



**Girl Scouts of
Northern Illinois
Volunteer Policies,
Procedures, and How-Tos**





Girl Scout Promise, Law, and Mission

Girl Scout Promise

On my honor, I will try:

To serve God* and my country,
To help people at all times,
And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

Girl Scout Law

I will do my best to be
honest and fair,
friendly and helpful,
considerate and caring,
courageous and strong,
and responsible for what I say and do,
and to respect myself and others,
respect authority,
use resources wisely,
make the world a better place,
and be a sister to every Girl Scout.

Girl Scout Mission

Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

*Girl Scouts of the USA makes no attempt to define or interpret the word "God" in the Girl Scout Promise. It looks to individual members to establish for themselves the nature of their spiritual beliefs. When making the Girl Scout Promise, individuals may substitute wording appropriate to their own spiritual beliefs for the word "God." Note: This disclaimer appears in the National Leadership Journey adult guides, but not in the Girl Scouts' books. It is included here as a reminder to you, as a volunteer, that it is your responsibility to be sensitive to the spiritual beliefs of the Girl Scouts and adults in your group and to make sure everyone feels comfortable and included in Girl Scouting. Please feel free to share this information with families.

Introduction

The Volunteer Policies & Procedures of Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois (GSNI) are established upon the principle that the direction and success of Girl Scouting rests in the voluntary participation of its adult members in collaboration with our council staff.

This document outlines the policies and procedures of GSNI. It is not the intent of this document to repeat national policies, but to adopt specific, local policies and procedures fitting to our council. These policies and procedures are intended to provide the basis for reasonable and consistent guidance for our volunteers. Volunteers are not employees of Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois, and the policies and procedures contained herein do not constitute an employment contract and are subject to change at the discretion of the Board of Directors of Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois.

All members of Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) are responsible for adhering to the policies, practices, procedures, and guidelines in GSUSA's [Blue Book of Basic Documents](#), [Volunteer Essentials](#), and [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#). These documents are published by GSUSA and are used throughout the national organization.

In addition to the standard volunteer policies, Board Members have standards of conduct that apply to that particular position. A Board Member may not, while serving as a member of the Council Board of Directors, serve in any operational volunteer position for GSNI.

Within this document, the term "GSNI" is used interchangeably with the words "the council." The term "volunteer" is defined as any person who is not a paid staff member, who is approved and appointed by GSNI and delivers Girl Scout programming. Their participation affects the health, safety, and/or finances of the youth or adult membership.

These policies and procedures will be reviewed annually to ensure they reflect the volunteer management goals of GSNI, the current policies and trends in Girl Scouts, as well as current legislative requirements.

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Part 1: Policies

COMMITMENT TO PLURALISM

Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois Belonging Statement

Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois draws inspiration from our Girl Scout Promise and Law in our Belonging Statement. Being a member of Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois means you are part of a community of diverse races, ethnicities, gender identities, sexual orientations, abilities, and religions. We commit to providing an equitable and accessible Girl Scout Leadership Experience to all Girl Scouts in our council. We are champions for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access.

These are our promises to you:

- We will listen and seek to understand from **diverse voices and experiences**. We will act on what we have learned.
- We will offer a **culture of welcoming and belonging** to all members, potential members, and community partners of Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois.
- We will provide **brave and safe spaces** for Girl Scouts to participate with us. Members can expect to be themselves in a secure and respectful environment.
- We will incorporate **the principles of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility** at all levels of our movement.
- We believe every member (youth and adult) of Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois should have **respect and acceptance** in our organization.
- We commit to a journey of being an **anti-racist and anti-oppressive** organization.
- We **welcome** you to join us in our movement and mission.

You belong here.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

GSNI maintains a strong policy of equal opportunity. In keeping with GSUSA's [Blue Book of Basic Documents](#); we recruit, train, promote, and dismiss volunteers on the basis of competence and volunteer position performance, without regard to race, creed, color, ethnicity, religion, lineage or citizenship, national origin, gender marital status, familial status, age, socioeconomic background, source of income, disability, genetic information, predisposing genetic characteristics, carrier status, domestic violence victim status, or any other characteristic

protected by law. Furthermore, to assure the membership of GSNI reflects the diversity of population groups within its jurisdiction; GSNI is committed to a policy of equal opportunity and outreach in the recruitment, selection, placement, development, and recognition of volunteers and in the extension of Girl Scouting to adults in all communities within its jurisdiction.

Adults and volunteers are responsible for making Girl Scouting a place where children are as safe emotionally as they are physically. Girl Scouts welcomes those interested members in grades K-12, regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, family structure, religion, and socioeconomic background. When scheduling, helping plan, and carrying out activities, carefully consider the needs of everyone involved (e.g., financial constraints, religious holidays, accessibility of appropriate transportation, and meeting places).

Any volunteer who engages in or encourages discrimination in any form is subject to release from their volunteer position at the discretion of GSNI.

MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION

All Girl Scouts and adults participating in the Girl Scout Movement must be registered as members with GSUSA and pay the annual membership dues as outlined by GSUSA, except those adults who are lifetime members. At times there are adults who are working on a short-term project, in a temporary advisory or consulting capacity, who do not work with Girl Scouts or Girl Scout funds directly, in which membership is not a requirement. Members agree to abide by the policies, principles, and procedures of GSUSA and GSNI.

VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS & BENEFITS

Basic Volunteer Requirements

- Membership Registration - Adult volunteers (18+ years and out of high school) participating in the Girl Scout Movement must be registered as members with GSUSA and individually pay the annual membership dues, except those adults who are lifetime members or who are volunteering in an episodic capacity.
- Must complete and pass a criminal background check.
- Must believe in the Girl Scout Mission.
- Must accept the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
- Should have adequate time to perform the duties and responsibilities of the position.
- Must complete required training based on volunteer role.
- Must demonstrate an understanding that services are given without payment.
- Must accept supervision and provide feedback to GSNI.

Benefits to volunteers include:

- GSNI newsletter and publications.
- Learning opportunities and support from GSNI staff.
- Supplementary accident insurance as part of GSUSA membership.
- Volunteer experience that may be useful for career development.
- Support youth growth and leadership.

Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

Volunteers are a valuable resource to GSNI, its staff, and members. Volunteers shall be extended the right to be given meaningful assignments, the right to be treated respectfully, the right to effective supervision, the right to full involvement and participation, and the right to appropriate recognition for work done.

In return, volunteers shall agree to perform their duties to the best of their abilities, to support the goals and policies and procedures of GSNI, and to ask for assistance and/or guidance from the Service Team or GSNI staff if they find themselves in a situation that they are unsure of or may conflict with those goals and policies of GSNI, as detailed in the Conflict Resolution section of this document.

Further, volunteers shall agree that they will not use the Girl Scout name, related activities, publications, and/or facilities for public or private promotion of their own views and opinions on topics unrelated to Girl Scouting (including, but not limited to, views on sexual orientation, religion, family situations, politics, etc.).

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

GSNI is committed to the highest ethical standards, and we expect all volunteers to act in the best interest of the organization and its mission. This mission demands that we, as stewards, act in an ethical manner to uphold the public trust and the values of responsibility, integrity, openness, honesty, accountability, and respect in all that we do in the name of Girl Scouts.

I agree to uphold these values, and I will:

1. Affirm the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
2. Take all required training based on volunteer role, and comply with GSNI policies, procedures, and safety guidelines.
3. Welcome Girl Scouts and adults from a variety of backgrounds and include them in activities. Make an intentional effort to learn about, experience, and appreciate cultures other than my own.
4. Honor the leadership role of the youth members of Girl Scouts and support their decisions.

5. Act responsibly when overseeing Girl Scout funds, ensure responsible use of the GSNI tax exempt letter, maintain accurate records, and file required reports. Girl Scout funds are only to be used in direct support of Girl Scout programs and to pay for appropriate Girl Scout expenses.
6. Model the behavior that shows respect for local, state, and federal laws and ordinances, as well as follow GSNI Volunteer Policies & Procedures, [Volunteer Essentials](#), [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#), and in GSUSA's [Blue Book of Basic Documents](#).

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK

Caregivers and youth members trust that Girl Scouts is a safe place, and we do not take that trust lightly. GSNI is committed to maintaining policies and procedures that create a safe environment for our members. One of those policies is to conduct a criminal background check (CBC) for all new volunteers and repeat them every three years.

Frequently Asked Questions about Criminal Background Checks

Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois requires all members to complete a Criminal Background Check (CBC) prior to appointment as an eligible volunteer. The criminal background search is a required component of the Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois volunteer screening procedure, the goal of which is to screen prospective adult volunteers and place capable and qualified adults in all operational positions. *ALL* volunteer roles require a background check every three years. The Adult Member campaign is for adults who are not volunteering either by choice or due to non-eligibility issues.

Q: When does the background check need to be done? I've volunteered for years – why am I getting this now?

A: Northern Illinois will conduct a criminal background search on new volunteers at the time of appointment to their role, and on all renewing volunteers, every three years. Returning volunteers will be asked to renew their background check 90 days BEFORE their current CBC has expired. They will receive another prompt via email to renew their CBC at 45 days and at 30 days. The background check link will be automatically sent when a member registers for a volunteer position they do not currently hold.

Q: How do I complete a background check?

A: There are two options to complete the background check:

- Online (preferred): All volunteers will receive instructions via email to complete their background check from our independent vendor: Asurint.
 - Every attempt should be made to have volunteers complete their background check via the link sent to them by Asurint. This option avoids GSNI staff being responsible for volunteers' sensitive personal information.

- Paper: The paper form is available by request. The form can be requested from GSNI and should be submitted to GSNI via mail, email, or fax. The appropriate Recruitment Specialist will enter the CBC order with Asurint if member is new; Member Support if member is renewing.

Q: How long does it take for a criminal background check to be processed?

A: CBCs are usually processed by our vendor (Asurint) within 2-3 business days. Depending on the county, or if multiple states are involved, a CBC can take longer to complete.

Q: Can I submit a completed background check report from another vendor or organization?

A: GSNI requires that background checks be completed by the vendor we use. Therefore, background checks from other vendors or organizations are not accepted.

Q: How much does a background check cost?

A: There are two options for payment:

- Council Pay
- Self-Pay

By selecting self-pay, you are donating the cost of your background check back to the council and will be helping us invest those funds back toward our Girl Scouts. The fee for a basic (one address) search is currently \$6.25.

Q: What information does GSNI look for on a background check report?

A: GSNI is looking for criminal offenses and/or charges and presence on sex offender databases. GSNI does not check credit or financial information.

Q: Do you check credit? Will this affect my credit rating?

A: GSNI does not run a credit check, nor do we request any credit related information. The CBC process does make mention of the "Fair Credit Reporting Act" because that is the legislation that governs background checks as well as credit checks. We legally must include that information, even though we are not checking credit.

Q: Is my information kept confidential?

A: GSNI will maintain the confidentiality of all criminal background search information, including information regarding disqualification decisions. Additionally, Asurint uses multiple layers of security to ensure information is kept in strict confidence. From the point of entry, all data is encrypted upon submission to their web server.

Q: Can I have a copy of my background check once completed?

A: Members requesting a copy of their background check report can log into Asurint using the login and password that they created and view their background check results. Only the applicant can request a copy of their background check report from the vendor.

Q: Why is a social security number requested?

A: The social security number trace performs multiple functions in the background check process:

- It is an identifier – it verifies that the person is who they say they are and that they have a valid social security number.
- It uncovers any aliases a person may have used, so we are checking all names associated with that number, not just the name they have provided.
- It uncovers any additional counties that the person may have resided in, which enables us to check all jurisdictions.
- It gives us better assurances that we are looking at the correct person – especially a concern with common names.

Q: What if I don't have a social security number issued by the U.S., or I don't want to provide it?

A: A valid U.S. social security number should be entered when ordering your CBC so that Asurint can be confident they are returning accurate results. The well-being of our Girl Scouts is our TOP priority. Thank you for helping GSNI keep them safe! If you do not want to provide your social security number, or you do not have one, you can enter it as 111-11-1111; however, GSNI will require you to provide two forms of ID after the background check has been completed by the vendor.

Q: What if I don't agree with the information reported in the background check?

A: For disputes regarding information obtained by Asurint, please contact Asurint's customer support as follows:

- Phone: 800-906-1674
- Email: support@asurint.com

Q: What could exclude me from volunteering with GSNI?

A: Volunteer Disqualification:

- Murder
- A crime against a child
- A crime requiring offender to be on the sex offender list
- Identity theft and/or forgery
- Embezzlement
- Any crime in which a weapon was used
- Manufacturing of illegal drugs
- Selling certain types of drugs

For all other conduct and offenses, GSNI will review the applicant's situation on a case-by-case basis. The decision whether to allow volunteer participation will be within the discretion of GSNI.

The factors used to determine disqualification of a person from volunteer participation is as follows: The nature and severity of the criminal conduct, the position for which the person seeks to volunteer, length of time since the criminal conduct occurred, the circumstances under which the crime was committed, the degree of rehabilitation, and the number of crimes committed by the prospective volunteer.

GSNI reserves the right to disqualify or restrict the duties of any person who has been:

- Arrested
- convicted of certain crimes
- placed on probation or deferred adjudication for certain crimes, and/or who has committed acts that are considered contrary to the community standards of justice, honesty, or good morals, or has, plead guilty or no contest to certain crimes.

Volunteer approval may include a restriction of handling funds if there is a record of:

- Stealing
- Petty theft
- Misuse of credit cards
- Passing bad checks

DRIVERS

Individuals who drive vehicles for Girl Scout trips must be at least 21 years old with a valid driver's license and carry current motor vehicle insurance in compliance with Illinois State Law. Accidents and violation records will be reviewed by GSNI staff. A driving restriction may be placed on an individual prohibiting them from driving GSNI members, based on the number and severity of violations or accidents.

The primary volunteer in charge of a Girl Scout outing or trip should inquire with all drivers that they are 21 years of age, without a driving restriction, have a valid driver's license, and are a current auto insurance policy holder. It is not necessary for the primary volunteer to maintain a copy of these documents.

Volunteer approval may include a driving restriction if there is:

- Offense involving driving under the influence
- Reckless operation
- Loss of license

SEX OFFENDERS AND OTHER CRIMINAL ACTS

A Registered Sex Offender may not serve as a volunteer with GSNI in any capacity, and they may not participate in any way, either in troop, service unit, or in GSNI activities where youth members may be present. Troop meetings and activities may not be held or conducted at any residence where a member of the household is a Registered Sex Offender.

Troop leaders, assistant troop leaders, troop volunteers, and parents or guardians of youth members are required to immediately notify GSNI if they are, or an immediate family or household member is, or become aware that any troop leader, troop assistant leader or other troop volunteer, or troop family member is a Registered Sex Offender, has pending charges, has pled guilty or no contest, or has been placed on probation or deferred adjudication, regarding sexual offenses.

In addition, the individuals identified above are also required to immediately notify GSNI if they have been convicted, have pending charges, are placed on probation for a crime, or become aware of another person in their household or other adult associated with a troop has been convicted, has pending charges or has been placed on probation.

When GSNI in its discretion determines that it is reasonably necessary to safeguard youth members, GSNI may notify the parents or guardians of all youth members of a troop regarding: (a) the status of a troop leader, assistant leader, volunteer or family member as a Registered Sex Offender; (b) the requirements of this policy; and (c) the steps taken by GSNI to comply with the policy (for instance, the dismissal of, or written notice as described above to, the Registered Sex Offender.) For instance, if a family member of a Registered Sex Offender withdraws their youth member from the troop, or if a troop co-leader or other troop volunteer has been dismissed, GSNI may determine it is not necessary to give notice to the parents or guardians of the other youth members of their status as a Registered Sex Offender.

HARASSMENT, HOSTILITY, AND BULLYING

GSNI is committed to an environment and climate in which relationships are characterized by dignity, respect, courtesy, and equitable treatment. It is the policy of GSNI to provide all volunteers, staff, and members (youth and adult) with an environment free from all forms of unlawful or unwelcome harassment, hostility, and bullying; and therefore, it will not be tolerated.

Harassment on the basis of race, creed, color, ethnicity, religion, lineage or citizenship, national origin, gender status, age, socioeconomic background, source of income, disability, genetic information, predisposing genetic characteristics, carrier status, domestic violence

victim status, or any other characteristic protected by law will not be tolerated and is grounds for release.

This policy includes physical violence as well as intimidation, stalking, coercion, display of weapons, threats, and talking or joking about harassment or hostility, whether in person or through some other means of communications such as writing, telephone, voice mail, e-mail, or any form of social media.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources, “bullying” is defined as aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength, typically repeated over time.

Cyberbullying is bullying that occurs online. Whether cyberbullying occurs in e-mail, a text message, an online game, or on a social networking site, it is prohibited. This includes rumors or images posted online where other people may see them. GSNI will cooperate with police, schools, and other organizations that share our values that are attempting to enforce laws, regulations, and rules regarding cyberbullying regardless of the potential punishment.

Anyone, regardless of volunteer or member status, who violates this policy and/or refuses to abide by this policy, is prohibited from holding volunteer positions with GSNI and from attending Girl Scout activities, events, and meetings. Any volunteer who engages in or encourages bullying is subject to release from their volunteer position.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

GSNI prohibits sexual harassment and retaliation against its applicants, interns, contractors, volunteers, or employees by another individual. Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and is unlawful under federal, Illinois State, and local law. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome conduct which is either of a sexual nature or which is directed at an individual because of that individual's sex or gender, gender identity or gender expression (including, but not limited to, transgender status), and/or sexual orientation. Sexual harassment can be verbal, visual, or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion towards an individual based on sex or gender, gender identity or gender expression, and/or sexual orientation. This includes but is not limited to sexual advances or flirtations, requests for sexual favors, obscene or vulgar comments or gestures, sexual jokes or comments about a person's body, and propositions or suggestive or insulting comments of a sexual nature. It is unlawful and against this policy for males to sexually harass females or other males, and for females to sexually harass males or other females.

In accordance with this policy, GSNI will not condone or tolerate the following:

- Any display or demonstration of sexual activity between volunteers or between volunteers and youth members.
- Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between volunteers and youth members.
- Infliction of sexually abusive behavior upon youth members, including sexual touching and bodily contact, exhibitionism, voyeurism, and/or involvement of youth members in pornographic materials.
- Unwelcome sexual conduct/harassment of any Girl Scout member, volunteer, or employee of the same or opposite sex.
- Any other similar inappropriate behavior in accordance with federal, state, and local law.

GSNI maintains an environment that encourages any volunteer who believes they have been the subject of any unlawful or unwelcome harassment as defined in GSNI policy, to report the incident using GSNI's Incident Form B. Similarly, a volunteer who believes that a youth member is the victim of any form of harassment must immediately report the fact using [GSNI's Incident Form B](#). The designated staff will initiate an investigation and, depending on the findings, take appropriate corrective action.

If the harassment involves unwanted physical touching, coerced physical confinement or coerced sex acts, the conduct may constitute a crime. Contact the local police department or, in an emergency, dial 9-1-1.

GSNI reserves the right to refuse appointment/reappointment to any position and to dismiss or suspend from any position or affiliation with GSNI, any volunteer who, participating in Girl Scout activities, violates the aforementioned policy.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A conflict of interest exists when the interests or concerns of any volunteer member or any member of their family or any party, group, or organization in which the volunteer is actively involved may be seen as competing with the interests or concerns of GSNI.

Volunteer members or any member of their family, acting individually, or on behalf of another entity to which they have allegiance or obligation, should not utilize their position with GSNI for any personal advantage or for the advantage of another entity. A volunteer or any member of his/her immediate family shall not engage in conduct or activities which constitute a conflict of interest.

The purpose of the Conflict of Interest policy is to protect GSNI's constituents when volunteers are contemplating entering into a transaction or arrangement that might benefit the private interest of a volunteer or family member holding a leadership position over Girl Scout members or other volunteers.

Volunteers are prohibited from soliciting directly or indirectly any Girl Scout member or their families for any business relationship, charitable organization, or vendor relationship that may be perceived as a conflict of interest.

Duty to Disclose: Volunteers shall disclose in writing a full description of any activity, interest, or relationship that might create or appear to create a conflict of interest as soon as practicable, prior to the inception of the activity, interest, or relationship. In connection with any actual or possible conflict of interest where a volunteer or family member is expected to gain financially, the volunteer must disclose the existence of the financial interest and be given the opportunity to disclose all facts to their service unit leadership and GSNI staff representative to consider the proposed transaction or arrangement.

If a volunteer has brought legal action against GSNI or has caused GSNI to initiate legal action, GSNI has the right, at its discretion, to decline to appoint that person to a volunteer position within GSNI, or to remove that volunteer from their position if currently in place. Legal action includes any or all remedies of existing federal and state law.

This policy statement is not intended to apply to gifts and/or similar entertainment of nominal value that clearly are in keeping with good business ethics and do not obligate the recipient.

Any matter of question or interpretation that arises relating to this policy should be referred to the Chief Executive Officer for a decision.

All members of the Board of Directors will be required to sign an appropriate Conflict of Interest Disclosure.

This policy is intended to supplement but not replace any applicable state and federal laws governing conflicts of interest applicable to nonprofit and charitable organizations.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary, privileged, or sensitive information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer, whether this information involves a staff member, volunteer, member (youth or adult), or other person, or overall GSNI or personal business. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to, non-public technical, business, and financial information and plans, as well as private information about councils, young people, volunteers, customers, suppliers and employees. Information may include names, addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and information that might relate to family health, circumstances, living arrangements, or financial matters.

Personal, medical, and/or financial information about any youth or adult member which becomes known to a volunteer must be treated as confidential and may only be shared when necessary and only through established systems or the appropriate GSNI staff member/process.

Health or medical information may be disclosed to the extent necessary solely for treatment or emergency purposes.

Names, addresses, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers of youth members and adults must not be shared with any individual or business outside of Girl Scouting except as required for safety or for emergency purposes. Confidential information about members must not be published through any means including any internet channels or social media. Volunteers should be aware that most e-mails are not necessarily sent through secure channels and must only send content which is not confidential. Steps must be taken to properly secure and protect personal information in possession of volunteers, whether in paper or electronic form. Volunteers must exercise good judgment and care at all times to avoid unauthorized or improper disclosures of confidential information. Conversations in public places should be limited to matters that do not pertain to information of a sensitive or confidential nature. The privacy of all members must be respected and protected.

Any volunteer who belongs to multiple youth serving organizations is expected to protect the confidential information, brand, program pieces, and reputation of Girl Scouts. Using or sharing our information with competing organizations is strictly prohibited and may be a basis for release, suspension, or cause for not being reappointed to a position.

Failure to maintain confidentiality may result in termination of the volunteer's relationship with GSNI. Board members will be asked to sign GSNI's Confidential Non-Disclosure Agreement or other similar documents.

WHISTLEBLOWER

Retaliation against anyone who has reported an allegation of harassment, sexual harassment, or any violation of any GSNI policy is expressly prohibited and, if it occurs, will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including releasing the person who has engaged in the retaliatory behavior from their volunteer position. No volunteer making a good faith report shall be subjected to any retaliation from GSNI.

CHILD ABUSE

GSNI supports and maintains environments free of child abuse and neglect. All states require certain professionals and institutions to report suspected child abuse. Failure to report suspected child abuse can result in criminal and/or civil liability. All states require the report to be made to some type of law enforcement authority or child protection agency.

Reporting to a parent or relative will not satisfy the reporter's legal duty under the statutes. The following guidelines outline how reporting should happen in GSNI.

While volunteers are not mandated reporters within GSNI, we would encourage them to report suspected child abuse and/or neglect. GSNI requires all staff members to act as mandated reporters.

While not required, volunteers may find the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) online training module or online manual useful.

The training, *Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse: Training for Mandated Reporters*, can be accessed at the [Manual for Mandated Reporters](#).

Ideally the person with the most direct knowledge of the suspected abuse should be the one to call the DCFS Hotline. However, this is not a requirement. Volunteers suspecting child abuse have two options:

1) Report child abuse to DCFS: Volunteers who suspect abuse or neglect may contact the DCFS Hotline Number at 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873) directly.

The GSNI volunteer must also complete and submit GSNI's [Youth and Adult Incident Reporting Form \(B\)](#). Information submitted on this form will remain confidential with only appropriate staff members.

2) Report child abuse to GSNI: If a volunteer suspects child abuse and is not comfortable calling the hotline, they may complete and submit GSNI's [Youth and Adult Incident Reporting Form \(B\)](#). Once possible child abuse is reported via the form, a staff member is mandated to report it to DCFS.

In all cases, please preserve confidentiality of all reports made. Discuss only with the appropriate GSNI staff member and with DCFS/law enforcement personnel.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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

When a conflict arises between youth members or a youth member and a volunteer, get those involved to sit down together and [talk calmly in a nonjudgmental manner](#), keeping in mind that each party may need some time—a few days or a week—to calm down before being able to do this. Talking in this way might feel uncomfortable and difficult now, but it lays the groundwork

for working well together in the future. Whatever you do, do not spread your complaint around to others—that won't help the situation and causes only embarrassment and anger.

You'll also find conflict resolution activities in some of the Journeys, such as the aMAZE Journey for Cadettes or the MISSION: SISTERHOOD Journey for Seniors.

If a conflict persists, be sure you explain the matter to your volunteer support team. If the supervisor cannot resolve the issues satisfactorily (or if the problem involves the supervisor), refer to the [GSNI Behavioral Guide](#).

DELINQUENT FUNDS

Members with amounts due to GSNI more than 45 days past due are not permitted to handle money, product, or merchandise for GSNI until the amount owed is paid in full. GSNI reserves the right to restrict or remove from GSNI any person who owes money to GSNI.

Restriction or dismissal may occur as a result of delinquent and/or mismanagement of funds. Reappointment to a volunteer position is at the discretion of GSNI. GSNI will make a good faith attempt to collect any monies owed and reserves the right to use outside collection agencies. If restitution is not paid within 45 days, GSNI retains the right to file criminal and/or civil charges.

GSNI reserves the right to take legal action if the funds owed are not remitted. Legal action includes, but is not limited to, taking out a warrant to appear in small claims court, report to law enforcement, and submission to legal and or collection agency.

GSNI volunteers who are authorized signers are personally responsible for all financial consequences of overdrafts that they initiate.

A volunteer owing a debt to GSNI for more than four months will be removed from their volunteer position. They will not be eligible to be reappointed or serve in an appointed volunteer position until such time as that debt is paid in full. When the debt is paid in full, the volunteer may serve only in a volunteer role that does not have financial responsibilities for one full Girl Scout year or upon reevaluation. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to contact GSNI and request a review of volunteer eligibility status.

A volunteer who also serves as a facilitator owing debt to GSNI for more than 30 days will be suspended until the debt is completely paid.

Additional restrictions or actions may be applied for specific circumstances; the volunteer will be notified in writing of any restrictions or actions taken.

Volunteers, both at troop and service unit levels, must follow the policies and procedures as related to Finances and Money Earning as detailed in both this document and [Volunteer Essentials](#). This includes but is not limited to:

- All individuals handling Girl Scout funds must be a registered member, have had a background check completed, and must have completed the assigned financial training based on the volunteer role they will hold.
- Adhering to requirements for submitting annual finance reports by the established deadlines.
- Following requirements and guidelines for appropriate [money-earning](#) activities.

CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS

No volunteer may waive liability of a third party on behalf of GSNI.

When planning an event, there may be times where we need to obtain a Certificate of Insurance and have it on file two weeks prior to when your event is scheduled.

Please consult GSNI's [Safety Activity Checkpoints At-A-Glance](#) to determine if the facility offering the activity your troop would like to do requires GSNI to have a copy of the facility's [Certificate of Insurance](#) on file. Please consult our current Certificates of Insurance List to check if we already have a Certificate of Insurance on file for the organization.

If the facility your troop is planning to use is listed, then you only need to complete the necessary GSNI Permission Slips, the facility's waiver (if applicable), and the GSNI Troop Trip & Overnight Approval Form (if your field trip is further than 60 miles from your normal meeting space).

If the facility is not listed, the troop leader needs to request a Certificate of Insurance from the facility. To do this, simply call the facility and ask for a current Certificate of Insurance with GSNI listed as a Certificate Holder, including the information below:

Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois
1886 Daimler Road
Rockford, IL 61112

The certificate can be emailed to customercare@girlscoutsni.org with "Certificate of Insurance" in the subject line, U.S. mailed to the above address, or faxed to 847-741-5667.

The following chart outlines who may sign contracts/agreements for camps and when a Certificate of Insurance (COI) is required.

WHAT	WHO	IMPORTANT
Contracts and/or agreements for most service unit and troop activities	May be signed by either the local volunteer or assigned staff member IF no payment required or payment is less than \$100; howeverif the contract or agreement requires a payment greater than \$100, a review is required prior to the volunteer signing the contract. Submit contract to customercare@girlscoutsni.org for review.
15-Passenger Vans	GSNI will NOT enter into rental agreements for 15-passenger vans due to safety and liability issues concerning vans of that size.	
Bus Rentals	A COI (\$1,000,000 coverage) is required for all bus rentals.	
Horseback Riding	A COI (\$1,000,000 coverage) is required for activities involving horses.	

ALCOHOL, AND DRUG USE (including marijuana)

No volunteer may purchase, consume, possess or be under the influence of alcohol, marijuana, illegal drugs/substances, or prescription or over-the-counter medications which impair performance or judgment on GSNI property, in the presence of youth, or while conducting GSNI business.

Violators of the alcohol and drug policy will be asked to leave GSNI property or activity site. Any violation of this policy will be grounds for appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including removal from volunteer role.

Alcoholic beverages may be responsibly served to/consumed by adults of legal age at GSNI adult events off GSNI property when youth are not present.

This policy does not prohibit volunteers from the lawful use and possession of prescribed medications, except that volunteers may not use or possess cannabis (even medical cannabis) on GSNI premises, while operating a GSNI vehicle, or in the presence of youth.

TOBACCO/SMOKING/VAPING

Volunteers function as role models at all times, and therefore the use of tobacco/smoking/vaping products is prohibited whenever youth members are present in any environment. This policy applies to all types of smoking/vaping nicotine products and similar apparatus and the use of tobacco in any form.

WEAPONS

Firearms and/or weapons are prohibited while on GSNI's property (owned or leased), driving a GSNI-owned, rented or leased vehicle, or at meetings, events, or trips. Weapons include firearms, knives, explosives, and other items with the potential to inflict harm. Any violation of this policy will be grounds for appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including removal from volunteer role.

Excluded from this provision, would be any equipment that a volunteer would use in a typical camping environment while engaged in camping activities or by a trained adult while conducting a GSNI-approved Girl Scout program activity and must be used according to the guidelines for such in [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#).

UNIFORMS

Girl Scouts are part of a heritage more than 110 years in the making, and it shows when they wear their uniform! Official Girl Scout uniforms help our members tell stories and offer ways to display their big accomplishments like badges earned and awards received.

GSNI highly recommends all our Girl Scouts have one official uniform item—such as a vest, sash, or tunic—to be customized with each new achievement. Each item pairs well with a classic white shirt and khaki bottoms or optional official items available in our stores. Girl Scouts should wear their official uniform item at events when they're representing the Girl Scout Movement—bridging ceremonies, community gatherings, parades, and flag ceremonies, etc.

However, if Girl Scouts might get their uniform dirty at community service events or while working with animals or when sorting through recycle bins, we recommend more casual Girl Scout attire, such as troop T-shirts or easily washable items.

Even though it is preferable for all GSNI Girl Scouts to have a uniform item, no GSNI Girl Scout is ever to be turned away from participating in any Girl Scout activity due to a lack of uniform. Girl Scouts must feel safe, valued, included, and respected for who they are, no matter what they are wearing. They should face no barriers to participating joyfully with their Girl Scout sisters in all Girl Scout activities, programs, and events.

ANIMALS

Animals may not be brought onto any GSNI property or into any GSNI-sponsored activity without the written permission of the Chief of Property and Program or designee. Exceptions will be made for animals needed to assist persons with disabilities and for fulfilling program activities.

PROPERTY

No person should use or alter GSNI property or equipment without permission from GSNI.

The use of GSNI properties and/or equipment, for personal gain or for the purposes of solicitation or distribution of literature for non-sanctioned Girl Scout events is prohibited.

No sale or solicitation of materials or services of any type is allowed on GSNI properties without the written permission of GSNI.

"Solicitation" means requesting another person to purchase goods and/or services; donate goods, services, or money to any person or organization; or sign petitions or the like for any purpose.

Part 2: Procedures

VOLUNTEER PHILOSOPHY

Volunteers are GSNI's greatest asset in guiding generations of Girl Scouts to become leaders in their own lives and in the world. It is through this volunteer leadership that the Girl Scout Movement serves our young people and realizes its mission to build girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. To ensure job satisfaction of volunteers and to utilize the talents of volunteers effectively, it is essential that the following policies and procedures be established and maintained. Together we can work to ensure the safety and well-being of all members.

GSNI will create a culture of appreciation that includes both formal and informal methods to recognize all volunteers for their time, talent, and impact. Volunteers can also be nominated or nominate other volunteers for more formal council and national recognition consistent with the GSUSA guidelines, such as Adult Recognitions in Girl Scouting. More information can be found on [GSNI's Recognition webpage](#).

VOLUNTEER WELLNESS

Volunteer service can involve multiple commitments. Enthusiasm, energy, and positive attitudes are essential to providing youth members and adults with worthwhile and enjoyable leadership experiences. To this end, it is vital that adult volunteers do not overextend themselves by volunteering for too many overlapping roles. Building a broader base of adult support by encouraging others to participate increases and expands the opportunities for everyone to grow and share. GSNI is committed to providing enriching quality experiences for both Girl Scouts and adults.

VOLUNTEER/STAFF PARTNERSHIP

GSNI staff are employed to provide full-time managerial and specialist expertise, research capability, and continuity to support the delivery of programs to youth members through volunteers.

Volunteers and staff are considered to be partners in implementing the Mission, the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, and the goals of GSNI. It is essential that each partner understands and respects the needs and abilities of the other.

VOLUNTEER ROLE

A volunteer is any adult 18 years of age or older and out of high school) who, without compensation or expectation of compensation, performs a task on behalf of GSNI. A volunteer must be approved (registered member of Girl Scouts, background check approved, and trained) and appointed by GSNI prior to performing the task.

All adults accompanying troop/group meetings or activities on a regular basis or attending any overnight activity or who at any time assume care, custody, or control of youth members and/or Girl Scout money must be a registered Girl Scout adult member, background check approved, and trained volunteer of GSNI and GSUSA.

GSNI has two main categories of volunteers:

- **Operational Volunteers:** Adult members who provide direct/indirect services to youth members and adults. Operational volunteers are appointed for a term of up to one year, depending on the volunteer position held.
 - Episodic volunteers are also operational volunteers who serve on a one-time or limited basis. These volunteers may not go through the same appointment process based on responsibilities/tasks of their assignment.
- **Governance Volunteers:** Members who communicate ideas and feelings, influence proposals, and make decisions that govern GSNI and its members. They are accountable to the voting members of GSNI. Governance volunteers are elected or appointed.
 - Volunteers are 18 years of age or older and out of high school.
 - GSNI members 14 years of age and older can apply to be a delegate.
 - Associate Board of Director members must be 14 years of age by the date of the Annual Meeting.

Unless otherwise specified, Volunteer Policies & Procedures apply to all volunteers.

POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

Each volunteer position will have a volunteer position description that defines specific responsibilities, clarifies expectations, and forms the basis for assessment of volunteer performance, reappointment, rotation to another position, and/or release. Volunteers review

and sign their position description within GSNI's online learning platform, gsLearn, as they complete their required training.

ACCEPTANCE AND APPOINTMENT OF VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer eligibility is determined, and acceptance is completed online. Prior to applying for a volunteer position, it is the responsibility of the prospective volunteer to review the volunteer position description for the role for which they are applying.

Girl Scout volunteers must be appointed to their position, using the procedures below. It is the responsibility of the prospective volunteer to complete all the required steps. GSNI reserves the right to limit volunteer involvement until all steps have been completed.

1. Prospective volunteer reviews volunteer position description located on GSNI's website to determine their interest in becoming a volunteer.
2. Prospective volunteer joins Girl Scouts by registering online, selecting the appropriate volunteer role, and paying GSUSA's annual membership dues. Once registration is complete, they will receive their volunteer welcome letter and attend a New Volunteer Orientation within a week of registration.
3. Prospective volunteer successfully completes required criminal background check. Criminal background checks are conducted every three years for current/active volunteers. GSUSA will notify volunteers as to when their criminal background check needs to be renewed.
4. Volunteer receives the notification of their next steps with required training once their criminal background check has been approved. Troop-level volunteer roles will complete their first part of required training through gsLearn and electronically sign and submit their volunteer position description. Spanish-preferred or Service Team-level volunteers will receive their position descriptions from their GSNI staff contact.
5. The new volunteer appointment is conditional based on successful completion of all required training for their position.

Appointment Terms

- Operational volunteers may be appointed for a term of up to one year and will be reappointed based upon completion of responsibilities as outlined in their volunteer position description. Please see Volunteer Supervision, Performance Assessment, and Reappointment section of this document for more information.
- Terms for governance volunteers (including delegates, members, and Officers of Board of Directors and its committees, etc.), vary, and are detailed in [Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois Bylaws](#).

TRAINING AND SUPPORT

To ensure volunteers are prepared to deliver high-quality programming and leadership, they need to complete training for their role. Volunteers are encouraged to continually enhance and develop their skills throughout their leadership volunteer experience.

All new Girl Scout troop leadership volunteers complete the following mandatory training upon acceptance of their leadership role:

- 415 Learn the Basics
- 415 Expand Your Knowledge: Girl Scout Certified Leader Level Specific Path

All new Girl Scout Troop Product Chair volunteer positions complete the following mandatory training upon acceptance of their leadership role:

- 415 Learn the Basics – Troop Volunteer
- 415 Fall Product Training and/or 415 Troop Cookie Chair

All new Girl Scout troop volunteer positions, complete the following mandatory training upon acceptance of their leadership role:

- 415 Learn the Basics – Troop Volunteer
- Mandatory Training required for specified volunteer role (ex. First Aider, Troop Camp Volunteer, Troop Bank Signer, etc.)

Additional required training expectations are outlined in each volunteer position checklist. Other training may be offered to be completed within specified timeframes.

Volunteer training is offered in a variety of ways to best meet varied and unique learning styles, such as written resources, face-to-face learning, and interactive online learning. GSNI will make every effort to accommodate a volunteer's preferred language.

Training records are kept on file within each gsLearn volunteer account. Volunteers should also keep personal records of their training history.

Troops may decide to cover the cost for volunteer training as a troop expense.

VOLUNTEER SUPERVISION, PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT, AND REAPPOINTMENT

Service Unit Team volunteers are essential in providing support, guidance, and supervision to other volunteers. In addition, GSNI staff shall be available to all volunteers for consultation and assistance. To have the best experience, volunteers are encouraged to utilize this support system to help navigate new roles, address situations, and identify opportunities.

Supervision of volunteers may include periodic verbal and/or written coaching based upon expectations outlined in the volunteer position description. The purpose of the coaching could be to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of GSNI volunteers, to evaluate changes that need to be made, to help assess whether a position is a good fit or make any other recommendations to help the volunteer be successful in their role.

Volunteers are automatically reappointed to their current volunteer position(s) unless otherwise notified by GSNI staff. In the case of unsatisfactory performance, the volunteer will be asked to make changes or to fulfill specified requirements to correct the unfavorable behavior within a specified timeframe. Failure to improve performance will subject a volunteer to redirection or release. At any time, a volunteer may be appointed to another Girl Scout position, removed from a position, or may resign from a position.

Service Unit Team members will be reappointed based on past performance, adherence to GSNI and GSUSA policies and procedures, support of the Girl Scout Mission, Promise, and Law, supporting GSNI goals, as well as positive relationships with the community, parents, other volunteers, and GSNI staff. Service Unit Team positions are a one-year, renewable term. Service Unit Team members will be evaluated on their performance prior to reappointment. There will be mutual acceptance of position accountabilities, expectations, and time commitments.

Volunteers with financial responsibility to troops/groups or to GSNI will not be reappointed to a position if required financial responsibilities have not been met.

Girl Scout bank accounts are managed by two registered, trained, and background checked adult volunteers associated with the troop or group. Bank co-signers are responsible for submitting the troop/group's financial report to GSNI annually.

VOLUNTEER RESIGNATION

A volunteer may resign from their volunteer position at any time following these steps:

1. Prior to giving notice, we encourage the volunteer to discuss the reason(s) with their designated GSNI staff member.
2. At least two weeks prior to leaving, the volunteer should submit a written resignation outlining the specific position(s) from which they are resigning and the reason(s) for leaving.
3. When applicable, we ask that the volunteer assist in identifying a replacement and communicate their decision with members of the Service Unit Team.

The volunteer may be required to balance Girl Scout funds/accounts and return property and records. The volunteer and their designated GSNI staff member will be responsible for completing all necessary steps to ensure a smooth transition.

VOLUNTEER REDIRECT/RELEASE

Either GSNI or the volunteer may initiate a redirect or release from a volunteer position prior to the end of the term of appointment for any reason. Situations may arise in which GSNI may initiate a release of a volunteer from a position prior to the end of the term of appointment. Any action to release a volunteer will receive careful and detailed consideration.

GSNI may release a volunteer because of, but not limited to:

- Restructuring of positions or elimination of the volunteer position in which the individual serves;
- The volunteer's inability or failure to complete the requirements of the position;
- Conduct not consistent with the principles of the Girl Scout Movement;
- Not demonstrating the core values of the Girl Scout Mission. This may include but is not limited to: Speaking poorly of Girl Scouts, parents, volunteers, or GSNI staff; posting negative comments on Facebook or other social media websites, etc.;
- Failure to support GSNI policies, activities, and/or goals;
- Refusal to comply with GSNI or GSUSA policies and procedures. Examples include but are not limited to:
 - Unauthorized possession of dangerous weapons on Girl Scout property or while conducting volunteer activities, as stated in the policy prohibiting weapons.
 - Willful violation of security or safety rules; negligence or any careless action, which endangers the life or safety of a child or another adult.
 - Failure to ask permission for [additional money-earning events](#)
 - Failure to submit annual financial reports
 - Failure to submit a [Troop, Trip and Overnight Approval Form](#) and/or follow [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#).
 - Acts of discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, ethnicity, religion, lineage or citizenship, national origin, gender status, familial status, age, socioeconomic background, source of income, disability, genetic information, predisposing genetic characteristics, carrier status, domestic violence victim status, or any other characteristic protected by law.
 - Membership in an organization whose goals are not compatible with those of GSUSA or GSNI;
 - Abuse, neglect, mishandling, or mistreatment of youth members or adults;
 - Conviction of a felony or engaging in criminal conduct, acts of violence, or making threats of violence towards anyone;
 - Being intoxicated or under the influence of controlled substance drugs while volunteering; use, possession, or sale of controlled substance drugs in any quantity while on Girl Scout premises and/or while conducting volunteer

activities except medications prescribed by a physician which do not impair volunteer performance;

- Breach of confidentiality of personal or health information;
- Refusal to participate in conflict resolution procedures with GSNI staff, other volunteers, or parents;
- Misappropriation of funds or debt incurred to GSNI or service unit.

All volunteers who are redirected or released will be notified in writing. GSNI will maintain confidentiality; however, it may be necessary to notify other approved volunteers and/or members impacted by the change in volunteer status.

Volunteers who are released or redirected from their volunteer position are no longer approved volunteers with GSNI. They are still considered members of GSUSA and GSNI unless it is determined they are not able to meet the membership requirements related to accepting the principles and beliefs of the Girl Scout Movement or by supporting the mission and values of the organization.

Volunteers who are released or redirected from a volunteer position may or may not be restricted from attending and/or participating in Girl Scout activities/events as members depending on the nature of the situation.

REINSTATEMENT OF RELEASED VOLUNTEERS

Girl Scout volunteers who have been released may be considered for reinstatement to their volunteer position. A former/prospective volunteer who wishes to be reinstated as a volunteer with GSNI may submit a request in writing after a period of 24 months from the date of GSNI decision to restrict or remove the individual from their position. Fulfillment of the waiting period and submission of request does not guarantee an applicant will be reinstated as a volunteer.

Volunteers who were removed due to the results of their criminal background check must wait ten years from the time of the infraction to request reinstatement. Fulfillment of the waiting period does not guarantee that an applicant will be appointed as a volunteer.

It is the responsibility of the former/prospective volunteer to complete all the required steps to apply for reinstatement as a volunteer.

When a volunteer is reinstated, GSNI reserves the right to coach the volunteer for a minimum of 12 months to ensure compliance with the Girl Scout Promise and Law and their volunteer position description. Coaching may include, but is not limited to, check-ins with GSNI staff, training updates/refreshers, troop/event drop-ins, etc. Should a reoccurrence arise where the reinstated volunteer is having the same issues/behaviors that led to their original release, GSNI

reserves the right to immediately release them from any and all volunteer positions with the organization.

GSNI reserves the right to limit or deny reinstated volunteer involvement as deemed appropriate.

GIRL SCOUT BRAND AND OTHER YOUTH SERVING ORGANIZATIONS

To ensure the integrity of our brand and safety of our members, all volunteers are charged with ensuring that youth members participate in activities that are safe, girl-led, and conducted under the supervision of registered and trained adult Girl Scout volunteers.

Girl Scouts will continue doing what is best for our youth members and that means strongly girl-led. All Girl Scout members should:

- Use the full name of Girl Scouts whenever possible. Do not refer to Girl Scouts as “Scouts” or “Scouting.”
- If possible, wear uniforms proudly and publicly whenever you are representing Girl Scouts. Do not mix uniform pieces with those of other youth-serving organizations.
- Use Girl Scouts’ name, logos, and likenesses according to guidelines provided by Girl Scouts of the USA. If you wish to use the Girl Scout logo, please contact GSNI’s marketing department at customercare@girlscoutsni.org for assistance and approval.
- Use flyer templates when able to advertise Girl Scout-sponsored events. These events include, but are not limited to, recruitment events and service unit events. To request a flyer template, complete the Girl Scout brand training available in gsLearn. After completion of the training, a link to templates is shared.
- Use templates whenever possible. However, if a member would like to create a flyer or assets such as banners, bookmarks, post cards, etc. without a template, a copy of the artwork must be submitted to customercare@girlscoutsni.org for review. Please allow at least five business days for review.
- When participating in community events such as parades, flag ceremonies, or festivals, request a distinct Girl Scout booth or marching space, if possible.
- If Girl Scouts are members of multiple youth-serving organizations, ensure that funds earned by Girl Scouts are spent on Girl Scout expenses and Girl Scout troop experiences only.
- Refrain from sharing membership information including, but not limited to, name, phone numbers, email addresses, program level, and membership status. These activities are strictly prohibited.

FLYERS/INFORMATION IN MAILBOXES

It is against federal law to insert flyers in mailboxes. Girl Scouts and Girl Scout volunteers may not place any matter not bearing postage into a mailbox. This includes flyers, Girl Scout Cookie Program information, letters, etc.

GRADE-LEVEL TROOPS/GROUPS

Youth members participate in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience in troops or independently, in these program grade levels:

- Girl Scout Daisies: Grades K-1
- Girl Scout Brownies: Grades 2-3
- Girl Scout Juniors: Grades 4-5
- Girl Scout Cadettes: Grades 6-8
- Girl Scout Seniors: Grades 9-10
- Girl Scout Ambassadors: Grades 11-12

Multi-grade level troops are also available to best fit the needs of families and local communities.

Service unit assignment is based on the location of where a child's troop meets.

Bridging youth members to the next grade level early is not recommended, due to the progressive nature of the Girl Scout program. If you bridge a member from one grade-level to another early, they may not be physically, mentally, and emotionally ready (i.e., bridging a member just finishing second grade to Girl Scout Juniors instead of allowing the full second year Girl Scout Brownie experience). There may be some experiences Girl Scouts may not be able to participate in because of their age.

OPPORTUNITY CATALOG

The Opportunity Catalog is an online listing of troops in GSNI. The Opportunity Catalog helps ensure that those who want to be a Girl Scout have the opportunity to participate in a troop experience. All troops with fewer than 12 youth members will be displayed in GSNI's Opportunity Catalog as open to accepting new members. Extenuating circumstances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by designated GSNI staff.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE GUIDELINES

GSNI would like all youth members to have the opportunity to engage in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, regardless of financial status. GSNI's Financial Assistance is based on need without regard to race, creed, color, religion, national origin, ability, or any other characteristic protected by federal or state law.

To ensure we best serve our membership when awarding Financial Assistance, we consider the total number of requests and our available funds. GSNI provides Financial Assistance to members based on the [National School Lunch Program](#) guidelines.

What does Financial Assistance cover?

Financial Assistance is offered for:

- [Membership dues](#) for adult volunteers or youth – up to \$25 per member for standard membership year and up to \$35 for extended year membership
- [Uniform components or troop dues](#) – up to \$35 for troop dues, for youth vest and basic insignia, and for adults, up to \$40 off a uniform component
- [Financial Assistance for Travel](#) – Helps GSNI youth members who wouldn't otherwise be able to travel to Juliette Low's Birthplace (Savannah, GA) or one of the WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts) World Centers, or on a council-sponsored trip lasting longer than three nights. Applications are due by January 1 and July 1 of each year.
- [GSNI Travel Endowment](#) – The Travel Endowment was set up by a donor (with the support of others) to help fund travel experiences for GSNI youth members. Priority is given to a first-time trip. Applications are due by January 1 and July 1 each year. The youth members will share their experiences after the trip.
- [D-Pass](#) – D-Pass funds are sometimes given to GSNI by GSUSA to support GSNI youth members who have been accepted to a GSUSA Destination. The Girl Scout will share their experiences after the trip.
- [Council Sponsored Events](#) – Funds are available to help Girl Scouts who would not otherwise be able to participate in council-sponsored events. GSNI members may request up to \$15 twice a membership year. Financial Assistance is for GSNI youth members only. If the event is less than \$15, the awarded amount will be half of the registration fee. If the event is more than \$15, the amount awarded will be \$15 Note: All requests should be submitted to Customer Care at customercare@girlscoutsn.org before registering for any event you wish to apply Financial Assistance towards.
- [Camperships](#)- Camperships offer financial assistance for GSNI members attending council-led summer camp programming. These camps include day camp, sleep-away camp, and horse camps. Applications open the first day of summer camp registration each year and close on March 1.

- [Volunteer-led Day/Twilight Camp](#)

Any adult volunteer who receives financial assistance must complete all criteria for their volunteer role, including training, or they will be asked to reimburse the council for their membership fee.

Troops that have had the opportunity to participate in the Fall Product Program and the Girl Scout Cookie Program may consider using troop funds to renew youth and volunteer Girl Scout memberships.

Receipt of financial assistance indicates commitment to participate in GSNI's Product Programs (fall and cookie).

Steps for requesting Financial Assistance for membership:

1. Financial Assistance can be requested for the membership fee on the payment screen during the online membership registration process. Your request is noted as pending. Requesting financial assistance does not guarantee approval.
2. GSNI will send you an e-mail with a link to the online application for financial aid. The e-mail is sent to the e-mail address used during the online membership registration process. The Subject Line of the e-mail will be "Financial Assistance Request."
3. A parent/caregiver must complete the online form and submit it to GSNI via the online form.
4. GSNI will review the application and notify applicants of eligibility.

Steps for requesting Financial Assistance for troop dues or uniform components:

1. Volunteers can find the Financial Assistance for Troop Dues or Uniform and Component form on GSNI's website, Rallyhood, and through their Recruiter or Member Support Specialist for any family that may need to apply.
2. Troop leadership volunteers should submit completed forms to GSNI's Customer Care Team at customer care@girlscoutsni.org for processing and approval.

BANK ACCOUNTS

All troops, groups, and service units must open a separate business checking account into and out of which all funds flow. All Girl Scout accounts must have two unrelated, approved, registered, background checked, and trained adult signers who are responsible for troop funds. These accounts, the signers, and the use of GSNI's EIN must be authorized in writing by GSNI.

The bank account must only be used to support the Girl Scout program; money earned by Girl Scouts can only be used to fund their Girl Scout experience. Funds of more than one troop may not be co-mingled in one bank account with funds from other troops; each troop must have its own bank account. Co-mingling of funds will be regarded as misappropriation.

Troops, groups, volunteer-led day camps, and service units must follow GSNI procedures when opening accounts, closing accounts, or changing bank account signers at a financial institution. The full process can be found in Volunteer Essentials in the [Troop Finances](#) section. GSNI has the authority to change bank account signers, request bank statements, or close accounts whenever it deems necessary.

The Bank Account Information and ACH Authorization form must be completed by all GSNI troops, groups, and service units that have been given permission to open a bank account in the GSNI name. This form must be completed for new bank accounts as soon as it is opened or if there are any changes in authorized signers. This form should also be completed any time a change in banking information occurs. The information on the completed form will be available to designated GSNI staff.

Troops, groups, volunteer-led day camps, and service units may obtain debit/check cards. The debit/check card must not be used for personal purchases. The cardholder(s) are responsible for obtaining purchase receipts, securing the card(s), and are legally responsible for the transactions posted to the card. Online banking is permitted.

All Girl Scout funds must be deposited into the troop/group/service unit bank account, and all itemized receipts of purchases, bank receipts/deposits, and monthly bank statements must be kept on file for a period of three years.

GSNI reserves the right to review troop, group, volunteer-led day camp, and service unit accounts. If a troop, group, volunteer-led day camp, or service unit fails to submit its annual finance report, it is subjected to a full financial audit and/or closure of the account by GSNI and will be put on the Financial Alert list until either the report is submitted, or new signers have been identified and trained. Other situations that may result in a financial review include, but are not limited to:

- Complaints from parents/caregivers
- Suspected misuse
- Mismanagement or theft of funds

Financial reviews may be initiated at the full discretion of GSNI.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Volunteers who oversee Girl Scout funds whether for troops, groups, service units, day camps, or any other reason, are accountable to GSNI and youth members in all financial matters.

For GSNI troop bank accounts, the Girl Scout volunteer bank signers are responsible for:

- good management of funds including timely deposits of funds

- up-to-date recordkeeping
- monthly review of bank statements
- effective management of funds
- submission of timely reports to affected members, their parents, and GSNI
- receipts showing how the money was spent
- documenting all cash withdrawals

If cash is collected, receipts must be provided to document the reason for the payment. Girl Scout bank accounts are managed by two registered, trained, and background checked adult volunteers associated with the troop or group. Bank co-signers are responsible for submitting the troop/group's financial report to GSNI annually.

Failure to exercise proper management over finances will result in release from the volunteer position.

All troops, groups, service units, and day camps are required to submit an annual finance report to GSNI. Parents/caregivers can view completed troop finance report(s) on the Volunteer Toolkit. It is important to comply with this procedure as financial transparency at all levels of Girl Scouting encourages trust and confidence. Additionally, any registered Girl Scout and their parents/caregivers will be given access to view financial records upon request.

The troop bank signers have access to the Finance Tab on the Volunteer Toolkit. They have the option to submit the finance report through the Finance Tab, email, or hard copy to their Member Support Specialist annually by the June 15 deadline.

Girl Scout groups and service units can submit their finance reports by email or hard copy to their Member Support Specialist annually by the June 15 deadline.

Volunteer-Led day camps must submit their financial report to the Volunteer Development Department by August 15 annually.

Volunteers with financial responsibility to troops/groups or to GSNI will not be reappointed to a position if required financial responsibilities have not been met.

MONEY EARNING AND FUNDRAISING GUIDELINES

Helping Girl Scouts earn and manage money is an integral part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. When members participate in [money earning activities](#), they learn important skills such as goal setting, decision making, money management, people skills, and business ethics.

Your Girl Scout group (troop, service unit, etc.) is responsible for planning and financing its own activities. This puts Girl Scouts in charge (with support from troop leaders and GSNI registered volunteers), giving them the opportunity to cooperatively set goals, manage a

budget, spend responsibly, and maintain records, as well as develop social, marketing, and entrepreneurial skills.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall Product Program are the two best opportunities for Girl Scouts to earn troop funds. Troops must participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall Product Program to participate in additional money earning or fundraising. Consideration will be given to troops that formed after these opportunities have passed. Troops that participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall Product Program usually do not need to participate in additional money earning or fundraising unless they are planning trips or other travel.

When planning additional money-earning activities, troops and groups must follow GSNI Volunteer Policies & Procedures, [Volunteer Essentials](#), and [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) to ensure safety, including appropriate ratios of approved Girl Scout volunteers to youth members.

Before working with a potential sponsor for your troop, group, or service unit, please contact GSNI's Director of Philanthropy and refer to Volunteer Essentials for more information.

In-Kind Contributions

In-kind donations are goods or services, other than cash, that are to be used by troops for Girl Scout Mission-based activities. Examples of in-kind gifts include:

- space for a meeting or event
- program supplies
- food
- camping equipment

To properly document an in-kind contribution, the [Donation Agreement – In-Kind](#) form should be submitted to GSNI's Director of Philanthropy. GSNI will ensure the sponsor receives a thank you letter meeting IRS requirements. The contribution can also be recognized locally by having Girl Scouts send thank you cards, inviting the sponsor to a meeting or ceremony, or working together on a Take-Action project.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS DUE TO TROOP CHANGES

Graduating Girl Scout Ambassador Troops

When all members of a troop graduate, care must be taken with the final expenditure of troop funds. All troop funds are the property of the troop, not the individual members, and the troop should decide how to spend the money prior to dissolving the troop and closing the bank account. All decisions concerning the disposition of troop funds should be made by the troop, not by the leaders.

Options to consider depending on the remaining amount of troop funds:

- Purchase discounted Lifetime Girl Scout memberships for each graduating member.
- Leave a legacy to Girl Scouts by donating to a fund or program in honor of the troop.
- Take advantage of the last year of youth membership to participate in GSNI planned activities and events.

New Troop Leadership

If new troop leadership has been appointed, turn all supplies and financial records over to the new troop leader. New troop leadership must complete their required training. This includes GSNI's 415 Troop Financial Training course and submission of a request to the Volunteer Development Department for a change of signer bank letter and new ACH Agreement form. This should be done before making an appointment with the bank to make changes. The signatures on the bank account must be changed with the bank and GSNI within a month of completing the first two weeks of GSNI's onboarding process for new volunteers. There is no need to close the account and open a new one if this process is followed.

Troop Merges or Splits

If a troop merges with another troop, the funds and supplies will be combined for use by all members in the newly formed troop. If a troop splits, equal portions of the troop funds and supplies will follow members to their new troop. This will be done with guidance and direction from your Member Support Specialist.

Troop Disbands

When a troop disbands, any unused Girl Scout funds left in the account becomes the property of the council. Troop funds are not the property of any individual Girl Scout. Before disbanding, ask members how they want to pay it forward. They may decide to donate any unused funds to their service unit, to another troop, or to pay for activities. Activities can include purchasing materials to support another organization through Take Action projects.

How to Handle Changes within a Troop/Group

- If a member leaves, transfers to another troop/group, or registers as an Individually Registered Member (IRM):
 - All money remains with the original troop/group and is neither given to the member nor transferred to another troop/group.
 - If a member leaves during the Girl Scout Cookie Program, the decision about cookie proceeds will be processed on a case-by-case basis by GSNI. It is NOT recommended for a member to transfer into another troop during the Girl Scout Cookie Program.
- When an entire troop/group moves from one program level to another:

- All money moves with the troop/group (i.e., from Girl Scout Brownies to Juniors).
- In an ongoing troop/group, where only some of the members are bridging to a new program age level troop/group:
 - All money will remain with the original troop/group and is neither given to the members nor transferred to another troop/group.
- If the troop/group divides:
 - An annual financial report is completed and turned into the Member Support Specialist.
 - All assets are apportioned between the two treasuries on a pro-rata basis according to troop/group membership at the time of division.
- If a troop/group disbands, is no longer functioning, or has not re-registered as of October 1 of the membership year:
 - The leader must complete and submit a Troop Annual Finance Report and a Disbanded Troop/Group Form.
 - The troop/group bank account must be closed and a cashier's check for the ending balance, payable to GSNI, is submitted to the council. All assets, together with disbandment and financial reports, unused checks, and debit cards must also be turned into the council.
 - The distribution of gift cards/retail merchandise/cash to each troop member/adult is not permitted when closing a troop/group bank account upon disbandment.
 - Renewal of membership dues for members who would like to continue in Girl Scouts is permitted.
- If some of the members from the disbanded troop/group continue in a new troop/group:
 - All assets are divided on a pro-rated basis. Assets for members continuing in Girl Scouts are given to the new troop/group.
 - All remaining assets are returned to the council for the best interest of members within the council.
- If there is a change of leadership:
 - Outgoing leaders must submit a financial report and debit cards to the Member Support Specialist at the time of leadership change.
 - A copy of the financial report with all assets, funds, bank statements, and unused checks will be given to the new leader.
 - The new troop leadership volunteers must complete required training through the onboarding process and coordinate with the Volunteer Development Department and outgoing leader to make necessary changes to the troop/group account.
 - The new troop leadership volunteers must submit the completed and signed ACH Agreement and a bank document that shows the account number and the

routing number (such as a voided check, a screenshot of online banking, or other bank document).

- The new troop leadership volunteers must submit a copy (picture) of new debit cards to the Volunteer Development Department.

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE (IRS) COMPLIANCE AND TROOP ACCOUNTS

GSNI has no ability to control, change, or influence IRS requirements. Non-compliance with IRS requirements is a risk management issue that may affect the tax-exempt status of this council and the tax-exempt status of other Girl Scout councils nationwide.

- Once money is received into the troop treasury (bank account), it no longer belongs to individual members.
- Cash-based accounts may not be kept for or distributed to individual members.
- All benefits provided should relate back to supporting the Girl Scout Mission; decisions should be based on our tax-supported philosophy regarding what is Mission-related. For example, camp, travel, and Girl Scout events are Mission-related. Scholarships to an outside organization would not be Mission-related.
- A business or individual may not receive a tax deduction for money given directly to troops or an individual Girl Scout, as they are not considered a charitable nonprofit. The GSNI Tax ID number may not be used by these businesses or individuals.
- Donations may be made to GSNI and include a restriction for troop use when the donation is made. GSNI will cut a check for the designated troop and mail it to the troop leadership volunteer. (Troops may receive up to \$500/donor. Four \$500 donations may be accepted per year. All funds must be spent in the fiscal year they are received).
- Troop monies cannot follow a member if they leave the GSNI council.
- If a member leaves, transfers to another troop/group, or registers as an individually registered member (IRM): All money remains with the original troop/group and is neither given to the member nor transferred to another troop/group. The IRS prohibits funds from following an individual member dollar-for-dollar. We understand that this could cause concern if troops split up or for members who participate in troop money-earning activities.

THIRD PARTY PAYMENT PROCESSING SOFTWARE APPLICATIONS

GSNI does allow troops, groups, day/twilight camps, or service units to set up [Third-Party Service Organizations \(TSOs\)](#), such as CheddarUp, Stripe, PayPal, and Venmo. When setting up these accounts, create them using GSNI's EIN in lieu of your social security number. You may

receive a 1099K tax document from the TSO. Submit a copy of this 1099K when turning in your annual finance report.

TRAVEL/TROOP TRIPS

To be considered a Girl Scout trip/activity, the troop/group leader must:

- Make sure all participants are registered members of GSNI. See the [Girl Scout Guide to Travel](#) for more information.
- Provide parents/caregivers with written details (date, time, locations, and brief description) of the trip/activity prior to its occurrence.
- Ensure trip/activity meets all requirements in [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#). A completed [Troop Trip Travel form](#) must be turned into GSNI and approved by GSNI prior to certain activities and trips occurring.
- Receive from parents/caregivers a signed [Annual Permission](#) and [Health History Form](#)

The Annual Permission and Health History Forms allows for troop trips/activities that are:

- Located within GSNI council jurisdiction
- Not exceeding eight hours (including travel time)
- Not considered high risk activities as outlined in [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) and needing GSNI approval

A completed [Troop Trip Travel form](#) must be turned into GSNI and approved by GSNI for all overnight activities. Extended trips (three or more nights) and international trips require advanced trip training. As a courtesy, GSNI recommends sharing trip information with your Service Unit Manager.

FIRST AID/CPR TRAINING

It is best practice to have at least one adult volunteer who is trained in First Aid/CPR accompany the troop any time they leave their regular meeting place. For many activities, GSNI requires that at least one adult volunteer be First Aid/CPR certified. More information on which activities require an adult volunteer to be First Aid/CPR certified can be found in [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#).

Volunteers can take advantage of First Aid/CPR training offered by chapters of the American Red Cross, National Safety Council, EMP America, American Heart Association, Medic, or other sponsoring organizations approved by GSNI. First Aid/CPR training opportunities are offered by GSNI. More information about First Aid requirements can be found in the [First Aid Safety Activity Checkpoint](#).

First Aid/CPR training that is available entirely online does not satisfy GSUSA and GSNI requirements. Such courses do not offer enough opportunities to practice and receive feedback on your technique. If taking a course not offered by one of the organizations listed in the previous paragraph, or any course that has online components, get approval from GSNI Volunteer Development Department prior to enrolling in the course.

EMERGENCIES

If an emergency occurs during a Girl Scout troop meeting, activity, etc., Girl Scout volunteers must follow the GSNI Emergency Procedures listed below and on the GSNI Emergency Card. These procedures ensure safety is the number one concern in any emergency. Volunteers are guided to seek help and report the incident, efficiently and effectively.

GSNI Emergency Procedures

1. Provide all possible care for the injured person.
2. Call for help: 9-1-1 (Police, Fire, EMS).
3. Move non-injured people away from the scene.
4. In the event of a motor vehicle accident, serious accident, or fatality – always notify the police. Unless the victim is in immediate danger, do not allow disturbance to the victim or surroundings until first responders arrive.
5. Call emergency contact(s) of injured person.
6. Speak only to police or other first responders.
7. Report emergency to GSNI.
 - a. Business Hours Emergency Phone: 844-476-4787
 - b. After Hours Emergency Phone: 866-841-0099
8. GSNI will provide you with additional support on how to handle the emergency.
9. Complete a GSNI [Accident/Incident Report Form](#)
10. Volunteers should not make statements of any kind to the media. Refer requests to customercare@girlscoutsni.org or 844-476-4463. Volunteers must also refrain from posting and/or sharing pictures or comments on social media related to the emergency.
11. Do not discuss the incident with media/witnesses, release names, place blame, or accept liability.
12. If there is an automobile accident, share insurance information with the other party, do not sign any accident report, except for the police report.
13. Keep a record of the order of events, treatments, calls, etc.

ACTIVITY INSURANCE

Every registered Girl Scout and registered adult member in the Girl Scout Movement is automatically covered under the Plan 1 Basic activity insurance plan upon registration. This insurance provides up to a specified maximum for medical expenses incurred as a result of an accident while a member is participating in an approved, supervised Girl Scout activity or trip lasting two nights or less, after the individual's primary insurance pays out.

An approved, supervised Girl Scout activity is an activity carried out by those who are registered members of the Girl Scout Movement under the overall supervision of volunteers, in keeping with GSNI Volunteer Policies & Procedures, [Volunteer Essentials](#), and [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#).

GSUSA and Mutual of Omaha have expanded the automatic coverage under Basic Plan 1 to minimize the extra cost to troops and reduce the administrative burden on volunteers and council staff.

The coverage enhancement to Basic Plan 1 eliminates the need for troops, volunteers, and council staff to individually order and pay for the extra Activity Accident insurance in two scenarios:

1. Non-member participation. Non-member participation is automatically covered. A non-member participant is any person invited to attend or participate in a Girl Scout approved/supervised event.
2. Trips longer than two overnight stays. All domestic trips within the USA, regardless of time duration, are automatically covered under Basic Plan 1. There is no longer a time element involved.

Effective October 1, 2023 – members will no longer need to separately order insurance for non-members and/or overnight trips (within the USA), coverage for these scenarios will be automatic.

Additional activity insurance coverage must be purchased for any approved, supervised Girl Scout activity that includes travel outside the United States (Plan 3PI).

To purchase additional insurance, please contact customer care at 844-476-4463.

MEETING PLACES/CAMPS/SITES

A meeting place needs to provide a safe, clean, and secure environment that allows for the participation of all Girl Scouts and adults. You might consider using meeting rooms at schools, libraries, houses of worship, community buildings, childcare facilities, and local businesses. For

teens, you can also rotate meetings at coffee shops, bookstores, and other places young people enjoy spending time.

See [Volunteer Essentials](#) for a few points to keep in mind as you consider meeting locations.

GSNI does allow troops to meet in homes. Troop leadership volunteers should follow the guidelines below to meeting within their home:

- Location:
 - The private home must be the home of an approved volunteer. (Approved volunteer means an adult that is background checked and registered as a Girl Scout adult member.)
 - Girl Scouts may not meet in a home where a registered sex offender lives.
 - Be sure the home is allergen-free. Ensure that pet dander, smoke, and other common allergens will not bother susceptible members during the meeting.
- Meeting Space:
 - Ensure that the space is safe, secure, clean, properly ventilated, heated (or cooled, depending on your location), free from hazards, and has at least two exits that are well-marked and fully functional. Also be sure first-aid equipment, smoke detectors, and fire extinguisher are on hand. NOTE: If meeting in the basement of the home, there must be two exits from the basement.
 - The troop needs to be able to focus without disruptions from other household members.
 - Be sure the space is accessible to those with disabilities who may come to the meetings.
- Supervision of Girl Scouts
 - Must meet the appropriate youth/adult ratio.
 - As always, the group must have at least two unrelated, approved volunteers present at all times, plus additional volunteers, as necessary. Any adult supervising Girl Scouts must be an approved volunteer. Adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old. One troop leader in every group must be female. (Approved volunteer means an adult who is background checked and registered as a Girl Scout adult member.)
 - Ensure Girl Scouts are never left alone or stray off into areas of the home where they would not be supervised by approved adult volunteers.
- Insurance:
 - Copy of current Homeowner's/Renter's Insurance (stating coverage amounts for Personal Liability and Medical Payment to Others) must be on file with GSNI. Certificates of insurance may be submitted to customercare@girlscoutsni.org with the subject line: Proof of Insurance for Troop# ___ in-home Meeting.

- Homeowner's/Renter's Insurance covers injuries that occur on the premises and is the primary insurance. GSNI's insurance company represents the council not the homeowner in the case of suit/claim.
- Homeowners/renters should consider any personal insurance implications. The homeowner/renter should ask their personal insurance carrier if there are any insurance concerns with troops meeting at the home.
- Activity accident insurance is a supplemental health insurance that protects registered Girl Scout members. Registered members are automatically covered under activity accident insurance when participating in all Girl Scout events and activities including trips that involve two (or less) overnight stays.
- Other:
 - Items off limits to members must be secured. Example, backyard trampolines and pools are secured, so troop members cannot access.
 - Weapons must be out of view and in a locked space.
 - Medication, cleaning products, or any poisonous substance must be stored in a secure space out of sight, preferably locked.
 - Animals should be kept in a place that is separate from the meeting space. Members may be fearful of the animal or not have a clear understanding of how to treat the animal. Animals may become overwhelmed by the number of participants in the meeting.

Please know that during all Girl Scout activities, including ones at your home that two, unrelated, registered and background checked approved volunteers must be present at all times.

GSNI allows Girl Scout troops/groups to reserve the conference room or hoteling space in our Rockford and South Elgin Resource Centers and the hoteling space in our Freeport Resource Center after-work hours.

For more information or for the reservation form to complete, please contact GSNI Customer Care at either customer care@girlscoutsni.org or at 844-476-4463.

Part 3: How-To Guide

VOLUNTEER RESOURCES

The Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois (GSNI) website and Rallyhood offer great resources for volunteers. Links to both are below:

- GSNI website: <https://www.girlscoutsni.org/>
- Rallyhood: https://rallyhood.com/log_in

[GSNI Website: Online Support for Volunteers](#)

The [Online Support for Volunteers page](#) on GSNI's website is a wealth of volunteer resources. Some of the references include frequently used forms, position descriptions, the tax-exempt letter, honor troop, service unit position descriptions, requesting Certificates of Insurance, etc.

[Volunteer Essentials](#)

[Volunteer Essentials](#) is a guide that explains the fundamental topics for Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois volunteers. When volunteers have questions, Volunteer Essentials is a great place to start to find answers.

[Rallyhood](#)

[Rallyhood](#) is an all-in-one solution to integrate the many functions volunteers and families need to communicate, collaborate, share files, organize events, collect money, share photos, and build a strong, connected Girl Scout community. This secure platform eliminates the inefficiency of using many apps and social platforms and creates a consistent way for all of us to stay organized and engaged online. Rallyhood has worked with Girl Scout councils across the country for years with proven success!

Many service units and troops already have a social media connection; however, Rallyhood makes the connection between council, service units, troops, and families more efficient and effective.

How to access Rallyhood:

1. Volunteers will receive an invitation to Rallyhood from either your service unit or Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois. If you do not receive an email, reach out to GSNI's Customer Care for assistance.

2. Go to [Rallyhood](#) to sign into your account.
3. Explore to find your service unit under the Service Units and Troops Hubs & Rallies.
4. Once you find your service unit, join the hub or page.
5. Select "Groups" to determine if there is a page for your troop.
 - a. If not, reach out to your service unit as they can assist in creating a Rally (page) for the troop.
 - b. Troops can have a Rally (page) even if the service unit is not actively using Rallyhood.
6. Find the GSNI Resources & Support Center hub. Explore and join any hubs of interest.
 - a. Make sure to join the Member Support hub.
 - b. On the Member Support hub, you will find a link to the Volunteer and Troop Support hub.
 - c. On the GSNI Resources & Support Center hub, review the message board and under files, volunteers can find all the necessary files and forms they need.

SERVICE UNITS

Understanding the support system available to volunteers is key to the success and longevity of the volunteers in their positions. The saying "many hands make light work" is extremely true for Girl Scout volunteers. Here is the support system:

- Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois
- Service unit
- Troops
- Caregivers and families

To best describe the relationships between the support system we will start with caregivers and families.

Caregivers and families – Caregivers and families will support their child by encouraging them to participate in Girl Scouts with an open mind and heart and try new adventures throughout the years. They will see their Girl Scouts grow and develop into future leaders. Registered leaders and volunteers should ask the caregivers and families for assistance with meetings and outings.

Troops – Leaders and volunteers teach, lead, encourage, and create new opportunities for the members who are in the troop. They are the support system for the Girl Scouts, caregivers, and families. The leaders and volunteers spend countless hours to provide the members with an amazing Girl Scout opportunity and they need to be supported as well. Leaders and volunteers' first and significant support is their Service Unit.

Service Units – Service units are filled with leaders and volunteers who have years of experience volunteering for Girl Scouts and leading troops and groups. They have invaluable knowledge to pass along to the new leaders and volunteers. It is best to learn from others who have had first-hand experience. New leaders also bring a fresh perspective and new ways to approach Girl Scouts.

Leaders and volunteers need to have at least one representative from the troop at every Service Unit meeting throughout the year.

Service Unit meetings run concurrent with the school year; therefore, the meetings do not occur during the summer. Service Unit meetings give the leaders an opportunity to network, hear upcoming events and news about the Service Unit, and council updates. It is the best way to stay informed about what is going on in Girl Scouts.

Service units can aid with best practices, discovering ways to sustain the troop, how to handle various situations within their troop, offer additional ways to volunteer within Girl Scouts, assistance with any type of conflict resolution, and much more.

GSNI – Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois provides support when the service unit is not equipped to do so, or the situation is based on the Girl Scout policies and procedures. Also, GSNI provides any necessary training to the volunteers when they are new to their roles. GSNI is the support system for the service units.

CAMPING, OUTINGS, ACTIVITIES, AND ADVENTURES

Taking Girl Scouts on outings and adventures is part of the Girl Scout experience. Before taking the troop anywhere, volunteers must review the appropriate requirements. These requirements are in place to ensure that the troop will be safe while having fun and learning.

The first step in planning is to work with the Girl Scouts in your troop/group to decide which activity they would like to participate in.

Finding Activities

There are several places to find activities for your troop or group:

- Recommendations from other troops
- Service Units have events throughout the year, so it is important to stay connected with your service unit. Remember a troop or group's service unit is based on where the troop hosts its meetings.
- GSNI holds events for Girl Scouts or works with local experts to provide programming that supports the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. GSNI-sponsored events can be found on the [activities page](#) on the GSNI website.

- ActiveNet is used to register for adult outdoor trainings, GSNI-sponsored activities, and reserve a GSNI camp. [“How to” guides](#) with tips on how to use ActiveNet are available on the GSNI website. ActiveNet can be accessed through the following [here](#).
- Preferred Partners are local businesses who host workshops specifically for Girl Scouts. These workshops will meet Girl Scout badge requirements. Troops and groups contact the Preferred Partners directly to schedule a time to visit the partner and ask any questions. The [Preferred Partners list](#) can be found on the Activity Zone on GSNI’s website.

Camping

Troop camping is a beloved Girl Scout tradition! The troop determines what type of camping experience fits their needs and outdoor knowledge. Several camping options are available at [GSNI’s camp properties](#).

Outdoor training is available to Girl Scout volunteers to equip them properly for troop/group camping. Some outdoor training is required before starting out on a troop camping excursion. Information on Troop Camping requirements can be found in the [Troop Camp Guide](#) and the [Troop Trip and Overnight Approval Form](#).

Adult Outdoor Training

Some training is required to take a troop camping, even for the most outdoor-experienced adult.

- Beyond the Troop Meeting is available in gsLearn by searching in the content library.
- Lodge Camping and Outdoor Training is a combined training offered by GSNI, and can be registered for in [ActiveNet](#).

Summer Camps

Summer is a great time for Girl Scout to go off to camp! Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois offers three types of camps throughout the summer:

- Volunteer Led Day Camp or Volunteer Led Twilight Camp
 - Camp organized and led by volunteers in a particular service unit or geographical area. A Day/Twilight Camp committee is formed to plan, organize, and run the camp. If camp committees prefer, they can host a camp in the early evening, which is called Twilight Camp. The camps have themes and activities. Often a camp tshirt will be created to reflect the selected theme. All camp details, registration, payments, questions, etc. are addressed by the service unit camp committee. Camp registration and details are sent out through the service unit through email, the service unit social media platform, and/or monthly publications.
- GSNI Camps

- Camps hosted by GSNI and are held at Camp Dean and/or Camp McCormick. Camp registration opens in the winter, and it is best to register early. The opening of registration is announced in the Around GSNI newsletter publication, social media, and the GSNI website. Registration is completed with ActiveNet.
 - There are a variety of camps offered for the girls through the GSNI. The types and themes of camps offered can change each year. Often, there are age requirements for session of camp, and all details will be in the summer camp booklet (aka the Camphlet) on the [GSNI website](#). Camps offered include:
 - Day Camp – Campers are dropped off and picked up each day.
 - Sleepaway Camp – Campers will sleep in cabins and can select a mini half-week camp or a full-week camp.
 - Horse Camp – Campers sleep in cabins for either a half-week or full week at camp. These campers also visit local stables to interact with horses throughout the camp session.
 - Adventure Camp - Campers sleepaway at camp and participate in high adventure activities, such as ziplining, kayaking, and backpacking.
 - Counselor-In-Training (Camp Leadership Opportunity) - Campers sleepaway at camp for more than 1 week and hone their leadership skills by taking on responsibilities of leading younger campers.
- Council Supported Weekends for Troops and Families
 - Council Supported Weekends for Troops and Families are camps hosted by GSNI staff Fridays through Sundays during the summer. Registration for the camps is completed through ActiveNet. These camps are at Camp Dean and Camp McCormick. Meals are provided and will be a combination of family-style meals and cookouts. Campers can participate in all the available activities. Camp staff facilitate outdoor skills and activities, themed arts and crafts, games, and badgework. Sleeping arrangements are:
 - Families receive a private cabin or tent per household then share communal space such as latrines. Each family must have a 18+ camper and a girl under the age of 18.
 - Troops need to meet adult-to-girl ratios, but do not need to bring family members. Troops use platform tents for sleeping and share units and sleeping quarters with other troops. Leaders do NOT need GSNI outdoor overnight training when attending these council led weekends.

SAFETY ACTIVITY CHECKPOINTS (SAC)

Safety Activity Checkpoints is a guide of standard safety guidelines to be followed by the troops. The Safety Activity Checkpoints Guide includes:

- Adult supervision requirements
- Adult-to-girl ratios
- Emergency action plans
- Everything leaders need to keep Girl Scouts and adults safe.
- Activities not permitted
- First Aid support
- Overall health, well-being, and inclusivity
- Transporting Girl Scouts
- Troop meeting spaces
- Overviews for each activity along with the requirements

[Safety Activities Checkpoints](#) includes an Activities At-A-Glance section. This section provides a chart by activity and information on which Girl Scout grade levels can participate in a particular activity, if council approval is required, and what is required for the Girl Scouts to participate, such as leader training, instructor requirements, and any additional notes.

Safety Activity Checkpoints also includes chart with GSNI-specific Safety Activity Checkpoints and activities frequently participated in by troops. The name of the activity is a link to the activity overview and requirements. The chart also has a link to the Activities At-A-Glance and First Aid requirements.

Activities may have a progression. For example, Girl Scouts should visit a camp and participate in an outdoor activity before staying overnight. They would then camp for one overnight before going on a multiple night camping trip. Also, younger Girl Scouts such as Daisies may not want to be away from home so an alternative may be to have a trusted adult attend the overnight with the child for the first time.

CERTIFICATES OF INSURANCE (COI)

Depending on the outing the troop is going on, volunteers may need to obtain a Certificate of Insurance from GSNI or from the business where the outing is taking place. In both situations, volunteers will begin their process on the [GSNI website](#).

Requesting Certificates of Insurance for Outside Vendors

Outside vendors' certificates of insurance should be submitted to GSNI at least 2 weeks prior to the outing. Certificates are generally valid for a year, so if another troop or service unit has

previously been on the same outing, then the certificate of insurance may already be on file with GSNI. If so, then the volunteer would not need to request another certificate. When a certificate of insurance is needed for an outside vendor, the first step is to check if the [certificate is on file](#).

If the vendor is not on the spreadsheet, then the certificate needs to be requested. The volunteer will call the vendor to request a current Certificate of Insurance with GSNI listed as a Certificate Holder. The certificate needs to include:

Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois
1886 Daimler Road
Rockford, IL 61112

The certificate can be emailed with the subject line Certificate of Insurance to customercare@girlscoutsni.org, mailed to the above address, or faxed to 847-741-5667.

Requesting Certificate of Insurance from GSNI

If the outside vendor or business requests a certificate of insurance from GSNI, the volunteer would fill out the [online form](#). It can take up to 2 weeks to process the request.

The certificate will be sent directly to the vendor. Whomever submits the request will not receive a copy of the certificate.

In a situation where the volunteer needs to receive the certificate to submit on the vendor's platform, please email Customer Care at customercare@girlscoutsni.org to request the certificate and explain why the certificate needs to go directly to the volunteer instead of the vendor.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: Sample planning activity – Troop Camping

1. Introduce the topic of camping to the troop. Gauge interest and experience to determine the type of camping the troop is prepared to do.
2. Access the [Safety Activity Checkpoints \(SAC\)](#).
3. Review the Camping Safety Activity Checkpoint document in its entirety. The box in the upper right corner of the document will list the details needed to know the requirements. See camping box below:

Council Approval: May be required- [Troop Trip Travel Form](#) may need to be completed.

Training is required for this activity. One Adult Volunteer present at this activity must have completed Beyond the Troop Meeting, Lodge Camping Training or Outdoor Overnight Training as applicable.

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

4. The first step after reviewing the SAC is to ensure required training is completed by appropriate volunteers in the troop. If training requirements are not met, register for the appropriate trainings in ActiveNet.
5. Reserve the campsite for the camping trip.
 - a. For a GSNI camp property, reservations are made through ActiveNet. Information about GSNI's camps can be found on the [GSNI website](#). The Troop Camp Guide found on the camp webpage instructs leaders through the process of camping at a GSNI camp and provides summaries along with available activities at each camp.
6. After the training requirements are completed, then the volunteer will complete the [Troop Trip Form](#) if applicable. This form is also completed when an activity states GSNI approval is required. The Troop Trip Form can be completed electronically and must be submitted to Customer Care at customer care@girlscoutsni.org for review. Whomever submits the trip form will receive an email with any questions and approval and/or denial.
7. Plan for the trip accordingly. The volunteer should communicate with families on what each Girl Scout needs to bring to the trip. The volunteer should ensure family contact and emergency contact information is brought along to camp, and that families are able to contact the troop if an emergency arises.

TROOP FUNDS

Girls Scouts will have the opportunity to participate in the Fall Product Program and Cookie Program. Participating in these activities earns funds for the troop. All funds earned by the Girl Scouts are troop funds. All funds need to be deposited into the troop account for the Girl Scouts to use equally. Girl Scouts can be recognized for their individual accomplishments in these programs, but not in any monetary way.

In some cases, troops may want to fundraise in addition to the Fall Product and Cookie programs and they can do so if they have [met the requirements](#).

Funds earned by the troop can be spent on Girl Scout related items and activities. All Girl Scouts should have the same opportunities to spend the funds. For instance, if the troop is going to pay for summer camp fees, then all families should know the troop is paying for the fees and the same amount needs to be paid for each Girl Scout. There are situations when every Girl Scout is not available for the same outing, field trip, activity, etc. and it is okay as long as they received the same opportunity to partake.

Some options for spending troop funds include:

- ✓ Patches
- ✓ Meeting space

- ✓ Meeting supplies and printing of materials
- ✓ Meeting snacks
- ✓ Field trips
- ✓ Camping
- ✓ Activities for the girls
- ✓ Renewal Fees
- ✓ Bridging Supplies
- ✓ Vests/sashes and starter patches for next level
- ✓ Community Service
- ✓ Take-action projects
- ✓ Summer camp fees
- ✓ Highest Awards: Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards
- ✓ Leader training such as First Aid/CPR, Lodge & Outdoor Overnight Training, and any training to benefit the troop and girls
- ✓ Leader renewal fees
- ✓ Lifetime Memberships (after completing the 2nd year of Ambassadors)

Funds cannot be spent on:

- ✗ Gift cards
- ✗ Personal expenses
- ✗ Savings for college
- ✗ Tuition reimbursement

Remember: Girl Scouts work extremely hard to earn the funds and it is important they have a voice in how the funds are spent. It is critical they see the funds spent in positive and beneficial ways.

FUNDRAISING/MONEY EARNING APPLICATION

Fundraising in addition to Fall Product and Cookies requires a Money Earning Application to be completed and submitted to GSNI for review and approval. Participating in additional fundraising is not typically necessary, however troops saving for traveling to another state or internationally or troops working on a Bronze or Silver Award project may need additional funds.

When troops determine an additional fundraising activity is necessary, complete the following steps:

1. Review [the Volunteer Essentials Guide](#) starting with Money-Earning Basics for Troops through all money-earning sections.

2. Meet with the troop to determine the budget, what money activity they would like to do, etc. If the troop needs additional suggestions for activities, reach out to the Service Unit may be able to offer some ideas.
3. After meeting with the troop, complete the [Money Earning Application](#) on the troop's behalf and submit the application to Customer Care at customer care@girlscoutsni.org for review.
4. The application will be reviewed by GSNI staff to confirm the troop met the Fall Product and Cookie Program requirements and if the activity is acceptable. Whomever submitted the application will receive an email with an approval, denial, or any questions.

Note: Groups and service units must submit a Money Earning Application to participate in any additional fundraising activities as well.

HIGHEST AWARDS

Girl Scouts focus on making the world a better place and Highest Awards take that philosophy to the next level. Girl Scouts can work toward earning their Bronze, Silver, and/or Gold Awards starting as Junior Girl Scouts. Highest Awards ask girls to find an issue within their community and then find a long-term solution. Girl Scouts have made improvements at GSNI camp properties, local parks, schools, libraries, hospitals, park districts, and even across the world. It is an incredible honor to be recognized for these awards.

Visit the [GSNI website](#) to find more information about Highest Awards.

HONOR TROOP

The [Honor Troop Program](#) is a volunteer's roadmap to create the best possible experience for their troop. Each age level of Girl Scouts has its own requirements to achieve Honor Troop and these requirements are laid out in the level specific Honor Troop Packet. It is a great privilege to earn Honor Troop as it shows the troop has worked hard throughout the year to participate in multiple aspects of Girl Scouts.

The Honor Troop Program spans the membership year from October 1st through September 30th. The deadline to submit the packet is October 15th. The Honor Troop packets can be found on the [GSNI website](#).

[Honor Troop Packet submittal process:](#)

1. Volunteers will complete the Honor Troop Packet on behalf of the troop. On the final page of the packet, the volunteer will indicate what patches are needed.
 - a. First year Honor Troop recipients will mark how many Honor Troop Patches AND year bars the troop needs.
 - b. Every additional year earning Honor Troop, mark how many year bars the troop needs.
2. Submit packet to GSNI
 - a. Email to Customer Care at customercare@girlscoutsni.org
 - i. If emailing the packet, the volunteer will indicate if the patches should be shipped or picked up from a local resource center.
 - b. Take to a local resource center
 - i. Double-check the store hours prior to visiting the store on the GSNI website. GSNI will make an announcement on social media if there is a last-minute closure.
 - ii. The Resource Specialist will review the packet and assist you with receiving the earned Honor Troop Patches.

While GSNI can check a couple of the requirements, we trust volunteers to follow the Girl Scout Law and be honest with meeting the necessary requirements to achieve Honor Troop.

ADD-A-FRIEND PROGRAM

Bring the joy of Girl Scouts to a friend who has not had the opportunity to experience Girl Scouts will receive a patch and a charm for the first friend who they recommend to Girl Scouts and who joins. A charm to add to their patch will be awarded for each additional friend who joins.

Steps to receive the patch and charms:

1. Complete the Add-A-Friend form. The form will ask for the new Girl Scout's name, troop, grade, and mailing address along with the name, troop, grade, mailing address, email, and service unit for the Girl Scout who invited the new member.
2. Email the completed form to Customer Care at customercare@girlscoutsni.org for processing.
3. Customer Care will mail out the patch and charm to the girl.
4. For any additional new friends joining, make sure to indicate on the form that the patch is not needed.

BRIDGING TO THE NEXT GIRL SCOUT LEVEL

Bridging to the next level of Girl Scouts is exciting for both the Girl Scouts and the volunteers! Girl Scouts experience substantial emotional, mental, and physical growth in each Girl Scout grade level. A bridging ceremony is a visual representation of their growth and movement to the next grade level. Troops can host a bridging ceremony with only their troop in the late spring, summer, or fall. Service units can host a large bridging ceremony to include all troops within the service unit who are bridging to the next level. Girl Scouts can even participate in planning the troop and service unit ceremonies.

Reference the [Bridging Guide](#) on the GSNI website for all the necessary details of bridging ceremonies.

REPLACEMENT LEADERS

Leaders give their troop countless hours of their time and do amazing things. Without leaders there would be no troops, so we are very grateful for their dedication and generosity when leading the girls. Some leaders may need to take a step back due to various reasons, which is understandable. The hope is to work together to ensure the troops can continue. This is done by finding replacement leaders.

If leader(s) are stepping down, take these steps:

1. Make the families aware of plans to step down and try to find replacement leaders. Let the families know leaders can be any adult – moms, dads, aunts, uncles, grandparents, friends, college students, etc.
2. Contact your Member Support Specialist to make them aware of the leader(s) stepping down and provide an update after your meeting.
3. Any replacement leader will need to register, complete a background check, and complete the required training.
 - a. Replacement leaders will register through their MYGS account.
 - b. After the registration is successfully completed, the new leader(s) will receive an email from Asurint to complete a Criminal Background Check. Asurint is the third-party vendor GSNI works with to process the background checks.
 - c. Once a valid background check is on file, then the new leader(s) will be contacted by the Volunteer Development team about the training process.
 - d. The Volunteer Development team will assist the new leader(s) with the Change of Bank Signer documents during the training process. This ensures the troop bank account does not need to be closed when there is a change of leadership.

4. The current leaders should work with the replacement leaders to make the transition as smooth as possible. Pass off troop supplies, email/social media, etc. usernames and passwords, and bank account checks, ledger, etc.

CONSIDERING DISBANDING THE TROOP

If volunteers and Girl Scouts have decided to end their Girl Scout journey:

1. The troop should meet to discuss how any remaining funds will be spent. The Girl Scouts work hard to earn the funds and should have the privilege to spend the funds as they wish within the Girl Scout policies. The troop has until September 30th (end of the membership year) to spend any remaining funds. Options for spending the funds include:
 - a. Spend the funds by going on final adventures as a troop.
 - b. Donate to a local charity, their service unit, another troop, or GSNI.

Any remaining funds would be put into a cashier's check addressed to GSNI.

2. Volunteers contact their Member Support Specialist to make them aware of the troop disbanding and the plans for the remaining funds.
3. Volunteers need to review the steps on the most recent [Disbanding Troop Form](#). The Disbanding Troop Form is updated each year and available by April 1.
4. After the troop funds have been spent on what the troop voted to do, one of the volunteers (bank signers) on the troop bank account should go into the bank, request a cashier's check for any remaining funds, and close out the bank account.
5. Leaders will need to provide GSNI with the following documentation via email to customercare@girlscoutsni.org or by dropping it off at a local resource center.
 - a. Completed Disbanding Troop Form
 - b. Documents confirming the bank account is closed and, if applicable, the cashier's check with the remaining funds
 - c. A ledger with bank statements showing how any remaining funds were spent

RENEWAL

The Girl Scout membership year is from October 1st – September 30th.

Renewal season begins April 1st each year. The renewal membership fee is \$25 per member. GSNI will announce any renewal incentives for the year through the Around GSNI publication email, on social media, and on Rallyhood. The step-by-step instructions on how to renew become available at this time.

Troop Leaders can renew girls and volunteers assigned to the troop. Primary caregivers can renew themselves and their child(ren). Troop funds can be used for the membership renewal fees if agreed upon by the Girl Scouts. Renewals are completed through [MYGS](#) accounts by selecting the household or troop from the menu on the left side of the MYGS homepage. Should leaders or caregivers experience issues with renewing they should contact Customer Care.

Girl Scouts' cashew cash from the Fall Product program or cookie dough from the Girl Scout Cookie program can be used for their membership renewal fee. Leaders will need to complete the [necessary e-code form](#) whenever a girl would like to use cashew cash or cookie dough. The form can be filled out once with all the girls in the troop wanting to use their funds and then sent to Customer Care at customercare@girlscoutsni.org for processing.

The form is reviewed by GSNI staff and once approved the funds are sent to the troop bank account. It is recommended that the troop leader pay for Girl Scout renewals with the troop funds since the troop will receive the funds from GSNI after the e-code form is processed. If the caregiver pays for the renewal, then the troop will need to reimburse them once the funds are received from council.

Early renewal is from April 1st – June 30th.

On-time renewal is from July 1st – September 30th.

Extended Year Membership - New girls or adults starting after April 1st have the option to register for the extended year membership. The extended year membership fee is \$35, which includes \$10 for the remainder of the current year and \$25 for the upcoming membership year.

Many troops will run concurrent with the school year – starting in August and stopping their activities in May/June to give the families a break and account for families taking vacation throughout the summer. Based on this tradition, GSNI will have an End of Year Packet available in April. However, troops are welcome to run year-round as there is no requirement to stop over the summer.

This packet contains everything you need to stay organized and get everything done for your troop to be ready next year! The End of Year Packet includes a checklist, the Annual Financial Report, GSNI E-Code Reimbursement for Renewed Membership Spreadsheet, and the Disbanding Troop Form. These forms can be found individually under Online Support for Volunteers so leaders can complete them electronically.

STARTING THE NEW YEAR

Leaders should take the Girl Scout level training if the troop bridged to the next level. In gsLearn, volunteers can take the GSUSA (Brownie, Junior, Cadette, Senior, or Ambassador) Grade Level Essentials course, which introduces leaders to the next level of Girl Scouts. Log into your gsLearn account, click on Content Library, type in the level the girls will be in the upcoming year in the search box, and the training needed will populate.

It would be best for the leaders to meet prior to the first troop meeting to organize for the upcoming year. Girl Scouts is girl-led, but the troop needs to know what is available for them to experience. At the meeting, volunteers can review what patches, activities, and experiences are available for their troop so they can present the options.

Annual Forms

Annual forms should be completed by the families at the beginning of each membership year and leaders should maintain them in a safe place where they can easily access them when needed.

- [Girl Information Form](#) – Families complete this form at the start of each year as it will ensure the leaders have the most current information about the girls.
- [Emergency card](#) – Print this off and carry it with your troop or save it somewhere in your phone where you can easily access. It gives you the GSNI phone number along with the after-hours number should you need to report an incident. It gives a quick process of who should be contacted if an incident occurs.
- Permission Slips – There are a few ways to obtain permission slips for the girls.
 - [Girl Scout Activity Permission Slip](#) – needs to be completed by the families for each outing the girls attend.
 - [Girl Scout Annual Activity Permission Slip](#) – completed once for the year by the families.
 - [Girl Scout Annual Activity Sign-up Sheet](#) – used with the annual permission slip. Leaders list the information about the activity, the primary caregiver writes down their girl's name, and signs to confirm they give permission and acknowledge they have an annual permission slip on file with the leaders. The annual permission slip and sign-up sheet can make it easier and less time-consuming for leaders prior to each activity.

- [Troop Behavior Agreement](#) – Behavioral issues happen with girls and adults even though we wish they would not. It is best to have an upfront agreement about how girls and adults need to conduct themselves and should something arise how it will be handled. It is strongly encouraged for troops to have a Troop Agreement created at the beginning of the year. Leaders can find how to handle behavioral situations and a Troop Agreement in the [GSNI Behavioral Guide](#) document.

Troop and troop meeting details should be confirmed at the beginning of each year to ensure everything is accurate. It is important for GSNI to have the most updated information about each troop and their meetings. You can confirm troop and meeting information under the troop on your MYGS account.

If the meeting information is not accurate, visit the following link and submit the accurate details on [GSNI's website](#).

INCIDENT AND ACCIDENT REPORTS

Unfortunately, incidents such as accidents and inappropriate behavior happen. When these situations do occur, it is crucial incident reports are submitted to GSNI. There are now two online incident reports:

- [Youth and Adult Accident Reporting Form \(Form A\)](#) is used for reporting injuries, serious accidents, and fatalities. Should any of these occur reference the Emergencies section in the Volunteer Policies for step-by-step instructions.
- [Incident Reporting Form \(Form B\)](#) is used to report behavior incidents including verbal, written, or physical threats to others, continued inappropriate language, or continued violation of the Girl Scout Promise and/or Law.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflicts arise from time to time, and it is best to have a process to handle them as it can be difficult in the midst of a conflict when emotions are heightened.

When an issue occurs with a youth member:

- Reference the [GSNI Behavioral Guide](#). This guide has a step-by-step process for handling conflicts.
 - [In Volunteer Essentials](#), review two topics:

- Manage Conflicts
- Communicate Effectively with Girls of Any Age

When conflict arises between adults, it is a challenging situation for everyone involved. Remember to assume positive intent, which means everyone involved is acting in good will and did not intend on causing harm. Also, avoid gossip and only discuss the issue with the necessary people. Then follow these steps:

1. Individuals talk one-on-one. If the conflict becomes heated, the conversation should take place when cooler heads prevail.

If unable to resolve:

2. The Service Unit Manager would intervene and speak with all parties individually.

If unable to resolve:

3. The Service Unit Manager would include the Member Support Specialist in a meeting of all parties.

If unable to resolve:

4. The Member Support Specialist will take the conflict to their supervisor.

When conflict arises between a volunteer and a staff member, the steps are:

1. Individuals talk one-on-one.

If unable to resolve:

2. Either of the individuals involved can reach out to the staff member's direct supervisor.

If the conflict remains unresolved:

3. The conflict will be elevated to the direct supervisor's supervisor.

All adults have an equal obligation to maintain confidentiality, dignity, and respect for others and this is particularly important during a process of conflict resolution.

FIRST AID/CPR TRAINING

Volunteers can take First Aid/CPR courses through GSNI or with an outside vendor. Any questions regarding the First Aid/CPR courses and/or requirements should be directed to the Volunteer Development team by emailing Customer Care at customercare@girlscoutsni.org.

Courses with outside vendors:

Reference the policies section on First Aid/CPR courses to ensure the course meets the necessary requirements should you take the course outside of GSNI. Your certification card needs to be uploaded into gsLearn. Follow these steps to upload your card:

1. Log into gsLearn through your MYGS account: <https://mygs.girlscouts.org/>
2. On your dashboard, you will find the training for First Aid/CPR, which is called 415 First Aid and CPR Certification.
 - a) If the training is not listed on your dashboard, click on Content Library then type in First Aid and CPR in the search box. The training will populate.
3. Select First Aid and CPR Certification upload then follow the steps to upload your certification card.
4. GsLearn will notify volunteers when their certification is expiring.

GSNI courses:

To find when First Aid/CPR courses are scheduled, follow these steps:

1. Log into gsLearn through your MYGS account: <https://mygs.girlscouts.org/>
2. On your dashboard, you will find the training for First Aid/CPR, which is called 415 First Aid and CPR Certification.
 - a) If the training is not listed on your dashboard, click on Content Library then type in First Aid and CPR in the search box. The training will populate.
3. Select Red Cross First Aid and CPR Blended Learning Course
 - a) If there are courses scheduled, there will be a list of the available courses.
 - i) The schedule varies and at times there are no classes scheduled. The Volunteer Development team works to schedule as many courses as possible throughout the year.
4. Register for the course that works with your schedule. When you have completed the registration in gsLearn, you will be prompted to make the

payment on gsEvents. The registrations on both gsLearn and gsEvents need to be completed for volunteers to be successfully scheduled for the course.

5. GSNI courses have an online portion along with an in-person portion. Online requirements must be completed prior to the in-person portion.
6. Make sure to upload your First Aid/CPR certification card once you have completed the course.
 - a) Log back into gsLearn
 - b) Select the First Aid and CPR course
 - c) Click on the First Aid and CPR Certification upload and walk through the steps to upload your card.

SPECIAL TEACHING ENRICHMENT WORKSHOPS (STEW)

STEW is a fun-filled weekend for volunteers only (no girls)! STEW is a great opportunity for Girl Scout volunteers to try hands-on activities to teach at troop meetings or service unit events and network with other volunteers from throughout the council.

STEW is held at one of the GSNI camps usually at the end of September or the beginning of October. Registration opens early in summer (typically beginning of June) and will be completed through ActiveNet. There is usually the option to stay the entire weekend or to spend all-day Saturday at STEW.

Volunteers can select sleeping and workshop preferences. The preferences are on a first come, first served basis, which makes registering early very important. All STEW details are outlined in the registration. A great way to find out more about STEW is speaking with a leader who has attended in the past – ask at a service unit meeting who has attended before.