

Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints 2023-24

Safety Activity Checkpoints (SACs) are resources that provide safety standards and guidelines for Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA) and Girl Scouts of Northern California (GSNorCal)–approved activities.

GSUSA, GSNorCal, other nationwide councils, and other units holding a credential—including USA Girl Scouts Overseas (USAGSO) committees—shall be responsible for seeing that all activities are planned and carried out in a manner that considers the health, safety, and general well-being of all participants in accordance with these guidelines.

This section provides general safety standards & guidelines by topic that will apply to all activities. Please read and become familiar with all topics in this section. These standards and guidelines are to be used together with the specific safety checkpoints for an individual activity along with reasonable common-sense adjustments to ensure a safe positive experience for girls. The intent of providing these guidelines is to establish a checklist for success and develop confident leaders.

Throughout *Safety Activity Checkpoints*, several individual activities, such as Paddling and Rowing, Climbing and Adventure, and Target Sports, are categorized under related sections to provide continuity as well as the grade level and skill progression.

Volunteer Essentials. A key resource for volunteers in Girl Scouting is the [Volunteer Essentials](#). While *Safety Activity Checkpoints* focus on safety guidance and parameters, [Volunteer Essentials](#) will address an array of topics, such as, About Girl Scouts, Engaging Families, Troop and Program, Product Program, Troop Finances, and Safety. All Girl Scout volunteers are instructed to review, understand, and practice the principles and standards in both [Volunteer Essentials](#) and [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#).

Overview of the 2023-24 Safety Activity Checkpoints

The 2023-24 *Safety Activity Checkpoints* have been developed through collaboration between GSUSA and Girl Scout councils in the form of a task group. The SAC task group is responsible for researching outdoor program aspects pertaining to girls' health, safety, and well-being, as well as each approved activity, including transportation to and from the activities.

Activity specifications, safety gear, age, and experience requirements were developed by researching available safety information for each individual activity. Guidelines—including the presence of certified instructors and lifeguards, adult-to-child ratios, travel specifications, activity progression, and activity-specific safety precautions—have been established after taking into consideration factors such as activity-specific loss data, Girl Scouts' historical experience, American Camp Association recommendations, and the industry trends and standards that are considered best practices for safety.

The Risk Management team at Girl Scouts of Northern California (GSNorCal) has enhanced each *Safety Activity Checkpoint* to account for California state laws, our council's insurance coverage, council practices and procedures, and our own council forms and resources. Where possible, we have added links to facilitate finding additional information.

The 2023-24 *Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints* provides a chart for the activities, called "[Activities at a Glance](#)," as an easy reference grid with respect to grade-level specifications for activity participation, council approval requirements, and instructor credentialing (i.e., required certification/experience).

Coronavirus Safety in Girl Scouts. Health and safety in Girl Scouts are always our highest priority. Although California's State of Emergency is over, COVID-19 has not gone away. Members of our Girl Scout community continue to contract COVID-19.

GSNorCal continues to update the latest COVID-19 guidelines specific to the topics that touch our lives in Girl Scouts, e.g., troop meetings and activities, camping, day trips, and domestic and international travel. The GSNorCal website is the first place to go for health and safety practices in Girl Scouting. You can access the latest guidelines here: [GSNorCal COVID-19 Guidelines](#).

Another excellent source of guidance to follow when planning camping trips is the American Camp Association's [COVID-19 Resource Center for Camps](#).

There is also more on coronavirus safety in the [Camping Safety Activity Checkpoint](#).

Girl Scout Safety Standards and Activity Guidelines

This section provides general safety standards and guidelines by topics that apply to all activities. Please read and get familiar with these standards and guidelines.

Consider these safety guidelines for all group outings. Also, incorporate the standards with the specific activity checkpoint provided for individual approved activities.

Council Approval Requirement. At the top of each activity page, you will see a field indicating whether GSNorCal's approval is required to perform the activity. There are two categories for this field:

- **Required.** Certain higher-risk activities will require an extra measure of risk management input. This could be related to travel; ensuring a local facility is safe and adequately insured; checking council's own liability insurance to make sure coverage is adequate; or determining if girls of a certain grade level have the skills to safely engage in an activity. Examples include swimming, skiing, and all travel involving an overnight stay. For these activities, the activity heading will read: "Council Approval: Required."
- **Not required.** Activities that have been traditionally and historically accepted and carry a known or predictable risk but are not considered dangerous will carry no insurance implications or exclusions. Examples of this range from geocaching to STEM projects to crafting and the arts. For these activities, the activity heading will read: "Council Approval: Not required."

Activity Preparation. Communicate with GSNorCal and girls' parents/guardians about the activity, including details about safety precautions and any appropriate clothing or supplies that may be necessary. Follow council procedures for activity approval, certificates of insurance, use of GSNorCal authorized vendors, and guidelines about girls' general health examinations. Arrange in advance for all transportation and confirm plans before departure. Girls are key to activity planning. Keeping their grade level abilities in mind, encourage girls to take proactive leadership roles in organizing details of the activity.

Adult Supervision. The adult supervision rule at Girl Scouts is a strict standard that requires whenever girls meet, whether in person or virtually, there must be *at least* two registered, background checked adult volunteers who are unrelated, (for example: not a sibling, spouse, domestic partner, parent, child, or anyone who would be considered a family member) and who do not live in the same residence with a minimum of one who is female. Troop leaders must always be adults. Youth or youth members are not permitted to substitute for adult supervision. This applies to every Girl Scout gathering, including troop meetings (in person and virtual), day trips, camp, sleep-away travel, events, activities, and projects. There are no exceptions to this rule.

Visiting and Participating Adults. Occasionally, friends and family members join Girl Scout outings or trips. If friends and family members are going to participate in chaperoning Girl Scouts, attending Girl Scout gatherings, have shared oversight over members, participate in an overnight stay, handle money, or drive youth members then they must be registered members, have a completed GSNorCal background check on file, and have completed mandated reporter, and any other required trainings to participate in their role. If friends and family members are not going to be chaperoning Girl Scouts, they must still be registered on the roster with name and contact information in case they are injured while attending the Girl Scout event.

Experts in a subject who have been invited to troop meetings to help work on badges do not require a Girl Scout membership nor need to undergo a GSNorCal background check or complete training.

Episodic volunteers are considered to be volunteers who engage with girls in more than the occasional family activity or attendance at a bridging event. They can volunteer as chaperones at a Girl Scout troop meeting or activity and can be a part of the adult-to-girl ratio at any given time. This volunteer could exclusively only work with Volunteer Run Camps, or may be part of a co-op troop and only lead for 2 meetings of the year. Regardless of the number of events or their role, they must be registered members, have a completed GSNorCal background check on file, and have completed mandated reporter training, and any other required trainings in order to volunteer with Girl Scouts.

There are different adult supervision requirements for Girl Scout troop meetings as compared to events outside of the regular Girl Scout troop meeting such as outings, activities, camping and travel. Activities and travel outside of the regular troop meeting space require more adult supervision.

For Troop Meetings: The adult-to-girl ratio for Troop Meetings means a *minimum* of two registered, approved background screened volunteers who are unrelated, including one female, must be present at troop meetings for up to this number of girls:

- 12 Girl Scout Daisies
- 20 Girl Scout Brownies
- 25 Girl Scout Juniors
- 25 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 30 Girl Scout Seniors
- 30 Girl Scout Ambassadors

With one extra registered, approved, adult volunteer for every additional:

- 1-6 Girl Scout Daisies
- 1-8 Girl Scout Brownies
- 1-10 Girl Scout Juniors
- 1-12 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 1-15 Girl Scout Seniors
- 1-15 Girl Scout Ambassadors

For Outings, Activities, Travel and Camping: The adult-to-girl ratio means a minimum of two registered, approved, adult volunteers who are unrelated, including one female, must be present for this number of girls:

- 6 Girl Scout Daisies
- 12 Girl Scout Brownies
- 16 Girl Scout Juniors
- 20 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 24 Girl Scout Seniors
- 24 Girl Scout Ambassadors

There should be one extra adult for every additional:

- 1–4 Girl Scout Daisies
- 1–6 Girl Scout Brownies
- 1–8 Girl Scout Juniors
- 1–10 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 1–12 Girl Scout Seniors
- 1–12 Girl Scout Ambassadors

Some high-adventure activities may require more adult-to-girl supervision than stated above. For those activities, the *Safety Activity Checkpoint* will provide specific adult-to-girl supervision ratios. Remember, some activities are less safe for younger girls, particularly Daisies and Brownies. Younger girls may not be permitted to participate based on their age—as appropriate, and this will be specified on the individual activity. In cases where younger-girl participation is an option but only under certain conditions, this is indicated toward the top (on some occasions, with an asterisk that’s followed by explanation further into the write-up).

Note: For mixed-grade level troops, use the ratio for the lowest grade level in the troop. For example, if the troop consists of Daisies and Brownies, the Daisy ratio should be followed.

Have an Emergency Action Plan (EAP)

The Girl Scout motto is "Be prepared.", and proper preparation is the key to success. An important thing to consider ahead of time, before taking girls out on a trip or to an activity, is an Emergency Action Plan. Volunteers can review their troop’s Emergency Action Plan with girls as a learning experience for them, to the extent it makes sense according to their age and maturity.

For the adult volunteer, however, it is important to think about and document an emergency action plan in the event of an emergency or injury. Think through scenarios of what can go wrong such as physical injury to a girl, severe weather, fire, intruder, missing girl or sudden illness. This simple step is invaluable. The key elements included in an effective risk management plan are:

- **Identify**– the type of emergency:
 - Medical, a member becomes suddenly ill,
 - Accidental injury, a member is hurt during an activity,
 - Weather related crisis or challenging environment
 - Pay attention to weather so that the activity can be rescheduled if there is a severe storm or weather-related risk,
 - Fire: become aware of all entrances and exits, and alternative routes out,
 - Missing or lost member.
- **Mitigate**– minimize the damage, injury or time element in seeking help. Make sure to know how far the activity is from the closest Emergency Medical Service (EMS).
 - If EMS is more than 30 minutes away, an Advanced First Aider should always be present with girls, preferably with Wilderness First Aider (WFA) or Wilderness First Responder (WFR) credentials.
 - If EMS is less than 30 minutes away, a General First Aider should be present with girls.
 - If more than 200 people at an event, an Advanced First Aider should be added to the General First Aider for every 200 girls.
 - Make sure that emergency response vehicles can access the area where you are practicing an activity with girls. If an emergency vehicle cannot access the site, notify either local EMS or parks services or other authorities ahead of time of where you will be, what you will be doing

and how many members are with you. [[Volunteer Essentials](#) | [Safety Wise: First Aid and First Aider](#)]

- **Respond** – having confirmed the properly trained First Aiders are present:
 - Immediately engage the First Aider to the accident scene involving an illness or injury.
 - Notify and coordinate the arrival of emergency medical services or law enforcement.
 - Contact all relevant parties:
 - Parents or legal guardians
 - Council staff
 - Law enforcement
 - Property owner or facility manager

Some key components of an effective Emergency Action Plan include:

- **Contact List.** A chart, table, or simple list for all participants, including adults, with:
 - Parent and legal guardian contact phone #s
 - Key emergency phone #s, in addition to 911, such as
 - The nearest hospital, medical center, law enforcement or emergency transportation.
- **Roles and Responsibilities.** A pre-determined and established emergency role assignment, who does what. For example, the leader stays with girls or the injured girl(s) while the co-leader calls for help and coordinates the arrival of emergency help and notifies the parents, or vice versa. Agree on this ahead of time so that you are calm and prepared if the worst occurs. Also think through what you will do if the injured person is one of the adults.
- **Exit Strategy.** Become aware of all emergency exits and/or evacuate plans beforehand. Identify and communicate alternative exit routes.
- **Evacuation Meeting Place.** Determine and communicate a pre-agreed meeting place in case the group becomes separated, or a girl should become lost.
- **Communication Method.** Have a method of emergency communication that works. If camping or backpacking, consider a whistle or horn as an emergency call out. Make sure to inform girls that this is the sound of an emergency. When girls hear this sound, they know to gather at a designated spot. If there is cell service at the activity site, save all contact names and numbers, including those for the appropriate authorities, in your mobile phones ahead of time before the activity takes place. Consider bringing walkie-talkies with you for areas that do not have cell service.

Buddy System. Always use the buddy system for trips and activities. It is helpful for Girl Scouts of similar ages to pair up as partners. Each girl is responsible for staying with her buddy throughout a trip or activity. A buddy can warn her partner of danger, give a helping hand, or get immediate assistance when the situation warrants it. All girls are encouraged to stay near the group so that if someone is injured or not feeling well, there are others, including an adult, close by to seek help.

Instructor Credibility. Verify instructor knowledge, experience, and maturity. Ensure the volunteers or on-site instructors possess the proper skill set, knowledge, training and certification, or documented experience required to meet GSNorCal's guidelines and as outlined in the specific approved activity.

With respect to instructing and safeguarding children, maturity level and years of experience can positively affect the support needed for volunteers to safeguard girls. For example, while the legal definition of an adult lifeguard instructor is 18, qualified lifeguard of 21 years of age are preferred whenever possible.

Itinerary and Key Contacts. Give an itinerary and a copy of your [trip roster form](#) to a contact person who is staying at home. Call the contact person upon departure and return. If you are not using the trip roster form, create a list that includes girls' parent/guardian contact information, council contacts, and emergency services contacts. Keep this list on hand or post in an easily accessible location. Emergency and parent contact

information should be saved to an adult's mobile phone on the trip and be provided to the contact person at home.

The Use of Vendors for Girl Scout Activities When planning activities, outings, or trips for your troop, check GSNorCal's [Approved Vendor List](#) for vendors that you are required to use. These approved vendors/facilities have met the safety and insurance guidelines for GSNorCal and GSUSA.

If your troop is interested in using a vendor or facility that is not listed in the Approved Vendor List, BEFORE scheduling your activity, tell the vendor that because your activity is considered high adventure by GSUSA safety guidelines, there are a few steps to complete in order for any troop from GSNorCal to use the facility. [Volunteer Essentials](#) Safety-Wise, Approved Vendor List.

The vendor needs to provide GSNorCal with a copy of their Certificate of Insurance (COI) [[Troop Finances: Contracts & Certificates of Insurance](#)] that:

- Indicates at least \$1,000,000 General Liability Insurance
- Lists Girl Scouts of Northern California as a Certificate Holder
- Lists Girl Scouts of Northern California as Additionally Insured

In addition, the vendor must agree to follow the *Safety Activity Checkpoints* related to the activities they offer.

IMPORTANT: If a vendor/facility refuses to follow the safety guidelines listed above, then the council will not be able to endorse this vendor/facility on our [Approved Vendors List](#) OR approve trips/outings for troops to use this vendor/facility.

Please note that approved vendors are subject to change depending on when their Certificate of Insurance (COI) Policy expires. If a vendor's Certificate of Insurance (COI) policy expires and we are unable to reach the vendor to renew the policy, we must remove the vendor from the list until we receive the updated COI. Please contact the Risk Management team with any questions at travel@gsnorcal.org.

Vendors can apply to become approved vendors by contacting the Risk Management team.

Email: travel@gsnorcal.org.

Activity Accident Insurance. Activity accident insurance is a supplemental health insurance that protects registered Girl Scout members. Under the Basic Plan, enrolled Girl Scouts members and non-enrolled participants are automatically covered under activity accident insurance when participating in all Girl Scout events and activities including trips that involve overnight stays, regardless of duration or location.

Important! The Basic Plan **does not** cover illnesses that may occur during trips that are three overnights or longer regardless of location, domestic or overseas.

So, to clarify, **you will only need to purchase extra activity accident insurance** for outings and events in which:

- You would like illness coverage and the trip is a minimum of three or more overnight stays
- You would like illness coverage and AXA Travel Assistance Services and the trip takes place outside U.S. territory

To get answers to Frequently Asked Questions related to Girl Scout Activity Insurance, please go to: [Member Insurance Guide: Frequently Asked Questions](#)

When planning trips, always consult GSNorCal Insurance@gsnorcal.org to see if extra activity accident insurance is needed and how to purchase it.

Emergency Preparation. Familiarize yourself with basic First Aid, emergency response requirements, and other precautions. Know how far away and where emergency medical and law enforcement services are located. Understand your surroundings in relation to the closest medical facility or hospital. Also, familiarize yourself with the forms of emergency communication and emergency transportation options that are available. Consider bringing walkie-talkies with you for areas that do not have cell phone service.

First Aid

Make sure at least one adult member who is certified in First Aid/CPR and the GSNorCal's online Troop First Aider course accompanies the troop on activities. Each individual Safety Activity Checkpoint for the activity you are planning will indicate if a First Aider is required for that particular activity.

What to do if there is an Accident

Although we all hope the worst never happens, you must observe council procedures for handling accidents and fatalities. At the scene of an accident, first provide all possible care for the injured person. Follow established council procedures for obtaining medical assistance and immediately reporting the emergency. To do this, you must always have on hand the Council Emergency Number **(1-877-636-1912)**, and telephone numbers to parents/guardians and emergency services, such as, the police, fire department or hospital.

Contact GSNorCal by calling the 24-hour emergency answering service at **1-877-636-1912**. After receiving a report of an accident, council staff will immediately arrange for additional assistance at the scene, if needed, and will notify parents/guardians, as appropriate.

If a Girl Scout needs emergency medical care as the result of an accident or injury, first contact emergency medical services, and then follow council procedures for accidents and incidents. Your adherence to these procedures is critical, especially with regard to notifying parents or guardians. If the media is involved, let council-designated staff discuss the incident with media representatives.

In the event of a fatality or other serious accident, the police must be notified and a responsible volunteer must remain at the scene at all times. In the case of a fatality, do not disturb the victim or surroundings and follow police instructions. Do not share information about the accident with anyone but the police, GSNorCal staff, and, if applicable, insurance representatives or legal counsel, as directed by council.

[Incident Report Form](#)

[Accident/Injury Report Form](#)

When Someone Needs Emergency Care

Girl Scouts need to receive proper instruction in how to care for themselves and others in emergencies. They also need to learn the importance of reporting to volunteers any accidents, illnesses or unusual behaviors during Girl Scout activities. You can help them by keeping in mind the following:

- Know what to report.
- Establish and practice procedures for weather emergencies.
- Know the type of extreme weather to expect in your area (e.g., tornadoes, hurricanes, and lightning). Please consult with GSNorCal for the most relevant information for you to share with your Girl Scouts.
- Establish and practice procedures for such circumstances as fire evacuation, lost persons, and building-security issues. Every Girl Scout and adult volunteer must know how to act in these situations. For example, you and the girls, with the help of a fire department representative, should design a fire evacuation plan for meeting places used by the troop.
- Assemble a well-stocked First-Aid kit that is always accessible. First-Aid administered in the first few minutes can make a significant difference in the severity of an injury. In an emergency, secure professional medical assistance as soon as possible, normally by calling 911, and then administer First Aid, if appropriately trained.

First-Aid/CPR

For many activities, Girl Scouts recommends that at least one adult volunteer be First Aid/CPR-certified. You can take advantage of First Aid/ CPR training offered by organizations such as:

- American Red Cross (offers discounts to Girl Scouts)
- National Safety Council
- EMP America
- American Heart Association
- Health and Safety Institute (HSI)
- Emergency Care and Safety Institute
- First Response Training International
- Medic
- Other sponsoring organization approved by GSNorCal

First-Aider

A general First-Aider is an adult volunteer who has taken Girl Scout approved First Aid and CPR training that includes specific instructions for adult and pediatric CPR, First Aid, and AED as well as AED (Automated External Defibrillator) training that, minimally, includes face to face, hands-on skills check for:

- Checking a conscious victim
- Checking an unconscious victim
- Adult & Pediatric CPR
- Adult & Pediatric Conscious choking
- Controlling bleeding
- Sudden illness

If, through the vendors listed above, you have a chance to be fully trained in First-Aid and CPR, doing so may make your activity planning go a little more smoothly.

Advanced First Aider. An advanced First Aider is an adult with general First Aid certification with additional health, safety or emergency response expertise, for example, a physician; physician’s assistant; nurse practitioner; registered nurse; licensed practical nurse; paramedic; military medic; wilderness training, certified lifeguard or emergency medical technician (EMT).

The *Safety Activity Checkpoints* always tell you when a First-Aider needs to be present. Since activities can take place in a variety of locations, the presence of a First-Aider and the qualifications they need to have are based on the remoteness and scope of the activity. For example, if you take a two-mile hike in an area that has cell phone reception and service along the entire route and EMS (Emergency Medical Services) is no more than 30 minutes away at all times, the First-Aider will not need to have knowledge of wilderness First Aid. If, on the other hand, you take the same two-mile hike in a more remote area with no cell phone service and where EMS is more than 30 minutes away, the advanced First-Aider must have knowledge of wilderness First Aid (see the chart below).

Access to EMS Minimum Level of First Aid Required	Level of First Aid Required
Less than 30 minutes	Adult and Pediatrics First Aid/CPR/AED Plus GSNorCal Online Course: Troop First Aider or Event First Aider Download the most updated Girl Scouts of Northern California Health and Safety Plan <u>www.GSNorCal.org/forms</u>

More than 30 minutes	Wilderness First Aid (WFA) Wilderness First Aid Responder (WFR) not required but highly recommended Plus GSNorCal Online Course: Wilderness First Aider Download the most updated Girl Scouts of Northern California Health and Safety Plan www.GSNorCal.org/forms

It is important to understand the differences between a first-aid course and a wilderness-rated course. Although standard first-aid training provides basic incident response, wilderness-rated courses include training on remote-assessment skills, as well as the emergency first-aid response, including evacuation techniques, to use when an EMS is not readily available.

Note. For large events—200 people or more—there should be **one First-Aider** for every 200 participants. The following healthcare providers may also serve as First-Aiders for large groups: physician, physician’s assistant, nurse practitioner, registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, paramedic, military medic, and emergency medical technician.

First-Aid Kit

Make sure a general First-Aid kit is available at your troop meeting place and accompanies Girl Scouts on any activity (including transportation to and from the activity). Please be aware that you may need to provide this kit if one is not available at your meeting place. You can purchase a Girl Scout First-Aid kit, you can buy a commercial kit, or your troop can assemble a kit yourselves. The Red Cross offers a list of potential items in its [Anatomy of a First Aid Kit](#) (note that the Red Cross’s suggested list includes aspirin, which you will not be at liberty to give to girls without direct parent/guardian permission). You can also customize a kit to cover your specific needs, including flares, treatments for frostbite or snake bites and the like.

In addition to standard materials, all kits should contain GSNorCal’s emergency answering service’s telephone number (**1-877-636-1912**), Girl Scout activity insurance forms; [activity/event permission form](#) and [health histories](#) may also be included. Please note that the emergency answering service is for emergency use only. Regular Girl Scout business calls should be made to **1-800-447-4475**.

Overall Health, Well Being and Inclusivity

Health History. Girl Scout councils require an [annual health history form](#) to be completed and signed by one parent/guardian for every Girl Scout and filed with the troop leader. A complete [adult health history form](#) should be submitted to the troop leader when adults are participating or chaperoning a Girl Scout trip or activity. **A new health history form should be completed every year or when anything changes in a girl’s health history during the membership year.**

Health history forms should reflect any significant medical condition, health issue, or allergies. The form should also reflect any over-the-counter medication that a girl is not permitted to take, if there are any.

If parents send medication on trips or activities, it should be in an original labeled container, controlled, and administered by one designated adult. Health history forms are only shared with those who have a need to know, for example, the First Aider or the site or camp physician or nurse.

Some girls may need to carry and administer their own medications, such as bronchial inhalers, an EpiPen, or diabetes medication. You must have documentation from the girl's parent or guardian that it is acceptable for the girl to self-administer these medications.

Keep a current and signed health history form for each girl and adult with you when traveling. You may require an updated mid-year health history for overnight trips. For physically demanding activities, such as water sports, horseback riding, or skiing, an additional current health history form may be obtained to make sure all adults are aware of any current medical conditions or special needs.

Health Exams. Girl Scout councils also require a health exam for any activity that is three nights or longer, which includes resident camp. Again, follow GSNorCal's guidelines with respect to health exams. The health exam needs to have been completed within two years of the last date of the trip for a girl or adult to participate, though within one year is preferred. For resident camp, the health exam is required within one year of the start date. A licensed physician, a nurse practitioner, a physician's assistant, or a registered nurse can give a health exam. The medical provider must sign the health exam form. GSNorCal requires a current health history form and exam for adult volunteers who participate in trips three nights or more.

For large events or trips longer in duration, such as resident camp or a weeklong trip to a ranch, the designated health professional at the trip location is responsible for collecting all health exam forms and health history forms for girls and adults.

Health exam forms and health history forms are to be shared only with designated health professionals and GSNorCal staff responsible for coordinating them. All health and medical information are private (by law) and must not be shared or be publicly available, so keep it safe and secure. Only share information on a need-to-know basis. We recommend that health history forms be kept in a sealed envelope until they are needed.

Health history forms should be destroyed after three years.

Vaccination and Immunization. Girl Scouts of Northern California follows state law as it applies to public and private school attendance. Visit shotsforschool.org for information about California's vaccination requirements, including information from the [California Department of Public Health](https://www.cdph.ca/). A general overview of state laws regarding school immunization exemption is provided and annually updated on the [National Conference of State Legislatures](https://www.nationalconferenceofstatelegislatures.org/) website. Updated information regarding GSNorCal's Immunization Policy can be found by accessing our [Immunization Policy Frequently Asked Questions](#) document.

The COVID-19 vaccine is now available for girls 5 years of age and older. GSUSA and GSNorCal are strongly encouraging adult volunteers and girls who are able, to receive the vaccine. For the most current policies, please visit [GSNorCal COVID-19 policies](#).

Mosquitoes, Ticks, and Lyme Disease Prevention. Mosquitoes, ticks, and insect bites are an inherent risk to any warm weather outdoor activity. Ensure parents and guardians are aware of the need to have their girls properly covered, preferably with closed-toed shoes and light-colored clothing and socks. It is important to advise parents, guardians, and girls of this risk and the safety precautions they should take.

An excellent resource for learning more is the [tick and Lyme disease prevention section of UpToDate](#). This site is used by medical professionals and patients worldwide to find answers to medical questions.

To learn more about using insect repellent safely, visit the Environmental Protection Agency website at EPA Using Repellants Safely. [EPA Find the Repellent that is Right for You](#). To learn more about safely using DEET directly on the skin and on children, check out [EPA DEET](#). In addition, for more on skin-applied and clothing-only repellent education, review [EPA Insect Repellents](#).

Emotional Safety. Adults are responsible for making Girl Scouts a place where girls are as safe emotionally as they are physically. Protect the emotional safety of girls by creating a team-spirited environment and coach girls to honor this agreement. Team-spirit agreements typically encourage behaviors like respecting diverse feelings and opinions, resolving conflicts constructively, avoiding physical and verbal bullying, avoiding clique behavior, practicing fairness, and showing positive and helpful communication with others.

Physical and Sexual Child Abuse and Neglect. Physical, verbal, emotional or sexual abuse of girls is forbidden. Sexual pressure, sexual advances, improper touching, sexual communication, such as, text messaging, and sexual activity of any kind with Girl Scout members is not tolerated. If you witness or experience any behavior of this nature, notify appropriate council staff immediately. Incidences of abuse of any kind will result in immediate council intervention.

The state of California has **mandated** that all volunteers and staff who are in contact with Girl Scouts must take Mandated Reporter Training and must be fingerprinted as part of their background screening process. The link to the training can be found here: [MyGS Account - gsLearn](#)

A Frequently Asked Questions document regarding AB506 can be found here:

https://www.gsnorcal.org/content/dam/girlscouts-gsnorcal/documents/volunteer_resources/risk/ab506-faq.pdf

For additional information, please check the following resources:

- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services: [Child Welfare](#)
- How to Report Suspected Child Maltreatment: [Reporting Abuse](#)
- Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect: [Mandatory Reporters](#)
- [CDC Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention](#)

Youth Violence and Bullying. Youth violence or bullying is also not tolerated in Girl Scouts. Youth violence occurs when young people intentionally use physical force or power to threaten or harm others. Bullying is a form of youth violence. Volunteers should become familiar with the signs, risk factors, and preventive measures against this type of behavior. If you witness or experience any behavior of this nature, notify your Volunteer Support Manager for guidance. The CDC provides excellent resources on this topic, including:

- [CDC Youth Violence](#)
- [CDC Bullying](#)
- [CDC Youth Violence Prevention](#)

Mental Health and Safety. As an adult volunteer overseeing the activities and behaviors of young girls, and similar to child abuse, you may witness other signs of harmful tendencies, such as, self-harm. Self-harm can take a physical form, such as, cutting, burning, bruising, excessive scratching, hair pulling, poisoning, or drug use. Other tendencies of self-harm are suicidal ideations that can be expressed verbally or with the written word. Another harmful expression involves harm to others which can be detected verbally or with physical aggression. If a situation of this nature is observed or comes to your attention in any form, always notify an appropriate council staff member, e.g., your VSM (Volunteer Support Manager) immediately and follow GSNorCal's guidelines with respect to next steps. The CDC provides informative guidance around identifying and responding to harmful behaviors: [Self-Directed Violence and Other Forms of Self-Injury](#) and also a section on at-risk youth [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\) Youth at Risk](#).

Equity. Girl Scouts welcomes all members, regardless of race, color, creed, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, ancestry, veteran's status, citizenship, pregnancy, childbirth or other related medical condition, marital status, political persuasion, or any other

classification, protected by federal, state, or local laws or ordinances. In other words, we do not discriminate, and everyone is not only welcome, but is encouraged to join us.

In addition to physical and social-emotional disabilities consider the history, culture, and past experiences of the Girl Scout members in your troop that could affect their ability to equally participate in an activity. Work with girls and families to understand how an activity is perceived. Ensure that all girls and their families feel comfortable that they have access to whatever is needed to fully participate, such as the proper equipment, prior experiences and skills needed to enjoy the activity.

When scheduling, planning, and carrying out activities, carefully consider the needs of all Girl Scouts and their families involved, including school schedules, family needs, financial constraints, religious holidays, and the accessibility of appropriate transportation and meeting places.

[GSNorCal's Volunteer Policy](#) can provide more detail on our council's policy for building an equitable community for all.

Making Activities Accessible. Girl Scouts is committed to making reasonable accommodations for any physical or cognitive limitations a girl may have. Communicate with all girl attendees and their caregivers to learn about and accommodate their varied support needs. To learn more about the resources available, visit [Disabled World](#). Whenever possible, the individual *Safety Activity Checkpoint* will provide resources specific to that sport or activity. So always check when planning to accommodate a girl's support needs. Our goal is to include all girls with a desire to participate in Girl Scouting.

Leave No Trace. Search the web for tips on environmental responsibility, and remember our principle of [Leave no trace](#) (scroll down to the "How to Leave No Trace Outdoors" video). In fact, Girl Scouts have a long tradition of leaving an area better than we found it. Doing so will teach girls responsibility and safeguard your troop and GSNorCal from complications or issues involving the use of public property.

Modeling the Right Behavior. Adult volunteers should adhere to the Girl Scout Promise and Law and [GSNorCal's Volunteer Policy](#). Never use illegal drugs. Don't consume alcohol, smoke, vape, or use foul language in the presence of girls. Always obey the law, for example, by not talking on a phone or texting while driving. Do not carry ammunition or firearms in the presence of girls unless given special permission by GSNorCal for group marksmanship activities.

Drugs and Alcohol. Volunteers and adults may not purchase, consume, possess or be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs/substances, or prescription drugs or over-the-counter medications, which could impair performance or judgment, while:

- Participating in Girl Scout-sanctioned activities
- In the presence of girls
- While conducting Girl Scout business, or
- In Girl Scout branded clothing.

Alcohol or any substance which may impair one's judgment must never be used by volunteers, adult members, or any other adult in the presence of a girl member, immediately prior to, or during a girl member activity. Alcohol is not permitted at an event where the main objective is girl program. If girls are present where alcohol is served at an adult-only event (sponsored and run by adults), they must be supervised by an adult who is not consuming alcohol and is responsible for the girls' safety and well-being. *(If alcohol is being served at a Girl Scout event, the participants will not be covered by Girl Scout insurance unless prior approval has been obtained from the insurance carrier).* Contact the Risk Management Team at insurance@gsnorcal.org.

Money-Earning Activities. Safety is an important consideration throughout money-earning activities, including the Girl Scout Cookie program and other council-sponsored product programs. During Girl Scout product programs, you are responsible for the safety of girls, money, and products. In addition, a wide variety

of organizations, causes, and fundraisers may appeal to Girl Scouts to serve as their labor force. When representing Girl Scouts, girls cannot participate in money-earning activities that represent partisan politics or are not Girl Scout-approved product sales and efforts. It is imperative that Girl Scouts do not partake in anything that can be construed as unrelated business income, in order to protect our organization's 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. If there is a questionable circumstance, consult GSNorCal at info@gsnorcal.org

Online Safety. Instruct girls never to put their full names, location, or contact information online, videotape their online meetings or activities, engage in virtual conversation with strangers, or arrange in-person meetings with online contacts. On group websites, publish girls' first names only and never divulge their location or contact information. Teach girls the [Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge](#) and ask them to read, understand, discuss, and commit to following it.

Overnight Trips. Prepare girls to be away from home by involving them in the planning process so they know what to expect.

Adult and Family Member Sleeping Arrangements. Generally, adults and non-registered children, e.g., siblings, etc., should not sleep in tents or the same area, such as, a hotel room, with the girls. If the girls are not ready to sleep without an adult in their tents, cabin, or hotel rooms, it is recommended that the troop plan a simpler trip with indoor dormitory-style sleeping.

If adults are sleeping in the same general area with the girls, more than one unrelated adult should be sleeping with more than one unrelated girl. No adult should be alone with any girl, unless she is her or his own child.

To clarify: a troop leader, her mother, and another unrelated female adult could sleep in a dormitory style room with more than one girl in the group.

An exception is made for family members during events such as parent-daughter or family overnights where one family may sleep together in an area specifically designated to accommodate families. Also, please make note of the following:

- Each participant must have her own bed.
- Parent/guardian permission must be obtained if girls are to share a bed.
- Girls and adults do not share a bed; however, GSNorCal makes exceptions for mothers and daughters.
- It is not mandatory that an adult sleep in the sleeping area (tent, cabin, or designated area) with the girls, but if an adult female does share the sleeping area, there should always be *two unrelated adult females* present.
- In the case of transgender or transitioning girl members or adult members, sleeping arrangements should reflect their identified gender, (i.e. transgender males should have separate sleeping quarters and bathrooms for their use).

Airbnb and Other Private Rentals are Now Permitted. Troops may stay at Airbnb and other private rental properties, such as VRBO or HomeAway, as long as parents/guardians sign the [Activity/Event Permission Form](#) that includes a Waiver and Assumption of Risk and Indemnification for Private Property Rentals and Acknowledgement of Risks and Responsibilities Related to Private Rentals, including through short-term rental platforms. Girl Scouts may not stay at these private rentals unless their parents/guardians sign the form.

Permission Slips.

The [Annual Permission Form](#) is a parental or legal guardian consent form for girls' attendance at regular troop meetings throughout the year.

Day trips and activities – It is imperative to secure a signed [Activity and Event Permission Form](#) from a girl's parent or guardian for any trip or special activity outside the troop meeting space, is farther than 60 miles, or lasts longer than 6-hours. This applies to all girls under the age of 18.

Troop Leaders should keep copies of the Annual Permission form for all of their girls in addition to Activity and Event Permission Form for one year.

In most cases, one parental consent is legally acceptable. However, there may be circumstances regarding a custody situation. For international trips, both parents'/guardians' written consent is generally required.

Required Gear. Required gear simply means the gear that girls need to actually participate in the activity. For example, ski poles and ski boots are necessary to ski.

Safety Gear. Safety gear includes clothing and equipment girls will need to safely take part in the activity. These items are necessary and are required by the industry and/or the American Camp Association while performing the activity. The necessary safety gear is clearly listed under each approved activity. For example, helmets are necessary for bicycling, skiing, Go-Karting, and other activities. Always opt to take the safety equipment offered by an organization or facility, even if it is not listed here. Take roller rinks, for example—some offer roller derby or roller dancing, and so they may offer helmets. Other rinks, such as those featuring traditional skating, may not. If a rink offers helmets, accept them for the girls. The same applies to organized sledding or tobogganing. Some runs are faster than others and trail types vary. Therefore, if an organized company is running it and they offer helmets, use them.

Additional Gear. Additional gear may include items that support a safe and healthy outdoor learning experience. These items can be used in any activity, including daylong hikes and camping and other overnight trips, and often make the experience more comfortable. Recommended items, based on Girl Scout experience, include:

- Layers of clothing for wintertime or for activities on or by the water or mountains, where temperatures or wind can change dramatically within a short period of time
- Sunglasses, sunscreen, hat, sun visor, and lip balm
- Change of clothes for water-related activities or those involving dirt or mud, such as caving/spelunking
- Comfortable shoes and socks if hiking or spending long days outside, in order to prevent ticks and blisters
- Watch, compass, and maps
- Insect repellent
- Towels for waterfront, pool, and paddling activities
- Bottle of drinking water, and healthy snacks
- Backpacks—girls carry their own gear and supplies!

Always consider additional gear when planning an outdoor activity or trip in addition to the safety gear required for the specific activity.

Transportation.

Detailed information on transporting girls can be found in the [Volunteer Essentials: Safety-Wise](#).

Vans Designed for 15 Passengers- Keep in mind that 15-passenger vans have been flagged as unsafe by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and therefore, are not permitted for use in transporting girls. For chartered buses or rented vehicles, always ensure the possession of safety credentials and commercial driving licenses, and the use of seat belts.

Taxis and ride-sharing services, including Uber and Lyft, may be used with these guidelines:

- A registered and background checked adult must ride in each vehicle with Girl Scouts when multiple vehicles are being used.
- Girls should not ride alone without a registered and background checked adult accompanying them.
- It is strongly recommended that chaperoning adults riding in the car activate the “Follow My Ride” feature in the ride-sharing company’s app for the duration of their ride in the locations where this feature is available.
 - In areas where the “Follow My Ride” feature is not available, send your in-town contact the name of the driver and your destination.
- Riders must wait for their ride in a safe place. For taxis, when possible, call (or ask your hotel to call) rather than hailing a cab from the street.
- Use a taxi stand at airports. Stand away from traffic while waiting for the taxi.
- For taxis: Check that the taxi is appropriately marked.
- For ride-sharing services, like Uber or Lyft, do not get into the vehicle if these checkpoints do not match:
 - Check that the vehicle’s license plate, make and model match what is shown in the app.
 - Compare the app’s photo with the driver. Ask for their name and be sure it matches the app.
 - Ask, “Who are you here to pick up?” They should have your first name, but no other info about you.
- If you feel uncomfortable for any reason, do not get in the vehicle.
 - If you become uncomfortable, end the ride.
 - Report your experience to the taxi service or ride-sharing app.
- Don’t share information about the group or where you are staying with any stranger.
- Each passenger must wear a seat belt. Enter and exit curbside.
- In foreign countries, consult a local expert about how to best call for taxis or rides. Reputable practices vary.

Recreational vehicles, campers, and trailers—whether privately-owned or rented—may be used if the driver has the appropriate training and license for the vehicle. Passengers must use seat belts when the vehicle is in motion and may not ride in a trailer or in the bed of a truck.

Commercial and common-carrier transportation is available to the public. They include buses, trains, airlines, ferries, and similar modes of transportation. In the United States, these are regulated and can be considered safe. Girls can compare fares and schedules and make decisions with adult support. Volunteers are welcome to choose bus companies and ferry services of their liking. If asked to sign a contract or agreement, please forward these to insurance@gsnorcal.org for processing. Allow 7-10 business days for processing.

When traveling internationally, consider the transportation options available in the host country and determine safety and accessibility specific to the location.

Drivers

It is the responsibility of the troop leader to ensure that drivers have a valid driver’s license and proof of insurance. Use the [Troop Driver Form](#), available on the council website. www.GSNorCal.org/forms. This form should be updated annually.

When driving a vehicle to transport Girl Scouts, take the following precautions and ask any other drivers to do the same. The troop leader should familiarize drivers with guidelines for acting in this capacity and ask them to take the online [Troop Driver](#) course on [gsLearn](#).

Each driver of motorized private transportation must:

- Ensure all drivers are volunteers at least 21 years old.

- Hold a valid driver's/operator's license appropriate to the vehicle being driven.
- Carry the minimum insurance required by the [California Responsibility Law](#).
- Must be registered members and complete the adult background check as required by the GSNorCal.
- A male volunteer must never have one girl in the car alone with him, except for his own daughter.
- Keep directions and a road map in the car, along with a First Aid kit and a flashlight.
- Check your lights, signals, tires, windshield wipers, horns, and fluid levels before each trip and check them periodically on long trips.
- Load gear appropriately. Heavy objects and luggage can affect vehicles' stability and handling. Avoid overloading, especially on the top or back of any vehicle.
- Keep all necessary papers up to date, such as your driver's license, vehicle registration, any state or local inspections, insurance coverage, and the like.
- Wear your seat belt at all times and insist that all passengers do the same.
- Keep girls under 12 in the back seats. Use car seats and boosters as required in California.
- Never transport girls in flatbed or panel trucks, in the bed of a pickup, or in a camper-trailer. Girls must always wear seat belts and be in a seat intended for passengers.
- Follow all established rules of the road in California or the state in which you are traveling in:
 - Follow the speed limit
 - Keep a two-car length between you and the car ahead of you
 - Do not talk or text on a mobile phone or other personal electronic devices
 - Do not use ear buds or headphones
 - Have your headlights on when your windshield wipers are on
- Avoid driving when tired, taking medication that makes you drowsy, or for extended periods at night.
- Know what to do in case of breakdown or accident. It is smart to have reflectors, a flashlight, a few tools, and a good spare tire.
- Take time to familiarize yourself with any new or rented vehicle.
- Plan rest stops every few hours. If driving with others, prearrange stopping places along the way. When planning longer trips, arrange for relief drivers.
- Never travel in caravans (having drivers follow behind one another). This can result in an increased chance of accidents if drivers hurry through a light to stay together or make unsafe lane changes to follow. Instead, every driver should know where they are going and where any rest stops will be taken.
- Girls may not transport other girls.

Information and training for drivers is available on [gsLearn](#).

Weather Conditions. Always monitor the weather in the days preceding an activity or trip. Check the local weather report on the day of the trip. For circumstances in which forecasted weather could be a risk to safety, consider scheduling alternatives. In the case of severe wind, lightning, hail, ice, snowstorm, flood warnings due to heavy rain, or a hurricane or tropical storm, consider contingency plans for itineraries and transportation. Consider rescheduling the event if the weather report is severe. Adhere to public safety announcements concerning staying indoors or evacuating the area. In extremely hot weather, girls should do outdoor activities in the morning and late afternoon hours, and during the hottest time of day stay in a shaded area or inside with air conditioning. It is important on extremely hot days to plan for easy access to plenty of drinking water to prevent heat exhaustion or dehydration.

If extreme weather or temperature conditions prevent a trip, be prepared with a backup plan or alternative activity.

Understanding Which Activities Are Not Permitted

In a challenging, learn-by-doing environment like Girl Scouts, it is only natural that girls will sometimes want to take part in activities that are not specifically addressed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*. In many cases, as new activity options arise, there may not have been an opportunity or a need to fully provide a safety checkpoint. In addition, some activities may be unique to a specific area of the country. If there is a question or a need for specific guidelines on an unlisted activity, please bring it to the attention of GSNorCal Insurance@gsnorcal.org for specific direction.

After being thoroughly investigated, some activities are clearly classified as “not permitted.” Each sport or activity on the “not permitted” list is evaluated annually on safety factors, council feedback, insurability, and accident history. These activities pose a high risk of severe bodily injury, require extensive prior experience, or require a license to participate. Activities with a poor accident history based on loss data gathered from various industries are not approved and, thus, are deemed “not permitted.” The purpose of prohibiting certain activities is primarily to protect girls. The prohibitions also safeguard the financial and reputational well-being of GSNorCal and the Girl Scout organization. Additionally, council insurance may not always cover a specific activity based on safety risk factors, as described above.

GSUSA and GSNorCal cannot approve, endorse, or provide safety checkpoints for these “not permitted” activities.

The following activities are in the **not permitted** category:

- Bungee jumping
- Flying in privately owned planes, helicopters, or blimps
- Hang gliding
- Hot-air ballooning
- Hunting
- Jet skiing
- Snowmobiling
- Riding a motorbike
- Riding electric scooters
- Using outdoor trampolines
- Parachuting or skydiving
- Parasailing
- Paintball tagging
- Riding all-terrain vehicles (ATVs)
- Stunt skiing
- Zorbing

Rationale: High Risk Activities Not Permitted

Bungee Jumping. Bungee jumping is not highly regulated for safety or consistent in terms of facilitation from one place to the next. It is an activity that carries a significant risk of bodily injury. Most insurance companies that have access to the accident history of bungee jumping have deemed this activity high risk and dangerous and will not cover this activity.

Firearms. Firearms and/or weapons are prohibited at any Girl Scout activity and on Girl Scout-owned or leased property, except when in the possession of a sworn officer of the law, council-authorized property staff, a certified instructor, licensed wildlife control personnel, and/or trained adult while conducting a Council-approved Girl Scout program activity. Volunteers and adults do not carry ammunition or firearms in the presence of girls, unless given special permission by GSNorCal for target sport activities.

Hang Gliding, Parasailing, Zorbing, Parachuting/Skydiving, and Hot-Air Ballooning are activities similar to bungee jumping in terms of safety regulations, consistency of facilitation, and insurance implications. These

are activities that carry a significant risk of bodily injury. Insurance carriers with knowledge of these activities from a claims perspective view them as a high safety risk, meaning they see frequent and/or severe accidents associated with these sports.

Hunting. Hunting is a sport that requires handling firearms in the wilderness, high maturity levels, and the availability of expert guides. Shooting accidents are not uncommon during hunting trips. This is also a sport, which rarely, if ever, comes up as a requested activity.

Jet Skiing, Motor Biking, ATVs, Snow Mobiles and Electric Scooters. Jet skiing, motor biking, and riding ATVs, snow mobiles, and electronic scooters are prohibited due to the extremely high incidence of serious injury involved. Most insurance carriers are not comfortable with these activities due to the poor accident history of these vehicles. Insurance companies require that an operator hold a valid driver's license. Adults and children riding on the back of motor bikes and jet skis as passengers are exposed to a high risk of serious injury with no active opportunity to actually learn the skill.

Outdoor Trampolines. Outdoor trampolines, particularly those with stilted metal frames, pose a high risk of injury. The activity can result in sprains and fractures in the arms or legs—as well as potentially serious head and neck injuries. The risk of injury is so high that the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly discourages the use of trampolines at home. Outdoor trampoline park injuries are also an area of emerging concern. Indoor trampolines in a confined padded indoor facility with higher supervision are far safer, but still not recommended for children under six years old. See for reference: [AAOS](#)

Paintball Tag. Paintball tag is offered in specialized parks where participants shoot pellets of paint at each other throughout an obstacle course, woods, or maze. The pressure used in a paintball gun is quite strong. When hit by a paintball pellet, a girl is certain to experience pain, swelling, and perhaps a bruise or welt for a couple of days. Shooting a girl with a paintball pellet is likely to cause a minor injury and has the potential to cause a more serious injury to eyes, mouth, ears, and throat. For these reasons, paintball tag is prohibited. Target paintball shooting, however, is permitted.

Privately Owned Aircraft. Flying in privately owned aircraft is a truly clear exclusion under GSUSA and GSNorCal's commercial general liability insurance policies. In the event of an incident involving an aircraft accident, GSNorCal would be financially liable for potential liability and resulting lawsuits. Even with a specific non-owned aviation liability policy, a private plane is a separate and distinct insurable interest (compared to a professional chartered aircraft tour). In other words, even under non-owned aviation insurance, privately owned and/or operated planes are excluded.

Plan B: If Your Activity is Not Listed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.

Remember to have a plan or process in place for addressing and handling requests for activities that are not specifically listed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*:

- Consult GSNorCal for clarification and approval ***before taking girls***. GSNorCal may or may not permit the activity. If we approve the activity, we may direct you to a specific vendor or facility or advise you to stay away from others.
- Investigate whether the activity is similar to another activity and if the safety checkpoints can easily translate and apply to a covered activity, then follow those checkpoints.
- Consider whether the proposed activity requires any additional expert supervision or special certification for the instructor.
- As with approved activities, think about the quality of the experience in terms of how participation ties back to long-term outcomes girls receive in Girl Scouting.

Selecting an Activity to do with Girl Scouts

When considering what type of activities to do with girls, whether specifically listed in Safety Activity Checkpoints or not, be thoughtful and intentional with selecting the activity. Be mindful about the long-term positive outcomes that girls receive through Girl Scouting and think about how participating in the activity ties into at least one of these outcomes. Girl Scouts has proven to help girls thrive in 5 ways:

Strong Sense of Self

Girls have confidence in themselves and their abilities and form positive identities.

Positive Values

Girls act ethically, honestly, and responsibly and show concern for others.

Challenge Seeking

Girls take appropriate risks, try things even though they might fail and learn from their mistakes.

Healthy Relationships

Girls develop and maintain healthy relationships by communicating their feelings directly and resolving conflict constructively.

Community Problem Solving

Girls contribute to the world in purposeful and meaningful ways, learn how to identify problems in the community, and create “action plans” to solve them.

Activities chosen should work towards intentionally helping girls be successful in these key areas. As part of the planning process, consider how and why the activity selected connects to the Girl Scout outcomes. Make it girl led by sharing these goals with girls and engaging them in the activity selection process.

Troop Meeting Space

Always choose a safe meeting space. Careful considerations should be made to find appropriate facilities for the age of the girls to be served and the activities to be conducted. A meeting place needs to provide a safe, clean, and secure environment that allows for the participation of all girls. You might consider using meeting rooms at schools, libraries, houses of worship, community buildings, childcare facilities, and local businesses. For teens, you can also rotate meetings at coffee shops, bookstores, and other places girls enjoy spending time. For more information, please refer to the [Volunteer Essentials: Meeting Place Considerations](#).

Here are a few points to keep in mind as you consider meeting locations:

- **Accessibility:** Be sure the space can accommodate girls and parents of all abilities who may come to meetings.
- **Allergen-free:** Ensure that pet dander, smoke, and other common allergens won't bother susceptible girls during meetings.
- **Availability:** Be sure the space is available for the day and the entire length of time you want to meet.
- **Communication-friendly:** Be sure your cell phone works in the meeting space or there is a land line for emergencies. Internet accessibility is also helpful.
- **Cost:** The space should be free to use. However, you may wish to develop a partnership to provide service or offer a donation toward maintenance or utilities.
- **Facilities:** Sanitary and accessible toilets are critical.
- **Resources:** Determine what types of furnishings come with the room and ensure that the lighting is adequate. A bonus would be a cubby or closet of some sort, where you can store supplies.

- **Safety:** Ensure that the space is safe, secure, clean, properly ventilated, heated (or cooled, depending on your location), free from hazards, and has at least two exits that are well-marked and fully functional. Also be sure First-Aid equipment, smoke detectors and fire extinguisher are on hand.
- **Size:** Make sure the space is large enough to accommodate the whole group and all planned activities.

Can we meet in a private home? It is not recommended to hold troop meetings in a private home. If you must meet in a private home, in addition to the above, please remember to ensure these standards:

- The private home must be the home of a registered, council approved Volunteer.
- Girls may not meet in a home where a registered sex offender lives or has access to..
- 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 insurance implications. The Homeowner should ask their personal Homeowner’s insurance carrier if there are any insurance concerns with troop meetings at the home.
- Weapons must be out of view and in a locked space. Medication, cleaning products, or any poisonous substance must be stored in a secure space out of sight, preferably locked.

Other Actions Girls and Volunteers Should Not Take

For legal reasons, and in order to preserve the integrity of our organization, there are other activities that girls and volunteers are not permitted to participate in while representing Girl Scouts. These include:

- Endorsement of commercial products or services
- Solicitation of financial contributions for purposes other than Girl Scouting
- Participation in political campaigns or legislative activities, unless the legislative activity has been council-approved
- Avoid fundraising for other organizations