

# Volunteer Essentials

## 2022–23 Edition

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# Welcome! Adventures Ahead!

You're her hero—and ours too! Thanks to you, girls will learn to listen to their hearts, think on their feet, and raise their voices for what they believe in. From all of us at Girl Scouts, thank you for sharing your time and talents as a Girl Scout volunteer!

As a Girl Scout volunteer, you are a community-builder, mentor, champion of fun, and a role model for what it means to lead with your heart. And because of you, Girl Scouts of all ages will have the opportunity to discover that a little imagination can go a long way as they chase their dreams, explore the world around them, take action to improve their communities, and make the world a better place.

Whether you're supporting them through their Girl Scout experience, guiding them as they choose the way they will run their Girl Scout Cookie business, or encouraging them as they raise their voices on issues, they care about most cheerleader, guide, and mentor as they develop essential life skills and gain the confidence they will rely on throughout their lives. The best part of this experience is while you're teaching them important life lessons and setting them up for happy, successful lives, you'll grow too! Because when you embrace leadership in all forms and show girls what it means to be resilient and strong, they learn, grow, and thrive. Before you know it, you'll be trying to keep up with your unstoppable troop. Imagine the excitement, the impact, and the memories that will be made—those are the moments you'll enjoy as a Girl Scout volunteer.

Thank you and welcome, we're glad you're here!

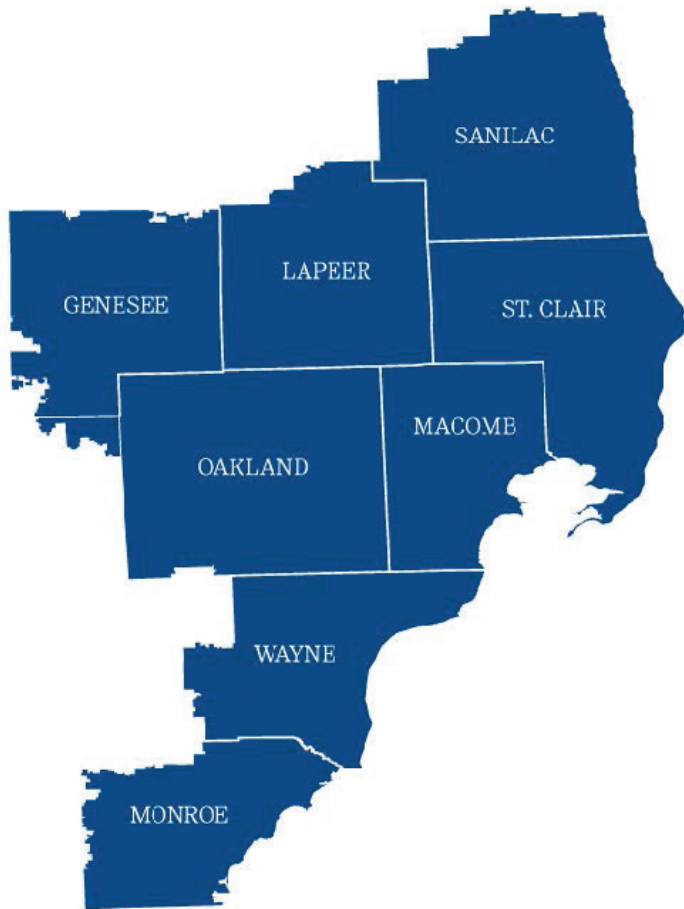
## What's Inside?

This guide is designed to support busy, on-the-go troop volunteers. Inside you will find details and information to help you get started on your newest adventure being an awesome leader for girls. We recommend that you begin by browsing the sections below and come back throughout the year to find answers to your questions as they arise.

- All About Girl Scouts
- Troop Management
- Troop Finances
- Engaging Girls
- Creating a Safe Space for Girls
- Engaging Families
- Girl Scout Product Programs
- Insurance Overview
- Additional Resources and Support

New troop leader? We've got you covered. Check out the *New Leader's Guide to Success*, a resource designed especially for you. Plus, council staff and volunteer coaches are ready to help throughout your first year and beyond!

## GSSEM Council Map



Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan (GSSEM) is the local council chartered by Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) to bring the excitement and adventure of Girl Scouting to our region. As Girl Scouts, girls discover the fun, friendship, and power of girls together. Girl discover who they are and what they love to do through a wide variety of Girl Scouts experiences that spark their imaginations, build their confidence and celebrate every new achievement.

Caring, adult volunteers support and mentor the girls, and foster an environment where girls feel a sense of belonging, can try new things, overcome fears, and most of all—have fun!

GSSEM is comprised of an area including Genesee, Lapeer, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, Sanilac, St. Clair, and Wayne Counties. Our service area contains 12 smaller units called Communities, which are further divided into 2-4 Service Units apiece. Our volunteers may seek local support at the Community or Service Unit levels.

Our service area contains six service centers, including:

### **Clinton Township Service Center**

42800 Garfield Rd  
Clinton Twp. MI 48038

### **Detroit Service Center**

1333 Brewery Park Blvd, Suite 500  
Detroit, MI 48207

### **Flint Service Center**

111 E. Court St, Suite D  
Flint, MI 48502

### **Port Huron Service Center**

Birchwood Mall  
4350 24th Ave, Space 518  
Fort Gratiot, MI 48059

### **Southgate Service Center**

1 Heritage Place, Ste 130  
Southgate, MI 48195

### **White Lake Service Center**

8545 Highland Rd  
White Lake, MI 48386

Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan is here to support you as a volunteer. Here is where you can go to seek support:

**Council Website:** At [gssem.org](https://gssem.org), you can access information about upcoming Girl Scout events, essential forms, and other Council information. Log into MyGS from our website to manage your Girl Scout account and access helpful resources like the [Volunteer Toolkit](#) and [gsLearn](#).

**Social Media:** Follow Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan (@GSSEM) on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram! We also recommend joining in your Service Unit and/or Girl Scout Community social media to connect and share with volunteers near you. Not sure what your Service Unit is? Visit [gssem.org/mysu](https://gssem.org/mysu) to find out!

**Council Staff:** Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan staff are here to support you! If you are ever unsure whom to contact, call 800-482-6734 and our receptionist will connect you where you need to go. These departments can assist with many common volunteer inquiries:

- **Customer Care:** [customercare@gssem.org](mailto:customercare@gssem.org): Fields general questions (e.g. council shop hours, Girl Scout cookie program dates). They also assist with Girl Scout membership, background check, and event registration inquiries.
- **Finance:** [gssem-finance@gssem.org](mailto:gssem-finance@gssem.org): Answers questions about establishing troop bank accounts, managing troop finances, and troop annual financial reports.
- **Member Support:** [troopsupport@gssem.org](mailto:troopsupport@gssem.org): Answers questions related to the troop experience and Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan policy.
- **Product Program:** [productsales@gssem.org](mailto:productsales@gssem.org): Fields questions about the Fall Product Program and Girl Scout Cookie Program.
- **Recruitment:** [join@gssem.org](mailto:join@gssem.org): Assists with organizing a recruitment event at schools, houses of worship, and other locations in the community.
- **Volunteer Experience:** [volunteerexp@gssem.org](mailto:volunteerexp@gssem.org): Answers questions regarding mandatory Girl Scout volunteer training such as Troop Leader Orientation and Grade Level Essentials. Contact for assistance with using the Volunteer Toolkit and gsLearn.

**Administrative Volunteers:** Administrative volunteers are local, behind the scenes volunteers who support troops and troop leaders. In your area, you may have:

- **Community Events Coordinator:** A Community-level volunteer who supports the creation of local Girl Scout events.
- **Community Finance Coordinator:** A Community-level volunteer who manages their Girl Scout Community's bank account.
- **Product Program Committee:** Council-wide volunteers who assist GSSEM with many aspects of the Girl Scout product programs, including answering volunteer questions related to the Fall Product and Girl Scout Cookie Programs.
- **Service Unit Manager:** A Service Unit volunteer who provides support to Troop Leaders based on their own troop leadership experience. They also organize regular Service Unit meetings throughout the school year to give troop volunteers the opportunity to network and share. Service Unit Managers may also work with:
  - **Communications Liaison:** A Service Unit volunteer who manages Service Unit social media accounts and other communications on behalf of the Service Unit.
  - **Resource Champion:** A Service Unit volunteer who assists Troop Leaders in accessing forms as well as using gsLearn and the Volunteer Toolkit.

- **Welcome Champion:** A Service Unit volunteer who welcomes new volunteers into the Service Unit and assists them with the onboarding process.
- **Troop Organizer:** A Service Unit volunteer who supports recruitment efforts within a school district.

## All About Girl Scouts

At Girl Scouts, girls' dreams are our dreams and Girl Scouts is where girls see the limitless possibilities ahead, because they are encouraged to aim for the stars and reach them! Whether she's making a new friend on the playground, raising her hand in class, starting her own nonprofit, or advocating for climate change or social justice, a Girl Scout builds a better world—just as Girl Scouts have been doing for over a century. With programs in every zip code, coast-to-coast and around the globe, every girl can find her place in Girl Scouts and start creating the world she wants to see.

### Girl Scout Volunteers

Girl Scout volunteers are a dynamic and diverse group. Whether you're a recent college graduate, parent, retiree, or really, anyone with a sense of curiosity and adventure (of any gender, who is 18 years or older and has passed their council's screening process), your unique skills and experiences have the power to change girls' lives. With you as their mentor, girls will grow and thrive.

Girl Scout members and volunteers are united by the values in the [Girl Scout Promise and Law](#) and their shared commitment to embrace leadership in all forms. Each member agrees to follow Girl Scouts safety guidelines and pay annual membership dues of \$25. Volunteers and adults also have the option to purchase a [Lifetime membership](#).

### Girl Scout Grade Levels

Girls can join the fun at any point from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Girl Scouts six grade levels are:

- [Girl Scout Daisy](#) (grades K-1)
- [Girl Scout Brownie](#) (grades 2-3)
- [Girl Scout Junior](#) (grades 4-5)
- [Girl Scout Cadette](#) (grades 6-8)
- [Girl Scout Senior](#) (grades 9-10)
- [Girl Scout Ambassador](#) (grades 11-12)

### The Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience provides the foundation for all we do. It is the core of our program and encompasses everything from our Promise and Law to our badges, activities, and Journeys. And at the center of it all are the girls. At Girl Scouts, everything centers around the girl, [it's what makes Girl Scouts truly unique](#). Our program is designed by, with, and for girls. With a focus on girl-led programming and activities, girls have the opportunity to take on leadership roles and learn-by-doing in a safe, fun, and cooperative environment.

Although girls may start building their leadership skills in school and on sports teams, [research shows](#) that the courage, confidence, and character girls develop as Girl Scouts stay with them throughout their lives. Our program and outcomes are based in research and our studies show that Girl Scouting has a measurable positive impact on girls. In fact, we can proudly say Girl Scouts are almost 10% more likely, than non-Girl Scouts, to have positive expectations about their future based on our studies. We encourage you to learn more about our program and outcomes as you [check out our studies and in-depth research](#) for insights and information.

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience has been purposefully designed to include a variety of fun and challenging activities to help girls learn, grow, and thrive. And at the base of it all are three keys and three processes.

What girls *do* in Girl Scouting all fit within our three keys: **Discover**, **Connect**, and **Take Action**.

- **Discover.** When Girl Scouts take part in fun and exciting badge activities, earn a Girl Scout Journey award, go camping, or attend an amazing Girl Scout program or event, you are helping them discover who they are, what they care about, and where their talents lie.
- **Connect.** When Girl Scouts collaborate with others—including the members and leaders of their troop, Girl Scouts from their local community, or community partners and experts—they connect and expand their horizons. This helps them care about, support, inspire, and team up with others both locally and globally.
- **Take Action.** When girls deepen their relationship with the world around them, they're eager to take action to improve the local community and the greater global community and make the world a better place.

So how *do* we do it? The Girl Scout Leadership Experience draws on three unique processes—**Girl-led**, **Learning by Doing**, and **Cooperative Learning**—that encourage girls to try new things, write their own stories, and develop the skills and confidence to say, “I know I can do this!”

- **Girl-led.** Girl Scouts take the lead, no matter their age. From selecting the badges they'll pursue to how they'll organize an activity; Girl Scouts have the chance to follow their dreams and grow their skills—and gain the confidence that comes with that.
- **Learning-By-Doing.** Hands-on activities are fun for Girl Scouts of any age, but they also help them feel empowered to shape their own experience. Girl Scouts unlock their “I've got this” attitude as they discover they can always dust themselves off and try again when things don't go according to plan.
- **Cooperative Learning.** There's power in having a tight-knit group of friends who will learn with you, grow with you, and always cheer you on. Girl Scouts see firsthand that teamwork, respect, and collaboration can fuel them through any challenge that comes their way.

As a volunteer, you'll draw on these **three processes** as you lead girls of any age. And naturally, girl-led at the Daisy level will look very different from girl-led at the Ambassador level. What is most important is that your Girl Scouts make decisions about the activities they will do together and make choices as they're doing the activities together. As girls learn from their successful, and not so successful tries, they gain confidence. All girls should have the opportunity to lead within their peer group. By the time girls are Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors, they will be using the leadership skills they've developed to take on more ownership of their activities, mentor younger Girl Scouts, and take action to make the world a better place.

One last tip about following these processes. Girl Scouting **isn't** a to-do list, so please don't feel that checking activities off a list is more important than tuning in to what interests girls and sparks their imaginations. Projects don't have to come out perfectly—in fact, it's a valuable learning experience when they don't—Girl Scouts don't have to fill their vests and sashes with badges. What matters most is the fun and learning that takes place as they make experience their own, so don't be afraid to **step back and let your girls take the lead.**

## **Reflection**

Was a badge-earning activity a resounding success? Or was it derailed by something your troop hadn't factored in? No matter the activity's outcome, you can amplify its impact by encouraging your girls to reflect on their latest endeavor.

Reflection is the necessary debrief that reinforces what girls learned. As your Girl Scouts explore the what's and why's, they'll make meaningful connections between the activity at hand and future challenges that come their way. In other words, reflection gives girls the confidence boost they need to pick themselves up, try again, and succeed.

Keep in mind that reflection does not need to be a formal process, but you can kick-start the conversation with three simple questions: What? So what? and Now what?

### **What? Go over the “what” of the activity. For example, ask:**

- What did we do today?
- What part was your favorite?
- If we did it again, what would you want to do differently and what would you want to repeat?

### **So what? Next, move to the “so what.” You might ask:**

- So, what did you learn by doing this activity?
- So, what did you learn about yourself?
- So, what did you learn about your community (or environment, school, or others) that you didn't know before?

### **Last, review the now what. Say something like:**

- Now that we've done this, what would you like to do next?
- Now that you know this about yourselves, what would you like to try next?
- Now that we've completed this Take Action™ project, what do you think we should do next to make sure it continues?

This form of reflection, or whatever style of reflection you choose to use with your girls, is a powerful component of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience that helps girls to carry these lessons with them for the rest of their lives.

## **Progression**

Although program elements—like outdoor expeditions or entrepreneurial ventures—align across all grade levels, Girl Scout Brownies and Juniors won't be doing the same activities as Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors. But with your support, they will get there!

Girl Scout programming is designed to be progressive and it's what makes Girl Scouting fun and effective! By building on the knowledge and skills they gain year after year, your girls' confidence will grow exponentially, and they'll be eager to try new things and take on new challenges. As a volunteer,



you will cultivate a [supportive, nonjudgmental space](#) where your Girl Scouts can test their skills and be unafraid to fail.

Keep in mind that progression drives success for your troop. In the following links, we've outlined some suggestions that will help you determine when your girls are ready for their next [outdoor challenge](#), their [next troop trip](#), or their next cookie-selling challenge.

## **Inclusion**

Girl Scouts has a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion, and we welcome and embrace girls of all abilities and backgrounds into our wonderful sisterhood.

Inclusion is at the core of who we are; it's about being a sister to every Girl Scout and celebrating our unique strengths. Part of the important work you will do includes modeling friendship and kindness for your girls and showing them what it means to practice empathy. Nurturing an inclusive troop environment requires us to treat all Girl Scouts equitably, making sure we are conscious of who they are and the unique things they may need to fully access the Girl Scout experience.

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

## **The Girl Scout Program: National Program Pillars & More**

[Girl Scouts four Program Pillars](#)—STEM, Life Skills, Outdoors, and Entrepreneurship—form the foundation of the Girl Scout program and work together to build girls' curiosity, kindness, and can-do spirit. In fact, every aspect of our program, and every Girl Scout adventure, can be traced back to one of our four program pillars.

**STEM.** (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). Girls are naturally curious and have a strong desire to help others. Whether they're building a robot, developing a video game, or studying the stars, Girl Scouts become better problem-solvers and critical thinkers through STEM and gain the confidence to turn their ideas into breakthrough inventions to help others.

**Life Skills.** Girl Scouts life skills programming includes a mix of practical skills, tools, and activities that foster positive values in girls like financial literacy, civic engagement, and community service. Skills that help them discover that they have what it takes to raise their voices as community advocates, make smart decisions about their finances, and form strong, healthy relationships—skills that inspire them to accept challenges and overcome obstacles, now and always.

**Outdoors.** Girl Scouts has been building girls' outdoor confidence and skills for over one hundred years through a variety of outdoor adventures like camping and nature focused badges that inspire them to spend time outdoors and develop a lifelong appreciation of nature. An appreciation that sparks girls' desire to take action as environmental stewards in their community and across the globe.

**Entrepreneurship.** Starting with Girl Scouts iconic Girl Scout Cookie Program and growing to include the fall product program and a Series of entrepreneurship badges, this pillar instills and nurtures an entrepreneurial mindset and fuels girls' curiosity and confidence as they learn the essentials of running their own businesses and how to think like entrepreneurs.

## Important Differences: Journeys and Badges

Journeys and badges are designed to give girls different leadership-building experiences, all while having fun!

- **Journeys** are multi-session leadership experiences through which girls explore topics such as bullying, media literacy, or environmental stewardship. They'll do hands-on activities, connect with experts, and take the reins on age-appropriate Take Action projects. Because of their leadership focus, Journeys are also a prerequisite for Girl Scouts highest awards, the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards.
- **Badges** are about skill building. When a Girl Scout earns a badge, it shows that she's learned a new Skill, such as how to make a healthy snack, build and test a toy race car, or take great digital photos. Badges may even spark an interest at school or plant the seed for a future career.

If they choose, your Girl Scouts can pursue badges and Journey awards in the same year. If they do choose to take this approach, encourage them to find the connections between the two to magnify their Girl Scout experience. While you're having fun, keep in mind that the quality of a girl's experience and the skills and pride she gains from earning Journey awards and skill-building badges far outweigh the quantity of badges she earns.

As a volunteer, you don't have to be the expert in any badge or Journey topic. In fact, when you show that you're not afraid to fail and willing to try something new, you are modeling what it is to be a Girl Scout. Our badge and Journey requirements are structured so your girls can learn new skills without you having to be an expert in all the assorted topics, including STEM.

## Important Differences: Community Service and Take Action Projects

As your Girl Scouts look for meaningful ways to give back to their community, you can help sharpen their problem-solving skills and expand their definition of doing good by discussing community service and Take Action projects. **Both projects serve essential needs, but at different levels.**

- When a Girl Scout performs **community service**, she is responding to an immediate need in a one-off, "doing for" capacity. In other words, she is making an impact right now.
- Through **Take Action/service learning**, girls explore the root causes of a community need and address it in a lasting way; they truly make the world—or their part of it—a better place.

If your troop members want to pursue their Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award, they'll develop a Take Action project on an issue that's close to their hearts. To make Take Action projects even more impactful for your Girl Scouts, set time aside for them to reflect on their projects. When they take time to internalize the lessons they've learned, they're more likely to find success in their future projects—or anything else they put their minds to. For more information on Take Action projects, check out the *Take Action Short & Snappy* on [gsLearn](#).

## Traditions, Ceremonies, and Special Girl Scout Days

Time-honored traditions and ceremonies unite Girl Scout sisters, and the millions of Girl Scout alums who came before them—around the country and around the globe—and remind girls how far their fellow trailblazers have come and just how far they'll go.

A few of those extra special days, when you will want to turn up the celebrations, include:

- Juliette Gordon Low's birthday or Founder's Day, October 31, marks the birth in 1860 of **Girl Scouts of the USA founder Juliette Gordon Low** in Savannah, Georgia.

- [World Thinking Day](#), February 22, celebrates international friendship. It is an opportunity for Girl Scouts and Girl Guides to connect with each other and explore a common theme around the world.
- Girl Scouts' birthday, March 12, commemorates the day in 1912 when Juliette Gordon Low officially registered the organization's first eighteen girl members in Savannah, Georgia.

So, whether they're working on a new badge, making new friends, or closing meetings with a friendship circle, your troop won't want to miss out on Girl Scouts' treasured [traditions, ceremonies, and special Girl Scout days](#).

## Highest Awards

The Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards honor girls who become forces for good and create a lasting impact in their communities, nationally and around the world.

As your Girl Scouts discover the power of their voices, they'll want to take on an issue that is close to their hearts and meaningful to them. Encourage them to turn their ideas into reality by pursuing Girl Scouts' highest awards.

- [The Girl Scout Bronze Award](#) can be earned by Juniors. The prerequisite is completion of one Junior Journey and the associated Take Action project. The Bronze Award is earned by the group.
- [The Girl Scout Silver Award](#) can be earned by Cadettes. The prerequisite is completion of one Cadette Journey and the associated Take Action project. The Silver Award can be earned by an individual girl or by a small group.
- [The Girl Scout Gold Award](#) can be earned by Seniors and Ambassadors who have completed either two Girl Scout Senior/Ambassador level Journeys and the associated Take Action project or earned the Silver Award and completed one Senior/Ambassador level Journey.

Did you know that a Gold Award Girl Scout is entitled to enlist at a higher pay grade when she joins the U.S. military? A Gold Award Girl Scout's achievements also prime her for the fast track when it comes to college admissions and make her an outstanding candidate for academic scholarships and other financial awards.

Girl Scouts are eligible to earn any recognition at the grade level in which they are registered. Any Girl Scout is eligible to earn the Girl Scout Gold Award even if she joined Girl Scouts for the first time in high school.

Contact the GSSEM Council Programs and Partnerships team about Girl Scout Gold Award Girl Scouts in your community and how they're doing their part to make the world a better place. For inspiration, consider inviting a local Gold Award Girl Scout to speak to your troop about how she took the lead and made a difference. You'll be inspired when you see and hear what girls can accomplish when they take the lead—and by the confidence, grit, problem-solving, time and project management, and team-building expertise they gain while doing so!

Training is available for adults working with girls as they earn their Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards on [gsLearn](#).

## Girl Scout Travel and Destinations

Girl Scouts encourages girls to try new things and see the world with fresh eyes, both inside and outside of their usual troop meetings. As COVID-19-related travel restrictions are lifted across the globe and you and your troop feel safe doing so, you may be excited to travel and explore the world as a troop.

Traveling as a Girl Scout is a more engaging experience than traveling with family, school, or other groups because [girls take the lead](#). They'll make important decisions about where to go, what to do, and take increasing responsibility for the planning of their trips. During this process, they will also build their organizational and management skills—skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

Girl Scout travel is built on a [progression of activities](#), so girls are set up for success. Daisies and Brownies start with field trips and progress to day trips, overnights, and weekend trips. Juniors can take their adventures farther with longer regional trips. And Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors can travel the United States and then the world. There are even opportunities for older girls to travel independently by joining trips their council organizes or participating in GSUSA's travel program, [Destinations](#).

## Planning Troop Adventures

Contact Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan at [travel@gsem.org](mailto:travel@gsem.org) as soon as you start thinking about planning a trip to find out more about their approval process for overnight and extended travel. Our [website](#) offers information on planning local, national, and international troop travel as well as Girl Scout Destinations. Also, check out our [event list](#) for upcoming Troop Travel training dates.

Prior to scheduling troop travel, please review the following Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan guidelines to ensure your troop is ready for your travel experience:

- Troop/Group Travel - International Trip or Cruise Requirements
  - There are many opportunities for troops/groups to visit other countries on trips they have planned themselves or through organized tour groups, such as EF Tours.
  - Troops/groups must always consult the U.S. State Department Web site at [state.gov/travelers](http://state.gov/travelers) for travel alerts, warnings, requirements for passports, travel safety tips, etc.
  - International Travel forms that troops/groups are required to complete are available on Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan's website, at [gsem.org/forms](http://gsem.org/forms).
    - [Intent for International Travel form](#)
    - [Parent Permission Form](#)
    - [Permission for Minors to Travel Internationally](#)
    - [Authorization for Medical Treatment for Adults](#)
    - [Authorization for Medical Treatment for Minors](#)
  - Intent for International Travel must be completed and submitted to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan [travel@gsem.org](mailto:travel@gsem.org) by all troops/groups three to six months prior to international travel. Please submit the form even if you cannot provide all of the information in its entirety due to planning with a tour company. Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan staff will work with each individual group as they progress through the planning process.

The form includes directions for submitting to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan. (This form is NOT required for travel to Canada). You will be notified of the decision of your request within (10) business days of receipt of this form. The Intent for International Travel Form must be approved before girls proceed with further planning. Please submit the following documentation with the Intent for International Travel form:

- An itinerary of the trip listing hotels, cities, modes of transportation.
- A roster of all participants (girls and adults) along with their emergency contact information.
- For international trips, troops/groups must contact Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan at least 4-6 weeks prior to the start of your trip to purchase **Additional Accident and/or**

**Sickness Insurance. Additional insurance must be purchased for the entire period of the travel (including departure and return days) for 100% of the participants.** PLAN 3PI (International Accident and Sickness Insurance, is **REQUIRED** for International Travel). For questions or to purchase insurance, contact our Office Manager at (313) 870-2514.

- Visiting Canada
  - **Day Trip or Overnight:** Due to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan’s unique geographic border with Canada, troops/groups crossing the border from Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan’s jurisdiction and staying for one night or less do not need to submit an Intent for International Travel form to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan.

Remember that the international Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) requires U.S. and Canadian travelers to present a passport or other document that denotes identity and proof of citizenship when entering the US or Canada. A valid U.S. passport, an enhanced driver’s license or NEXUS card meet the requirements of WHTI. Children under 16 need a birth certificate.

Consult with the U.S. State Department’s website for travel information for U.S. citizens traveling into Canada (especially when traveling with minors), as requirements may change without notice (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports.html>).

- **Two nights or More:** Troops/groups who are staying in Canada overnight two nights or longer, or are entering Canada from areas outside of Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan’s jurisdiction, must follow the Troop/Group Travel - International Trip or Cruise Requirements.
- Any specialized equipment that will be used, if applicable
  - Required agreements or contracts (for example, hiring a bus, use of premises)

Not sure where to begin? Check out the Girl Scout [Guide to U.S. Travel](#). This resource is designed for Juniors and older Girl Scouts who want to take extended trips—that is, longer than a weekend—but also features tips and tools for budding explorers who are just getting started with field trips and overnights.

Once girls have mastered planning trips in the United States, they might be ready for a global travel adventure! Global trips usually take a few years to plan, and the Girl Scout [Global Travel Toolkit](#) can walk you through the entire process.

## Safety First

If you’re planning any kind of trip—from a short field trip to an overseas expedition—the “Trip and Travel” section of [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) is your go-to resource for safety. For troop travel and activity approval, please contact [travel@gsssem.org](mailto:travel@gsssem.org). Be sure to follow all the basic safety guidelines, like the buddy system and first aid requirements, in addition to the specific guidelines for travel. You’ll also want to refer to the COVID-19 guidelines in Safety Activity Checkpoints as well as any COVID-19 guidelines for your destination. You will learn more about how to use and follow Girl Scouts Safety Activity Checkpoints in the next section.

Note that extended travel (more than three nights) is not covered under the basic Girl Scout insurance plan and will require additional coverage.

## Travel and Girl Scout Program Connections

It's easy to connect eye-opening travel opportunities to the leadership training and skill building your girls are doing in Girl Scouts! When it's safe to travel together, girls can use their creativity to connect any leadership Journey theme into an idea for travel. For example, girls learn where their food comes from in the *Sow What?* Journey. That would connect well with a trip focusing on sustainable agriculture and sampling tasty foods!

There are abundant opportunities to build real skills through earning badges too. The most obvious example is the Senior Traveler badge, but there are plenty more, such as Eco Camper, New Cuisines, Coding for Good, and, of course, all the financial badges that help girls budget and earn money for their trips.

Want to include Girl Scout traditions in your trip? Look no farther than the [Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace](#) in Savannah, Georgia! Your girls also have the chance to deepen their connections to Girl Scouts around the world by visiting one of the WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts) [World Centers](#), which offer low-cost accommodations and special programs in five locations around the world.

And if your troop is looking to stay closer to home this year? Reach out to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan's [Camp team](#) to learn about camping opportunities at Camp Hawthorn Hollow and Camp Playfair. If you plan to camp at one of our properties, at least one volunteer per troop is responsible for taking the Outdoor 1 and Outdoor 2 trainings available on [gsLearn](#). Any troops planning to cook outside or tent camp must take Outdoor 3 as well.

As your Girl Scouts excitedly plan their next trip, remember to limit your role to facilitating the girls' brainstorming and planning, never doing the work for them. Share your ideas and insights, ask tough questions when you have to, and support all their decisions with enthusiasm and encouragement!

# Troop Management

Leadership is more than “being in charge” or having a title; it’s recognizing that you are part of a team and understanding that team’s needs and interests. Here’s how you’ll do that with your troop!

## Your Role as a Girl Scout Volunteer

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience is based on three keys—discover, connect, and take action—but it’s not just for your troop. As a Girl Scout leader, you will embark on your own leadership journey as you help girls develop the leadership skills they’ll use to make the world a better place. Here are a few basic concepts that outline what leadership means in Girl Scouting.

### Leadership is teaching your Girl Scouts:

- That they can do and be anything!
- That they are decision makers and should own their decisions.
- How to live the Girl Scout Law by modeling it for them.

### As a leader, see yourself as a coach who:

- Advises, discusses, and cheers on your troop, not as a teacher with a planned lesson or activity but as a mentor and coach.
- Ensures each member understands and can carry out their responsibilities within the troop.
- Encourages Girl Scouts to build their skills and their ethics.
- Gives more responsibilities to the girls as they grow and develop.

### It is important to remember that:

- You cannot know everything that your Girl Scouts might ever want to learn.
- You’ll explore and learn alongside your girls and grow your confidence in the process.
- You’re not expected to know everything about Girl Scouting, but you should know where to go for information—and to ask for help when you need it.

## Your Responsibilities as a Girl Scout Volunteer

Your responsibilities as a Girl Scout volunteer include:

- Accepting the [Girl Scout Promise and Law](#).
- Carrying out the duties and requirements of your volunteer role listed in your role’s Volunteer Position Description.
- Completing required trainings for your role such as Troop Leader Orientation and Grade Level Essentials, found on [gsLearn](#).
- Understanding and coaching Girl Scouts Three Keys to Leadership—discover, connect, and take action—that are the basis of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.
- Sharing your knowledge, experience, and skills with a positive and flexible approach.
- Working in a partnership with your Girl Scouts so that their activities are girl-led and that they learn by doing, individually and as a group. You’ll also partner with other volunteers and council staff for support and guidance.
- Organizing fun, interactive, girl-led activities that address relevant issues and match girls’ interests and needs.
- Providing guidance and information regarding Girl Scout group meetings with troop families on a regular and ongoing basis through a variety of tools, including email, phone calls, newsletters, blogs, other forms of social media, and any other method you choose.

- Processing and completing registration forms and other paperwork, such as permission slips.
- Communicating effectively and delivering clear, organized, and vibrant presentations or information to an individual or the group.
- Overseeing with honesty, integrity, and careful record-keeping the funds that girls raise.
- Maintaining a close connection to your [troop committee volunteers](#), administrative volunteers, as well as GSSEM.
- Facilitating a safe experience for every Girl Scout.

### Planning for Your First Troop Meeting

Depending on the ages of your girls, you might take the lead in guiding the structure and experiences of your troop—from how and when meetings are held to how the troop communicates, from steering girl-led activities to setting financial expectations. You'll make these decisions collaboratively with your troop committee (or volunteer team) or co-leader, as well as with input from the girls and their parents and caregivers. Your First Year Troop Support Specialist will be in contact with you to assist you with planning your first meeting.

Use the questions below to guide your conversations with your [troop committee volunteers](#) or co-leader before discussing these topics with parents and caregivers.

- When will we meet and for how long? How frequently should we schedule troop meetings?
- Where will we meet? Your meeting space should be somewhere safe, clean, and secure that allows all girls to participate. Some great meeting space ideas include schools, places of worship, libraries, and community centers. If working with teens, consider meeting at coffee shops, bookstores, or another place they enjoy.
- Which components of the uniform will families need to purchase? Which uniform components will the troop provide for each girl?
- Will our troop be a single-grade level or [facilitated as a multi-level troop](#) with girls of many grade levels combined into one troop? If multi-level, how will we make sure they each get an age-appropriate experience?
- How will we keep troop activities and decisions girl-led? Use the [Volunteer Toolkit](#) to help you through this process by exploring options for activities and reviewing the meeting plans and resource lists.
- How often are we going to communicate with troop families? Which channels will we use to keep families in the loop? Effective communication [will help set expectations](#) and clarify parent/caregiver responsibilities.

Will our troop charge dues, use product program proceeds, and/or charge per activity? How much money will we need to cover supplies and activities? What should our financial plan look like? For help with calculating troop dues, please refer to the *Troop Dues Short & Snappy* in the [gsLearn](#) content library.

### Choosing a Meeting Place

What makes a great meeting space? It depends on your troop, but here are a few considerations as you visit potential locations:

- **Cost.** The space should be free to use.
- **Size.** Make sure the space is large enough for the whole group and all planned activities.
- **Availability.** Be sure the space is available for the day and the entire length of time you want to meet.



- **Resources.** Ask if tables and chairs come with the room and ensure that the lighting is adequate. A bonus would be a cubby of some sort where you could store supplies or a safe outdoor space for activities.
- **Safety.** Potential spaces must be safe, secure, clean, properly ventilated, heated (or cooled, depending on your location), free from hazards, and have at least two exits that are well-marked and fully functional. Also be sure first-aid equipment is on hand.
- **Facilities.** It goes without saying, but make sure that toilets are sanitary and accessible.
- **Communication-Friendly.** Check for cell reception in the potential space and whether Wi-Fi is available.
- **Allergen-Free.** Ensure that pet dander and other common allergens won't bother susceptible girls during meetings.
- **Accessibility.** Your space should accommodate girls with disabilities as well as parents with disabilities who may come to meetings.

Need a few talking points to get the conversation started? Try...

“I'm a Girl Scout volunteer with a group of [number of girls] girls. We're doing lots of great things for girls and for the community, like [something your group is doing] and [something else your troop is doing]. We're all about leadership—the kind that girls use in their daily lives and the kind that makes our community better. We'd love to hold our meetings here because [reason why you'd like to meet there].”

Stuck and need additional support? Contact the GSSEM Member Support team or your service unit support team for help with a troop meeting place.

## Virtual Meetings

If your group or troop can't meet in person or hold a traditional meeting, there are many ways to bring the power of Girl Scouting home! Meeting virtually can be a fun and engaging option for your troop.

Before setting up a virtual meeting, you'll want to:

- Partner with troop families to make sure the girls are safe online.
- Select a meeting platform that allows families who may not have internet access to call in.
- **Think about logistics.** Work with the girls to set up ground rules; consider how you will incorporate in-person meeting traditions in your virtual space and how you'll keep meetings on track.
- Talk with families on [how to keep activities girl-led](#) if your girls will be completing them from home.

And don't worry if your girls want to use a web or social platform you're not as familiar with, because you'll learn alongside them! For more tips on successful virtual meetings, check out [Tips, Tools, and Ideas for Planning a Great Virtual Meeting](#).

## Girl Scout Troop Size

A Girl Scout troop/group must have a minimum of three girls from three different families and two unrelated, approved adult volunteers. Be sure to double-check the volunteer-to-girl ratio table below to make sure you have the right number of adults present for group meetings, events, travel, and camping. Adults and girls registering in groups of fewer than three girls and two approved, unrelated adult volunteers, at least one of whom is female, will be registered as individual Girl Scouts to accurately reflect their status and program experience. Individual girls are always welcome to participate in Girl Scout activities and events.

## Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need

From troop meetings to camping weekends and cookie booths, adult volunteers must always be present to ensure Girl Scouts have fun and stay safe, no matter their grade level. If you are not sure about the number of adults you will need for your activity, the chart below breaks down the minimum number of volunteers needed to supervise a specific number of Girl Scouts.

Girl Scouts Volunteer-to-Girl Ratios	Group Meetings		Events, Travel, and Camping	
	Two unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for up to this number of girls:	One additional volunteer to each additional:	Two unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is	One additional volunteer to each additional:
Girl Scout Daisies (Grades K-1)	12	1-6	6	1-4
Girl Scout Brownies (Grades 2-3)	20	1-8	12	1-6
Girl Scout Juniors (Grades 4-5)	25	1-10	16	1-8
Girl Scout Cadettes (Grades 6-8)	25	1-12	20	1-10
Girl Scout Seniors (Grades 9-10)	30	1-15	24	1-12
Girl Scout Ambassadors (Grades 11-12)	30	1-15	24	1-12

## Safety in Girl Scouting

The emotional and physical safety and well-being of Girl Scouts is our top priority. *Safety Activity Checkpoints* outlines the Safety Standards and Guidelines used in Girl Scouting, which apply to all Girl Scout activities. All volunteers should review the *Safety Activity Checkpoints* manual when planning activities with girls in order to manage safety and risk in Girl Scout-sanctioned activities.

For current COVID-19 guidelines, refer to the *Safety Activity Checkpoints* at [gssem.org/safety](https://gssem.org/safety).

In *Safety Activity Checkpoints*, you will find:

- Girl Scouts Safety Standards and Guidelines, which apply to all Girl Scout activities, including requirements for adult supervision, permission slips, preparation, field trips and overnight trips, and other vital information.
- Activities that are not permitted by Girl Scouts of the USA and actions that girls and volunteers should not take.
- Policies surrounding chartered aircraft trips and aviation.

- First aid and overall health information.
- Standards for well-being and inclusivity along with ways to include Girl Scouts with disabilities and ways to ensure girls' emotional safety.
- Individual safety activity checkpoints for specific activities—such as camping, internet use, and water sports that provide activity-specific safety information.

The document is laid out in three primary sections, Safety Standards and Guidelines, Activities at a Glance, and individual safety activity checkpoint pages.

- **Girl Scouts' Activities at a Glance** table provides a quick look at the safety standards for that activity with a focus on two critical points to keep in mind when considering and planning activities for you troop:
  - age-appropriate activities and participation by grade level, and
  - whether prior approval from GSSEM is required before girls participate in a specific activity. Contact GSSEM for approval at [travel@gssem.org](mailto:travel@gssem.org).
- **Individual Safety Activity Checkpoint** pages provide activity-specific safety measures and guidance on the individual activities that troops and girls may choose to participate in.

## Registering Girls and Adults in Girl Scouting

Every participant (girl or adult) in Girl Scouting must register and become a member of Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA). GSUSA membership dues are valid for one year. Membership dues cannot be transferred to another member and are not refundable. Girls must be registered members to attend Girl Scout meetings and events.

Preregistration for the upcoming membership year occurs in the spring. Girls are encouraged to register early to avoid the fall rush. Early registration allows for uninterrupted receipt of forms and materials from the council, helps girls and councils plan ahead, and gets girls excited about all the great things they want to do as Girl Scouts next year. A Girl Scout's grade level is determined by the current membership year beginning October 1.

**Lifetime membership** is available to anyone who accepts the principles and beliefs of the Girl Scout Promise and Law, pays the one-time lifetime membership fee, and is at least 18 years old (or a high school graduate or equivalent). Volunteers with ten or more years of service can become lifetime members at the discounted young alum rate.

## Adding New Girls to Your Troop

Growing your troop is a great way to share the power of the Girl Scout experience and **there are many ways to get the word out**, like hanging posters at your girl's school, using social media to reach families in your community, or including your troop in GSSEM's Participation Catalog. The **GSSEM Customer Care team** can help get your troop listed in the Opportunity Catalog and set the desired number for members your troop would like to have. Contact the **GSSEM Recruitment team** for marketing and recruitment materials for adding new girls to your troop.

When you are ready to welcome new troop members, check out the *Welcoming New Girl Scouts Short & Snappy* on **gsLearn** to learn ways to welcome girls to your troop in a thoughtful way.

## Creating an Atmosphere of Acceptance and Inclusion

Girl Scouts is for every girl, and that’s why we embrace girls of all abilities and backgrounds with a specific and positive philosophy of inclusion that benefits everyone. Each girl—regardless of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, physical or cognitive ability, sexual orientation, primary language, or religion—is an equal and valued member of the group, and groups reflect the diversity of the community.

We believe inclusion is an approach and an attitude, rather than a set of guidelines. Inclusion is about belonging, all girls being offered the same opportunities with respect, dignity, and celebration of their unique strengths. It’s about being a sister to every Girl Scout. You’re accepting and inclusive when you:

- Welcome every girl and focus on building community.
- Emphasize cooperation instead of competition.
- Provide a safe and socially comfortable environment for girls.
- Teach respect for, understanding of, and dignity toward all girls and their families.
- Actively reach out to girls and families who are traditionally excluded or marginalized.
- Foster a sense of belonging to a community as a respected and valued peer.
- Honor the intrinsic value of each person’s life.

If you have questions about accommodating an individual girl, please reach out to the [GSSEM Member Support team](#). GSSEM also recommends completing the Ability Enrichment Training available on [gsLearn](#) to learn how to welcome Girl Scouts of all abilities.

As you think about where, when, and how often to meet with your group, consider the needs, resources, safety, and beliefs of all members and potential members. Include the special needs of any members who have disabilities or whose parents or caregivers have disabilities. But please, do not rely on visual cues to inform you of a disability; approximately 20 percent of the U.S. population has a disability—that’s one in five people of every socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and religion.

If you want to find out what a girl with a disability needs to make her Girl Scout experience successful, simply ask her or her parent or caregiver. If you are open and honest, they’ll likely respond in kind, [creating an atmosphere that enriches everyone](#).

It’s important for all girls to be rewarded based on their best efforts—not on the completion of a task. Give any girl the opportunity to do her best and she will! Sometimes that means changing a few rules or approaching an activity in a more creative way. Here are some examples of ways to modify activities:

- Invite a girl to complete an activity after she has observed others doing it.
- If you are visiting a museum to view a sculpture, find out if a girl who is blind might be given permission to touch the pieces.
- If an activity requires running, a girl who is unable to run could be asked to walk or do another physical movement.

Focus on a person’s abilities—on what she can do rather than on what she cannot. In that spirit, use people-first language that puts the person before the disability.

### Say: Instead of:

She has a learning disability.	She is learning disabled.
She has a developmental delay.	She is mentally retarded; she is slow.
She uses a wheelchair.	She is wheelchair bound.

When interacting with a girl (or parent/caregiver) with a disability, consider these tips:

- When talking to a girl with a disability, speak directly to her, not through a family member or friend.
- It's okay to offer assistance to a girl with a disability but wait until your offer is accepted before you begin to help. Listen closely to any instructions the person may have.
- Leaning on a girl's wheelchair is invading her space and is considered annoying and rude.
- When speaking to a girl who is deaf and using an interpreter, speak to the girl, not to the interpreter.
- When speaking for more than a few minutes to a girl who uses a wheelchair, place yourself at eye level.
- When greeting a girl with a visual disability, always identify yourself and others. You might say, "Hi, it's Sheryl. Tarais on my right, and Chris is on my left."

### **Registering Girls with Cognitive Disabilities**

Girls with cognitive disabilities can be registered as closely as possible to their chronological ages. They wear the uniform of that grade level. Make any adaptations for the girl to ongoing activities of the grade level to which the group belongs. Young women with cognitive disorders may choose to retain their girl membership through their twenty-first year, and then move into an adult membership category.

### **Getting Support for Your Troop**

Just as your Girl Scouts rally around each other for support, you will also have a dedicated Girl Scout support team, consisting of council staff and passionate volunteers like you. Your Community and Service Unit volunteers are ready to offer local learning opportunities and advice as well as [answer your questions](#) about the Girl Scout program, working with girls, product sales, and much more.

Before you hold your first troop meeting with girls, consider the support and people resources you'll need to cultivate an energizing troop experience. Parents, friends, family, and other members of the community have their own unique strengths and can provide time, experience, and ideas to a troop, so get them involved from the very beginning as part of your volunteer troop team. This team is made up of troop leaders (like you) and troop committee volunteers.

Your [troop committee volunteers](#) are the extra set of eyes, ears, and hands that help the troop safely explore the world around them. Depending on your troop's needs, they can play a more active role—for instance, someone can step up as a dedicated troop treasurer—or simply provide an occasional helping hand when you need to keep a meeting activity on track.

If a parent or caregiver isn't sure if they can commit to a committee or co-leader role, encourage them to try [volunteering in a smaller capacity](#) that matches their skill set. Just like your young Girl Scouts, once troop parents and caregivers discover they can succeed in their volunteer role, they'll feel empowered to volunteer again. Use the [Ways To Help The Troop form](#) to collect information from parents about how they can contribute to troop operations.

### **Troop Management Tools and Resources**

From toolkits and guides to regular contact with experienced individuals, you'll have all the support you need to be a Girl Scout volunteer. Here's a list of some important resources you'll want to check out.

## The Volunteer Toolkit

### A Girl Scouts Volunteer Toolkit (VTK)

The Volunteer Toolkit is a customizable planning tool where you can find suggested meeting plans for most badges, access activity guides and badge requirements, track your Girl Scouts' achievements, and so much more. With inspiring ideas so you can engage your troop in a mix of activities all year long, it's the digital planning assistant that will help you power a fun-filled—and organized—Girl Scout year. Be sure to look for helpful icons to identify activity focus areas like the evergreen icon which tells you the activity can be taken outside or the globe icon which lets you know you can bring a global perspective to the activity. You'll find the Volunteer Toolkit in the left menu bar under My GS/ My Account. VTK is accessible on any desktop, tablet, or mobile device.

With the Volunteer Toolkit, girls and leaders can explore meeting topics and program activities together and follow the fun as they plan their Girl Scout year. Using the Volunteer Toolkit:

#### Troop Leaders can:

- Plan the troop's calendar year and meeting schedule.
- Email parents/caregivers with one click.
- View the troop roster, renew girls' memberships, and update girls' contact information.
- View meeting plans for Journeys and badges, including suggested tracks for multi-level groups (K-5 and 6-12).
- Customize meeting agendas to fit your troop.
- Explore individual meeting plans that show a breakdown of every step, including a list of materials needed, editable time allotments for each activity within a meeting, and printable meeting aids.
- Record attendance at meetings and their troop's badge and Journey achievements.
- Add council or custom events to the troop's calendar.
- Submit troop finance reports.
- Easily locate both national and local council resources, such as Safety Activity Checkpoints.

#### Parents and Caregivers can:

- View the troop's meeting schedule and individual meeting plans to stay up to date on the badges and Journeys the troop is working on.
- Renew their memberships and update their contact information.
- View their Girl Scout's attendance and achievements.
- See upcoming events the troop is planning or attending.
- Easily locate both national and local council resources.
- View the troop's finance report (depending on the council's process).

Get started by visiting [gssem.org/vtk](https://gssem.org/vtk) and by viewing Volunteer Toolkit tutorial videos on [gsLearn](#).

### Additional Tools and Resources

The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting/Girl Scout Handbooks. What does it mean to be a Girl Scout? You'll find it all in *The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting* or in the Girl Scout handbook. These grade level-specific binders will break it down for your girls. It's part handbook, part badge book, and 100 percent fun! Get yours from the GSSEM council shop or on our [shop website](#).

**Safety Activity Checkpoints.** Safety is paramount in Girl Scouting, and *Safety Activity Checkpoints* contains everything you need to know to help keep your girls safe during a variety of exciting activities outside of their regular Girl Scout troop meetings.

**Tips for Troop Leaders.** When you're looking for real-world advice from fellow troop leaders who've been there, [this volunteer-to-volunteer resource](#) on the Girl Scouts of the USA website has what you need for a Successful troop year.

**Girl Scout Volunteers in Your Community.** Remember that Girl Scout support team we mentioned? You'll find them in your service unit! Troops are organized geographically into service units or communities. You'll find a local network of fellow leaders and administrative volunteers [ready to offer tips and advice](#) to help you succeed in your volunteer role.

**Customer Care Contacts.** Questions? Need help resolving an issue? We've got you! Reach out anytime by either clicking on the "Contact Us" form at [gssem.org](https://gssem.org) or [customercare@gssem.org](mailto:customercare@gssem.org). During business hours (Monday-Friday, 8:30 AM-5:00 PM) you can reach a customer service specialist by calling 800-482-6734.

## Newsletters/Communication

- **Leaders Newsletter:** This biweekly e-publication is sent to GSSEM troop leaders and is comprised of Council updates, upcoming events/programs, helpful tips, reminders, and much more.
- **Juliette News:** This monthly e-publication is sent to parents/guardians of GSSEM Juliettes and contains important updates, upcoming events/programs, and helpful ways to keep individually registered girls engaged with Girl Scouts.
- **GirlTalk Blog:** Our Council blog recaps exciting events and highlights outstanding GSSEM troops, volunteers, and girls. Visit [girltalk.gssem.org](https://girltalk.gssem.org) to check it out!

## Take Advantage of Learning Opportunities

We know that when you have the knowledge and skills you need to manage your girls, both you and your troop will thrive. GSSEM has learning opportunities that will help you grow your skills and confidence. The GSSEM Volunteer Experience team holds live webinar and in-person training opportunities to help volunteers explore the many facets of troop leadership. Visit the gsLearn live sessions tab to register for webinar and in-person trainings.

gsLearn houses all of GSSEM's online trainings. Most of our online trainings, called Short & Snappies are under 15 minutes long and provide a quick overview of a Girl Scout topic. GSSEM also provides deep-dive online trainings for topics such as getting started as Girl Scout volunteer, program grade levels, and highest awards. For a full list of GSSEM training opportunities, please view the [GSSEM Volunteer Training Catalog](#).

### Attention New Troop Leaders!

Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan requires all new Troop Leaders and Co-Leaders complete Troop Leader Orientation and at least one Grade Level Essentials training (GSSEM recommends completing a Grade Level Essentials training for every level of Girl Scouting present in your troop). Troop Leader Orientation should be completed prior to their troop's first meeting with girls, while Grade Level Essentials should be completed within two months of starting.

## Know How Much You are Appreciated

What begins with Girl Scouts speaking up at a troop meeting can go all the way to speaking in front of their city council for a cause they champion—and they will have your support to thank for that. Your volunteer role makes a powerful difference. Thank you for all you do.

Just as you'll receive support throughout your volunteer experience, when you reach the end of the term you signed up for, you'll talk with your support team about the positive parts of your experience as well as the challenges you faced, and you'll discuss whether you want to return to this position or try something new. The end of your troop year, camp season, Overseas trip, or series/event session is just the beginning of your next adventure with Girl Scouts!

If you're ready for more opportunities, be sure to let the [GSSEM Member Support team](#) know how you'd like to be a part of girls' lives in the future— whether in the same position or in other, flexible ways. Are you ready to organize a Series or event? Take a trip? Work with girls at camp? Work with a troop of girls as a yearlong volunteer? Share your skills at a council office, working behind the scenes? The possibilities are endless and can be tailored to fit your skills and interests.

GSSEM spotlights volunteers in our [GirlTalk blog](#), showcasing their exemplary leadership. If you would like to spotlight a volunteer, please visit [gssem.org/spotlight](https://gssem.org/spotlight) to access the Volunteer Spotlight Nomination Form.

Do you know an amazing volunteer who goes above and beyond? If so, please nominate them for one of the five Volunteer National Awards! Honorees are invited to the annual Volunteer?

National Awards banquet held in the spring. The Volunteer National Awards nomination form may be found at [gssem.org/volrecognition](https://gssem.org/volrecognition). The Volunteer Experience team can also help you identify thoughtful ways to informally recognize volunteers. For more information on both formal and informal recognitions, check out the [Volunteer Recognition Information Packet](#).

Please also join us at one of the Volunteer Experience team's mixer events to connect with volunteers in your area! Check the [event calendar](#) for dates and more information.

### Volunteer Appreciation



Without our passionate and dedicated volunteers, there would be no Girl Scouting. That's why we celebrate National Volunteer Month every April and turn up the party as we ring in National Girl Scout Leader's Day on April 22.

Girl Scouts also celebrates National Volunteer Week, which falls during the third day of April. What can we say, we love our volunteers!

## Girl Scout Participation in Activities with Other Scouting Organizations

The decision by Boy Scouts of America (BSA) to open the Boy Scout program to girls has fundamentally altered the nature of the relationship between BSA and Girl Scouts nationally and locally. Local relationships between BSA and Girl Scout councils that have led to partnerships and joint activities in the past may now create certain risks or challenges for Girl Scouts. For this reason, councils are encouraged to avoid joint recruiting and/or joint participation in community events or activities.



## **Marketplace Confusion**

To protect the integrity of the Girl Scout brand and reinforce our programming as unique, girl-only, and best in class, we must ensure that we take Care that the activities in which girls participate are exclusive to the Girl Scout program, are safe and girl-led, and are conducted under the appropriate supervision of Girl Scouts.

## **Protecting Use of Girl Scout Materials**

Girl Scout materials are intended for the exclusive use of Girl Scouts and are protected as the intellectual property of Girl Scouts of the USA. Materials include but are not limited to: Girl Scout logo, tag lines, and/or program and badge requirements.

## **GSUSA & GSSEM Policies and Procedures**

All appointed volunteers participating in the Girl Scout movement shall meet GSUSA and Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan membership requirements, be registered as a member of GSUSA (annual or lifetime membership), and shall agree to abide by the policies and principles of GSUSA and Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan.

Membership dues are \$25 per year for both girls and adults. For information on registration please visit [gssem.org](https://gssem.org).

## **Financial Assistance**

Financial Assistance is available for membership and program resources for girl members whose families meet the Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan income eligibility requirements (See the Financial Aid Application Form, [gssem.org/fa](https://gssem.org/fa), for more information). Girls receiving financial aid are required to participate in the Cookie Program. Girls will be issued a My GS Kit certificate and/or program certificate (depending on completed FA form). The My GS Kit certificate should be used for program resources and uniform components (please see the Financial Aid Application for more detail). The program certificate should be used for GSSEM council events or community events.

## **Customer Care**

Customer Care is here to assist volunteers and parents in navigating the registration process. For general customer service needs and technical assistance, please contact our Customer Care. Customer Care Associates are available Monday through Friday (8:30 AM - 5:00 PM) at 1-800-482-6734 or by email at [customercare@gssem.org](mailto:customercare@gssem.org).

## **Volunteer Compensation vs. Volunteer Benefits: Compliance with IRS Regulations**

Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan staff and volunteers must be mindful to not inadvertently cause a volunteer to become liable for payment of taxes by offering taxable benefits to a volunteer.

The U.S. Department of Labor generally defines a volunteer as an individual who donates his or her services, usually on a part-time basis, for charitable objectives, and without the expectation of receiving compensation. Compensation is generally defined as pay or another tangible benefit that is tied to an individual's productivity or hours worked. Compensation does not include reimbursement for an individual's expenses incurred while volunteering, reasonable benefits, or nominal fees.

Everyone—both staff and volunteers—should be very careful when designing volunteer reward and recognition programs to ensure that the program is not providing what the IRS determines is income or another tangible benefit that is tied to productivity or hours worked.

The following examples help illustrate when volunteer benefits may cross the line to become compensation, thereby risking a reclassification of a volunteer’s status and thereby triggering the need for the volunteer to pay income taxes on the benefit:

<b>Acceptable Practice</b> <b>(Examples of reimbursements, reasonable benefits, and nominal fees)</b>	<b>Beware!</b> <b>(Examples of potential compensation and tax liability)</b>
<p>The Council pays for an onsite babysitter during a meeting or event to care for the children of any individuals who volunteer at that meeting. The babysitter’s services are available at and during that meeting or event regardless of whether, how frequently or how long an individual volunteers.</p>	<p>The Council provides each volunteer with coupons for one hour of a babysitter’s services per hour of time volunteered. These coupons can be used at any time, even during times when the individual is not volunteering for Girl Scouts.</p>
<p>A volunteer signs up to drive girls to a camping event and later turns in an expense report to be reimbursed using the current IRS volunteer mileage rate for her actual mileage. the miles they drive.</p>	<p>The Council is finding it hard to get qualified drivers for an upcoming camp event, so it advertises that each driver who signs up will receive a \$50 gas card, regardless of</p>
<p>For Volunteer Appreciation Week in April, the Council emails all volunteers a 10% discount coupon for the Council’s shop.</p>	<p>The Council advertises that all candidates who sign up to be Troop Leaders will get a 50% discount for their daughters at summer camp.</p>
<p>A troop leader agrees to come in for a Saturday to take part in a focus group to help the Council assess the service-delivery needs in her region. Afterward, the Council gives her a thank-you card and a \$5 Starbucks gift card for her extra effort.</p>	<p>The Council designates \$1,000 to give to each Day Camp Organizer as a stipend to ensure all positions are filled.</p>

## Non-Discrimination

Girl Scouts is an inclusive organization. There shall be no discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, creed, national origin, marital or socioeconomic status, disability, or age. In addition, to ensure full equality of opportunity in all operations and activities of the organization, affirmative action policies and procedures shall be utilized in the recruitment, selection, training, placement, and recognition of volunteers. Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan is committed to having its membership reflect the diversity of population groups within its jurisdiction.

## Code of Ethics

Volunteers are required to conduct themselves in a professional manner, keeping in mind that adult volunteers serve as role models to the girls they serve. This conduct will be reflected in appropriate dress, language and conduct. Dress, grooming, and personal cleanliness standards contribute to the morale of girls and other volunteers and affect the image that Girl Scouts present to members and the community. Volunteers will serve to the best of their ability, but not beyond their capabilities. Confidentiality must be maintained at all times in order to protect the dignity and rights of individuals. Violation of confidentiality may be a cause for release from duties.

## **Sexual Harassment**

Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan is committed to an environment in which volunteer and staff relationships are characterized by dignity, courtesy, respect, and equitable treatment and an environment free of all forms of discrimination, including sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is defined as “unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.” Sexual harassment is a form of illegal discrimination on the basis of an individual’s gender. It frequently involves an expression of sexual conduct that seeks to exploit a relationship in which there is an imbalance of power (e.g., Supervisor/ Subordinate). It can also occur where there is a perception of power among or between colleagues or between individuals with no formal business relationship.

No volunteer, man or woman, may sexually harass another volunteer, employee, or Girl Scout member of the same or opposite sex, and may not advocate, solicit, or promote a particular personal lifestyle or sexual orientation.

Any volunteer who believes she/he has been the subject of sexual harassment should report the incident(s) to either her/his Troop Support staff and/or Chief Executive Officer.

Retaliation against anyone who has reported an allegation of sexual harassment is expressly prohibited and, if it occurs, will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including release.

## **Duty to Report Threatening or Inappropriate Behavior by Other Adults**

At Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan, staff and volunteers have a particular responsibility to girl and adult members. Therefore, if a volunteer witnesses behavior or relationships that could be potentially detrimental or developmentally inappropriate, volunteers are required to report immediately the behavior/relationship to Member Support staff or the GSSEM Chief Executive Officer.

Any adult engaging in behavior threatening the health or welfare of girls will be released from acting in an official Girl Scout capacity. Threatening behavior may include but is not limited to: neglect, physical abuse, withholding of food, lack of supervision, emotional maltreatment including verbal, physical or sexual abuse, abuse of prescription or illegal drugs, use of alcohol, or careless management of firearms.

## **Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect by Caregivers**

Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan paid staff is required by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect to the State of Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Volunteers are not specifically named as mandated reporters under the law, but are strongly urged as citizens to report suspected child abuse or neglect by caregivers to the Department of Health and Human Services or any law enforcement agency.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services staff and law enforcement officers are required by law to preserve the confidentiality of the citizen reporter, so citizens can make anonymous reports. Contact Central Intake at 1-855-444-3911 to report abuse and neglect at any time 24 hours per day. Volunteers who suspect child abuse or neglect but are not comfortable or are unsure about reporting it should contact GSSEM Member Support staff. Department of Health and Human Services staff are trained in evaluating such situations and your report will not necessarily result in immediate action, but may often result in services being provided to keep the family intact.

## **Tobacco, Drugs, and Alcohol**

Volunteers may not use tobacco, consume alcohol or use illegal drugs in the presence of girl members or while engaged in any official Girl Scout duty or function. Possession or consumption of alcoholic

beverages, illegal substances, or use of tobacco shall not be allowed at Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan offices or on Council property at any time for any reason by any person (whether staff or volunteer, outside groups, members or non-members) prior to, or during Girl Scout activities.

## Weapons

Use of weapons such as handguns, shotguns, rifles, pellet guns, knives, or other objects used with the intent of causing harm, injury, death, etc. are not permitted at any Girl Scout activity or on any property owned or leased by Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan. There are two exceptions: law enforcement personnel who are required to carry their weapons while on or off duty, and Council approved program-related activities. For approval for these types of activities, please contact [travel@gssem.org](mailto:travel@gssem.org).

## Troop Finances

With your guidance, your Girl Scouts will learn money skills that will serve them throughout their lives. Your Girl Scout troop will plan and finance its own activities, and you'll coach your girls as they earn and manage troop funds. Troop activities are powered by proceeds earned through council-sponsored product program activities (such as the Girl Scout Cookie Program), group money-earning activities (council approved, of course), and any dues your troop may charge.

### Establishing a Troop Account

No matter how much your troop plans to save or spend, you'll need a safe place to deposit your troop dues, product program proceeds, and other funds. If you've stepped up to lead an existing troop, you may inherit a checking account, but with a new troop, you'll want to open a new bank account. All Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan troops **must** open its own independent troop bank account in accordance with the steps outlined in the [Troop Banking Package](#). Troop bank accounts may not be combined with other organization or booster club accounts.

Here are a few helpful tips you can take to the bank:

- Be sure to find a bank that has free checking and low fees. It is recommended that troops use one of GSSEM's preferred banks as listed in the [Troop Banking Package](#), which has free checking and low fees.
- Designate a "troop treasurer," that is, one person who is responsible for troop funds and for keeping a daily account of expenditures.
- Ensure your account comes with a debit card that you can use during activities or trips. These transactions are easier to track at the end of the year.
- Be prepared and make sure another troop volunteer has a debit card for the troop account in case the main card is lost.
- Handle a lost troop debit card the same way you would a personal debit card: cancel it immediately.
- Keep troop funds in the bank before an activity or trip and pay for as many items as possible in advance of your departure.

Please refer to the [Troop Banking Package](#) and the *Establishing a Troop Bank Account Short & Snappy* on [gsLearn](#) for more information on how to establish your troop bank account. Most council-sponsored product program activities have specific banking and tracking procedures, which you can learn more about during Fall Product and Girl Scout Cookie Program trainings.

## Financial Assistance to Girls

- Families are welcome to apply for financial aid for girls to support their experience by completing a [Financial Aid Application Form](#).
- Based upon funding availability and the family's financial need, girls will be approved for a comprehensive package to ensure that they have a high-quality Girl Scout experience for their entire first year of membership. The package includes a My GS Kit certificate (please see Financial Aid Application Form for additional information) and a Program Credit certificate to participate in a council wide or Community-sponsored program.
- Once approved for financial aid, girls will be **required** to participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program in order to enhance their financial literacy skills.
- All girl members are welcome to apply for financial aid to attend Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan summer camp. Eligibility is determined based upon funding availability and financial need. Families complete the Financial Aid Application Form found at [gssem.org/fa](https://gssem.org/fa). A minimum deposit of \$50 is required for all attendees.

## Managing Troop Finances

Managing troop funds is one of the most important troop management tasks. Keep these helpful tips in mind when working with troop finances:

- Ensure your account comes with a debit card(s) that you can use during activities or trips. These transactions are easier to track at the end of the year.
- If you lose your troop debit card, cancel it immediately.
- Keep troop funds in the bank before an activity or trip and pay for as many items as possible in advance of your departure.
- All monies raised by a troop for **any purpose** belong to the troop as a whole. Whatever is done with troop funds must benefit all girls in equal measure, no matter their ability to contribute troop dues or their participation in Product Programs. Troops may not create individual bank accounts or track girl contributions to troop funds, as this can result in tax-related consequences for the troop and can endanger Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan's nonprofit status.
- All authorized signers on troop bank accounts are responsible for managing all aspects of the troop bank account including purchases, deposits, withdrawals, and record-keeping.
- Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan volunteers who are check signers are responsible for all overdrafts that they initiate. Non-sufficient funds checks written to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan are immediately turned over to a collection agency that may assess a fee for their services. The fee is payable by the offending party.
- In the event a troop receives a bad check, if still uncollected after being presented to the bank twice for payment, the troop has the option to forward the bad check to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan for collection agency follow-up.
- Payment to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan for the Cookie Program and Fall Product Program will be made through electronic Automated Clearing House (ACH) withdrawal from the troop bank account. ACH withdrawals will continue to be deducted from the bank account until all monies due to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan have been collected. If there are not enough funds in the account to cover the ACH withdrawal, non-sufficient funds charges incurred by Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan Finance Department may be added to the troop debt for each ACH rejection.

For more information on opening a troop bank account, please refer to the *Managing Troop Finances Short & Snappy* in the gsLearn content library.

### **Important GSSEM Finance Policies**

Please be aware of these important troop finance policies:

- Personal use of troop funds at **ANY TIME** is illegal. Personal funds and troop funds should never be mixed.

#### ***Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan takes misuse of troop funds extremely seriously.***

If personal use of troop monies occurs, Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan will begin collection procedures, taking legal action as necessary. Volunteers who misuse funds for which they are responsible will be released from all positions with Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan. Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan will pursue all available criminal and/or civil charges involving misuse of funds.

- All funds collected, raised, earned, or otherwise received in the name of and for the benefit of Girl Scouting belong to the troop and must be used for the purposes of Girl Scouting. Funds are administered through the troop and do not belong to individuals.

### **Record Keeping and Annual Reporting**

Keeping accurate records is necessary when managing a troop bank account, as it makes annual reporting simple. All troops are required to submit the annual troop finance report by June 21 every year. The finance report may be submitted via the Volunteer Toolkit (see the *Volunteer Toolkit Finance Tab Short & Snappy* on [gsLearn](#) for more information) or by using the document at [gssem.org/financereport](https://gssem.org/financereport). Here are some tips for troop bank account record-keeping:

- Receipts must be written (i.e. for troop dues, when selling Girl Scout cookies in person) and collected for any transaction made using the troop's bank account. GSSEM recommends purchasing a carbon copy receipt book for this purpose.
- Receipts and records from troop bank account transactions should be retained for 3 years. Find a safe place to store your troop's receipts. If the volunteer managing the troop bank account no longer plans to continue, that volunteer should arrange the transfer of all receipts and other documents related to the troop bank account to the Troop Leader or Co-Leader before exiting their role.
- Accurate financial records and reports may be a condition of reappointment for troop volunteers for the next membership year. The GSSEM Volunteer Experience team monitors troop submission of the annual financial report.
- Troop financial records are subject to random or periodic audits by Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan staff.
- All financial records must also be available to caregivers and girls. Financial information should be reviewed with girls at least annually, though GSSEM recommends discussing troop finances with caregivers at least three times per year. Parents will be advised by newsletter that they should receive a troop financial report at least annually and that troop financial records are available for their review.
- Troop leaders should also communicate goal-setting objectives to parents when planning for Cookie or Fall Product Programs. Parents will demonstrate stronger support if they know both the troop goals and the activities or community take action projects planned for use of troop proceeds.

## Girl and Adult Member Transfers

Individual girl and adult member transfers between troops are permitted at any time of the Girl Scout year. Girl members transferring between December 1 and May 1 of each year should be advised that any cookie sales and proceeds stay with the troop the cookies were sold with. GSSEM will make every effort to ensure girls receive all cookie program rewards from total sales.

## Merging and Splitting of Troops

Money does not belong to any individual girl members. Thus, if one girl transfers to another troop, money does not transfer with her. If a troop divides into two troops, the money and materials of the original troop should be divided between the two troops in proportion to the number of girls moving into each new troop. The troop leader should contact their Member Support Specialist to inform them of the split and obtain new troop number(s), if necessary.

If one or more troops merge, money and material of each troop involved should be combined. Troop leader(s) should contact their Member Support Specialist regarding the merger and which troop is disbanding.

Due to the complex nature of the Girl Scout cookie program related to troop financials, troop splits are **not permitted** between December 1 and May 1 of any Girl Scout year. If it is no longer an option to continue meeting together, groups may choose to meet separately, but a final troop split cannot be completed until after May 1. Once the troop has decided to split, no significant purchases should be made from the troop bank account. Nominal purchases of less than \$50 for troop meeting supplies are permitted. While the troop is waiting to complete the split, documentation, including receipts and purchase descriptions, for any nominal purchases **must** be retained until after the troop split is complete. For additional guidance regarding troop splits, please contact the Director of Member Support.

## Disbanding Troops

When a troop disbands, any unused Girl Scout money left in the account becomes the property of the Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan. Troop funds are not the property of any individual member. Before disbanding, ask your girls how they want to pay it forward. They may decide to donate any unused funds to their service unit, to another troop, or to pay for Girl Scout activities for the remainder of the time the troop remains active. Activities can also include purchasing materials to Support another organization through Take Action projects.

If Troop Leaders have not been able to identify new troop leadership prior to disbanding, troop leaders should contact all troop caregivers to inform them of their decision to no longer lead the troop and make one last attempt to recruit caregivers to serve as troop leaders. If a final attempt to identify new leadership is unsuccessful, Troop Leader should contact their Member Support Specialist for support with additional alternatives to keep the troop from disbanding. If girls interested in troop participation, the GSSEM Member Support team will then communicate with Caregivers and work to place the girls in new troop.

Prior to officially disbanding, Troop Leaders should fill out the [Disbanding Troop Checklist](#) to ensure they have completed all the necessary steps for disbanding a Girl Scout troop, including attempting to identify new troop leadership at a caregiver meeting, indicating what will be done with troop funds, and what will be done with troop supplies.

## Unspent Troop Funds and Closing the Troop/Group Account

### Where should unspent troop funds go?

Before a troop disbands, the currently registered girls in the troop should decide what to do with the troop's funds.

GSSEM encourages all disbanding troops to consider using troop funds to spread the spirit of Girl Scouting to others by donating all funds or a portion of remaining funds back to their Girl Scout Community bank account to support local recruitment and recognition efforts for girls and adult volunteers.

Troops may also elect to use remaining funds on Girl Scout activities, such as a community service/Take Action project or to the troop's favorite cause.

**Please note** that the use of the remaining troop funds must be a girl-led decision by current girl members. Funds may not be spent on girls who are not registered in the current membership year. Please remember that according to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan and GSUSA policy (and to avoid having to pay taxes to the IRS), troop funds may not be refunded or paid out directly to girls or adults.

Prior to closing the troop/group bank account, be sure all checks and other debits have cleared the account before you close it. Remember, you may need to close the bank account in person, so work with the troop/group's authorized signers to find time to get together to close the account. Once all monies have been paid for any outstanding bills/invoices/receipts, etc. then the disbanding troop's bank account must be closed and a check sent to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan with the balance made out to "Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan". The check should be mailed to the Detroit Service Center, attention Finance Dept. Please contact the GSSEM Finance Department to obtain a letter that gives permission to close the troop bank account.

For troops that may disband due to lack of adult leadership, the remaining troop funds must be submitted to the [GSSEM Finance Department](#), who will hold the remaining troop funds for up to twelve months pending reorganization. If new leadership is recruited for that particular troop, council will provide the new troop leadership the funds that remained in that particular troop bank account. If any of the girls move to a different troop, then the balance that was received will be divided by the number of registered girls at the time of disbanding. That amount will be ACH deposited to the new troop bank account where the girl(s) moved to.

**Please note** that if troops elect to send any funds to the Community bank account, GSSEM will not send disbanding troop funds to any troops in which the girls continuing on with Girl Scouts will participate.

Even if there are no funds remaining, you must still submit the following to the GSSEM Finance Department:

- A cashier's check, made payable to "Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan," with the remaining balance of the troop bank account (if funds remain in the bank account).
- A final Troop Financial Report with the most recent bank statement (report may be found at [gssem.org/forms](https://gssem.org/forms)).
- Notification from the bank that the account has been closed.
- The disbanding troop number and contact information of all active troop leaders and authorized signers prior to the troop disbanding.



Send this information along with any remaining troop funds to:

Chief Financial Officer  
Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan  
1333 Brewery Park Blvd., Suite 500  
Detroit, MI 48207

If the troop disbands, the troop number becomes available for use anywhere else in the council.

## Money-Earning Basics for Troops

Troops flex their financial muscles in two distinct ways:

**The Girl Scout Cookie Program and other product sales of Girl Scouts** (authorized product sales such as magazines, or nuts and candy) organized by GSSEM. All girl members are eligible to participate in two council-sponsored product program activities each year with volunteer supervision—the Girl Scout Cookie Program and the Fall Product Program. Please remember, volunteers and Girl Scout council staff don't sell cookies and other products—girls do. Learn more about product programs at [gssem.org/cookies](https://gssem.org/cookies).

**Group money-earning activities** organized by the troop (not by the council) that are planned and carried out by girls (in partnership with volunteers) and that earn money for the group.

- Money-earning activities require approval from GSSEM staff. Please contact [customercare@gssem.org](mailto:customercare@gssem.org) for approval.

## Participation Guidance

Girls' participation in both council-sponsored product program activities and group money-earning projects is based on the following:

- Voluntary participation.
- Written permission of each girl's parent or guardian.
- An understanding of (and ability to explain clearly to others) why the money is needed.
- An understanding that money earning should not exceed what the group needs to support its program activities.
- Observance of local ordinances related to involvement of children in money-earning activities as well as health and safety laws.
- Vigilance in protecting the personal safety of each girl.
- Arrangements for safeguarding the money.

## Additional Guidelines

Keep these specific guidelines—some of which are required by the Internal Revenue Service—in mind to ensure that sales are conducted with legal and financial integrity.

- **All rewards earned by girls through the product program activities must support Girl Scout program experiences** (such as camp, travel, and program events, but not scholarships or financial credits toward outside organizations).
- **Rewards are based on sales ranges** set by councils and may not be based on a dollar-per-dollar calculation.

- **Troops are encouraged to participate in council product programs as their primary money-earning activity;** any group money earning shouldn't compete with the Girl Scout Cookie Program or other council product programs.
- **Obtain written approval from GSSEM before a group money-earning event;** All money-earning events organized by troops/groups must be approved by the [GSSEM Product Program team](#). Refer to the [Money Earning Requirement Packet: Events, Activities, and Donations](#) for more information.
- **Girl Scouts does not allow the use of games of chance.** Any activity which could be considered a game of chance (raffles, contests, bingo) is prohibited.
- **Girl Scouts may not directly solicit cash.**
- **Group money-earning activities need to be suited to the ages and abilities of the girls** and consistent with the principles of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.
- **Money earned is for Girl Scout activities and is not to be retained by individuals.** Girls can, however, be awarded incentives and/or may earn credits from their Girl Scout product programs. Funds acquired through group money-earning projects must be reported and accounted for by the group according to GSSEM policy.

## Sample Money-Earning Activities

### *Collections/Drives*

- Cell phones for refurbishment
- Used ink cartridges turned in for money
- Christmas tree recycling

### *Food/Meal Events*

- Lunch box auction (prepared lunch or meal auctioned off)
- Themed meals, like a high tea or a build-your-own-taco bar, related to activities girls are planning; for instance, if girls are earning money for travel, they could tie the meal to their destination

### *Service(s)*

- Service-a-thon (people sponsor a girl doing service and funds go to support a trip or other activity)
- Babysitting for holiday (New Year's Eve) or council events
- Raking leaves, weeding, cutting grass, shoveling snow, walking pets
- Cooking class or other specialty class

The Girl Scout Cookie Program and other council-sponsored product programs are designed to unleash the entrepreneurial potential in your girls. From there, your troop may decide to earn additional funds on its own.

## Help Your Troop Reach Its Financial Goals

We get it—there's something exciting about opening that first case of Girl Scout Cookies. However, before your girls take part in all the cookie program fun, it's important they have a clear plan and purpose for their product program activities. As a volunteer, you have the opportunity to facilitate girl-led financial planning, which may include the following steps for the girls:

1. **Set goals for money-earning activities.** What do girls hope to accomplish through this activity? In addition to earning money, what skills do they hope to build? What leadership opportunities present themselves?

2. **Create a budget.** Use a budget worksheet that includes both expenses (the cost of supplies, admission to events, travel, and so on) and available income (the group's account balance, projected cookie proceeds, and so on).
3. **Determine how much the group needs to earn.** Subtract expenses from available income to determine how much money your group needs to earn.
4. **Make a plan.** The group can brainstorm and make decisions about its financial plans. Will cookie and other product programs—if approached proactively and energetically—earn enough money to meet the group's goals? If not, which group money-earning activities might offset the difference? Will more than one group money-earning activity be necessary to achieve the group's financial goals? In this planning stage, engage the girls through the Girl Scout processes (girl-led, learning by doing, and cooperative learning) and consider the value of any potential activity. Have them weigh feasibility, implementation, and safety factors.
5. **Write it out.** Once the group has decided on its financial plan, describe it in writing. If the plan involves a group money-earning activity, fill out an application for approval from GSSEM and submit it along with the budget worksheet the girls created.

**Remember.** It's great for girls to have opportunities like the Girl Scout Cookie Program to earn funds that help them fulfill their goals. As a volunteer, try to help girls balance the money earning they do with opportunities to enjoy other activities that have less emphasis on earning and spending money. Take Action projects, for example, may not always require girls to spend a lot of money!

## Financial Management and Product Program Abilities by Grade Level

As with other Girl Scout activities, girls build their financial and sales savvy as they get older. Every girl will be different, but here you'll find some examples of the abilities and opportunities for progression of girls at each grade level.

### Girl Scout Daisies

- The group volunteer handles money, keeps financial records, and does all group budgeting.
- Parents/caregivers may decide they will contribute to the cost of activities.
- Girls can participate in Girl Scout Cookie Program activities and other council-sponsored product programs.
- Daisies are always paired with a volunteer when selling anything. Girls do the asking and deliver the product, but volunteers handle the money and keep the girls safe.
- Girls should be given the opportunity to practice identifying money and counting back change with an adult during each transaction.

### Girl Scout Brownies

- The group volunteer handles money, keeps financial records, and shares some of the group budgeting responsibilities.
- Girls discuss the cost of activities (supplies, fees, transportation, rentals, and so on) with guidance from their volunteer(s).
- Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product programs.
- Girls may decide to pay dues to contribute to the cost of activities.

## Girl Scout Juniors

- The group volunteer retains overall responsibility for long-term budgeting and record keeping, but shares or delegates all other financial responsibilities.
- Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product programs.
- Girls decide on group dues, if any. Dues are collected by girls and recorded by a group treasurer selected by the girls.
- Girls budget for the short-term needs of the group based on their plans and income from the group dues.
- Girls budget for more long-term activities, such as overnight trips, group camping, and special events.
- Girls budget for Take Action projects including the Girl Scout Bronze Award if they are pursuing it.

## Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors

- Girls estimate costs based on plans.
- Girls determine the amount of group dues, if any, and the scope of money-earning projects.
- Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product programs.
- Girls carry out budgeting, planning, and group money-earning programs.
- Girls budget for extended travel, Take Action projects, and leadership projects.
- Girls may be involved in seeking donations for Take Action projects with council approval.
- Girls keep their own financial records and give reports to parents and group volunteers.
- Girls budget for Take Action projects, including the Girl Scout Silver or Girl Scout Gold Awards, if they are pursuing them.

## Working with Sponsors and Other Organizations

Local sponsors can help councils power innovative programs for Girl Scouts. Community organizations, businesses, religious organizations, and individuals may be sponsors and may provide group meeting places, volunteer their time, offer in-kind donations, provide activity materials, or loan equipment. Encourage your girls to celebrate a sponsor's contribution to the troop by sending thank-you cards, inviting the sponsor to a meeting or ceremony, or working together on a Take Action project.

For information on working with a sponsor, consult the GSSEM Fund Development team, which can give you guidance on the availability of sponsors, recruiting guidelines, and any council policies or practices that must be followed. GSSEM may already have relationships with certain organizations or may know of some reasons not to collaborate with certain organizations.

Troops/groups must seek approval from the GSSEM Fund Development team when seeking sponsorship. Please use the [Solicitation & Sponsorship Approval for Troops, Groups, and Individual Girls form](#) for this purpose.

When collaborating with any other organization, keep these additional guidelines in mind:

**Fundraising for other organizations is not allowed.** Girl Scouts are not allowed to solicit money on behalf of another organization when identifying themselves as Girl Scouts by wearing a uniform, a sash or vest, official pins, and so on. This includes participating in a walkathon or telethon while in uniform. However, you and your group can support another Organization through Take Action projects. Girl Scouts as individuals are able to participate in whatever events they choose as long as they are not wearing anything that officially identifies them as Girl Scouts.

**Conducting political fundraisers is prohibited.** When in an official Girl Scout capacity or in any way identifying yourselves as Girl Scouts, your group may not participate, directly or indirectly, in any political campaign or work on behalf of or in opposition to a candidate for public office. Letter-writing campaigns are not allowed, nor is participating in a political rally, circulating a petition, or carrying a political banner.

**Be respectful when collaborating with religious organizations.** Girl Scout groups must respect the opinions and practices of religious partners, but no girl should be required to take part in any religious observance or practice of the sponsoring group.

**Do not sell or endorse commercial products.** A commercial product is any product sold at a retail location. Since 1939, girls and volunteers have not been allowed to endorse, provide a testimonial for, or sell such products.

# Engaging Girls

Creating the kind of environment in which girls are unafraid to try new things and to be who they want to be starts with you! By meeting your girls where they are, you'll help them develop the leadership skills they'll use today and in the future.

## Understanding Healthy Development in Girls

It sounds simple, but just being attentive to what girls are experiencing as they mature is a big help to them—and to you, as you guide and mentor them! You'll experience different joys and challenges with each Girl Scout level, but here are some guidelines for meeting girls' needs and abilities at different grade levels, you'll also find these listed in the adult guide of each leadership Journey.

Girl Scout Daisies	
At the Girl Scout Daisy level (kindergarten and first grades), girls...	<i>This means...</i>
Have loads of energy and need to run, walk, and play outside.	<i>They'll enjoy going on nature walks and outdoor scavenger hunts.</i>
Are great builders and budding artists, though they are still developing their fine motor skills.	<i>Encouraging them to express themselves and their creativity by making things with their hands. Girls may need assistance holding scissors, cutting in a straight line, and so on.</i>
Love to move and dance.	<i>They might especially enjoy marching like a penguin, dancing like a dolphin, or acting out how they might care for animals in the jungle.</i>
Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.	<i>Showing instead of telling, for example, about how animals are cared for. Plan visits to animal shelters, farms, or zoos; meet care providers, or make a creative bird feeder.</i>
Are only beginning to learn about basic number concepts, time, and money.	<i>You'll want to take opportunities to count out supplies together—and, perhaps, the legs on a caterpillar!</i>
Are just beginning to write and spell, and they don't always have the words for what they're thinking or feeling.	<i>That having girls draw a picture of something they are trying to communicate is easier and more meaningful for them.</i>
Know how to follow simple directions and respond well to recognition for doing so.	<i>Being specific and offering only one direction at a time. Acknowledge when girls have followed directions well to increase their motivation to listen and follow again.</i>

## Girl Scout Brownies

<b>At the Girl Scout Brownie level (second and third grades), girls...</b>	<b><i>This means...</i></b>
Have loads of energy and need to run, walk, and play outside.	<i>Taking your session activities outside whenever possible.</i>
Are social and enjoy working in groups.	<i>Allowing girls to team up in small or large groups for art projects and performances.</i>
Want to help others and appreciate being given individual responsibilities for a task.	<i>Letting girls lead, direct, and help out in activities whenever possible. Allow girls as a group to make decisions about individual roles and responsibilities.</i>
Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now.	<i>Doing more than just reading to girls about the Brownie Elf's adventures. Ask girls questions to gauge their understanding and allow them to role play their own pretend visit to a new country.</i>
Need clear directions and structure and like knowing what to expect.	<i>Offering only one direction at a time. Also, have girls create the schedule and flow of your get-togethers and share those at the start.</i>
Are becoming comfortable with basic number concepts, time, money, and distance.	<i>Offering support only when needed. Allow girls to set schedules for meetings or performances, count out money for a trip, and so on.</i>
Are continuing to develop their fine motor skills and can tie shoes, use basic tools, begin to sew, and the like.	<i>Encouraging girls to express themselves and their creativity by making things with their hands. Girls may need some assistance, however, holding scissors, threading needs, and so on.</i>
Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.	<i>Girls might like to create a play about welcoming a new girl to their school or to tell a story through dance or creative movement.</i>
Know how to follow rules, listen well, and appreciate recognition of a job well done.	<i>Acknowledging when the girls have listened or followed the directions well, which will increase their motivation to listen and follow again.</i>

## Girl Scout Juniors

At the Girl Scout Junior level (fourth and fifth grades), girls...	<b><i>This means...</i></b>
Want to make decisions and express their opinions.	<i>Whenever possible, allowing girls to make decisions and express their opinions through guided discussion and active reflection activities. Also, have girls set rules for listening to others' opinions and offering assistance in decision making.</i>
Are social and enjoy working in groups.	<i>Allowing girls to team up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities.</i>
Are aware of expectations and sensitive to the judgments of others.	<i>Although it's okay to have expectations, the expectation is not perfection! Share your own mistakes and what you learned from them and be sure to create an environment where girls can be comfortable sharing theirs.</i>
Are concerned about equity and fairness.	<i>Not shying away from discussing why rules are in place and having girls develop their own rules for their group.</i>
Are beginning to think abstractly and critically and are capable of flexible thought. Juniors can consider more than one perspective as well as the feelings and attitudes of another.	<i>Asking girls to explain why they made a decision, to share their visions of their roles in the future, and to challenge their own and others' perspectives.</i>
Have strong fine and gross motor skills and coordination.	<i>Engaging girls in moving their minds and their bodies. Allow girls to express themselves through the written word, choreography, and so on.</i>
Love to act in plays, create music, and dance.	<i>Girls might like to tell a story through playwriting, playing an instrument, or choreographing a dance.</i>
May be starting puberty, which means beginning breast development, skin changes, and weight changes. Some may be getting their periods.	<i>Being sensitive to girls' changing bodies, possible discomfort over these changes, and their desire for more information. Create an environment that acknowledges and celebrates this transition as healthy and normal for girls.</i>



## Girl Scout Cadettes

<b>At the Girl Scout Cadette level (sixth, seventh, and eighth grades), girls...</b>	<b><i>This means...</i></b>
<p>Are going through puberty, including changes in their skin, body shape, and weight. They're also starting their menstrual cycles and have occasional shifts in mood.</p>	<p><i>Being sensitive to the many changes Cadettes are undergoing and acknowledging that these changes are as normal as growing taller! Girls need time to adapt to their changing bodies, and their feelings about their bodies may not keep up. Reinforce that, as with everything else, people go through puberty in different ways and at different times.</i></p>
<p>Are starting to spend more time in peer groups than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.</p>	<p><i>That girls will enjoy teaming up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities as well as tackling relationship issues through both artistic endeavors and Take Action projects.</i></p>
<p>Can be very self-conscious, wanting to be like everyone else but fearing they are unique in their thoughts and feelings.</p>	<p><i>Encouraging girls to share, but only when they are ready. At this age, they may be more comfortable sharing a piece of artwork or a fictional story than their own words. Throughout the activities, highlight and discuss differences as positive, interesting, and beautiful.</i></p>
<p>Are beginning to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults at school and at home.</p>	<p><i>Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions and allowing them to experience “fun failure,” which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.</i></p>

## Girl Scout Seniors

At the Girl Scout Senior level (ninth and tenth grades), girls...	<i><b>This means...</b></i>
Are beginning to clarify their own values, consider alternative points of view on controversial issues, and see multiple aspects of a situation.	<i>Asking girls to explain the reasoning behind their decisions. Engage girls in role-play and performances, where others can watch and offer alternative solutions.</i>
Have strong problem-solving and critical thinking skills and are able to plan and reflect on their own learning experiences.	<i>Girls are more than able to go beyond community service to develop projects that will create sustainable solutions in their communities. Be sure to have girls plan and follow up on these experiences through written and discussion-based reflective activities.</i>
Spend more time in peer groups than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.	<i>That girls will enjoy teaming up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities. They'll also want to tackle relationship issues through both artistic endeavors and Take Action projects. Alter the makeup of groups with each activity so that girls interact with those they might not usually pair up with.</i>
Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality.	<i>Encouraging girls to express their individuality in their dress, creative expression, and thinking. Remind girls frequently that there isn't just one way to look, feel, think, or act. Assist girls in coming up with new ways of expressing their individuality.</i>
Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures—from home, school, peers, work, and other sources.	<i>Acknowledging girls' pressures and sharing how stress can limit health, creativity, and productivity. Help girls release stress through creative expression, movement, and more traditional stress-reduction techniques.</i>
Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults at school and at home.	<i>Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience "fun failure," which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.</i>

## Girl Scout Ambassadors

At the Girl Scout Ambassador level (eleventh and twelfth grades), girls...	<i><b>This means...</b></i>
Can see the complexity of situations and controversial issues—they understand that problems often have no clear solution and that varying points of view may each have merit.	<i>Inviting girls to develop stories as a group and then individually create endings that they later discuss and share.</i>
Have strong problem-solving and critical thinking skills and can adapt logical thinking to real-life situations. Ambassadors recognize and incorporate practical limitations to solutions.	<i>Girls are more than able to go beyond community service to develop projects that will create sustainable solutions in their communities. Be sure to have girls plan and follow up on these experiences through written and discussion-based reflective activities.</i>
Spend more time with peers than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.	<i>Girls will enjoy teaming up in small or large groups for art projects, performances, and written activities. They'll also want to tackle relationship issues through artistic endeavors and Take Action projects. Alter the makeup of groups with each activity so that girls interact with those they might not usually pair up with.</i>
Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality.	<i>Encouraging girls to express their individuality in their dress, creative expression, and thinking. Remind girls frequently that there isn't Just one way to look, feel, think, or act. Assist girls in coming up with new ways of expressing their individuality.</i>
Feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures—from home, school, peers, work, and other sources.	<i>Acknowledging girls' pressures and sharing how stress can limit health, creativity, and productivity. Help girls release stress through creative expression, movement, and more traditional stress-reduction techniques.</i>
Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults—at school and at home—and are looking to their futures.	<i>Trusting girls to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience "fun failure," which is learning from trying something new and making mistakes.</i>

# Creating a Safe Space for Girls

A safe space is where girls feel that they can be themselves, without explanation or judgment. As a volunteer, the environment you create is just as important as the activities girls do—it's the key to developing the sort of group that girls want to be part of! Cultivate a space where confidentiality is respected, and girls can express their true selves.

## **Recognize and Support Each Girl**

You're a role model and a mentor to your girls. Since you play an important role in their lives, they need to know that you consider each of them an important person too. They can weather a poor meeting place or an activity that flops, but they cannot endure being ignored or rejected.

- Give a shout-out when you see girls trying their best, not just when they've had a clear success.
- Emphasize the positive qualities that make each girl worthy and unique.
- Be generous with praise and stingy with rebuke.
- Help your girls find ways to show acceptance of and support for one another.

## **Promote Fairness**

Girls are sensitive to injustice. They forgive mistakes if they are sure you are trying to be fair. They look for fairness in how responsibilities are shared, in handling of disagreements, and in your responses to performance and accomplishment.

- When possible, ask the girls what they think is fair before decisions are made.
- Explain your reasoning and show why you did something.
- Be willing to apologize if needed.
- Try to see that responsibilities as well as the chances for feeling important are equally divided.
- Help girls explore and decide for themselves the fair ways of solving problems, carrying out activities, and responding to behavior and accomplishments.

## **Build Trust**

Girls need your belief in them and your support when they try new things. You'll also need to show them that you won't betray their confidence.

- Show girls you trust them to think for themselves and use their own judgment.
- Encourage them to make the important decisions in the group.
- Give them assistance in correcting their own mistakes.
- Support girls in trusting one another—let them see firsthand how trust can be built, lost, regained, and strengthened.

## **Inspire Open Communication**

Girls want someone who will listen to what they think, feel, and want to do. They like having someone they can talk to about the important things happening in their lives.

- Listen to the girls. Respond with words and actions.
- Speak your mind openly when you are happy or concerned about something and encourage girls to do the same.

- Leave the door open for girls to seek advice, share ideas and feelings, and propose plans or improvements.
- Help girls see how open communication can result in action, discovery, better understanding of self and others, and a more comfortable climate for fun and accomplishment.

## Managing Conflict

Conflicts and disagreements are an inevitable part of life, but if handled constructively, they show girls that they can overcome their differences, exercise diplomacy, and improve their communication and relationships. Respecting others and being a sister to every Girl Scout means that shouting, verbal abuse, or physical confrontations are never warranted and cannot be tolerated in the Girl Scout environment.

When a conflict arises between girls or a girl and a volunteer, get those involved to sit down together and **talk calmly in a nonjudgmental manner**, keeping in mind that each party may need some time—a few days or a week—to calm down before being able to do this. Talking in this way might feel uncomfortable and difficult now, but it lays the groundwork for working well together in the future. Whatever you do, do not spread your complaint around to others—that won't help the situation and causes only embarrassment and anger.

For tips on how to structure conversations that may be difficult for another party to hear, please view the *Difficult Conversations Short & Snappy* on [gsLearn](#). You'll also find conflict resolution activities in some of the Journeys, such as the Amaze Journey for Cadettes or the Mission Sisterhood Journey for Seniors.

If a conflict persists, be sure you explain the matter to your troop's volunteer support team. If the volunteer support team cannot resolve the issues satisfactorily (or if the problem involves a volunteer on the troop/group's volunteer support team), please contact your Member Support Specialist. If they are unable to resolve the issues satisfactorily, Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan will inform you of next steps. Please refer to the *Volunteer Relations Process Short & Snappy* on [gsLearn](#) for more information.

## Communicating Effectively with Girls of Any Age

Make sure your words and intentions create connection with the girls. Keep in mind how important the following attitudes are.

**Listen.** Listening to girls, as opposed to telling them what to think, feel, or do (no “you should”) is the first step in building a trusting relationship and helping them take ownership of their Girl Scout experience.

**Be Honest.** If you're not comfortable with a topic or activity, it's OK to say so. No one expects you to be an expert on every topic. Ask for alternatives or seek out volunteers with the required expertise. Owning up to mistakes—and apologizing for them—goes a long way with girls.

**Be Open to Real Issues.** Outside of Girl Scouts, girls may be dealing with issues like relationships, peer pressure, school, money, drugs, and other serious topics. When you don't know, listen. Also seek help from the GSSEM Member Support team if you need assistance or more information than you currently have.

**Show Respect.** Girls often say that their best experiences were the ones where adults treated them as equal partners. Being spoken to as young adults reinforces that their opinions matter and that they deserve respect.

**Offer Options.** Girls' needs and interests change and being flexible shows them that you respect them and their busy lives. Be ready with age-appropriate guidance and parameters no matter what the girls choose to do.

**Stay Current.** Show your girls that you're interested in their world by asking them about the TV shows and movies they like; the books, magazines, or blogs they read; the social media influencers they follow; and the music they listen to.

**Remember LUTE: Listen, Understand, Tolerate, and Empathize.** Try using the LUTE method to thoughtfully respond when a girl is upset, angry, or confused.

**Listen.** Hear her out, ask for details, and reflect back what you hear; try “What happened next?” or “What did she say?”

**Understand.** Show that you understand where she's coming from with comments such as, “So what I hear you saying is...” or “I understand why you're unhappy,” or “Your feelings are hurt; mine would be, too.”

**Tolerate.** You can tolerate the feelings that she just can't handle right now on her own. Let her know that you're there to listen and accept how she is feeling about the situation. Say something like: “Try talking to me about it. I'll listen,” or “I know you're mad—talking it out helps,” or “I can handle it—say whatever you want to.”

**Empathize.** Let her know you can imagine feeling what she's feeling with comments such as, “I'm sure that really hurts” or “I can imagine how painful this is for you.”

## Addressing the Needs of Older Girls

Let these simple tips guide you when working with teenage girls:

- Think of yourself as a “guide on the side”—a partner, a coach, or a mentor, not a “leader.”
- Ask girls what rules they need for safety and what group agreements they need to be a good team. When girls take the lead in establishing group rules, they're more likely to stick to them.
- Understand that girls need time to talk, unwind, and have fun together.
- Ask what they think and what they want to do.
- Encourage girls to speak their minds.
- Give everyone a voice in the group—understanding that “speaking up” may look different for each girl. For some girls, it might mean sharing their ideas in front of the entire group; for others it could mean submitting a written response or contributing as part of a group.
- Treat girls like partners.
- Don't repeat what's said in the group to anyone outside of it (unless necessary for a girl's safety). See “Report Concerns” below to understand the guard rails.

## When Sensitive Topics Come Up

It's an amazing feeling when your Girl Scouts put their trust in you—and when they do, they may come to you with some of the issues they are facing such as bullying, peer pressure, dating, athletic and

academic performance, and more. Some of these issues may be considered sensitive by families who may have opinions or input about how, and whether, Girl Scouts should cover these topics with their girls.

Girl Scouts welcomes and serves girls and families from a wide spectrum of faiths and cultures. When girls wish to participate in discussions or activities that could be considered sensitive—even for some—put the topic on hold until you have spoken with the parents and received guidance from GSSEM.

When Girl Scout activities involve sensitive issues, your role is that of a caring adult volunteer who can help girls acquire skills and knowledge in a supportive atmosphere, not someone who advocates a particular position.

Neither Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan nor Girl Scouts of the USA does not take a position or develop materials on issues relating to human sexuality, birth control, or abortion. We feel our role is to help girls develop self-confidence and good decision-making skills that will help them make wise choices in all areas of their lives. We believe parents and caregivers, along with schools and faith communities, are the primary sources of information on these topics.

Parents/caregivers make all decisions regarding their girl's participation in Girl Scout program that may be of a sensitive nature. As a volunteer leader, you must get written parental permission for any locally planned program offering that could be considered sensitive. Included on the permission form should be the topic of the activity, any specific content that might create controversy, and any action steps the girls will take when the activity is complete. Be sure to have a form for each girl and keep the forms on hand in case a problem arises. For activities not sponsored by Girl Scouts, find out in advance (from organizers or other volunteers who may be familiar with the content) what will be presented, and follow GSSEM's guidelines for obtaining written permission.

For more information on Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan's position on sensitive topics, please visit our [Religious & Social Issues page](#) on our website.

## **Report Concerns**

There may be times when you worry about the health and well-being of girls in your group. Alcohol, drugs, sex, bullying, abuse, depression, and eating disorders are some of the issues girls may encounter. You are on the frontlines of girls' lives which places you in a unique position to identify a situation in which a girl may need help. If you believe a girl is at risk of hurting herself or others, your role is to promptly bring that information to her parent/caregiver or the council so she can get the expert assistance she needs. Your concern about a girl's well-being and safety is taken seriously and GSSEM will guide you in addressing these concerns.

Here are a few signs that could indicate a girl needs expert help:

- Marked changes in behavior or personality (for example, unusual moodiness, aggressiveness, or sensitivity).
- Declining academic performance and/or inability to concentrate.
- Withdrawal from school, family activities, or friendships.
- Fatigue, apathy, or loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities.
- Sleep disturbances.
- Increased secretiveness.
- Deterioration in appearance and personal hygiene.

- Eating extremes, unexplained weight loss, distorted body image.
- Tendency toward perfectionism.
- Giving away prized possessions; preoccupation with the subject of death.
- Unexplained injuries such as bruises, burns, or fractures.
- Avoidance of eye contact or physical contact.
- Excessive fearfulness or distrust of adults.
- Abusive behavior toward other children, especially younger ones.

If you notice any of these signs in one of your girls, GSSEM recommends referring the girl to experts at school or in the community. Share your concern with the girl's family, if this is feasible, but only after seeking the girl's consent. Also, GSSEM has included information on how to talk to girls about eating disorders, anxiety, and depression in *Senior/Ambassador Grade Level Essentials* found on [gsLearn](#). GSSEM also offers Youth Mental Health First Aid training, which volunteers may register for via the [GSSEM event calendar](#).

Physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse of girls is forbidden. Please refer to the [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) for Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan's policies regarding physical or sexual abuse, youth violence and bullying, and child abuse.



# Engaging Families

You want your Girl Scouts to have fun, be inspired, take risks, and learn about themselves and the world—that's why you're a Girl Scout troop leader or troop volunteer! Parents and caregivers want the same thing for their girls but getting families to pitch in and play an active role in the troop while also enhancing the experience for their girl and themselves can be tricky for many volunteers. It doesn't have to be this way.

## **Kick the Year Off Right by Engaging Parents and Other Caregivers**

When families step up and play an active part in troop life, your troop can shine its brightest! Plus, girls feel a special sense of pride when their families take part and show interest in the things they are doing.

## **What Is a Parent and Caregiver Meeting?**

It's the first meeting you have to start each troop year—whether you are a new or returning troop, it's valuable for all troops.

**Why Hold a Meeting?** [Kicking off each year with a parent and caregiver meeting](#) sets the troop up for success. Outlining clear expectations, building a team, and engaging parents in the Girl Scout experience is a great way to start off on the right foot. When parents are involved, leaders have support, the troop has a plan, and girls' benefit! The meeting helps:

- Families understand what Girl Scouting can do for their girl.
- Families and leaders identify ways they will work as a team to support the troop.
- Families and leaders agree about what the troop pays for and what families pay for individually.
- You fill key troop positions—you never know which parent will make an awesome assistant leader or troop cookie manager.
- Families know how the troop will communicate things like upcoming events or schedule changes.
- Families learn about uniforms, books, and other important basics.

GSSEM recommends holding these meetings at least once per year, though a second meeting can be helpful to ensure families are still on the same page with troop leadership and to welcome new families that have joined the troop since the first meeting took place. For even more tips on working with troop families, check out [Girl Scouts' Tips for Troop Leaders](#) hub.

## **How to Keep Parents and Caregivers Engaged**

Make the Ask(s). The main reason people don't take action is because they were never asked to in the first place. That's why hearing one out of three Girl Scout parents say no one had communicated expectations around involvement with their girl's troop is so troubling. Parents may have many talents, but they're certainly not mind readers. If you're nervous about getting turned down, don't be. Sure, a few parents might be unable to lend a hand, but the helpers you do get will be worth their weight in gold. And just because someone wasn't available a month or two ago doesn't mean they won't be free to help now. Loop back, follow up, and ask again! Use the [Ways to Help The Troop form](#) to help you make the ask!

**Make Sense of “Why.”** Explain that not only does the whole troop benefit with extra help from parents and other caregivers, but also that girls feel a special sense of pride in seeing their own family member step up and take a leadership role. Getting involved can strengthen the caregiver/girl bond and is a meaningful way to show daughters that they are a priority in their parents’ lives.

**Make It Quick and Easy.** Everybody’s got a full plate these days, so instead of starting conversations with a list of tasks or responsibilities that parents and other caregivers could take on (which can be intimidating), ask how much time each week they might be able to dedicate to the troop, then go from there. For instance, if a troop mom or dad has 15 minutes each week to Spare, they could organize and manage the calendar for troop snacks and carpools. If a grandparent has one to two hours, they could assist with leading the troop through a specific badge on a topic they’re already comfortable with.

**Make Family Part of the Formula.** While Girl Scout programming is always focused on the girls themselves, it’s important and helpful to open up a few events to their families throughout the year. Inviting the whole crew to celebrate her accomplishments in Girl Scouting—whether at a holiday open house, a bridging ceremony, or a fun “reverse meeting” where girls take the role of leaders and guide the adults, including caregivers, through an activity—will help parents better understand the value of Girl Scouts and they’ll be more likely to invest their time and talents to the troop.

That said, there’s no need to wait for a special event to engage families in their girls’ Girl Scout life. Keep communication lines open throughout the year—whether it’s through your troop’s social media page, personal emails, or in-person chats—to keep parents in the loop on what the girls are doing and learning during each meeting and encourage them to let their daughters “be the experts” at home, explaining or teaching the new skills they’ve learned. You can get everyone in on the fun and keep Girl Scouts strong at home by sharing the family badge guides on the Volunteer Toolkit with parents and caregivers.

# Girl Scout Product Programs

Learning to think like an entrepreneur? Developing business smarts? Getting to know customers and building lasting relationships? There's so much more to that box of Thin Mints®.

Whether girls participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program or the Girl Scout Fall Product Program (or both!), everything your Girl Scouts learn prepares them to take on the world. Plus, Girl Scout Cookie proceeds stay in your local community to power amazing year-round experiences—experiences that broaden girls' worlds and spark their sense of wonder.

## Five Essential Skills

Girl Scouts as young as five develop five essential skills through the Girl Scout Cookie Program—skills that will help them be successful today and throughout their lives:

- **Goal Setting.** Girls learn to create a plan to reach their goals.
- **Decision Making.** Girls learn to make decisions on their own and as a team.
- **Money Management.** Girls learn to create a budget and handle money.
- **People Skills.** Girls find their voice and up their confidence through customer interactions that build relationships.
- **Business Ethics.** Girls learn to act responsibly and honestly, both in business and in life.

But building their business know-how isn't just tied to the cookies themselves! Girl Scouts at any level can continue honing their entrepreneurial skills by earning the [Cookie Business badges](#), [Cookie Entrepreneur Family Pin](#), and the [Financial Literacy badges](#) year over year.

Before your cookie bosses open shop, be sure to check out these [helpful troop leader resources](#) that will empower you to:

- Manage your troop's funds.
- Learn how girls participate in money earning.
- Discover how your troop can reach its financial goals.
- Plan activities to help her earn cookie pins and badges
- Understand just how much your girls are capable of by grade level and [how their entrepreneurial skills progress](#).

## Girl Scout Cookie History

What started with Girl Scouts selling home-baked cookies to raise money grew into enlisting professional bakers in 1936 to handle the growing demand—and the rest is history. [Explore Girl Scout Cookie History](#) to find out how cookies have helped build generations of female entrepreneurs and leaders who make the world a better place.

## Where Cookie Proceeds Go

After paying for the cost of cookies and materials, [Girl Scout Cookie proceeds stay local](#) and help councils provide Girl Scout programs in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), the outdoors, life skills, entrepreneurship, and more—in camps, through leadership training, and multiple other ways. A portion of the proceeds is directly managed by girls, and it's up to them to decide how to invest their troop's share of the earnings.

GSSEM provides a breakdown of how cookie program proceeds support Girl Scout activities locally in the Cookie Program’s Troop Manager Guide. Please share this information with girls and their families so everyone understands that product program sales make it possible for your Girl Scout council to serve girls.

Troop members share in the proceeds from a successful product program; proceeds are not distributed to individual girl members. Girls, however, may be eligible for rewards and credits that they put toward council-sponsored camps, programs, and Girl Scout swag. The council plan for rewards applies equally to all girls participating in the product program activity. Visit [gssem.org/cookies](https://gssem.org/cookies) for more information about individual rewards and troop proceeds locally.

The [Girl Scout Blue Book of Basic Documents](#) specifies that:

*“All money and other assets, including property, that are raised, earned, or otherwise received in the name of and for the benefit of Girl Scouting must be held and authorized by a Girl Scout council or Girl Scouts of the USA. Such money and other assets must be used for the purposes of Girl Scouting.”*

“Ownership of Assets,” *Blue Book of Basic Documents*

Making s’mores under the stars, creating a lasting impact in your community, or ordering supplies for an eye-opening STEM project—there are limitless ways to put troop proceeds toward dynamic Girl Scout experiences! There are a few things, however, that don’t qualify for “purposes of Girl Scouting,” for instance, using troop proceeds to purchase memberships in or uniforms for another organization. We encourage all councils to remind their volunteers of this policy in order to protect the all-girl environment and to avoid diversion of Girl Scout funds.

## **GSSEM’s Role**

When you are set up for success, you are better able to set up your girls for success! That’s why every year, GSSEM provides trainings, guidelines, and procedures for conducting the Girl Scout Cookie Program and fall product program and determines how the proceeds and product rewards system will be managed. Check [gssem.org/cookies](https://gssem.org/cookies) to find the answers you need as well as local trainings and resources.

Each council also selects the vendors of its choice to provide the products for their product programs. Two commercial bakers are licensed by Girl Scouts of the USA to produce Girl Scout Cookies: [Little Brownie Bakers](#) and [ABC Bakers](#). You can also [Meet the Cookies](#) and find additional info on cookie varieties, including nutritional details.

Councils also work with vendors to offer magazine subscriptions, nut and candy products, and more for the fall product program. These companies are [Ashdon Farms](#), [Trophy Nut](#), and [M2 Media Group](#). Each provides online tools and activities for girls to download. Magazine selection and sales may take place online—check with the GSSEM Product Program team for more details.

## **Your Role**

You play an exciting role in giving your Girl Scouts opportunities to practice the five skills as they learn how to think like entrepreneurs. Some of the things you’ll do include:

- Get girls excited about the opportunities to support the troop (but allowing their participation to be voluntary).

- Support both [competitive and apprehensive cookie bosses](#), helping all your girls set meaningful goals for themselves.
- [Fostering partnerships with each Girl Scout's family](#) to ensure cookie season success, whatever that may look like for her, will help you build a positive partnership with girls and families, and the [Cookie Entrepreneur Family pin](#) is designed to help families support girls' growth at home.

Not only can girls sell individually, both in-person and using the online tools provided by each vendor, they can also participate in group booth sales during product programs. Your local council has additional guidance and processes to market and ensure every booth is in a safe and appropriate location.

As your Girl Scouts grow, your role will evolve from a hands-on one to providing oversight and support where needed. No matter their ages, remember that volunteers and parents/caregivers do not sell the product. Your role is to encourage your girls and let their entrepreneurial spirit soar. Learning by doing is exactly how your girls develop the business savvy and communication skills that will [empower them to reach any goals they set for themselves](#).

Another critical task for each troop is to establish a clear accounting system for all proceeds and product during the programs. It's up to you to make sure that money is spent wisely, that excellent records are kept (remember to keep copies of all receipts in a binder or folder), and that all product is tracked. For older girls, your job is to oversee their work as they learn to keep impeccable records. Be sure to attend product program orientation or training so you are aware of the systems and helpful tools available.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program and the fall product program can be exhilarating and busy times during the troop year, but you're never alone in your efforts! You can reach out to your service unit product program manager when you're feeling stuck, or you can [build a cookie team](#) to provide the support your troop needs. GSSEM also offers training opportunities for both product programs as well as supplementary Cookie Café webinars which provide a deep-dive into Cookie Program topics. Please check the [GSSEM event calendar](#) for live product program training dates.

## Product Program Safety

Safety is the top priority while selling Girl Scout Cookies and other products. Volunteers, families, and girls should be familiar with and practice the safety guidelines outlined in local program resources as well as those available in the [troop leader resources](#) section of [girlscoutcookies.org](http://girlscoutcookies.org) and in [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#).

## Selling Cookies Online

Will your troop use the Digital Cookie® platform to manage its cookie business? Check the specific guidelines provided by each cookie vendor before participating. Before girls begin selling online, they should partner with their troop leader and families to learn how to safely run their business online.

A few more online safety practices to keep in mind:

- The Girl Scout Cookie Program is a girl-led program; a Girl Scout should always lead online marketing and sales efforts, with the supervision of her parent or caregiver.
- Girl Scouts engaging in online sales and marketing must review and apply the [Digital Marketing Tips for Cookie Entrepreneurs and Their Families](#).

- Girls, volunteers and parents must review and adhere to the [Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge](#), the [Digital Cookie Pledge](#), the [Supplemental Safety Tips for Online Marketing](#), and Girl Scouts' *Safety Activity Checkpoints* for Computer and Internet Use and Cookie and Product Sales (with the exception that they may share beyond friends and family).
- Girl sales links should never be posted to resale sites (Craigslist, eBay, Facebook Marketplace etc.).
- Girls must adhere to all terms and conditions on the Digital Cookie platform. For copies of terms and conditions, please contact GSUSA.
- Girl Scouts of the USA reserves the right to remove or disable the link for any reason including violation of guidance, inventory fulfillment issues, safety issues, or if sales and marketing activity goes viral and otherwise creates unanticipated disruption.

Additionally, families, girls, and volunteers should contact and collaborate with their councils and Girl Scouts of the USA in advance on any national news media opportunities tied to girls online marketing and sales efforts.

### **The Buddy System**

Using the buddy system, the troop is divided into teams of two. Each Girl Scout is responsible for staying with her buddy at all times, warning her buddy of danger, giving her buddy immediate assistance if safe to do so, and seeking help if needed. Girls are encouraged to stay near the group or buddy with another team of two so that in the event someone is injured, one person cares for the patient while two others seek help.

### **Handling Product Complaints**

Girl Scout Cookies are well loved and for good reason—it has always been the practice of Girl Scout councils and the bakers to guarantee customer satisfaction with their delicious cookies. If a customer is not satisfied with the quality of their cookies for some reason, they can contact the baker via the phone number printed on the side of the cookie package. Troops should notify the GSSEM Product Program team if they are aware of any customer dissatisfaction.

### **Recognizing Cookie Sellers in the Media**

Focusing on entrepreneurial outcomes has always been the focus of the Girl Scout Cookie Program. The cookie program has never been about and does not focus on individual girls' sales results.

- There are many impressive cookie bosses throughout the United States, and the Girl Scout organization will continue to recognize dynamic cookie entrepreneurs for various achievements tied to the Girl Scout Cookie Program and through their participation in Girl Scouts.
- Girl Scouts of the USA does not currently track the top seller(s) of Girl Scout Cookies on a national level and does not identify a specific Girl Scout as the number one or “record-breaking” national cookie seller.
- Girl Scout councils should not reference such girls as “top sellers” in the media. Doing so detracts from the essence of the Girl Scout Cookie Program, which is based on offering girls important experiences in entrepreneurship, business, and finance from a young age as well as providing girls and local Girl Scout councils with the funds necessary to power amazing experiences and opportunities for Girl Scouts year-round.

## Insurance Overview

### **Basic Supplemental Accident Insurance for Girl Scout Members through Mutual of Omaha (paid for by GSUSA)**

Every registered girl and adult Girl Scout member enjoys the benefit of being automatically covered under GSUSA's basic supplemental accident insurance through Mutual of Omaha. This insurance provides up to a specified maximum for medical expenses incurred as a result of an accident while a member is participating in an approved, supervised Girl Scout activity, after the individual's primary health insurance pays out. The entire premium cost for this protection is borne by Girl Scouts of the USA.

The basic plan is effective during the regular program year (October 1 to September 30). Up to 14 months of insurance coverage is provided for new members who register in the month of August. This is one reason that all adults and girls benefit by being registered members. Non-registered parents, tagalongs (brothers, sisters, friends), and other persons are not covered under this basic accident insurance coverage.

This basic insurance coverage is not intended to diminish the need for or replace family health insurance. This Mutual of Omaha insurance is considered supplemental to the family's insurance coverage. When \$140 in benefits has been paid for covered accident medical or dental expense, any subsequent benefits will be payable only for expenses incurred that aren't compensable under another insurance policy. If there is no family insurance or healthcare program, a specified maximum of medical benefits is available.

- **PLAN 1 (BASIC ACCIDENT INSURANCE):** Coverage is automatically provided to girls and adults who register as Girl Scout members. The basic plan covers every registered Girl Scout and Adult Member for any approved, supervised activity of the Girl Scouts, except activities lasting more than two (2) consecutive nights (a third night is covered if the event is over an official federal holiday). [This plan is secondary insurance coverage].

### **Purchasing Additional Accident &/or Sickness Insurance (paid for by troop/group)**

- **PLAN 2 (ACCIDENT INSURANCE):** This is the same type of coverage as Basic Insurance but designed specifically for: 1) events/activities lasting more than two (2) nights (or more than three nights if over an official federal holiday) or 2) non-Girl Scout members for any approved, supervised activity of the Girl Scouts. If covering non-members for a program when the exact numbers are not available, use a reasonable estimate to determine the number of non-member participants. [This plan is secondary insurance coverage. ]
- **PLAN 3E (ACCIDENT AND SICKNESS INSURANCE):** This is the same coverage as Insurance Plan 2, but also includes sickness coverage and is designed for the same type of events as Plan 2. [This plan is secondary insurance coverage.]
- **PLAN 3P (ACCIDENT AND SICKNESS INSURANCE):** This is the same accident and sickness coverage as Plan 3E, but is not subject to the "non-duplication provision". Plan 3P is for travel within the United States. This plan is primary insurance coverage.
- **PLAN 3PI (INTERNATIONAL ACCIDENT AND SICKNESS INSURANCE, REQUIRED FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL):** This plan includes essentially the same coverage found in Plan 3P, but with a Travel Assistance Services, "safety net" feature added for International travel purposes. Should a medical or other emergency occur while abroad, or if there are concerns before making

a trip abroad, the Council staff or group leader is a free telephone call away from mobilizing AXA Assistance resources to provide their “hands-on” assistance as detailed in the Description of Coverage. This plan is primary insurance coverage is not subject to the “non-duplication provision”.

*All above plans for additional insurance must be purchased for the entire period of the event and for 100% of the participants.* When figuring cost, remember to count ALL days of the event, including the departure and return days.

### **How to Purchase Additional Accident &/or Sickness Insurance:**

Complete the Additional Insurance Request - Mutual of Omaha form. Please note that the form is to be completed and submitted to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan, not to Mutual of Omaha. At least two weeks prior to the trip/activity insurance is being purchased for, please send check payable to *United of Omaha Life Insurance Company* and form to:

Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan  
Attention: Office Manager  
1333 Brewery Park Blvd, Suite 500  
Detroit, MI 48207

### **Mutual of Omaha-Optional Accident &/or Sickness Insurance Plans Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):**

- Q. What is the difference between Mutual of Omaha Plans 1 and 2 and Plans 3E and 3P?  
A. Plans 1 and 2 provide Accident only coverage. Plans 3E and 3P include both Accident and Sickness coverage.
- Q. If an event lasts more than two overnights, will the event be covered under Plan 1?  
A. No. The entire event is excluded from Plan 1, including travel to and from the event. Additional insurance would need to be arranged from Mutual of Omaha to cover the entire period of the event for all participants.
- Q. Must Plan 2 be purchased for Members and nonmembers participating in single day Community Events or Field Trips?  
A. It is NOT required to purchase additional insurance for single day Community Events or field trips. It is optional to purchase Plan 2-Accident Insurance for nonmembers.
- Q. Is there a need to provide coverage for Members under Plan 2?  
A. Yes, for events/activities lasting more than two (2) nights (or more than three nights if over an official federal holiday). Plan 2 also covers non-Girl Scout members for any approved, supervised activity of the Girl Scouts. If covering non-members for a program when the exact numbers are not available, use a reasonable estimate to determine the number of non-member participants.
- Q. What is meant by an approved, supervised Girl Scout activity?  
A. It is an activity carried out by Members of the Girl Scout Movement, under supervision of adults, in keeping with the Girl Scout Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- Q. If an event begins Friday after school and ends Sunday afternoon, does this meet the definition of a two-night event?  
A. Yes, it is covered under Plan 1.



- Q. Are program activities, such as cookie sales, covered under Plan 1?
- A. Yes, if they are approved and supervised.
- Q. Is coverage provided under Plan 1 if Members of our troop travel outside the United States on a Girl Scout project or activity?
- A. Yes, only if the trip lasts less than two consecutive nights (three if one of the official federal holiday). For example, a simple day trip to Ontario is covered. Other trips outside the USA would usually involve more than two consecutive nights, therefore, Additional Accident and Sickness Insurance is needed. Plan 3PI is recommended for International Travel, although 3E and 3P are available.
- Q. Would coverage be provided under Plan 1 for medical expenses of a Member who became ill during an approved activity?
- A. No. Sickness is not covered; only medical expenses arising out of an accident during an approved, supervised activity is covered. Sickness Insurance, along with Accident Insurance, is only provided for events lasting more than two consecutive nights and only available under one of the Plan 3 options (i.e., Plans 3E, 3P, 3PI).
- Q. Are nonregistered adults or other persons assisting the Leader covered?
- A. Only registered girl and adult members are covered by the Mutual of Omaha basic accident insurance as a benefit of membership. The only coverage available to non-registered girls and adults while they are performing duties related to Girl Scouts and during a supervised activity in keeping with the Girl Scout Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints is Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan's general liability insurance.
- Q. Are "Tagalongs" (brothers, sisters, friends) covered under Plan 1?
- A. No. If a Tagalong is a registered Member of a different troop, but is not of the proper age for the activity and is not participating as a service project, there is no coverage. For example, a registered Daisy tagging along with the parent who is leading a Cadette troop has no accident coverage. Conversely, a Cadette assisting at a Daisy meeting does have coverage.
- Q. What are typical events for which Plan 2 is used?
- A. Community events, recruitment events, family events, programs held in conjunction with other organizations where Girl Scouts is the primary sponsor are just a few events which can be covered under Plan 2.
- Q. What are examples of events that could last more than two nights and could be covered by Plan 3E or Plan 3P?
- A. GSUSA Destinations Program, and all sorts of trips and travel, including bike, canoe, white water rafting, etc. are just a few examples that may be covered.
- Q. When counting the number of days of an activity/event on the application form, do you include the beginning day and ending day of the event?
- A. Yes. Since coverage for travel directly to and from an activity/event is covered, all days, including days traveled, should be included, for example, a group leaves home on Friday afternoon and returns home on Tuesday morning. Coverage must be arranged for five calendar days.

## **Automobile Insurance**

It is the volunteer's responsibility to arrange private auto insurance protection appropriate for their own circumstances. Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan will not reimburse for the cost of physical damage, deductibles or liability claims. Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan strongly recommends, but does not require, that vehicle owners carry collision and comprehensive coverage. Under Michigan no-fault insurance law, if an accident should occur with an allegation of negligence, the car owner's auto liability insurance provides coverage first, and then if applicable, Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan's general liability insurance will take effect.

## **General Liability Insurance (paid for by Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan)**

Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan general liability insurance is different and separate from the various types of supplemental accident and health insurance coverage available through Mutual of Omaha.

General Liability coverage is intended to provide coverage in response to allegations of negligence or liability on the part of Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan, its employees, volunteers, officers or directors resulting in injury to people or damage to someone else's property. Coverage also extends to allegations of libel, slander, or false arrest.

Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan liability insurance covers all volunteers whether or not they are registered adult Girl Scout members as long as they are performing duties related to Girl Scouts and during a supervised activity in keeping with the Girl Scout Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints. The Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints are common sense rules that everyone should follow.

## Additional Resources and Support

So how are you feeling? Excited? Anxious? Not quite sure yet? That's ok, it's normal. We know that volunteering isn't always easy, especially when you're new, so we can't thank you enough for jumping in to be the mentor and role model she needs! Guiding your Girl Scouts—even if you're still figuring things out—is nothing short of amazing!

The important thing to remember is, you're not alone. We are in this with you, ready to help and support you at all times! Thanks again! It's going to be a great Girl Scout year!

### Contact GSSEM

**Phone:** 800-482-6734

**Email:** [customercare@gssem.org](mailto:customercare@gssem.org)

### GSSEM Service Centers

#### Clinton Township Service Center

42800 Garfield Rd  
Clinton Twp. MI 48038

#### Port Huron Service Center

Birchwood Mall  
4350 24th Ave, Space 518  
Fort Gratiot, MI 48059

#### Detroit Service Center

1333 Brewery Park Blvd, Suite 500  
Detroit, MI 48207

#### Southgate Service Center

1 Heritage Place, Ste 130  
Southgate, MI 48195

#### Flint Service Center

111 E. Court St, Suite D  
Flint, MI 48502

#### White Lake Service Center & Museum

8545 Highland Rd  
White Lake, MI 48386

### GSSEM Campgrounds

#### Camp Hawthorn Hollow

1046 Mayer Rd  
Columbus, MI 48063

#### Camp Playfair

3135 Lakeshore Rd  
Lexington, MI 48450