

## COVID-19 Guidance for Girl Scouts Heart of the Hudson Volunteers

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### General Guidelines

COVID-19 is a contagious virus that spreads easily in the community. Take all reasonable precautions to limit potential exposure for girls, volunteers, and families. Exposure to COVID-19 is an inherent risk; any interaction with the general public poses an elevated risk of being exposed to COVID-19.

Each family should evaluate and assess their risk when determining whether to participate in Girl Scout activities in-person and whether stricter safety measures than those in this guide should be taken. Take into consideration the private vaccination status, health conditions, age, and other risk factors of you and all members of your household.

All adults and girls are required to follow these Girl Scouts Heart of the Hudson, Inc. guidelines while engaging in Girl Scout activities.

### **Use these guidelines to help decide how and when to return to in-person troop or service unit activities:**

- Participating in-person activities during COVID-19 is **optional**.
- If the CDC, New York State and/or local health departments enact stricter safety guidelines than GSHH has required, GSHH and volunteers and girls must follow the stricter guidelines.
- All girls and volunteers must follow safety guidelines as outlined by the CDC.
- Leaders should share these guidelines with troop families, and make collaborative decisions about in-person activities.
- Anyone attending an in-person meeting should read and complete the [GSHH COVID-19 Waiver of Liability](#), regardless of their current membership status. The troop leader or meeting organizer should collect the waivers once per Girl Scout year.
- Volunteers and families should assess their ability to comply with required guidelines. If girls or adults cannot or choose not to comply with the guidelines, they should not attend in-person activities yet.

### **COVID-19 Vaccinations FAQs for Girl Scouts**

**1. Are volunteers required to be vaccinated before they can meet in person with girls?**

No. Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) strongly encourages, but does not require, vaccination for volunteers. GSHH follows the recommendation from GSUSA and all NYS laws, regulations, and guidelines when it comes to vaccine requirements.

**2. Can council staff members inquire about the vaccination status of volunteers?**

No. Deciding to receive a vaccine is a personal decision and GSHH respects the privacy of fellow members and their families.

**3. Once vaccinations for children are available, can councils or troop leaders require girls to be vaccinated before they attend in-person activities?**

No. Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) strongly encourages, but does not require, vaccination for girls or volunteers. GSHH follows the recommendation from GSUSA and all NYS laws, regulations, and guidelines when it comes to vaccine requirements.

**4. Once someone is vaccinated, do they have to continue to practice the safety protocols as outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), such as social distancing, washing their hands frequently, and wearing a mask?**

Yes. For the protection of all members as well as the families and communities we serve, GSHH will continue to practice, and require all members of the council to practice, all CDC-recommended health and safety protocols.

### **Meeting Space**

Outdoor spaces where social distancing can be maintained are strongly recommended. Get advance permission from the property owner or the jurisdiction that provides the location, and ask whether all safety and social distance guidelines are followed. Find out:

- How often are the space and touch surfaces cleaned and sanitized?

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- Who else uses the space (how often, how many people)?
- What type of faucets/soap dispensers are available in the restroom (sensory or manual)?

Supplement practices that are less than ideal. For example, if you will arrive after another user group, plan to bring sanitizing wipes to get the space ready for you troop.

If a facility requests a document outlining the steps your troop will take to be safe, you may share this document to fulfill that request.

### **Pre-Screening and Symptoms Check**

Prior to in-person troop meetings and activities, all participants should be screened. Volunteers planning in-person troop meetings and activities should utilize the [In-Person Meeting Attended COVID-19 Screening Form](#), available in English and Spanish, prior to each in-person gathering. This form must be filled out and submitted to the leader on the day of the in-person meeting prior to arrival. The form will go directly to the email address provided by the troop leader or meeting organizer.

If an attendee answers a question that would indicate a likelihood or a known possibility that they could be a carrier of the virus, they should not attend the in-person gathering. The Screening Form should be kept by the troop leader for 30 days from the date of the in-person meeting or activity.

### **Meetings/Activities in the Home**

GSHH is making a temporary change to its policy on Girl Scout troop or service unit meetings or activities which take place in private homes, back yards, and private patios. [Please review this update with more information on this subject.](#)

### **Meetings on Council Premises**

On September 1, 2021 GSHH increased the available reservations at its properties for indoor and outdoor meetings and overnight activities. The current available properties and restrictions are listed on our Rent Our Facilities webpage at <https://www.girlscoutshh.org/en/our-council/prop.html>. This webpage will be updated with current information as needed. Check this webpage for additional instructions and current availabilities.

### **Meeting Size**

Group size limits have been lifted. Refer to the regular adult to child ratios listed in the [Safety Activity Checkpoints Document](#).

### **Food, Dining and Snacks**

Be careful when handling and serving food and have girls be careful with each other when eating. Safety recommendations for food, dining and snacks include:

- Encourage girls to bring their own foods to eat (bag lunch or dinner).

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- Encourage girls not to share their food after having touched it, such as a bag of chips.
- Individually wrap or package snacks for each girl prior to the activity.
- One person, wearing gloves, hands out individually wrapped or packaged items to each person.
- Avoid buffet style meal set up.
- Public dining only as permitted in your local jurisdiction.
- Use disposable plates, forks, napkins, etc. when possible.
- Ensure adults handling food wash their hands (even if they will be wearing gloves) prior to any food prep or meals, following CDC handwashing guidelines.

## Transportation

Public transportation should be avoided and is not encouraged. It is imperative to take all safety precautions when girls are travelling in motor vehicles. Coronavirus transmission risk is high when people are in close proximity less than six feet apart. The risk increases when people are in a closed in area or indoors for longer than 10 minutes. Be careful with carpool decisions. GSHH recommends that girls from different households do not carpool. The parent/guardian should make the final decision as to whether or not their girl(s) may carpool.

If carpooling, follow these safety measures:

- Conduct the pre-screening process for in person meetings.
- Girls and adults should wear masks when inside of a motor vehicle.
- Always space out the girls to avoid crowding.
- Keep car window opened, at least partially, to circulate fresh air.

## Retail Shops

As of September 7, 2021, our retail shops are open for in-person shopping. We are also continuing to provide online/telephone shopping, curbside pick-up, and shop in-person by appointment. Call your local retail shop to learn more.

## Virtual Meetings

Use the [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) for Virtual Meetings, to guide your meeting plans: [Virtual Troop Meetings](#).

## Day Trips and Activities

Day trips are permitted. In conjunction with Safety Activity Checkpoints, and all other guidance provided in this document, follow these guidelines for day trips and activities:

Call ahead to the facility of vendor to confirm that they are following CDC and state health department guidelines.

If engaging in an activity with shared equipment or materials, ask the provider if they wipe down equipment in between uses, similar to equipment at the gym.

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Make appropriate accommodations when necessary. For example, bring extra sanitizer if none will be provided for public use at the activity location.

## **Travel and Overnight Stays**

Travel outside of New York state is permitted, as long as the below guidelines for overnights and all other COVID-19 guidelines in this document are followed.

Indoor and outdoor overnight activities are permitted now both inside and outside of New York State. If planning an overnight activity in another state, you must follow that state's COVID-19 safety guidelines. Troops must meet the sleeping accommodation requirements below in addition to all of the other COVID-19 guidelines in this document. When troops submit their [Trip/Activity Notification Packet](#), they will be required to describe the sleeping accommodations that will be utilized with indications of how the requirements will be met.

Sleeping accommodations must provide at minimum six feet of space between participants who do not reside in the same household. Family members of the same household do not require the six foot distance from one another. For a camping trip, only participants who reside together in a single household may share a tent. Participants should not sleep in or enter the tents of others during the overnight trip.

## **Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation**

Follow the [resources developed by credible public health sources such as CDC](#) or your local public health department. Share these with girls and volunteers and ensure that they are practiced during meetings and activities. Consider placing signs in the meeting or activity space to mind girls and volunteers to engage in [everyday preventive actions](#) to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

## **Personal Contact**

Hugs, handshakes, "high-fives," and even activities like the friendship circle or squeeze can transmit COVID-19 from person to person. Refrain from these gestures for the time being. Create a safe way for girls and volunteers to greet and end meetings.

## **Singing**

If you normally close your meetings with a song, make certain girls and adults are all wearing masks. Singing and shouting both project germs farther than talking. Ask your girls to either hum their closing song, or sing quietly.

## **First Aid Supplies**

Troop first aid supplies should include COVID-19 prevention items including hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol), tissues, disposable facemasks, and disinfectants. Trash baskets or bags should be supplied for meeting and activity spaces, if not already available. 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 (the same guidance applies to volunteers).

## First Aid/CPR Training

Keep skills up-to-date for any emergency. Follow the GSHH troop and trip guidelines. First Aid/CPR training is available through Girl Scouts Heart of the Hudson. See the Program & Events calendar to find courses available:

<https://www.girlscoutshh.org/en/activities/activity-list.html>

## Disinfectants and Disinfecting

GSHH recommends that volunteers use disinfectants as they see appropriate for their activities.

For information about cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects that are frequently touched, see the [CDC's guidance](#) and 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.

## Face Coverings

The following requirements are in place for all volunteers and girls, regardless of vaccination status, when participating at in-person activities:

GSHH will follow the CDC's federal mandate on face coverings for K-12 children.

### Indoor

- Masks must be worn indoors by everyone: adults and children, regardless of vaccination status. When possible, please refrain from serving food at troop meetings. If food must be served, please do so outdoors with proper social distancing.

### Outdoors

- Masks must be worn outdoors in situations where proper social distancing cannot be achieved. The meeting leader or facilitator is authorized to determine when girls and adults should wear masks during outdoor activities.
- Additionally, if a girl or adult volunteer feels more comfortable in a mask, that decision should be respected and supported. It is at the discretion

Girls can bring their own face coverings. Have disposable masks on hand for those who need them. Volunteers can teach girls how to handle their face coverings so that the coverings are effective.

## 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 your council in this situation. This is important for medical confidentiality compliance. Call Customer Care during business hours at 1-855-232-4744 and the Emergency line after hours at 1-845- 558-9436. A **council 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 where a troop has met, and
- Alerting the state department of health.

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**Let other volunteers know that council staff, NOT volunteers,** will notify parents and other about a positive test result and that the **tester's identity is confidential.** Remember that girl and volunteer health information is private and strictly confidential and should be only shared on a need to know basis with a council staff member.

**Please note that the GSHH guidelines may change based on the New York State and CDC requirements. Continue to go to our website at [girlscoutshh.org](https://girlscoutshh.org) for the most updated guidance available.**

**Please contact Customer Care if you have any questions:**  
**[customercare@girlscoutshh.org](mailto:customercare@girlscoutshh.org). In an emergency, please call 1-845-558-9436.**

**Thank you for all that you do.**