourage girls to bring their own food to eat (bag lunch or dinner).
- Do not allow girls to share their food.
- Prepackaged food items from a restaurant or caterer is recommended when lunch or dinner cannot be brought from home by each individual girl.
- Snacks should be limited to pre-packaged, individual serving size food which can be safely distributed without cross contamination.

**Personal contact:** Hugs, handshakes, “high-fives,” and even activities like the friendship circle hand squeeze can transmit COVID-19 from person-to-person. Refrain from person-to-person contact for the time being. Create a safe, contactless way for girls and volunteers to greet each other and end meetings instead.

**Beyond the Troop Events:**

- Overnight trips are not permitted in order to maintain social distancing and remain in travel compliance with CDC, state and local authorities.
- Day trips are permitted to participate in the recommended COVID-19 Activity List while maintaining social distancing and the wearing of masks. No carpooling or public transportation is permitted.
- Submit Trip or Beyond the Troop Event applications for activities requiring council approval as indicated on the COVID-19 Activity List.

**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 the following guidance:

- 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 your face.
- 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 (approximately 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit). Members with fever or temperature higher than 100.4 should skip the in-person gathering until their temperature is normal.

**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, have volunteers 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.

**First Aid Supplies:** Troop first aid supplies should include COVID-19 prevention items including hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol), tissues, disposable facemasks, 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. The Red Cross is currently offering an online [120 day certification extension](#) to ensure that leaders who have had recently expired certifications can stay certified. The 120-day certification enables an existing enrollee to extend their current American Red Cross certification by 120 days from the original certification expiration date. This extension certificate is for student or base level certificates from instructor-led and blended learning courses.

The Council is currently assessing other provisional online training opportunities and developing a plan to help ensure all volunteers can continue to stay Red Cross certified in the coming months.

**Disinfectants and Disinfecting:** [Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces](#) and objects that are frequently touched (i.e., table tops, door handles, 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<sup>rd</sup> cup) bleach per gallon of water or
- 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water

**FDA Warning.** The FDA advised consumers (6/19/2020) not to 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. <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/drug-safety-and-availability/fda-updates-hand-sanitizers-methanol>  
See the [CDC's website](#) for more about cleaning and disinfecting community facilities.

**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 the council in this situation. The Council member will instruct the volunteer to complete an [Incident Report](#) with an attached roster of all girls and volunteers involved in the activity and submit it to the council. Council staff will contact the volunteer if additional information is necessary. A **council staff member** and NOT volunteers, will be responsible for:

- Contacting the positive individual to inform them to refer the contact tracer to the Council for additional member contact information
- providing additional information to contact tracers.,
- Contacting the parents of anyone who may have been exposed (or other volunteers),
- Notifying a facility where a troop has met.

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

Thank you for doing your part to keep our Girl Scout community safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are stronger together, even when we are six feet apart.

## Questions & Answers

Q. Can I participate in indoor activities?

A. Yes, you may go to places that have been permitted to reopen if they have implemented, CDC & GDH measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (i.e., social distancing and sanitation mandates), provided equipment being used during the activity is not shared and thoroughly sanitized between uses. You must feel comfortable the venue is following COVID-19 mandates and GSGATL guidelines on sanitation and safety prior to your visit. If at any time you do not feel confident of that fact, please find a safer venue or activity for your Troop. We recommend outdoor activities whenever possible, as the risk of contracting COVID-19 is lower.

Q. Are masks required outdoors?

A. Yes, anytime you are not able to social distance you should wear masks to protect yourself and others. Swimming does not require wearing a mask. Given the challenges of maintaining social distance between our younger girl members, we recommend wearing masks in groups of younger girls at all times.

Q. Are masks required indoors?

A. Masks are required to be worn while indoors, except while eating.

Q. What if I have a Girl who is not able to wear a mask for medical reasons?

A. Face shields allow an adequate amount of oxygen, as well as provide protection for others. If there is an underlying health condition, please have a discussion with the Girl's parents of the potential risk of contracting COVID-19 and it being a higher medical risk to those with underlying health conditions. Should a girl not be able to wear a mask to a Girl Scout event, please contact the council for guidance on how best to handle these exceptional circumstances as they arise.

Q. Are overnight trips permitted?

A. Overnight Troop Trips are not permitted at this time.

Q. Is it possible to carpool?

A. No, parents/caregivers must drop off and pick up their own child at the location of the meeting or activity.

Q. Is overnight camping permitted?

A. Troop overnight camping is not permitted at this time. Family camping is permitted where each family is involved in their own activities and not comingling with other families.

Q. Can my Troop take a day trip to a camp for activities?

A. Yes, each parent/caregiver must transport their own child(ren).

Q. What camps are we permitted to visit?

A. You may visit all GSGATL camps and camps accredited by the American Camp Association that are following CDC, DPH and State of Georgia COVID-19 guidelines.

Q. Can the Troop cook their own food?

A. Food may not be cooked communally or shared at this time. Each Girl's meal must be sent from home, prepackaged or individually ordered from a restaurant.

Q. Can we have cookie rallies?

A. Yes! Cookie rallies are going virtual this year! Customer care will be able to provide additional information about Virtual Cookie Rallies later this fall.

Q. Will I need council approval for high risk activities?

A. Yes, check our council's Safety Activity Checkpoints and complete a Trip application.

Q. Are State Parks acceptable venues?

A. Yes, you may participate in State Park activities that are in compliance with CDC, state and local health guidelines and GSGATL Safety Activity Checkpoints.

Q. Are Money Earning Activities permitted during COVID-19?

A. Yes – existing guidelines continue to apply, subject to additional health and safety restrictions for COVID-19 as explained in this guide. Rules for Money Earning Activities can be found in Volunteer Essentials.