

Managing Girl Scout Conflict

POLICY

Differences of opinion, disagreements, and conflicts may occur even in the healthiest Girl Scout relationships. When handled with empathy, respect, and kindness, conflicts can enhance communication and improve relationships. However, when disagreements escalate, they often interfere with the ability of adults to provide girls with a high-quality Girl Scout experience.

Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania defines conflict as a disagreement in which the parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests, or concerns. It arises from a clash of perceptions, goals, or values in an arena where people care about the outcome.

When conflict arises, those involved are encouraged to sit down together and talk in a calm, nonjudgmental manner to resolve the conflict. If the conflict cannot be resolved informally, those involved are expected to participate in the council's conflict resolution processes. They are also expected to maintain confidentiality to respect the dignity and rights of everyone involved.

The volunteer relations coordinator, with the support of the volunteer support team, is committed to hearing from both parties and will help to identify the business problems and enact solutions that will improve the Girl Scout experience.

Every conflict is different, and all concerns brought to volunteer relations are handled individually. Nevertheless, you can always expect a thorough and careful investigation of all issues, coaching toward an amicable resolution, and the development of an action plan to address sources of conflict.

PROCEDURE

1. The most effective way of resolving conflicts or concerns is usually through calm, open discussion between the individuals involved, either by telephone or in person. Those in conflict are encouraged to try to resolve the matter informally among themselves. E-mail and text message exchanges are not conducive to clear communication and, therefore, should be avoided. Volunteers may contact the council for guidance and support with self-resolution.
2. If an issue cannot be resolved informally, any of the parties involved should reach out to customer care at 800-248-3355 or customercare@gswpa.org or contact their membership engagement specialist for guidance on resolving the conflict.
3. If the matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved in step two, the matter will be referred to the volunteer relations coordinator. The volunteer relations coordinator serves as a neutral person who helps to support those in conflict to reach a resolution. The volunteer relations coordinator will investigate the conflict by contacting all parties and relevant witnesses.
4. Based on the findings of that inquiry, the volunteer relations coordinator may recommend a staff-facilitated meeting between the parties in conflict. The two primary parties will agree to a face-to-

face meeting, facilitated by the volunteer relations coordinator, to discuss how they will work together moving forward. The meeting will result in a mutually agreeable action plan.

5. If the above step does not resolve the conflict, or the issue is deemed a safety, policy, or behavior issue, the volunteer relations coordinator will consult with the manager, volunteer support to identify appropriate solutions. For the most serious levels of conflict, the director, membership engagement and the executive team may also be consulted.
6. The volunteer relations coordinator will notify those involved in the conflict of the outcome in step five. The volunteer relations coordinator will also notify any appropriate individuals such as troop leaders, the service unit manager/team, or caregivers, when necessary, to help ensure that the Girl Scout experience is as uninterrupted as possible for the girls.

When working to resolve a situation, keep in mind that a troop/group leader may not dismiss a Girl Scout, including an adult or girl, from a troop/group for any reason.

Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania will not release girls from a troop because of an adult conflict, except in a last-resort situation where all other options have been explored and only with executive approval.

Once the volunteer relations coordinator becomes involved in a matter, it will be managed by the assigned staff until its conclusion. All participants in these matters are expected to comply with all requests and work toward a mutually beneficial outcome.