



Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan

Returning to In-Person Troop Meetings and Activities

This guidance is being provided as of September 2020 (when a vaccine has not been made readily available). Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan may modify this guidance as circumstances change. The recommendation is that troops continue meeting virtually. In the event that meeting virtually is not an option, please adhere to all guidelines.

COVID-19 is an extremely contagious virus that spreads easily in the community

Take all reasonable precautions to limit potential exposure for girls, volunteers, and families. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to change as infection rates rise and fall in different areas. Continue to follow local and national directives. Discuss plans with families. Use these questions and reminders to help decide how and when to return to troop activities.

Troop Meeting Space

Outdoor spaces where social distancing can be maintained are strongly recommended for meetings. Get advance permission from the property owner or the jurisdiction that provides the location.

For meetings held at public facilities, contact the facility ahead of time and ask:

1. Is the space cleaned, and touch surfaces (i.e., tabletops, light switches, chairs, etc.) sanitized, at least daily?
2. Who else uses the space (how often, what size is the group)? Is the space cleaned between groups?
3. What type of faucets / soap dispensers are available in the restroom (sensory or manual)?

Then, consider whether you can supplement any practices that are less than ideal. For example, if you will arrive after another user group, plan to bring sanitizing wipes to get the space ready for your troop. Another example: if faucets are manual, take some time to show girls how to shut them off with a paper towel. Use paper towels for doorknobs whenever possible. Meetings may not be held in fitness centers or gyms, where a greater risk for contracting the virus may exist. Also, schools or churches may not permit outside groups on premises, so always check and confirm ahead of time.

Troop Meetings in the home

If troop or groups decide to meet in private residences, they **MUST** follow all guidelines and safety protocols including the latest [CDC](#) and [State of Michigan](#) guidelines for indoor and outdoor gatherings.

Guidelines

- Current Guidelines: Face masks/coverings **MUST** be worn if indoor meeting. Outdoor meeting Face masks/coverings not mandatory but must maintain 6 feet distance between people.
- Make hand sanitizer available for all persons to use while at the meeting
- Up to 10 people are allowed at indoor meetings and up to 100 outdoors.
- Two unrelated, registered, criminally background checked GSSEM volunteers must be present at all times when working with girls, and at least one of those volunteers must be female.
- Girls should remain in the designated meeting space area and away from restricted areas inside the residence and on the exterior grounds.
- Home should have reasonable accommodations for girls and adults with disabilities.

- Smoking or drinking alcoholic beverages by all persons present in the meeting space or residence in the presence of girls is prohibited.
- Pets are in a safe and secure location completely separate from girls while girls are present in home.
- Girls should be released only to parents, guardians, or an approved adult.

Physical Hazards

- The following should be kept out of reach and properly stored to prevent children from having access to them:
 - Over-the-counter and prescription medications
 - Alcohol
 - Weapons (must be locked away)
 - Pool chemicals

Exterior Grounds

- Access to meeting space must be made accessible to girls and adults with disabilities
- A safe unloading zone and/or sufficient parking for multiple vehicles
- Lighting systems should illuminate entrances, walkways, and parking.
- Sidewalks and exterior stairs should be clear of hazards.
- If the property has a pool, access should be locked so that girls cannot enter the area.

Use of backyard equipment (i.e., backyard pools, diving boards, trampolines, zip lines) is not allowed, as some equipment may require certified watchers, additional council approval, or be on the list of unapproved activities. See the Safety Activity Checkpoints and Volunteer Essentials for further information on www.gssem.org.

Troop Meeting Size

The current suggested maximum for indoor meetings is ten people (eight girls and two unrelated adult volunteers). Outdoor gatherings are up to 50 people (with social distancing). However, check your local restrictions for small gatherings. If more restrictive, follow the local restriction. Restrictions vary greatly from state to state, county to county, and even from town to town--and frequently change. If a state allows more than ten to gather, utilize all social distancing practices and follow all preventative guidance (such as face coverings).

If you have a large troop, stay connected while you wait for a safe time for everyone to gather.

Some ideas:

- Host virtual troop meetings (see below).
- Gather up in smaller groups—such as age-level groups, patrols, or groups of girls with a particular badge they'd like to work on.

Transportation

Individual parents drop off and pick up their own girls from meetings. Carpooling and public transportation should be avoided, where possible, to maintain social distancing.

Virtual meetings

Meeting options may need to be flexible based on the fluid nature of COVID-19 risk. Troops that are able to run online meetings as needed (or wanted) should do so. GSUSA recommends maintaining a virtual to in-person ratio of at least 20/80, which means to maintain virtual troop meetings at least 20% of the time to keep tech skills and virtual meeting habits fresh. Use the [Safety Activity Checkpoints for Virtual Meetings](#), to guide your meeting plans.

Day trips and activities

In conjunction with Safety Activity Checkpoints, follow the same guidance as Troop Meetings and Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation guidance in this document. Call ahead to the facility or vendor to confirm that they are following CDC and state health department guidelines. If activity or sporting equipment is being provided, ask the provider if they wipe down equipment in between uses, similar to equipment at the gym. Make whatever appropriate accommodations that are necessary. For example, bring extra sanitizer if none will be provided for public use at the activity location.

Travel and overnight stays

Email travel@gsssem.org for approval before planning overnight stays and follow the guidance in Safety Activity checkpoints.

Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation

Follow the resources developed by credible public health sources such as CDC or your local public health department. Share these with girls and volunteers and ensure that they are practiced during meetings and activities. Place signs in the meeting or activity space to remind girls and volunteers to engage in everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Signs should include:

- Stay home if you are sick.
- Cough and sneeze into a tissue, throw the tissue in the trash, and wash or sanitize your hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Wash hands if you do touch.

Personal contact

Hugs, handshakes, “high-fives,” and even activities like the friendship circle or squeeze can transmit COVID-19 from person to person. Refrain from these gestures for the time being. Create a safe way for girls and volunteers to greet and end meetings instead (like tapping elbows).

Note: Use culturally appropriate messages, materials, and resources.

First Aid Supplies

Troop first aid supplies should include COVID-19 prevention items including hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol), tissues, disposable facemasks, and disinfectants. Trash baskets or bags should be supplied for meeting and activity spaces, if not already available. Make sure that the trash baskets (or bags) are easily accessible for girls. Disposable or no-contact thermometers may be added to supplies if available and not cost prohibitive, however, parents should be checking temperatures and allowing their girl(s) to join group activities only when temperatures are normal.

First Aid / CPR Training

Keep skills up-to-date for any emergency. Talk to your council about alternative methods of training that may be available during this time.

Disinfectants and Disinfecting

Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that are frequently touched (i.e., table tops, markers, scissors, etc.). Use a household cleaner, or see the EPA’s list of effective cleaners approved for use against COVID-19. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).

Household bleach is effective against COVID-19 for up to 24 hours when properly diluted. Check that the bleach is not expired and determine if it can be used on a given surface. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.

To prepare a bleach solution, mix:

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

See the CDC's website for more on cleaning and disinfecting community facilities.

Face Coverings

State of Michigan mandates everyone **MUST** wear a mask or face covering in public spaces. Volunteers should remind girls that Girl Scouts wear face coverings (masks) not only to protect themselves but to protect others. Face coverings are a civic responsibility and a sign of caring for the community.

Girls can bring their own face coverings. Have disposable masks on hand for those who need them.

Volunteers can teach girls how to handle their face coverings so that the coverings are effective. Some girls or volunteers may not be able to wear masks, due to medical conditions. If this is the case, please keep exposure to girls and adults minimal. Do not ask for any medical information it is protected by HIPPA Law.

Reporting and communicating a positive COVID 19 test

In the event of a COVID-19 positive test result, do **NOT** contact the parents or troop members. Promptly contact your Troop Support Specialist in this situation. Your Troop Support Specialist and **NOT** volunteers, will be responsible for:

- Confirming and tracing the positive tester,
- Contacting the parents of anyone who may have been exposed (or other volunteers),
- Notifying a facility or homeowner where a troop has met, and
- Alerting the state department of health.

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