

## Returning to In-Person Troop Meetings and Activities Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Volunteers Edition Date: September 8, 2020 (subject to change)

This guidance is being provided as of September 8, 2020 (when a vaccine has not been made readily available). GSGMS may modify this guidance from time to time as circumstances change.

[Coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. It spreads between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) and through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. [Symptoms](#) can include fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, which may appear 2-14 days after exposure. Take all reasonable precautions to limit potential exposure for girls, volunteers, and families.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to change as infection rates rise and fall in different areas. There may be regional differences or developments since this guidance was published. We continue to follow local and [national](#) directives. Be sure to discuss the troop's plan with the families of the girls.

### **Questions and reminders to help decide how and when to return to troop activities:**

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

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

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

Then, consider whether you can supplement any less ideal practices. For example, if you will arrive after another user group, plan to bring sanitizing wipes to get the space ready for your troop. Another example: if faucets are manual, take some time to show girls how to shut them off with a paper towel. Use paper towels for doorknobs whenever possible.

At this time, meetings may not be held in fitness centers or gyms, where a greater risk for contracting the virus may exist. Schools or churches may not permit outside groups on-premises, so always check and confirm ahead of time. If your troop normally meets after

school at the school, but no groups are allowed to meet at the school at this time, contact your membership specialist. She may be able to help you find a different place.

GSGMS **strongly** suggests there be no meetings in the home out of concern that there would be a greater risk of exposure to other family members. The recommendation is to not hold in-home troop meetings at this time.

**Troop Meeting Size:** Restrictions on small gatherings vary greatly from state to state, county to county, and even from town to town--and frequently change. Please utilize all social distancing practices and follow all preventative guidance (such as face coverings). Get clearance from GSGMS staff before planning any gatherings of more than fifty (50) people.

Have extra parents on hand to help with taking temperatures, keeping track of meeting attendance and promoting social distancing and mask wearing during your meetings.

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

- Hosting virtual troop meetings (see below).
- Gathering in smaller groups—such as age-level groups or groups of girls with a particular badge or activity they'd like to work on. If you plan to rotate girls through stations, you must sanitize after each group before the next group arrives at each station.

**Transportation:** At this time, a girl's parents, family member, or guardian should drop off and pick her up from meetings. Carpooling and public transportation should be avoided, where possible, to maintain social distancing.

**Virtual Meetings:** Meeting options may need to be flexible based on the fluid nature of COVID-19 risk. Troops that can hold online meetings and prefer that over in-person meetings at this time should continue to do so. GSUSA recommends maintaining a virtual meeting to an in-person meeting ratio of at least 20/80, which means to hold virtual troop meetings at least 20% of the time to keep tech skills and virtual meeting habits fresh. Use the Safety Activity Checkpoints for Virtual Meetings to guide your meeting plans: [Virtual Troop Meetings](#). If you have a few girls whose parents are not ready for her to return to in-person meetings, be ready for that. Refer that family to our council webpage and the "Events" tab for virtual programming opportunities to keep her involved until she is ready to return to in-person meetings.

Other helpful resources can be found [here](#) (Girl Scouts at Home)

**Day Trips and Activities:** In conjunction with Safety Activity Checkpoints, follow the same guidance as Troop Meetings and Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation guidance

in this document. Call ahead to the facility or vendor to confirm they are following CDC and state health department guidelines. If the activity or sporting equipment is being provided, ask the provider if they wipe down equipment in between uses, similar to equipment at the gym. Make necessary and appropriate accommodations. For example, bring extra sanitizer if none will be provided for public use at the activity location.

**Travel and Overnight Stays:** Travel and overnight trips are not permitted until Mississippi is successfully past Phase 3 of our re-opening process. As always, contact your Membership Specialist for prior approval before planning any overnight stays and follow guidance in Safety Activity Checkpoints.

**Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation:** Follow the [resources developed by credible public health sources such as CDC](#) or your local public health department. We encourage sharing these with girls and all volunteers and ensure that they are practiced during meetings and activities. Signs are to be placed in the meeting or activity space to remind participants to engage in [everyday preventive actions](#) to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Signs should include:

- ✓ Stay home if you are sick.
- ✓ Cough and sneeze into a tissue, throw the tissue in the trash, and wash or sanitize your hands.
- ✓ Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- ✓ If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- ✓ Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Wash hands if you do touch.
- ✓ Participants should be reminded to check temperatures before group interaction to confirm the individual is not running a fever and temperature is a normal 98.6 degrees Members with fever or temperature higher than 98.6 should skip the in-person gathering until their temperature is normal.

**Personal Contact:** Any troop member, girl or adult, who knows they have been exposed to COVID-19 in the past 14 days cannot attend troop meetings. Anyone waiting on COVID-19 test results cannot attend meetings. If the school that a large percentage of your troop members attend stop holding in-person classes and revert back to virtual learning, you cannot hold meetings until in-person instruction is resumed.

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

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

**First Aid / CPR Training:** Keep skills up-to-date for any emergency.

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

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

To prepare a bleach solution, mix 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water or 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water.

See the [CDC's website](#) for more on cleaning and disinfecting community facilities.

**Face Coverings:** Volunteers should remind girls that Girl Scouts wear face coverings (masks) not only to protect themselves but to protect others. Face coverings are a civic responsibility and a sign of caring for the community. Girls can bring their personal face coverings. Have disposable masks on hand for those who need them. Volunteers can teach girls [how to handle their face coverings](#) so that the coverings are effective. Some girls or volunteers may not be able to wear masks, due to medical conditions such as asthma. Contact GSGMS for guidance on how best to handle these exceptional circumstances as they arise.

**Reporting and Communicating a Positive COVID-19 Test:** In the event of a COVID-19 positive test result, do **NOT** contact the parents or troop members. Promptly contact GSGMS in this situation by calling Sarah Edwards, Chief Operating Officer, at 601.326.5645. A GSGMS staff member and **NOT** volunteers will be responsible for:

- Confirming and tracing the positive tester,

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

GSGMS staff will notify parents and others who may need to know about a positive test result. Remember that girl and volunteer health information is private and strictly confidential and should only be shared on a need to know basis with a council staff member. **To help facilitate notifications, troop leaders must keep a log of the date, location and attendees for each meeting.**

The safety and well being of the girls and our adult volunteers is our Number One priority. Therefore, failure to act responsibly by adhering to these guidelines could result in the loss of your leadership role in your troop.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact your Membership Specialist, email us at [customerservice@gsgms.org](mailto:customerservice@gsgms.org), or call 601-326-GIRL.

LEADERS, you must sign the acknowledgement below and email it to your membership specialist before you can begin meeting. You only need to email this page.

I promise I have read the above guidelines and will adhere to them for the safety of the girls in my troop and my adult volunteers, as well. I understand that failure to do so will result in me being removed from my leadership role.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

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Service Unit

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Troop Number