

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

*Edition date: 6/3/2020*

This guidance is being provided as of the Edition Date above (when a vaccine has not been made readily available). Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania may modify this guidance, from time to time as circumstances change. This document is intended to help volunteers determine if they are prepared to hold in person activities with their troop and elements to consider in planning those activities.

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. There may be regional differences or developments since this guidance was published. Continue to follow [local](#) and [national](#) directives. Discuss plans with families.

During this time, the [COVID-19 Permission Form](#) is replacing the Parent Permission Form. Please have this form completed by caregivers when you return to in-person meetings or activities.

**Use these questions and reminders to help decide how and when to return to troop activities.**

**Troop Meeting Space.** At this time, troops should keep activities within their own county. 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:

- Is the space cleaned, and touch surfaces (i.e., tabletops, light switches, chairs, etc.) sanitized, at least daily?
- Who else uses the space (how often, what size is the group)? Is the space cleaned between groups?
- 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 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. Schools or churches may not permit outside groups on premises, so always check and confirm ahead of time.

**Troop Meeting Size.** The current suggested maximum per GSUSA is ten people (eight girls and two unrelated adult volunteers). If more restrictive, follow the local restriction. Restrictions vary greatly from state to state, county to county, and even from facility to facility--and frequently change. [Check your local restrictions](#) for small gatherings. If a location 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. Large troops are wonderful, so stay together! 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. Each group must maintain volunteer to girl ratio.

**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 can run online meetings as needed (or wanted) should do so. GSUSA recommends continuing occasional virtual meetings to keep tech skills and virtual meeting habits fresh. Virtual meetings are also a great alternative for inclement weather. Use the Safety Activity Checkpoints for Virtual Meetings, to guide your meeting plans: [Virtual Troop Meetings](#).

Other helpful resources can be found [here](#)

**Day trips and activities.** At this time, troops should keep activities within their own county. In conjunction with Safety Activity Checkpoints, follow the same guidance as the Troop Meetings and Hygiene and the 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.** Overnight trips are not permitted until after the home state is successfully past Phase 3 of its re-opening process. The timeframes will vary from state to state and even from county to county in some cases. At this time, GSWPA is not approving troop overnight activities. Additional guidance will be provided when this restriction is lifted.

**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.
- Parents/guardians should be reminded to make sure temperatures are taken prior to group interaction to confirm the individual is not running a fever and temperature is a

normal 98.6 degrees Members with fever or temperature higher than 98.6 should skip the in-person gathering until their temperature is normal.

**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).

**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 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.). Cleaning and disinfecting should be done by adults and older girls.

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 (1/3<sup>rd</sup> 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.** 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 such as asthma. Contact your council for guidance on how best to handle these exceptional circumstances as they arise.