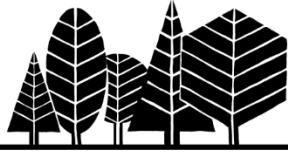


# Service Unit Day Camp Manual 2026

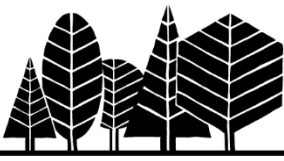




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# Introduction

It's time to get ready for day camp! Whether you're brand new to running day camp or if you're a seasoned veteran, it's important to understand how to run these programs, as well as the importance of outdoor experiences for girls.

Camp provides opportunities for girls to try new things, challenge themselves, and build relationships. Not to mention that camp memories are some of our fondest and longest-lasting memories of Girl Scouts. Camp is a valuable part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. Through planning and participating in camp experiences, such as day camp, campers can:

- make friends they won't make anywhere else.
- develop important skills, like self-confidence, happiness, inclusivity, and kindness.
- be able to be their true and best self.
- learn to use freedom wisely.
- be in an environment where people aren't constantly implying an "or else" to behaviors, perhaps for the first time ever.
- be exposed to what the world could be like if everyone were working to accept others.
- be a part of something important.
- have a sense of wonder and awe re-ignited.
- be in the 'flow' of life for a longer period of time than anywhere else in their life.
- feel seen and loved, perhaps for the first time.
- see a great example of the role adults and authority figures in general can play in the lives of children.



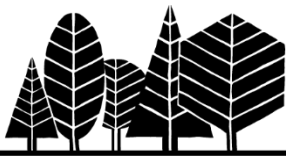
So what do you have to do with that? Well, no camper is going to even come close to achieving these things without the amazing individuals we call "camp staff." Every action we take, every decision we make, all this should lead campers towards these goals. Additionally, by applying the processes of girl-led planning, learning by doing, and cooperative learning to activities, you're guaranteeing that girls will have a meaningful, relevant, and fun experience.

**Girl-led:** Girls play an active role in determining what, where, when, how, and why of their activities.

**Learning by doing:** Rather than listening to someone tell them what to do or how to do it, campers get in there and do it themselves. They explore their own questions, gain new skills, share ideas, and take time to reflect.

**Cooperative learning:** The group works together toward shared goals in an atmosphere of respect and collaboration.

This manual will guide you through key parts of day camp planning, from selecting a site to planning activities to important safety considerations to ensure everyone has a safe and enjoyable camp experience.



## Planning

When beginning the process of planning a day camp, there are a variety of logistics to consider, specifically the site where you plan to hold camp, managing the finances, and promoting the camp. When organizing any of these aspects, it's important to make sure that what you're planning is both feasible for your group and follows council and Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) procedures.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health annually registers organized camps in Pennsylvania pursuant to Act 497 of 1959, as amended, 35 P.S. §§ 3001-3004. An organized camp is defined by law as a program and facilities established for the primary purpose of providing an outdoor group living experience for children, youth, and adults with social, recreational, and educational objectives, and which is operated and used for five or more consecutive days during one or more seasons of the year. The annual registration fee shall be ten dollars (\$10).

Day camps that are five consecutive days or more will need to register with the PA Department of Health. You may do this on your own, or a staff member can assist you.

For more information, please visit:

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/facilities/Pages/Organized-Camps.aspx>

## Review Process

In order to have your day camp reviewed, please complete the *Service Unit Day Camp Director Responsibility Form* online by May 1. This form gives us the information in the case of an emergency or if a local girl is interested in day camps near her. This form also acknowledges that you, as the Day Camp Director, understand your responsibilities for the safety and well-being of girls and volunteers at your camp.

<https://gswpa.wufoo.com/forms/s157kgy11ycqw8u/>

For the safety of our girls, all individuals volunteering with Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania are required to complete several background checks, including Pennsylvania clearances.

If they are not already screened and approved volunteers, our volunteer screening department will reach out to them to begin this process. Please note that clearances from the state and FBI will vary in processing time, so it is important to urge your volunteers to start their screening process at least six weeks prior to the start of your day camp. If you already have a list of adults interested in volunteering, you can send our Customer Care your list, and we will get them started in the screening process. Please include the following information in your list:

- First and Last Name
- Email
- Phone Number

If you have any changes in your adult roster, notify us as soon as possible. We cannot guarantee that volunteers submitted less than six weeks before your day camp will receive their clearances in time. For additional information about volunteers at day camp, please see the *Volunteer* section of this manual.

## Site

Day camp sites can vary widely from community to community. When selecting a location, consider what kind of facilities you're interested in having access to for camp:

- Open space for games and activities?
- Bathroom facilities and a water source?
- Shelter from inclement weather or from the sun?
- Cooking and dining space?
- Program areas, such as an archery range, a sheltered craft space, hiking trails, a campfire circle, etc.?
- Area for campers to be dropped off and picked up?
- Parking for staff?

No matter what site is ultimately chosen, all groups must ensure that there is a sufficient safety system in place in order to alert all participants in case of an emergency. This can be air horns, a bell, or another method, but it must be adequate to signal everyone participating. Electronic devices such as cell phones can work, but should not be relied on as the only method, since phones can be lost, forgotten, turned off, or out of service areas.

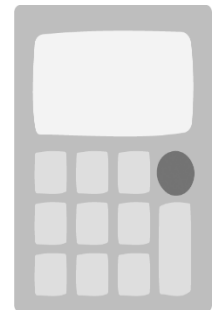
Additionally, all day camps must provide reasonable accommodations for persons who are visually impaired, hearing impaired, or physically disabled so they may participate or work.

## Finances

An integral part of planning a successful day camp is creating a financial plan for the summer. Service units are expected to manage their own finances, but are more than welcome to reach out for help from council staff.

Service unit day camps are charged with developing their own day camp budgets. Items to be considered when budgeting for your day camp should include:

- site rental fee
- food/drink (prepackaged)
- janitorial supplies
- program supplies, patches, activity materials, commemorative T-shirts, etc. (See "Use of Girl Scout Brand section on page six.)
- program and activity facilitators
- first-aid supplies
- office supplies, postage, and print material costs
- transportation (if provided)
- equipment purchases or rental



So how do you determine what to charge? Based on the budget you develop, you can determine the registration fee for day camp participants. Girl Scout Bucks can be used for service unit day camps. The camper should submit the Girl Scout Bucks with her day camp registration form. The Service Unit Day Camp Registrar will send all Girl Scout Bucks payment requests at one time to the Manager of Product Sales. One check will be issued to the service unit only. Council financial assistance is not available for service unit day camps. Service units may establish their own financial assistance programs as needed or desired, using service unit funds. Any special promotions or discounts related to council-run camps are not applicable to service unit day camps.

Service units are responsible for depositing all income into one service unit bank account. If multiple service units are conducting a day camp together, we recommend that one service unit bank account be chosen for managing finances. Day camps may open an account specifically for that day camp following the same process used to establish troop and service unit accounts. All service units must

adhere to the established council policies and procedures for finances and money-earning found in *Volunteer Essentials*.

The person receiving day camp registrations and the person managing the day camp funds must be approved volunteers and adults who are not living in the same household nor are related to one another. This provides for a system of checks and balances. Having spouses or parent/child pairs working together across registration and financial management is a conflict of interest and can lead to issues in liability for the day camp, the service unit, and the council.

A report of the day camp's finances must be included in the service unit's annual finance report, which is completed and submitted to council.

## Promotion & Registration

Clear and concise advertising and communication are some of the key elements to a successful day camp program. It generates excitement in your activity and provides important information to parents and guardians. Service unit day camps create and distribute their own registration forms/flyers for their camp. Promotional materials might include:

- dates/times/location, including directions,
- program cost and a statement on Girl Scout Bucks,
- how to register and deadlines for registration,
- a contact number or email address for questions and for adults interested in volunteering,
- T-shirt and patch ordering information (if offered), and
- camp highlights and/or theme.

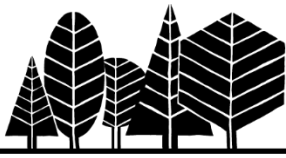
Having this information freely available will greatly help in attracting camp participants, as well as answering the most common questions that come from parents/guardians. When registering for camp, campers should receive a packet that includes the following:

- Council *Health History Form* to be completed and signed by the parent/guardian. This form is required for each person, including all adults, girls, and tag-a-longs (children under 5).
  - [Girl Health History](#)
  - [Adult Health History](#)
    - This form includes important information, in addition to health, such as parental authorization for picking up the child.
    - The camper's emergency contact number(s) can also be found on the health history form.
- emergency contact number(s) should the parent/guardian need to contact a volunteer at camp.
- dos and don'ts on what to bring and wear.

By requiring and checking all registration paperwork, day camps are able to make sure that all incoming campers and volunteers have given the appropriate information so as to have a safe time, as well as making sure that families become familiar with the policies of the day camp.

## Using the Girl Scout Brand for Day Camp Gear

If your service unit day camp will be creating t-shirts, patches, etc., for camp, there are some important guidelines to keep in mind. GSUSA requires the use of a licensed vendor for all items given away at fee-based events (which includes day camp) if they use elements of the Girl Scout brand, including use of the words "Girl Scouts (including GS) or the Girl Scout Trefoil. **Please note:** The Girl Scout Profiles were retired in April 2021. Using a licensed vendor is easy to do, and their costs are competitive! Please reach out to [brand@gswpa.org](mailto:brand@gswpa.org) to get connected to a licensed vendor.



Anyone working at a day camp can be considered “camp staff.” The responsibilities can vary from person to person, including administrative, support, program, or unit. So are you a “Camp Counselor?” Different camps will have different titles and position descriptions, but largely, anyone who works at camp is considered a Camp Counselor. A Camp Counselor is here for the camper, to make their camp experience the best experience possible. That’s the main reason we’re all here, regardless of our job title. So, whether you’re an Activity Specialist, a Lifeguard, Unit Staff, or any other camp position, consider yourself a Camp Counselor, because Camp Counselors are here for the girls.

You’re the key to the success of our summer. When Camp Counselors are enthusiastic and excited, our campers are enthusiastic and excited. It cannot be stressed enough just how much campers look up to you! You have a tremendous responsibility and influence on them. Every word you utter, and every action you take (or don’t take), can potentially be imitated by your campers. We must try our hardest to be positive role models at all times and always let our campers know they come first.

We can’t expect our campers to do something we are not prepared to do ourselves. Whether it’s getting to meals on time, using proper manners, keeping your program area clean, or listening to announcements carefully, we must lead by example.

## Volunteers

Anyone wishing to volunteer at a day camp who has already been through the council volunteer screening process will not need to repeat this step if all of their clearances are on file and up-to-date (valid). Day camp volunteer staff are responsible for reporting to the Day Camp Director during the entire camp session. All adult volunteers are required to fill out an Adult Health History Form and provide it to the Day Camp Director.

## Clearances

**All adults working at day camp who are serving as the adult-to-girl ratio or working directly with the girls, such as a Camp Nurse, are required to be an approved volunteer with Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania.** This includes being a registered member of Girl Scouts, as well as completion of the following:

- National Criminal Background Check
- Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance
- Pennsylvania Criminal Record Check
- Pennsylvania State Clearance Affidavit
- FBI Criminal Background Check (only if you have lived outside of Pennsylvania in the past 10 years)

Once an adult has successfully submitted their Girl Scout registration and selected the option to be a volunteer, they will receive an email with further instructions on how to complete these clearances. When all materials have been received by the volunteer screening department, the volunteer will receive an email confirming their approval status. **Please note:** Girls should never be left alone with adults who are not approved volunteers unless that adult is the girl’s parent/guardian.

If at any time the volunteer has questions about their status, they can contact [VolunteerScreening@gswpa.org](mailto:VolunteerScreening@gswpa.org) or call Customer Care at 800-248-3355.

## Training

All day camp volunteer staff must attend annual pre-camp training designed by the Day Camp Director. This training must cover the following topics:

- child development,

- behavior management,
- health and safety,
- emergency procedures,
- program activities, and
- scheduling.

This training should also include a clarification of duties and conduct standards. All volunteer staff members must agree that while they are volunteering with council, they will adjust their personal habits and actions so as to abide by the policies, standards, guidelines, procedures, practices, and ideals of the Girl Scout organization and of Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania.

- All adult leaders are required to act and speak appropriately and adhere to the principles of the Girl Scout Promise and Girl Scout Law.
- Smoking and vaping or using electronic cigarettes will only be permitted in designated areas and should never be in the view of campers.
- If you are ever unclear about how to handle concerning volunteer behavior, we are here to help. Please call our Customer Care at 1-800-248-3355

## Job Descriptions

Every position at camp helps to make sure that the overall camp program runs well. Take out any person, and it affects everyone! All staff members are at camp to contribute their expertise and support to the Girl Scout program through camping opportunities. To accomplish this goal, all camp staff members, regardless of position, must be:

- a current member of the Girl Scout movement.
- able to adhere to the principles and values of the Girl Scout organization.
- willing and able to work hard to accomplish the goals and objectives.
- willing to learn new skills and be able to share those skills with others.
- willing to share past experiences and ideas.
- able to easily adapt to a camp environment.
- extremely interested in all types of people.
- able to direct and supervise adults and children of various backgrounds and abilities.
- able to communicate well with both adults and children.

The Day Camp Director is charged with developing, directing, and overseeing all day camp operations in accordance with the Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania, GSUSA, federal, state, and local policies, standards, guidelines, procedures, and laws. The full Day Camp Director job description is included in the appendix of this manual.

## Program Aides/Camp Aides/Day Camp Aides

Your day camp may decide to use Program Aides for activities, etc., through your camp. Program Aides are Cadette Girl Scouts who attend a vetted Program Aide training at the council level in addition to your day camp-specific training. This may be slightly different than what has been done in previous years, as there is an update to the award to meet national updates.

Day Camp Aides are Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors who have not gone through Program Aide training but have been trained by the Day Camp Director to assist with their specific day camp.

<b>Program Aide Prior to 2025</b>	<b>New Program Aide 2025</b>	<b>Camp Aid</b>	<b>Day Camp Aide</b>
This National Leadership Award was earned by Cadette Girl	This National Teaching Leadership Award is earned by Cadettes	The Camp Aide Award is a Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania	Trained by the Day Camp Director to assist

<p>Scouts by completing council training and working with groups of younger Girl Scouts for at least six activity sessions. Could be earned through troop meetings, council-sponsored events, or day camp.</p>	<p>working with younger Girl Scouts or other youth groups. The award involves planning and leading multiple activities and a full meeting, and can be earned individually or with a group of Cadettes. <a href="#">Action Plan</a>   <a href="#">Volunteer Guide</a></p>	<p>council award for older Girl Scouts who have a love of camping and the outdoors and want to help younger Girl Scouts have a great camp experience. Camp Aides dive into hands-on fun—learning fire safety, outdoor cooking, knot tying, pocketknife skills, and so much more!</p>	<p>with their specific day camp.</p>
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# Campers

## Who Are Our Campers?

When we work with children coming from so many different walks of life, it's important to learn as much as we can to help them succeed. This includes understanding the basics of different age levels, what it means for a camper to have special needs, how to best supervise different groups in different activities, and how to effectively implement discipline.



## Age Levels

Your day camp may cater to specific Girl Scout levels, or it may be open to any member who wishes to take part in activities. Many camps provide opportunities for older girls to take on leadership positions, either as a Program Aide or another type of unit helper. Below is a listing of the Girl Scout levels, their corresponding grade in school, and the approximate age for this group.

Level	Grades	Ages
Daisy	K - 1	5 - 7
Brownie	2 - 3	7 - 9
Junior	4 - 5	9 - 11
Cadette	6 - 8	11 - 14
Senior	9 - 10	14 - 16
Ambassador	11 - 12	16 - 18

When working with different age groups, it's key to give them both accommodations and challenges that suit their abilities. Daisies may struggle with vague instructions, but are incredibly keen to learn and will often imitate adults in their efforts to participate. Cadettes are intensely interested in the approval of their peers and have often reached an age and maturity level where they are able to make longer-term plans and can start to explore ideas and locations different from their home. Volunteer staff should provide ample opportunities for campers to grow and learn in the camp environment.

## Ratios

When you're supervising any group of campers, you should always take into account the amount of campers and staff to make sure that everyone is covered safely. Ratio coverage is determined by using the Girl Scout level of the youngest camper in your group. See the ratio chart on the next page.

Volunteer-to-Girl Ratio Chart	Troop Meeting		Travel & Camping		Council-Sponsored Events & Product Sales Booths	
	<i>Two</i> unrelated troop leaders (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus <i>one</i> additional approved volunteer for each additional number of this many girls:	<i>One</i> troop leader and one unrelated approved volunteer (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus <i>one</i> additional troop leader or approved volunteer for each additional number of this many girls:	<i>Two</i> unrelated approved volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus <i>one</i> additional approved volunteer for each additional number of this many girls:
Girl Scout Daisies (grades K-1)	12	1-6	6	1-4	12	1-6
Girl Scout Brownies (grades 2-3)	20	1-8	12	1-6	20	1-8
Girl Scout Juniors (grades 4-5)	25	1-10	16	1-8	25	1-10
Girl Scout Cadettes (grades 6-8)	25	1-12	20	1-10	25	1-12
Girl Scout Seniors (grades 9-10)	30	1-15	24	1-12	30	1-15
Girl Scout Ambassadors (grades 11-12)	30	1-15	24	1-12	30	1-15

Approved volunteers must have membership purchased and appropriate clearances submitted to Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania as required by PA State Law. For mixed-grade level troops, use the ratio for the lowest grade level in the troop. For example, if Daisies and Brownies, the Daisy ratio should be followed.

So, if you have a group of 17 Juniors with two Brownies, you will need four total staff to be with the group. However, if the group were 19 total Juniors, you would need just three total staff.

Specialized activity areas sometimes have different ratio requirements. Below is a chart to show each of those:

	Archery Instructor: Archers	Canoe Instructor: Canoers (Flat water)*	Canoe Instructor: Canoers (Moving water)*	Riding Instructor + Asst. Instructor or other Instructor: Riders
Daisies (grades K-1)	Not permitted	Not permitted	Not permitted	2 : 10 (Pony rides only)
Brownies (grades 2-3)	1 : 10	1 : 12	1 : 8	2 : 10
Juniors (grades 4-5)	1 : 10	1 : 12	1 : 8	2 : 10
Cadettes (grades 6-8)	1 : 10	1 : 12	1 : 8	2 : 10
Seniors (grades 9-10)	1 : 10	1 : 12	1 : 8	2 : 10
Ambassadors (grades 11-12)	1 : 10	1 : 12	1 : 8	2 : 10

\*When canoeing, there should also be an additional staff member (watcher) for each canoe instructor.

Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors who are interested in being Program Aides (PAs) and Counselors-in-Training (CITs) have exciting opportunities to build skills as leaders by taking council's leadership training.

Program Aides and Day Camp Aides at camp do not qualify as adults but as campers and must be considered when determining the number of adults needed to meet ratio. Program Aides or Counselors-in-Training campers working with day camp units must be at least two years older than the participants with whom they work. Additionally, they must always have an adult supervisor present while they are leading activities or working with the campers.

Units of campers are made up of a Unit Leader, one or more Assistant Unit Leaders, and one or two Program Aides/Day Camp Aides. Volunteer staff are expected to be with their assigned campers at all

times, as campers are never left unsupervised. This includes program areas and all camp events. This allows the adults to assist campers in those areas and to handle any behavior issues in a timely fashion. Staff gathered together or off to the side gives a message to campers that they are “on their own.” Please note that when doing whole camp activities, you must follow ratio for the group as a whole.

## **Behavior Management**

A common concern is how to maintain discipline with a group of energetic and excited young children. The best discipline technique is to prevent situations that bring out misbehavior. Most children want the attention and approval of an adult who is as important as their counselor. Most children don't want to misbehave.

Used from the very first day of camp, the following suggestions will establish a climate that may prevent most discipline problems.

### **When working with an individual or a group:**

- Use high-energy and quieting activities as appropriate to help control energy levels.
- Set ground rules for behavior, which give the campers a set of expected behaviors even though they may need frequent repetition. Rules may be changed at a later time to suit the abilities of the children, but it is more difficult to set stricter rules than it is to agree to more relaxed ones.
- Have a signal or signals for requesting the attention of the group. “If you can hear me clap once...” works great for large groups, or “When everyone is sitting with their hands on their laps, I will begin,” when you're trying to do a quieter activity.
- Become involved in the group activities, so you can help to establish a group feeling.
- Get group involvement in decisions. If campers help to make decisions, they will be more likely to follow them.
- Do not take your personal feelings and prejudices out on the campers.
- Be consistent.
- Recognize that most children do not understand the concept of sarcasm yet, so don't use it.
- Try to see their side of the question. Explore it with them verbally until you understand it fully. Even if the camper's actions were wrong, your efforts in understanding will always be appreciated.
- Be sincere in your work and set a good example yourself. Actions speak louder than words.
- If you make a mistake, admit it, but don't dwell on it. Children and adults welcome an apology if given sincerely.
- Do not offer choices if there really are no options. Say “We're going to sing a song,” instead of “Do you want to sing a song?”
- Laugh often with campers, but NEVER at them. Step in quickly if you see campers laughing at another camper.
- Try to get every child involved somewhat equally. The child who never talks needs you to open the door occasionally with a comment like “What would you like to do?” The over-talkative child needs to be encouraged to give up the floor to others. While that child talks, the attention of the others will wander.
- Do not judge misconduct solely by how much it annoys you.
- Try to treat all children fairly. Children who are favored may misbehave to keep the Counselor's attention, and children who are not favored may misbehave to attract anyone's attention.

### **When it comes to behavior problems:**

- Offer choices of action. If a camper's lunch area needs to be cleaned, tell the child, “You can either clean your space now, and I will help you, or you can clean it later by yourself.” The objective of discipline is to accomplish a task or better the situation, NOT TO PUNISH.
- Avoid making threats. To some children, the words, “If you do that one more time, I'll...” are a signal to misbehave just to see if you'll carry out the threat.

- Follow up with all campers whom you have disciplined. Be certain that you still have the respect and confidence of the camper.
- When there is a need for a new rule, encourage the campers to decide what it needs to be. The group will more readily enforce the rules they set.
- Give lots of encouragement and praise when things are well done. These positive reinforcements will go a long way in keeping discipline rather than corrections or reprimands.
- Do not get into an argument with children. Restate your request calmly as many times as it takes until the camper realizes that you have set an expectation and that you will not bend the rules for her.
- Try not to reprimand a child in front of peers. This only leads to resentment and a loss of positive feelings toward the Counselor. It may also lessen the camper's self-esteem.

## Discipline

During the course of the camp, you'll have all kinds of children who come under your care. While the vast majority of them are excited to be at camp and are happy and willing to follow the rules, there will always be situations when you have behavior problems in the group, either intentionally or not. While every circumstance will call for a different response, you should remember that your reaction will color how everyone in the situation will respond. Anger and yelling will only bring about more anger and yelling, while ignoring the problem completely will most likely cause the issue to continue.

If discipline problems do arise, remember the following:

- Speak with the child away from the group as soon as possible. Make sure you are out of earshot of other campers.
- Start out firm on rules when you first meet the group. You can loosen up as the campers grow and learn to work together and with you.
- Allow them an "out" when disciplining them. Be careful not to back them into a corner.
- Ask them questions and have them talk about the problem. Use your questions to get to the heart of the issue.
- Keep your cool. Calm, quiet voices that get quieter as the problem gets worse are far more effective.
- Admit to and apologize for your mistakes. The campers will think more of you, not less. Besides, what better way to teach them to admit to and apologize for mistakes than by doing it yourself?
- Accentuate the positive. Find something good about each camper as soon as possible and praise each one as often as possible. Minimize criticism. Children bloom with praise.
- Stop and wait for them to stop talking before you begin. They can't pay attention with their ear when their mouths are engaged.
- Phrase things so you don't need threats. Instead of "If you don't stop [behavior], I'll have to..." Instead, try "This must stop because..." Give them a reason why something is "good" or "bad." This helps them to establish their own value system.
- Be self-confident, relaxed, and prepared. Sometimes being well prepared is the best antidote for insecurity and self-consciousness. They came to you because they needed someone like you in their lives. Be the person they believe you to be.

Most discipline issues are able to be resolved by a staff member in the unit or program area. It's absolutely imperative that any punishment that is given to a child is related to the infraction. A camper who behaves unsafely at the archery range after being told the rules can be made to sit out the rest of the archery session; they have shown they cannot be safe in the activity area. However, the same individual should not have pool time taken away, since this does not make a direct correlation to the displayed behavior.

In a situation where the camper has been given multiple warnings or is choosing to create an unsafe environment for themselves or others, the Assistant Day Camp Director or Day Camp Director should most likely be involved in the situation. If the circumstances have escalated to that level, most likely a parent/guardian of the camper will be contacted, and in rare cases, the camper will be sent home. This

is only done if the behavior of the camper has reached a point that they are choosing to no longer be a cooperative member of the camp community, and continuing to have them attend camp will only lead to others' experiences being compromised.

## Arrival and Departure

Day camps will need to have procedures in place to handle the drop-off and pick-up of all campers. This should include:

- Determining a safe location for the drop-off/pick-up area.
- Safety procedures in place to handle parking and the increased flow of traffic.
- Sign-in and out system, including a photo ID check for pickup.

Day camp staff must always know not only how many campers are in their charge but also exactly whom they have. This means keeping an updated daily roster. For multiple-day day camps, there are often campers who come for one day but not another. An emergency roster should be kept in a safe and secure location so that, if needed, a full head count of the volunteers and campers can be done.

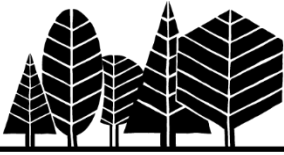
Communication with parents/guardians prior to the start of camp is integral in making sure they understand where to go and what to bring each day of camp.

## Camper Orientation

On the first day of camp, the following procedures should be discussed with all campers to ensure their well-being and safety while at the site and participating in activities.

- The **buddy system** must be in place at all times. Campers should not go anywhere without a buddy. Remind the campers that they need to get permission before they leave the group. Go over what they should do if they were to get separated from the group.
- If spending the night, be sure that all Unit Leaders **tell the girls where the staff will be sleeping** in case the child should need them during the night.
- **Discuss all emergency procedures** (fire, storm, etc.) with the girls. Go over what the signals (bell, horn, etc.) are for and what the different sounds mean. Let them know that there will be a fire drill on the first day of camp.
- Always **wear appropriate footwear** at camp, such as closed-toed/closed-heel shoes or sports sandals.
- Always **wear sunscreen**. Sunscreen should not be shared with other campers. Girls should have sunscreen on before arriving at camp.
- **Drink plenty of water**. Each camper should bring a water bottle each day.
- Go over where the **first aid station** is and when they will need to report there. Explain that if they are on any medication, it is to be given to the First Aider/Nurse, and they will need to see her/him to receive their medication.
- Discuss **snack, drink, and meal procedures** that are pertinent to your camp. Day campers should be instructed where their lunches are to be stored. Remind the girls that food items are not to be stored in tents or cabins.
- Campers are **not allowed in high-risk areas**, such as a pool, natural waterfront, or any type of ropes course, without adult supervision.
- Discuss **keeping camp beautiful**. Put trash in cans and pick up litter. Keep their areas neat and their belongings put away.
- Go over **what poison ivy/oak looks like**. Try to avoid contact and, if they should touch, to wash thoroughly.
- Remind the girls to **use resources wisely** (paper towels).
- Discuss **girl/adult planning**.

- Make sure that the girls understand what your role is. Try to **make them feel secure and welcome**. Remind them that you're there for them and that together camp will be a fun and positive experience.



# Health & Safety

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## Basic Health Procedures

The safety and well-being of all persons are first and foremost in importance at camp. Generally, campers are not yet mature enough to watch out for many of their needs, such as rest, hydration, and sun protection. A large part of your job is to teach them how to care for themselves. Creating healthy habits takes lots of patience and repetition.

All day camps are responsible for creating a *Day Camp Healthcare Plan*. This document ensures the health and safety of all campers and volunteer staff. This should outline routine practices, medication administration standards, the keeping of medical records and logs, who is responsible for healthcare during the camp session, out-of-camp healthcare procedures, and accident and incident reporting.

## Routine Practices

During each camp session, an emergency medical technician, paramedic, registered nurse, licensed physician, or certified first aider must be present on site at all times. This individual will be known as the first aider/nurse. A healthcare area will be designated on-site that includes:

- protection from the weather,
- first-aid and dispensary area,
- available toilet,
- water for drinking and cleaning,
- accessibility by ambulance or emergency vehicle,
- if used for overnights, a light or luminescent sign is visible from the outside at night,
- at least one volunteer staff member supervising campers at all times while they are in the infirmary area, and
- awareness for campers of the location of the first-aid station upon arrival at camp.

## Medications

Any medications, with the exception of emergency medications, brought by participants, children, and adults are to be given to the First Aider/Nurse upon arrival and must be in the original containers and be prescribed for the individual for whom they are being sent to camp. Non-prescription drugs sent to camp must have instructions for dispensing signed by the parent/guardian or physician.

All medications are stored in a locked area at the first aid station. Day camps are highly encouraged to have these administered by individuals with the following certifications:

- licensed physician or dentist,
- licensed physician assistant,
- registered nurse,
- licensed practical nurse, or
- an adult who has passed the Department of Human Services' Medications Administration Course.

Emergency medications, such as asthma inhalers and EpiPens, are permitted to be in units with an adult if an individual in that unit requires such items. Girls whose parents sign the permission form indicating their approval may carry these emergency medications. Any time these medications are administered, it must be notated in the *Health Log*.

## Health Information

All day campers and volunteers must have a council-approved *Health History Form* on site, completed within two months. When participants are riding a bus, all health conditions and dietary information are to be given to the bus monitor.

Health histories must be fully completed. Permission to seek emergency treatment, or a religious waiver, signed by the parent/guardian for all minors on site, is to be kept with the *Health History Form*. Campers known to have a life-threatening condition, such as an allergy to bee stings or seizures, must have a first-aid-certified adult oriented to handle that condition at the participant's activity sites.

When a camper is sent home because of illness, she may not return to camp unless her temperature has been normal for at least 24 hours and other related symptoms, such as vomiting, are no longer occurring. Under certain circumstances, a doctor's release to return may be required.

Day camp training for adult volunteers must identify the responsibilities each one has for healthcare and the use of supplies and equipment, as well as sanitary procedures when dealing with bodily fluids and/or medical waste.

## Health Records and Logs

A *Health Record Log* will be maintained on site by the First Aider/Nurse or the Health Care Provider and reviewed by the Day Camp Director. The *Health Record Log* is a bound book with documentation recorded line by line with no pages skipped. Volunteer staff providing treatment will use their legal name as their signature. The *Health Record Log* will include:

- date, time, and name of the person treated,
- description of the injury or illness,
- description of the treatment administered,
- name of the person evaluating and providing the treatment, and
- a signature page when initials are used.

At the end of camp, the daily *Health Record Log*, accident/incident reports, and the health histories for any camper or any volunteer staff member who received treatment or routine medications are to be returned to the council office for filing. These forms are kept on file in a secure location. We will retain health history forms and health record logs in accordance with state record retention guidelines and GSUSA risk management recommendations. In the state of Pennsylvania, the statute of limitations is two years after a minor has turned 18 years of age. This health information must be mailed to:

GSWPA  
c/o Day Camp Coordinator  
503 Martindale St., Suite 500,  
Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Any health information that is vital to the campers' health and well-being will be handled in a confidential manner and will only be shared with the unit volunteer staff, if necessary, not the entire camp volunteer staff.

## General Volunteer Staff Responsibilities for Health and Wellness

Monitoring the camper's health is the duty of all volunteer staff, particularly unit volunteer staff. Assuring the cleanliness of all areas in camp is the duty of each volunteer staff member working in that area. Proper health practices are to be followed by all participants in the camp. Consider the following items that all volunteer staff should be concerned with:

**Plenty of Water and Exercise:** The number one cause of headaches and a factor in injury potential is dehydration. Everyone should take water breaks at least once every two hours (depending on the weather). Make sure to encourage campers to drink at least one water bottle of water before lunch and one after.

**Good Hygiene:** Encourage campers to wash their hands before and after using the restroom, as well as before each meal.

**Regular Bathroom Habits:** Be alert to the fact that some campers may be afraid to use the bathrooms found in the outdoors because they are afraid of bugs, dirt, dark, etc. Help them become acquainted with the facilities to get over their fears. Having campers help clean the bathrooms (sweeping, tidying up, etc.) during unit campers will help them to realize that the bathroom is clean and perfectly safe to use.

**Beware of Sunburns:** Encourage campers and other staff to wear sunscreen and sun-blocking clothing (hats, loose, reflective clothing). Any sun exposure increases the risk of skin cancer, so we need to protect ourselves at all times.

**Clean and Proper Clothing:** Closed-toed/heeled shoes and socks or approved sport sandals should be worn at all times. Sandals such as flip-flops, clogs, or any other shoe without ankle/heel support do not provide enough protection for people walking around camp. They are only allowed during swim times or in sleeping spaces. Wear proper clothing to protect from the sun, ticks, mosquitoes, and scratches.

## Common Complaints

Always empathize with the camper about their pain, but try not to pamper them as this can encourage attention-getting ploys. Think of treating common complaints in three stages:

- With all minor complaints, first try to find an obvious cause, then provide a “sit down and rest” solution.
- If they complain a second time, implement something to make them more comfortable.
- When they complain the third time, let them know that they can see the Camp Nurse or the Day Camp Director. If at any time it seems like the pain is serious, call the First Aider/Nurse or Day Camp Director.

**Headaches** – Make sure that the camper is not dehydrated or overheated. Make sure there is water available to drink and offer the opportunity to sit out of the next activity in a shady, quiet spot and cool off. If pain persists, encourage lying down and resting, possibly with a cool cloth on the forehead.

**Stomachaches** – Think about potential causes. Has there been a lot of activity on a full stomach? Feeling homesick, upset, or angry? Had a bowel movement recently? Treatment is based on the potential cause. Encourage sitting down to rest, getting involved in an activity that helps to elevate mood, or try using the bathroom. A mint can also help, as peppermint oil helps to calm an upset stomach.

**Superficial Scratches** – Say you’re sorry that they are hurt, but thank goodness it’s not serious. Brush it off and continue. If it has broken the skin, have the camper clean it with soap and water and cover it with a bandage. If dirt is ground in, bleeding continues, or the cut is deep, take the camper to the First Aider/Nurse.

**Bumps & Bruises** – Help the camper to calm down and assess if ice is needed. If you apply ice, make sure there is a cloth between the ice and the skin. Elevating the area will help reduce swelling. If the bump is to the head, have the camper sit down and rest, and make sure to visit the First Aider/Nurse.

**Poison Ivy, Stinging Nettle, and Bug Bites** – Discourage scratching and rubbing. Wash it with cool water. Have the camper remove itchy clothing from the area or apply ice. If the problem continues, visit the First Aider/Nurse.

Simple routine health matters (i.e., scratches, minor cuts or bruises, and minor stomachaches) are the only health situations to be handled in the units during an activity. All treatments are to be entered on

the daily Health Record Log. Other health matters are to be handled by the First Aider/Nurse at the First Aid station.

Monitoring supplies in first-aid kits is the duty of all volunteer staff. Each kit is to be kept well supplied. Kits missing supplies should be exchanged for a complete one at the first-aid station.

In any situation where a camper's health or safety is jeopardized, an accident/incident report is to be completed by the adults witnessing the situation and given to the camp administration. The Day Camp Director will call the council emergency contact immediately after a severe incident or accident has occurred (ex. near drowning, burns, animal or human bites). **All accident/incident reports are kept on file and turned in to the council office within 24 hours of the incident/accident.**

## **Out of Camp First-Aid Procedures**

All groups hiking outside the main camp must have in their group a certified First Aider and a first-aid kit. Participants should carry a whistle and be instructed on its use.

All safety rules must be followed as stated in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*, and a hike outline must be on file with the Day Camp Director, as well as one left in the unit. In case of an accident, only first aid as outlined in the current *American Red Cross First Aid Manual* and the first-aid procedures for camp will be given. All first-aid procedures administered must be recorded in the *Health Record Log*.

The Unit Leader will assign one adult or two girls to call or run to get the Day Camp Director or First Aider/Nurse if assistance is needed in returning to camp.

Remember, there are other campers. Keep panic and fear down and get the remainder of the campers back to camp safely.

## **The Environment and Us:**

One of the goals for day camp is to develop in our campers a positive attitude toward the wildlife and environment that we share. As camp volunteer staff, we'll also encourage campers by action as well as example to become individually motivated to do their best to protect the environment.

- We will keep our campsites litter-free and refrain from polluting both grounds and waterways.
- We will protect all living things.

To help further these goals, the following will become a natural part of our camp routine:

1. We encourage all campers to bring mess kits for their cookouts or use the equipment provided in units instead of bringing disposable items.
2. No living plant or tree will be picked or chopped down unless permission is received from the Day Camp Director. Do not pick or dig up plants.
3. Only downed wood will be used for fires. Fires will be the proper type and size for which they are intended. Fires will be built in approved fire circles only, with adult supervision of a volunteer who has completed Let's Go Camping 2 training.
4. Each session should include hands-on learning experiences concerning the environment: i.e., stream exploration, nature games, or activities in the unit.
5. Hikers will stay on trails while hiking to prevent soil erosion.
6. Volunteer staff are expected to set the example in recycling.
7. Recyclables should be taken to a recycling center if possible.
8. Leave the site better than you found it!

## **Environmental Health Concerns**

While working in the outdoors, you'll find different circumstances that most likely are not common in other areas of your life. Below is an outline of some of these potential situations, along with the steps you should take if you encounter them.

**Ticks** – These are small parasitic arachnids. They come in a variety of sizes, with the smallest sometimes being the size of the period at the end of this sentence. Some types of ticks can carry bacteria that cause Lyme Disease. Symptoms can include headache, fatigue, fever, and sometimes a bullseye rash. Left untreated, the infection can spread to the joints, the heart, and the nervous system.

Precautions: Avoid areas of tall grass or thick underbrush. Wear long pants and long sleeves and use an insect repellent with at least 20% DEET on both exposed skin and clothing.

Treatment: If you find a tick has bitten you or a camper, remove it as quickly as possible. Use fine-tipped tweezers to firmly grasp the tick very close to your skin. With a steady motion, pull the tick's body away from your skin. Then clean your skin with soap and warm water. Tape the tick to an index card if you need to identify the tick. Do your best not to crush the tick, and no matter what, always wash the area with soap and water and apply a bandage afterward. Do not use a hot match, nail polish remover, or any other product to remove a tick.

**Hot Weather** – During the summer, it's easy to get caught up in the moment and forget about the potential health risks of prolonged sun exposure. Staff should constantly be making sure that campers are drinking enough water and taking steps to avoid damage from the sun.

Precautions: Plan water breaks throughout the day and have frequent reminders to both have and to fill up water bottles. Play water games and take breaks frequently. Remind everyone around you (campers AND staff) about sunscreen.

Treatment: If anyone appears to be overheated, remove them from the activity and have them sit in a shaded area with water to drink. If symptoms become more serious, such as not sweating, dizziness, or mental confusion, take the individual immediately to the First Aider/Nurse. In regard to sun damage, campers and staff are able to get various treatments from the First Aid Center, such as aloe vera, to help alleviate symptoms. If blisters or other more severe symptoms occur, immediately go to the First Aider/Nurse for further treatment.

**Wild Animals** – The forested area we live in is home to a wide variety of wild animals, including deer, raccoons, rabbits, groundhogs, bats, and many types of birds. While this is part of the incredible experience of camp, it's always important to be safe and respectful around them.

Precautions: At no time should any camper or staff member keep food in their living spaces. Avoid direct contact with any wild animals. If they attempt to approach you, leave the area as quickly and calmly as possible. Never purposefully leave food out for wild animals, and make sure that all trash is cleared from your unit or program area each night so as not to attract animals. Always instruct any camp participants to avoid animals, and make sure to report any abnormal animal behavior to the Day Camp Director.

Treatment: If at any time an individual is hurt by a wild animal, they should immediately be taken to the First Aid Center and will most likely be transported to a nearby hospital for treatment. Any staff who witness an incident should be prepared to report the type of animal, what it looked like, a description of what happened, how the animal behaved, and the direction it was traveling afterward.

# Emergency Procedures

Emergency procedures should be established and practiced by all campers and volunteer staff at the beginning of the day camp. These are in place for the safety of all participants. Each day camp must have an established means of communication within camp and with emergency services. In addition, it is recommended that each day camp have a person designated to be alert to any weather changes that may occur.

If extreme weather is predicted, the Day Camp Director will need to make a decision based on the safety of the campers and volunteer staff to cancel the day camp. If camp is cancelled, the Day Camp Director must have a system in place to contact the parents/guardians of the participants as well as the volunteer staff.

## Weather

Weather Watch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conditions indicate the possibility of severe weather</li><li>• Applies to tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, high winds, or floods</li><li>• Procedures are preparatory</li></ul>
Weather Warning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Severe weather is headed your way</li><li>• Applies to tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, high winds, or floods</li><li>• Requires immediate action</li></ul>

In the case of a “**Watch**,” the Day Camp Director will notify staff and review emergency procedures. Weather information will be monitored online, through weather radio, and/or a “spotter” to watch the skies. Staff should be prepared to stop activities and move indoors if necessary. Loose items around camp should be secured, tent flaps should be dropped and storm-lashed, and if groups can move inside, they should. Unit staff should have an updated unit roster.

In the case of a “**Warning**,” the Day Camp Director will notify all staff, and every group should move indoors immediately. Campers are the priority, not their gear! All groups will report in to ensure that everyone is accounted for, including all campers and staff. If it hasn’t been done yet but is still possible, tent flaps should be dropped and storm-lashed. When conditions are deemed safe, the Day Camp Director will alert staff. Relocation areas are listed below.

**Lightning** – In the case of a lightning storm, move immediately indoors. Do not shelter near a large body of water, a hilltop, above the tree line, under a large tree, or other tall structures that stand alone. If you’re unable to move indoors, find the lowest point in the area that you are in, and make yourself the smallest possible target you can by crouching down and placing your hands on your knees with your head between your knees. If you’re with a group, all group members should be spread several yards apart. If your hair stands on end or your skin tingles, lightning may be about to strike. Drop to the ground immediately. If an individual in your group is struck by lightning, give prompt first aid. Do not be afraid to touch the victim; they are not electrically charged. Check for signs of burns, shock, or if the victim has stopped breathing. Keep the victim lying down and seek immediate medical assistance.

**Tornado** – A tornado’s arrival is commonly preceded by darkened, often greenish skies, thick storm clouds, strong winds from the south, lightning, and periods of rain or hail. Once a tornado watch has been called, all groups should head indoors, and if it becomes a warning, all individuals should stay away from doors and windows, preferably moving to areas without any windows at all. All groups will report in with their total numbers of campers and staff, including anyone missing. Stay away from anything that conducts electricity. If you’re unable to move indoors, do not try to outrun a tornado. Move away by taking a route that is at a right angle to the tornado’s path and get to a low point, such as a ditch or under a tent platform, covering your head with your hands. Avoid taking shelter near vehicles or non-winterized structures, such as a unit shelter.

**Flood** – Resulting from heavy or prolonged rain, rapidly melting snow, or a dam breakage, flooding can occur with little or no warning and can be incredibly dangerous due to swift currents and an unpredictable nature. The level of any natural water sources should be monitored on a daily basis, and at times when water is rapidly rising, staff will be notified of potential actions to take. If flooding of camp begins, all groups will go directly to the designated safe space, preferably the highest indoor point near camp, with the possibility to evacuate out of camp to higher ground. If the situation calls for it, anyone in the main camp will begin to evacuate. The First Aider/Nurse will be responsible for taking all medications and health forms off-site during an evacuation.

## **Fire**

Staff should at all times follow fire safety precautions during camp activities. Fires built in units for cookouts or otherwise should always be supervised, with extinguishing equipment always available nearby, including a bucket of water and a shovel or rake. Fires should always be built in designated areas, such as fire pits or grills, and must be extinguished completely before a group leaves.

### **If you are in the area of a fire that is outside:**

- Notify the Day Camp Director by sending a runner or calling on a walkie-talkie or similar device.
- Look for escape routes such as dirt roads, gravel areas, large outcroppings of rock, asphalt, or an already burned area. Head for one of these immediately.
- Avoid going uphill from a fire. Heat rises rapidly, and the fire will outrun you up the hill.
- If smoke is a problem, cover your mouth and nose with a damp cloth. If the air becomes very hot, then breathe through your nose.
- If the fire is gaining on you, look for places with the least burnable fuels. Fine grasses are a carrier of fires, so stomp and scrape an area clear with your feet if necessary.
- Stay away from trees, thickets, and brushy areas.
- Use any jacket, backpack, hat, or other item to shield yourself from the heat.
- If necessary, lie down on a dirt surface with your feet pointing toward the approaching flames. (Even loose sand may give some protection if scooped over your feet or legs.)
- When the major portion of the fire has passed, continue to look for the best escape routes.
- Await pick-up and transportation to the evacuation site.

### **If you are in a building that is on fire:**

- Alert others in immediate danger.
- Do not fight the fire unless you are trained.
- Evacuate the building.
- Do a head count. Use the attendance roster.
- Notify the Day Camp Director by sending a runner or calling on a walkie-talkie.
- Do not go back into the building to retrieve belongings or lost campers.
- Take campers to another building.

The Day Camp Director will be responsible for contacting emergency services. If they are unable to do so, they will designate a staff member to do this. The relocation of campers and staff is heavily dependent on the location of the fire itself. Staff should stay in contact with the leadership team to know the most current information, as well as consider safety factors in the area where they are located.

## **Intruder**

Staff should do their best to gain familiarity with common vehicles seen on camp, as well as frequent visitors. If an individual is seen in the day camp area whom the staff do not recognize, remember the following:

- **Be polite.** Ask if you can help them. (They may be lost or may be a parent or council staff) Take them to the Day Camp Director if necessary.
- **Do not approach a stranger who looks threatening,** and never approach a stranger without another staff member at least nearby and within earshot.
- **Notify the Day Camp Director** about any strangers on the property.

## Missing Person

Staff should have a near-constant count of people in their group, taking into account those who are in the bathroom, first-aid center, or other area. If at any time a camper or staff member goes missing, the following procedure will be followed:

- If a head count comes up short, double-check with other staff in the area to see if anyone is away from the group for a specific reason. If this still leaves anyone unaccounted for, do a second head count, and if still short, contact the Day Camp Director. At this time, all staff in camp will be notified, and an all-camp count will be conducted and reported. Make sure to remain calm with campers and staff.
- The reporting staff member should be able to give as much identifying information as possible (where they were last seen, clothing, hair color, etc.). The Day Camp Director will organize a search party.
- All groups will stay in their area until further notice is given.
- If the camper is not found within a reasonable time, the camper will be presumed lost. The Day Camp Director will institute a public search that will include contacting the emergency personnel and council emergency line and the camper's family.

## Unknown Situation

While there are many emergencies we can prepare for, there will always be situations that arise that are much more difficult to anticipate. In the event of this type of situation, staff should always remember:

**Stay calm** – This can be difficult, especially when facing the unknown, but campers and other staff will follow your example, and being calm and collected will help everyone remain safe.

**Move as far away from danger as possible** – Whatever the source of danger is, you want to get yourself and anyone with you away from it as quickly and safely as possible.

**Contact the Day Camp Director** – As soon as you are able to, radio or call anyone on the leadership team in order to get help.

**You are camp's most valuable resource** – While we often emphasize the importance of our buildings and equipment, campers and staff will always be more important than a canoe. If getting your group to safety means leaving those things behind, that is the best plan.

## Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

During business hours, call 800-248-3355.

After business hours, call 877-359-7878.

## Accident/Incident Reports

Whenever an accident or an incident occurs, please complete the *Accident/Incident Report Form* ([this form](#)) after the incident occurs. This is the first step in documenting a situation that requires special attention and/or further action.

Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania considers an accident to be an incident that occurs, resulting in damage or injury to a person. Not all accidents warrant an *Accident/Incident Report*, such as in the case of minor instances— e.g., bumps and bruises, minor lacerations requiring no more than a band-aid or basic first aid. If an accident occurs that requires more advanced care (even after the event) or a prolonged time to heal, an *Accident/Incident Report Form* should be completed as soon as possible.

Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania considers an incident to be an atypical occurrence that is the result of improper conduct by a girl or adult, which warrants additional support. An incident may be the

result of a broken policy/procedure, inappropriate behavior, and/or a failure to follow the Girl Scout Promise and Law. If emergency services are contacted, an incident report should be completed. Disagreements do not require a report unless they escalate to a specific moment where special attention is required to address that particular situation.

Council staff will use this form to monitor and investigate accidents and incidents, ensuring that those involved receive the support and assistance they require.

## **Protecting Children**

As day camp volunteers, we are role models, leaders, and caretakers of every camper who arrives at camp. Our behaviors and actions must reflect what it means to care for a child appropriately. Follow these guidelines for appropriate behaviors when interacting with children:

### **Guidelines for the discipline of children:**

- Camp personnel may never, under any circumstances, hit or otherwise physically punish a child.
- Camp personnel may not use abusive or derogatory language with campers.
- Camp personnel should ask for help with particularly difficult children by seeking the assistance of supervisory or administrative staff.

### **Guidelines for touching campers:**

- On the hand, shoulder, or upper back.
- Side hugs rather than full hugs.
- Never against the child's will unless in the case of clear and present danger to the child.
- Never against the child's verbal or nonverbal expression of discomfort.
- Never when it would have the effect of over-stimulating the child.
- Never in a place on the child's body that is normally covered by a bathing suit unless for clear medical necessity and then only with the supervision of another adult.

### **Avoid behavior that may be intrusive or invasive:**

- Embarrassing a child about their body.
- Drawing attention to a child while they are changing or showering.
- Tickling, wrestling, or otherwise over-stimulating a child.
- Romantic lives of adults can, under no circumstances, be shared with the campers.
- Telling stories or engaging in conversation that is lurid or overstimulating.
- Adults should never be alone with an individual camper. Always follow the 2:1 ratio.
- Adults under no circumstances will share a bed or sleeping bag with a camper.
- Male volunteers need to be aware of the tendency for adolescent girls to develop crushes on them.
- Whatever is done with campers should be done in broad daylight and with company!
- Adults need to set limits on campers who cling and/or hang on them.
- There will be two adults supervising campers during changing time at the swimming pool.

### **Day Camp Staff Responsibilities:**

Adults are caretakers of children. We are not here to judge or gossip about other people's children.

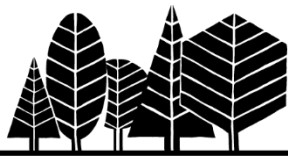
Inappropriate sexual contact with or physical abuse of a camper can have severe emotional and psychological effects on that camper that can last a lifetime. These reactions can be so severe that they can require intensive professional intervention, which can be disruptive to the victim's life.

- Staff need to watch for signs of stress in themselves and each other as a way of maintaining a safe environment in camp.
- Help other staff who may be at risk of hurting or abusing children.
- Alert other staff (i.e., the Day Camp Director or other supervisory staff) if there appears to be a problem or potential problem.
- Seek help for yourself if you feel at risk for hurting or abusing a camper.

## **Reporting Child Abuse**

All Day Camp Directors need to complete either Mandated Reporter Training or the Girl Scouts Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Training.

Girl Scout volunteers are considered mandated reporters under Pennsylvania's Child Protective Services Laws. If you suspect abuse of any kind, you are legally obligated to file a report. There are two ways to file a report—online at [www.pa-fsa.org](http://www.pa-fsa.org) or by calling ChildLine at 800-932-0313. Please note, you only need to have reasonable suspicion in order to file a report. If you are unsure, you may consult with your Day Camp Director or the Volunteer Relations Coordinator at 800-248-3355.



## Adding Girl Voice

When working at Day Camp, staff will hear a lot about girl-led planning but may not have a clear handle on what this exactly means. Sometimes, counselors get so enthusiastic about certain activities that the campers' interests and skills may get overlooked, and it's important to go over steps and ideas on how to incorporate girl-led planning into the camp culture.

Remember that when working with children, it will not be perfect! Although it may be hard to sit back and let them do things themselves when you could do it much more quickly and efficiently, it's vital to the program that they be allowed to make decisions and also make mistakes. This allows everyone at camp to learn and begin to grow their leadership.

As you can see to the right, as the leadership ladder begins at the bottom, the Girl Scout Daisy is present, but the adult is in the principal role. The Daisy has a say and does make the decisions, but the adult guides those decisions. As Girl Scouts get older, they start to take a more influential role in the leadership of the group, and the Counselor steps back to allow them to lead. By the time the Girl Scout is in her teens, it's a time to take an ever more prevailing role, and the staff member steps back even further. Staff should never leave completely, remaining there to advise, lend a hand when necessary, and ensure safety and well-being.



## Six Steps to Girl-Led Planning

### Step 1 – Do advanced planning.

The level of advanced planning will depend on the age level of the group. With Girl Scout Daisies, leaders should determine all of the possibilities and have a solid plan. With Girl Scout Seniors, staff should let the campers do the advanced planning and provide guidance only when needed. When working with an older group, you can research options for them to explore, just don't do the exploring for them!

### Step 2 – Ask the campers.

This may be the simplest step, but it is the most important one! Ask the unit to brainstorm ideas. Write these ideas on large pieces of paper. Remember, when brainstorming, there are no wrong answers. Let them dream!

### Step 3 – Sift through ideas and create a plan.

Take the brainstormed ideas and begin to sift through those ideas and put them on a preliminary schedule. Remember, big dreams can become a great program idea. If they say they want to go on a primitive camping overnight, that may not be immediately possible, but having a fun Camp Skills 101 session in the unit is a great first step! Use an age-appropriate form of decision-making to agree upon and continue to plan your week.

### Step 4 – Inform other staff.

Once you know what the unit wants to do and have figured out together a plan to accomplish it, inform other staff who might need to support you. Do all staff members in the unit know and understand the plan? Have you communicated with the leadership team or parents (if necessary)? Informing others will help ensure staff support when it comes time to implement the plan.

### Step 5 – Use the plan.

Follow the plan the best you can. Work with the campers to determine how to achieve their goals. Remember that when working with any group, it will not be perfect! Allow them to make mistakes. Encourage their hard work. If they follow the plan, they'll learn and become more independent in the future.

## Step 6 – Evaluate the activity.

Once the group has implemented their activity, take some time to evaluate how it went. Evaluating is important because it allows everyone to share ideas and gain meaning from their experience. If they understand what they learned, it can be applied to the next activity they plan. The application of learning will make your job easier as their counselor.

## Activities

All of the program activity areas of camp have specific rules and procedures that help to make the activities there fun, safe, and exciting for campers. Several of these program areas require a staff member who is specifically certified in order to run the activity. This is true whether it's campers taking part or just staff. Please make sure to reference *Safety Activity Checkpoints* for detailed information on all activities. Below is a summary, which does not include all standards to which you are responsible.

### Signs of Successful Girl-led Planning

- Engaged and invested in their activities
- Working cooperatively
- Excited to tell others about their work
- Gain confidence through sharing & group decision making

## Arts & Crafts

**Participation requirements:** Anyone can participate! Activities should be age-appropriate, with just enough challenge to the project to help campers be satisfied with their work, but not so difficult that they become frustrated.

**Instructor qualifications:** Anyone can lead! Arts and crafts activities can happen both during scheduled activity times or during downtime or chosen unit times. As long as the staff member knows what the plan is and has the equipment and supplies to be successful, they are qualified to lead arts and crafts.

**Safety precautions:** Counselors should be aware of their group's abilities and make sure to plan activities that they can be safe doing them. Younger campers might struggle with sharp objects or small, detailed work, and any camper working with something that has a heating element, such as a hot glue gun, should be monitored at all times.

## Nature

**Participation requirements:** Anyone can participate! Activities should be age-appropriate and accessible for all campers, add to their knowledge of the natural world, and be fun!

**Instructor qualifications:** Anyone can lead! Nature activities can happen both during scheduled activity times or during downtime or chosen unit times. As long as the staff member has a plan and has the equipment and supplies to be successful, they are qualified to lead nature sessions.

**Safety precautions:** Any time a staff member is leading any type of nature activity, they need to be sure that what they are doing and teaching campers about is safe. This would include wild edible plants, fire building, hikes, or water studies, along with a wide variety of other activities. All participants, both campers and staff, should be wearing the right gear for the activity, such as long pants or waterproof shoes. Any group going out on extended hikes must bring a First Aider with them, as well as a first-aid kit and some form of communication (walkie-talkie or phone).

## High Adventure

Any high-adventure activities, such as swimming, target sports, watercraft rentals, etc., will require the submission of a *Trip and High-Adventure Activity Application Form*. The *Trip and High-Adventure Activity*

*Application Form* will also be needed for day camps that provide transportation or have an overnight. The Day Camp Trip and High Adventure Application can be found [here](#).

## Archery

**Participation requirements:** All participants must be Junior level or above (4<sup>th</sup> grade). Brownies (grades 2-3) may participate if appropriately sized equipment is available.

**Instructor qualifications:** Only individuals who have successfully passed USA Archery's Level 1 Archery Instructor course or above may lead archery classes and activities. Archery instructors are responsible for checking all equipment prior to use to ensure that it is in good condition. Any equipment that is broken beyond repair should be disposed of, and the Day Camp Director should be informed in order to obtain new equipment. Any supplies that are able to be repaired can be set aside until this can be done.

**Safety precautions:** Every individual shooting archery will go over all safety procedures prior to the start of the activity. This includes:

- orientation to the equipment, including bows, arrows, and safety equipment;
- explanation of whistle commands and their meaning;
- instruction on proper use of shooting equipment, including a practical demonstration; and
- demonstration of proper use of safety equipment, including arm guards and finger tabs (if using).

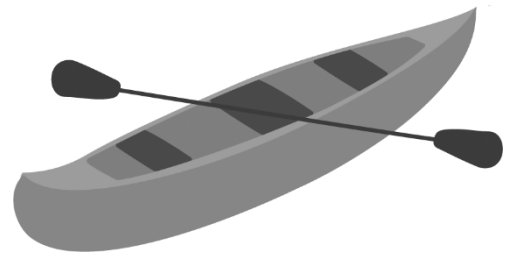
When archery is not in session, all equipment will be taken off the field and stored in a secure location. Quivers, targets, and target stands may remain outside if archery is scheduled within the next week. If not, they should be placed in a weather-proof building or closet. The archery field will have clear signs restricting access during archery activities.

## Boating

**Participation requirements:** Campers who are Brownie grade level and up (at least going into the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade) are able to participate in all boating activities at camp. Daisies can participate if there is an adult in every boat.

**Instructor qualifications:** Any staff member who is leading boating activities at camp must have at least a Level 1 certification from the American Canoe Association (or equivalent governing body) if boating on flatwater, and at least Level 2 if on moving water. Besides a boating instructor, staff must also cover the appropriate ratio for the age of the campers participating.

**Safety precautions:** Prior to going out on the boating trip, all participants should receive a basic orientation to the equipment they will be using, including the boat, paddles, and personal floatation devices (PFDs). All individuals in a boat are required to wear a PFD that is fitted well and checked by the instructor. At no time will boating activities take place during stormy weather or if there is a threat of a storm. All boating activities will cease for 30 minutes after the last heard thunder.



## Swimming

**Participation requirements:** Every participant at camp is able to go swimming. All campers and staff are required to undergo a swim test at the start of their camp session, which includes swimming a specified distance in the pool and treading water. The test is used to classify swimming abilities and for the placement of participants in an appropriate swim class. Some type of color-coded safety system must be in place to quickly account for all levels of the swimmers in the pool. This could be through the

use of different colored swim caps, wrist bands, or arm bands. Untested swimmers will be limited to the shallow end.

**Instructor qualifications:** All lifeguards must be at least 16 years old with a lifeguarding certification through the American Red Cross or equivalent certifying body. For every 25 swimmers, there needs to be one lifeguard, and there also must be one watcher for every 10 swimmers. **At no time can the number of lifeguards and watchers under the age of 18 be greater than the number of adult lifeguards and watchers.**

Swimmers	Lifeguards	Watchers
1-10	1	1
11-25	1	2
26-35	2	3
36-50	2	4

**Safety precautions:** Rules for any swimming area (pool, creek, lake, etc.) will be reviewed before every swim session and must be obeyed by everyone, campers and staff. A First Aid/CPR certified person is also required to be present. As most lifeguard certifications include this component, the lifeguard could be that certified person. With larger groups, it's advisable that a volunteer staff member who is not assigned a pool duty should handle those responsibilities.

## Transportation

At any point that day camp staff provide transportation to campers who are not their own children, or if a camper has been given explicit permission to be transported to and from camp (such as a neighbor), the following transportation procedures must be taken into consideration.

### Driver Requirements

Drivers must be 21 years of age and hold a valid driver's license for the size and type of vehicle being used. All drivers transporting campers must be registered members of Girl Scouts and approved volunteers.

### Vehicle Requirements

All vehicles used to transport campers and volunteer staff off-site must be equipped with the following:

- first-aid kit,
- health histories of all passengers,
- vehicle registration,
- insurance information, and
- current state safety inspection.

In addition, it's recommended that each vehicle have safety equipment and a means of communication. Safety equipment may include the following:

- fire extinguisher,
- reflectors,
- maps, and
- a cell phone.

### Transportation Guidelines

- At least one vehicle at camp should be designated the "emergency vehicle." The emergency vehicle should never have less than a half tank of gas.
- If, for some reason, a camper needs to leave the vehicle, they must have an adult with them. One of the adults in the vehicle is to be First Aid and CPR certified.
- Campers and volunteer staff should only be transported in vehicles designed to carry passengers. They are not permitted to ride in the back of trucks or station wagons, except in an extreme emergency and only when directed by appropriate volunteer staff.

- Vehicles should only carry the number of passengers specified by the vehicle manufacturer, and there must be a seatbelt for all passengers.
- There must be at least one adult in the vehicle at all times. In groups of five or more girls, an additional adult should be present.
- If traveling by bus, there should be at least two adults in addition to the bus driver.
- When transporting campers with disabilities, the ratio of adults to girls will change based on the additional assistance needed. (See established camp ratios.) Persons in wheelchairs must be belted to the wheelchair and have the chair in a locked position and secured to the vehicle.
- Vehicles are not permitted to convoy/caravan. When traveling together, all vehicles should be kept apart at a safe distance. All drivers should have maps, complete directions, and appropriate telephone numbers.
- Drivers should pre-establish rest stops for check-ins and stop at regular intervals at acceptable rest areas.
- All traffic laws must be obeyed.
- After three consecutive hours of driving, the drivers need to be rotated, and the passengers must be given an opportunity to rest.
- When loading or unloading passengers, be certain that the area is free from vehicular traffic, unless there is an emergency. The vehicle should be in park with the emergency brake on and the motor turned off. This procedure should be done in an orderly manner, and campers should be instructed where to assemble after unloading. Remember, there should be adult supervision at all times.

## **Vehicle Breakdowns**

- If a vehicle breaks down, move as far off the road as possible.
- Place the transmission in park, low, or reverse. Turn the ignition off and remove the key. Set the emergency brake and turn on the four-way flashers.
- If safe to do so, unload passengers and move them well off the road away from the vehicle. Remember, the campers are to be supervised by an adult at all times. If evacuation from a bus is necessary, follow the established procedures.
- Contact the emergency contact person with the information about the breakdown and your location. Request any additional help at this time. Remember, one adult must stay with the vehicle and the campers at all times.
- If an accident has occurred, refer to your Emergency Procedures Card.

## **Passenger Behavior and Orientation Checklist**

Before embarking, discuss vehicle safety with your passengers:

- All passengers must wear seatbelts. If in a bus, this requirement is exempt unless a bus has them available.
- Do not distract the driver.
- Passengers should remain seated at all times with their hands and arms inside the vehicle.
- Noise level should be low, so as not to distract the driver.
- No throwing of objects or any other disruptive behavior.
- Passengers should enter and leave the vehicle under the direction of an adult. If an emergency stop is necessary, all directions and the buddy system should be followed.
- If a behavior problem should arise and a verbal warning does not solve the problem, the vehicle should pull off the road in a safe area and follow the established disciplinary procedures.

## **Food Service**

When planning your day camp, food service is very important. Some day camps choose to prepare meals for attendees, some provide snacks only, and some ask that participants bring all their food. When choosing your options for meals, you'll need to adhere to the standards below. In addition, you'll need to ensure that the volunteer staff who are preparing and serving meals have the proper training (i.e., those cooking over a fire have attended the appropriate outdoor trainings).

## Facilities

- Kitchens, dining facilities, and food service units must comply with all applicable building and health codes. Permits and licenses are obtained for operation where applicable.
- All food service facilities with a commercial stove must have a suppression system in the hood.
- All utensils, equipment, and surrounding surfaces used in the preparation, service, and display of food must be made of nontoxic, non-corrosive materials constructed, installed, and maintained to be easily cleaned and kept clean and in good repair at all times during the site operation.
- Food service units provide:
  - an area for washing and sanitizing dishes, utensils, pots, and pans;
  - facilities for storing pots and pans and cooking utensils;
  - space for storage of cleaning equipment and supplies that is separate from the food storage area;
  - toilet and hand-washing facilities for food service personnel;
  - refrigeration for perishable foods;
  - water supply, sink space, food preparation, and storage areas that meet applicable health department requirements; and
  - sufficient equipment to prepare and serve food for the entire group using the facility.

## Outdoor Cooking Areas

- An extinguishing device (bucket of water/sand, shovel/rake, fire extinguisher, etc.) is readily available
- The fire circle/cooking area should be:
  - located in an area reasonably protected from the elements.
  - away from trails or traffic patterns.
  - in compliance with all local fire ordinances.
  - built on existing sites, if available.
  - away from overhanging branches, steep slopes, rotted stumps or logs, dry grass and leaves, and cleared of any burnable materials.

## Menu Planning

When planning menus, consideration is given to religious and other dietary needs or observances, to health considerations, and to ethnic diversity.

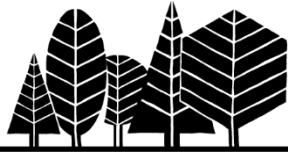
## Personnel

- All food service personnel will:
  - wear clean, washable outer garments, head coverings (hair net), and appropriate footwear,
  - wear food service gloves when handling food, and
  - maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness.
- All appropriate food service personnel are trained in the following:
  - safe use of cleaning compounds and drying agents,
  - safe and proper use of all food service equipment,
  - correct procedures for manual lifting and moving of heavy objects, and
  - use, type, and location of fire extinguishers.

## Guidelines

- All poisonous substances, detergents, bleaches, cleaning compounds, or any other potentially injurious materials are specifically and plainly labeled as to contents and hazards in use and are stored only in their original container away from food to prevent contamination of food.
- All food preparation and serving areas are cleaned after each use.

- It is recommended that the Nurse or First Aid/CPR-designated volunteer be present for meals.
- Any food service personnel with a skin infection, cold, or communicable disease will not be involved in food preparation, service, or clean up.
- Hand-washing facilities are provided for food service workers that include antibacterial soap or hand sanitizer, single-use towels, and signs posted reminding personnel of hand-washing procedures.
- All food service personnel must wash their hands and arms immediately with antibacterial soap after using restroom facilities.
- All methods for handling, storing, defrosting, preparing, and serving food and beverages meet applicable health codes.
- Procedures are in place and implemented that prevent food contamination during food preparation and serving.
- All perishable foods are kept at a temperature of 40°F or lower, and thermometers are located in a readily visible place in all refrigeration facilities. This applies to all refrigerators, but not to ice chests throughout the site. All foods are to be refrigerated until needed for the meal. If sending out to the site, all perishables should be sent in a cooler with adequate ice packs to ensure safe food.
- All prepared hot foods are maintained at a minimum of 140°F throughout the serving operation.
- Frozen foods are kept at a temperature that will keep them frozen until ready for processing. No food that has been thawed shall be refrozen unless it has been cooked or processed before refrigerating.
- All freezers are maintained at the appropriate temperature, and thermometers are located in a visible place.
- Unpackaged food that has been served or returned from an eating area will not be served again or used in the preparation of other food.
- No food prepared or stored in a private home will be served unless the state health department has licensed the home operation.
- Food that is stored in bulk containers or self-serve containers must have a label that is conspicuously displayed and securely attached, containing the common name of the product and the ingredients used.
- Dishes, silverware, and cooking equipment are cleaned by scraping, washing in hot, sudsy water (minimum 100 degrees), and rinsing in clear, hot water (minimum 100°F). A second-rinse process should be used with sanitizing tablets or a bleach mix, and then items should be air-dried.
- Dishes and silverware are stored in a dust-free, animal-resistant storage area.
- Garbage containing food waste must have a trash liner and a tight-fitting lid and must be emptied on a daily basis.



## Service Unit Day Camp Positions

This is a sample of day camp volunteer staff positions. Day camps may choose to add or subtract positions as appropriate for their day camp. **The required positions are Day Camp Director, First Aider/Nurse, and Unit Leaders.** A sample of a service unit Day Camp Director position description is on the next page.

- **Day Camp Director (required)**
- **First Aider/Nurse (required, cannot also be the Day Camp Director)**
- **Unit Leaders (required)**
- Assistant Day Camp Director (strongly recommended)
- Business Manager
- Registrar
- Kitchen Manager/ Cook
- Assistant Unit Leaders
- Activity Specialists (Canoeing, Archery, Lifeguards)
- Program Aides (Cadettes and older)
- Planning Committee

## Position Description

Title: Service Unit Day Camp Director

Purpose: To develop, direct, and oversee all day camp operations in accordance with the Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania, GSUSA, federal, state, and local policies, standards, guidelines, procedures, and laws.

Responsible to: Service Unit Manager and council staff

### Requirements:

- At least 21 years of age
- Registered Girl Scout member
- Approved Girl Scout Western Pennsylvania volunteer with current clearances on file
- Successful experience in administration, supervision, and group leadership
- Knowledge of the Girl Scout program
- Successful experience in planning and implementing outdoor living and activity experiences

### Qualifications:

- Accept and adhere to the principles of the Girl Scout movement as embodied in the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
- Support GSUSA and council policies, guidelines, standards, and procedures.
- Serve as a positive example for girls and other adults by modeling desired leadership attributes and behaviors, such as advocating for change, fostering teamwork, and maintaining a positive attitude, including flexibility, patience, reliability, and enthusiasm.
- Demonstrate the ability to work in an outdoor setting, where applicable

### Specific Responsibilities:

- Participation in service unit day camp training
- Develop a plan for the camp utilizing the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)
- Supervise volunteer staff
  - Recruit, select, place, train, supervise, and release volunteer staff
  - Plan, conduct, and evaluate day camp training specific to your day camp
  - Conduct volunteer staff meetings to ensure effective communications
- Interpret and administer personnel policies and practices
- Submit *Trip and High Adventure Applications*
- Maintain leadership, program activities, and health and safety in accordance with GSUSA, Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania, federal, state, and local standards
- Coordinate camp activities, organization, and government
- Promote understanding and use of the unit plan and the group government system
- Oversee planning and carrying out of Girl Scout programs in the units
- Coordinate schedules for special program features, such as waterfront activities and program consultants
- Approve all purchases and expenses within the approved budget
- Supervise business procedures and record-keeping
- Ensure that community contacts resource for health and protection services are developed and maintained
- Ensure that an emergency plan is in place and observed
- Ensure that a transportation plan is in place and observed
- Develop and maintain good relationships with parents/guardians; ensure that they are notified of illness and/or injury of campers and volunteer staff members
- Ensure the use of the *Program Site Safety Checklist*
- Follow all current CDC guidelines, as well as state and local guidelines
- Complete the *Trip & High Adventure Activity Application for Non-Council-Owned Campsites*
- Oversee the completion of required records and reports and submit them to council within 14 days of the close of camp.
  - Service Unit Day Camp Final Report (Online Form)
  - Attendance Rosters for girls and adults (Online Form)
  - Camp Health Record Log
  - Girl and Adult Health Histories for girls who required treatment
- Promote good morale for volunteer staff and campers
- Conduct a day camp volunteer staff evaluation meeting at the close of camp