



Updated 04/01/2021

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. Girl Scouts' number one priority is the safety and well-being of our members and families and communities we serve.

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 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 Meetings 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 door knobs 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 backyards or similar outdoor spaces are permitted while wearing masks with appropriate social distancing.

Backyard Meetings: For back and front yard meetings, make sure that the grounds are completely safe for children. For example, be careful that pools are 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. **Note:** Meetings on residential property may cause you to have liability under your homeowners' insurance policy in the event of an injury or other claim.

Troop Meeting Size: The current maximum is 30 people (including adult volunteers) for indoor troop meetings and small gatherings. The maximum for outdoor meetings and gatherings is 50 people, including the required adult volunteer ratio. If the group is more than 30, separate the group into smaller groups and do not allow comingling among groups. For tracking purposes, this will limit the number of persons who are required to quarantine in the event of a positive COVID-19 case. Outdoor meetings are strongly encouraged. Stagger time frames when necessary, to ensure the group does not exceed the maximum number for the gathering or event. Meetings and gatherings require participants to wear masks, **except during outdoor activities where social distancing can be maintained.** If local guidelines are more restrictive, follow the local restriction. Continue to utilize all social distancing practices **indoors and outdoors** and follow all preventive guidance.

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.

Transportation: Individual parents should drop off and pick up their own girls from meetings and day trips when possible. **Carpooling is permitted for brief, local day trips,**

so long as no more than two households are in the same vehicle. All passengers in the car must wear masks and maintain as much distance as possible. Keep the windows partially open to provide ventilation. Continue to conduct the COVID pre-screening process before carpooling to minimize coronavirus exposure from this activity.. Public transportation is not permitted at this time.

School buses with open windows are permitted to transport girls on day trips. Prior to getting on the bus, girls should be separated into groups (pods) and should enter the bus one pod at a time, loading from the rear of the bus and leaving one row of seats empty between pods. Pods should not co-mingle, and the same pod should remain together for the duration of the day or event. Masks must be worn inside the buses at all times.

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. Other helpful resources to support volunteers for virtual troop meetings and virtual activities include the gsZoom page, Getting Started Guide and FAQ's.

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. 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 in-person activities, consider hand washing and restroom options when outdoors.

Singing: Singing is a high-risk activity that can spread viral droplets over a farther distance than normal speech. As an alternative, ask your girls to either hum their closing song or sing quietly. If you normally close your meetings with a song, make certain girls and adults are wearing masks and are socially distanced. Another option is for Girls to face backwards (outwards) in a circle while singing.

Face Coverings: Masks should be worn, except in circumstances in which it is impractical; for example, while eating masks may be removed. **Masks may also be removed during outdoor activities when social distancing can be maintained.**

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 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 meetings 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 are 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, end meetings and celebrate instead, **for example, troop-created celebratory dance moves.**

Beyond the Troop Events:

- Day trips are permitted to participate in the recommended COVID-19 Activity List while maintaining social distancing and the wearing of masks.
- Submit Trip or Beyond the Troop Event applications for activities requiring council approval as indicated on the COVID-19 Activity List.

Overnight Trips: The timeframe for resuming travel will vary from state to state and even from county to county. Volunteers must follow council travel guidance:

- For the foreseeable future, volunteers must seek council’s prior approval before planning any overnight activities and continue to practice the Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation guidance outlined in this document.
- Troops should travel in pods of family household members. Driving is an acceptable form of transportation, following the carpooling guidelines set forth above; flying is not yet approved.
- Short (one- to three-day trips) within the state of Georgia generally will be approved.
- Lodge with family/household members in hotels or enclosed cabins. Girls not living in the same household should not share indoor sleeping quarters. Screened open cabins and well-ventilated outdoor tents may be shared by non-family members with social distancing.
- Overnight travel is restricted to areas that are **not** considered “COVID hot spots,” which may change as the pandemic progresses. Before planning your trip, check the state and county health department websites to be sure the area you are planning to visit is safe. [List of State Departments of Health](#)
- Be aware of any additional city and county restrictions in the areas you plan to visit. They may have restrictions relating to the number of people who can gather, the number of households that can be present in each gathering, or other restrictions.
- Once your destination research is complete, submit a Beyond the Troop or Trip application for approval, detailing the trip and COVID-19 safety precautions being taken for a successful trip.
- Troops should travel in pods of family or household members.
- When participating in activities, each pod should remain 6 feet apart from the other pods and wear masks during all indoor activities.
- If a family member becomes sick with COVID-19 like symptoms, the family should be prepared to isolate from other families.

- Families traveling together should plan to allow the troop to have unique experiences together to ensure any expenditure of troop funds goes towards the girls and their troop experience together.
- Troop funds are appropriate to spend to ensure child to adult ratios. Troop funds should not be spent to support additional family members who may travel overnight with the troop.
- In addition to following COVID-19 safety guidelines, follow safety guidance in our Safety Activity Checkpoints.

Although travel plans are often arranged several months in advance, recognize that the COVID-19 risk is fluid; it can and will 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.

International Travel

International Travel is not permitted at this time.

Pre-screening and Symptoms Check. 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.

Prior to in-person troop meetings and activities, all participants should be screened to ensure:

- They are healthy and that they or a family member have not experienced symptoms that are associated with COVID-19 in the previous 72 hours, and
- That they have not knowingly been in contact with someone who has exhibited symptoms or has been confirmed positive with COVID-19 or a person waiting to see if they are COVID-19 positive.

As a normal practice, add the following or similar statement to all meeting/event invites: “In our efforts to protect each other, if you or anyone in your household have any COVID-19 symptoms, cold or flu-like symptoms or have been exposed to anyone suspected to have COVID-19, please refrain from having any household members attend this meeting or event.”

Hygiene and COVID-19 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 volunteer 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.

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: Troops 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 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 cleaner. To prepare a bleach solution, mix:

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

FDA Warning: The FDA advised consumers (06/19/2020) 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/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 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 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, when social distancing is not possible or challenging to maintain. Otherwise, masks can be removed when participating in outdoor activities.

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

A. Face shields allow adequate amount of oxygen, as well as provide some 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, contact the council for guidance on how best to handle these exceptional circumstances as they arise.

Q. Is overnight camping permitted?

A. Yes, troop primitive camping, open screened cabins and well-ventilated tent platform overnight camping is permitted. For closed cabin overnight camping, only one family or household may spend the night in each cabin.

Q. Will I need council approval for Travel?

A. Yes, council approval is needed for all travel. Complete a Beyond the Troop or Trip Application.

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.

Q. What should I as a Troop Leader do if a parent or volunteer report a positive COVID-19 case to me of someone who has recently attended our Troop meet or event?

A. Complete an online Incident Report with a roster of all who attended the meeting or event. Do not notify others. Council will provide notification as appropriate. Email riskmanagement@gstatl.org with any questions, additional information or instructions.