



Updated 07/15/2021

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

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This Guidance is provided as of the edition date above. GSGATL (Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta) may modify this guidance as circumstances change. Girl Scouts' number one priority is the safety and well-being of our members, families, and the 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 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 Meetings Space:** Outdoor spaces where social distancing can be maintained are recommended for meetings. Get advance permission from the property owner or the authority that is providing 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 than ideal. For example, if you arrive after another group, 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 of 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 with appropriate social distancing.

**Backyard Meetings:** For back and front yard meetings, make sure that the grounds are entirely safe for children. For example, be careful that pools are fenced or otherwise safely sectioned off. The same goes for any equipment, tools or recreational apparatus 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 indoor maximum gathering is 50 people (including adult volunteers) for troop meetings and gatherings. Outdoor activities and events no longer have a limitation on gathering size. For large outdoor gatherings, we strongly recommend organizing the event into smaller groups of no more than 50 people. For tracking purposes, this will limit the number of persons required to quarantine in the event of a positive COVID-19 case. Outdoor gatherings are encouraged. Meetings and events require participants to wear masks, except during outdoor activities, and groups can maintain social distancing. If local guidelines are more restrictive than GSGATL guidelines, follow local restrictions. Continue to utilize social distancing practices indoors and outdoors and follow all preventive guidance.

**Virtual Meetings:** Meeting options may need to be flexible based on the fluid nature of the COVID-19 risk and limited meeting locations. Troops that can run online meetings may choose to do so. Even when in-person meetings are possible, consider using virtual events to supplement 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:** GSGATL continues to follow the advice and guidance of public health experts from the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) 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 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 necessary accommodations, as needed. Bring extra sanitizer if none is provided at the activity location. Be sensitive to and plan 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 sing at a lower volume while socially distanced. Wear masks inside while singing. Wear masks outside if you are unable to be socially distanced. Another option is to have girls face backwards (outwards) in a circle while singing

**Face Coverings:** Masks should always be worn, except in circumstances in which it is impractical; for example, masks can be removed while eating. 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), 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 but 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 the best way to handle these circumstances as they arise.

**Sharing:** Most forms of sharing are prohibited in the current environment to help ensure the health and safety of girls and to avoid the spread of the virus through surface contact. At in-person gatherings, limit sharing of activity supplies as much as possible and be vigilant about sanitizing and handwashing when items must be shared. . 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:

- Do not allow girls to share their food.
- One person wearing gloves to plate or serve food, i.e., pizza, snacks.
- Encourage individual girls to bring their food to eat (bag lunch or dinner).
- Pre-packaged snacks, lunch, or dinner safely distributed.

**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; utilize the approved activities on the COVID-19 Activity List on our website.
- Submit a Trip or Beyond the Troop Event application for activities requiring council approval as indicated on the COVID-19 Activity List.

**Overnight Trips:** Volunteers must follow council travel guidance:

- Domestic travel is permitted with restrictions. The COVID guidelines of the travel destination must be followed. Domestic travel includes Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands.
- Take care in planning travel to avoid areas considered to be “COVID hot spots,” which may periodically change. Before planning your trip, check the state and county health department websites to ensure the area you are planning to visit is safe. [List of State Departments of Health](#)
- Troop Leaders are responsible for researching the safety requirements and keep parents informed of the destination’s COVID guidelines and any changes in the destination’s risks during the trip planning process.

- Continue to follow the 'Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation' guidance, practice social distancing and wear masks as outlined in this document. If you are travelling to an area with more stringent guidelines, follow the state and local guidance of the visiting location.
- Overnight trips require council approval. Once your destination research is complete, submit a Beyond the Troop or Trip application for approval, provide detailed information on the trip along with the COVID-19 safety precautions being followed.
- Troops should be separated into small groups while travelling. Ideally you should create travel pods to coincide with sleeping pods.
- Be sure to have a plan if someone becomes sick with COVID symptoms while on the trip.
  - Be prepared to isolate the ill person from their current group and monitor the remaining pod for COVID signs.
  - Be aware that if someone develops COVID on the trip, they are not permitted to take public transportation home. Car transportation will need to be arranged with vaccinated travelers.
  - Have a plan and share it with all parents before taking a trip.
  - Have an additional approved adults on the trip to assist with the isolated child and be able to maintain an appropriate adult to child ratio.
- 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 risk is fluid; it can and will change, and contingencies should be planned in time for re-scheduling, cancelling, or pivoting to a virtual activity. Create a timeline and identify a due date when decisions must be made about whether 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:**

Tentatively, International Travel will begin Spring of 2022 contingent on improvements of COVID conditions in geographic areas of the world.

**Transportation:** Continue to conduct the COVID pre-screening process before traveling to minimize coronavirus exposure.

- Air Travel – Wear masks at airports and during flights. Follow any additional airline guidance.
- Car Travel – Wear masks if any passengers in the vehicle are not in the same household. Keep the windows partially open to provide ventilation whenever practical.
- Van Travel – Wear masks and follow safety checkpoints on van travel.
- Chartered Bus Travel – Wear masks and social distance. Check with the chartered bus company to find out what COVID protocols are in place; many chartered buses are equipped with upgraded filters and outside air systems.

**Overnight Sleeping Arrangements:** Troops are permitted to sleep in the same sleeping quarters. Sleeping without masks poses a higher risk for COVID, as a safety precaution, social distance whenever possible, i.e., additional sleeping cots, sleeping in opposite directions. Assign sleeping groups; the same group should remain together in sleeping quarters each night of the trip.

**Pre-screening and Symptoms Check:** Volunteers, girls, and parents should take temperatures prior to group interaction to confirm the individual is not running a fever. Members with a 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 in the previous 72 hours (about 3 days), 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 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.

**Restrooms:** Be 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 signage, have volunteers ensure girls take 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 towels 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 COVID.

**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. 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. First Aid and CPR training and recertification opportunities are available through the Council and other local organizations. r

**Disinfectants and Disinfecting:** [Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces](#) and objects that are frequently touched (i.e., tabletops, door handles, etc.). Use a household cleaner, or see the [EPA's list of effective cleaners](#) approved for use against COVID. 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 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 (1/3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

Adult volunteers are strongly encouraged, but not required, to be vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus. Deciding to receive a vaccine is a personal decision and Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta encourage staff and members to respect the privacy of fellow members and their families. The Council does not collect information on vaccination status of volunteers. While they may be asked by families, volunteers are under no obligation to Council or parent/caregiver to disclose their personal vaccination status. Also, under no



circumstance should a volunteer discuss the personal healthcare decisions of another volunteer with anyone.

For the protection of all members as well as the families and communities we serve, Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta members should continue to practice all recommended health and safety protocols outlined in this document, regardless of whether or not an individual has received the vaccine.

**Reporting and communicating a positive COVID-19 test:** In the event of a positive COVID-19 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 (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 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 is lower.

**Q.** Are masks required outdoors?

**A.** No, except when social distancing is not possible or challenging to maintain.

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

**A.** Face shields allow adequate amounts 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, when required, 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, follow covid guidance of the Camp as well as guidance in this document.

**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 reports a positive COVID case to me regarding someone who recently attended a Troop meeting or event?

**A.** Complete an online Incident Report with a roster of all who attended the meeting or event. Do not notify others. The council will provide notification as appropriate. Email [riskmanagement@gstatl.org](mailto:riskmanagement@gstatl.org) with any questions, additional information, or instructions.