

**COVID-19 Guidance for OCMTs**  
**Troop Meetings, Activities/Programs, Business/Practices & Additional Resources**  
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Girl Scouts' number one priority is the safety and well-being of our members and the families and communities we serve. *Before implementing GSUSA's/USAGSO's recommended guidance, please confirm the current country and local COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions in your region to ensure your council is in compliance.* Girl Scouts should always operate within the confines of what is permitted in their specific local region according to governmental public health authorities.

COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions can vary greatly from country to country or even from town to town. Restrictions will also fluctuate in response to COVID-19 transmission risk. Since it is imperative to stay within current local regulations, OCMTs should frequently:

- Check with your local Department of Health to ensure your jurisdiction is in compliance with its specific statutory norms and laws
- Verify whether your local and federal government has implemented any restrictive changes in response to elevated COVID-19 transmission risk
- Survey families for their comfort level with respect to returning to in-person gatherings
- Remind volunteers of the importance of regularly checking and following real-time local and national safety directives. In addition to monitoring local and federal guidance it is important that you continue to monitor and implement the appropriate health and safety steps provided by the [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) and [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)

GSUSA/USAGSO has provided this COVID-19 safety and health guidance for OCMTs to share with their volunteers, recognizing that the timing and degree of resuming in person troop meetings, activities and Programs will change as the risk of exposure changes and also vary from country to country or even city to city. This guidance is intended to be used for OCMTs and volunteers in conjunction with Safety Activity Checkpoints and according to each OCMTs individual country and local COVID-19 circumstances which change in response to risk factors.

GSUSA/USAGSO has consolidated its periodic COVID-19 Updates and guidance which can be accessed on the [gsConnect Home Page](#). This guidance was periodically provided throughout 2020 and will continue into 2021 as situations dictate or as new material becomes available. However, OCMTs should continually check current local resources in the event that guidance or restrictions have changed either due to transmission risk or to allow for differences in state and local laws. The categories available on the GSUSA/USAGSO COVID-19 Updates page include:

- National Service Projects
- Human Resources
- Data, Research and Resources
- Risk & Safety – Travel & Destinations

- Product Program
- Public Policy & Advocacy
- Risk & Safety – Program and Volunteer / Property

COVID-19 updates were provided throughout the past year and GSUSA/USAGSO may, but is not obligated to, develop and modify its guidance, from time to time, in its sole discretion. OCMTs should always check current local and national health and state regulations. This document is dedicated to pandemic and COVID-19 health and safety guidance for Girl Scout OCMTs to use and likewise share with their volunteers. The guidance which follows is separated into four categories:

- Troop Meetings
- Activities and Programs
- Business and Practices
- Additional Resources

## Troop Meetings

**Troop Meeting Size.** The current suggested maximum is ten people (eight girls and two unrelated adult volunteers). However, check your local restrictions for small gatherings. If more restrictive than 10 people, follow the local restriction. Restrictions vary greatly and can frequently change. If a location allows more than ten to gather, utilize all social distancing and follow all preventative guidance (such as face coverings).

For large troops, have volunteers stay connected with girls while waiting for a safe time for everyone to gather. Large troops are wonderful, so encourage them to stay together! Some ideas for volunteers:

- Host virtual troop meetings (see below).
- Gather up in smaller groups—such as age-level groups, patrols, or groups of girls with a particular badge they'd like to work on.

**Large Gatherings.** If your jurisdiction permits larger gatherings, confirm the number of people that are permitted and remind volunteers to allow for proper girl-to-adult ratios. It is strongly recommended to meet outdoors as opposed to indoors, and only when social distancing can be maintained. For more people or large gatherings, when the time is safely appropriate, follow WHO and CDC guidelines (CDC guidelines on [Large Gatherings and Community Events](#)).

Volunteers should get OCMT prior approval before planning any gatherings of more than ten people. OCMTs may consider larger group gatherings greater than 10 people after considering the norms in the local region. Answers to the following questions will help guide this decision:

- Has a successful final phase of re-opening been completed?
- Do country and local laws permit larger gatherings? How many people permitted?
- Have schools been re-opened for in-person classes?
- Is the event indoors or outdoors? (outdoors is safer than indoors provided social distancing is maintained)
- Can social distancing be maintained?
- Always follow WHO and CDC guidance and all GSUSA/USAGSO guidance available in this document pertaining to large in-person gatherings and/or hosting OCMT events.

**Troop Meeting Space.** Outdoor spaces where social distancing can be maintained are strongly recommended for meetings when the weather permits. Volunteers should get advance permission from the property owner or the jurisdiction that provides the location.

For meetings held at public facilities, volunteers should 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, encourage volunteers to supplement any practices that are less ideal. For example, if the troop arrives after another user group, they should plan to bring sanitizing wipes to get the space ready for their troop. Another example: if faucets are manual, ask volunteers to take some time to show girls how to shut them off with a paper towel and to use paper towels for doorknobs whenever possible.

Meetings may not be held in fitness centers or gyms because the atmosphere in sports facilities is aerosolizing making them a higher risk for contracting virus.

**Troop Meetings at Home.** GSUSA/USAGSO suggests no meetings in the home out of concern that there would be greater risk of exposure to other family members. In certain exceptional situations and due to the current COVID-19 risk restricting public meeting options, OCMTs *may wish* to evaluate in-home meetings on a case by case basis, particularly for those troops in rural areas who have regularly and successfully met in the home, have no elderly or immune

compromised family members in the home, have been deemed safe beyond a final phase of re-opening and do not have access to virtual or community-based location option. However, these complexities may be difficult to confirm and manage consistently which is why the recommendation, ideally, is to stay away from in-home meetings.

USAGSO will permit in-home meetings after conferring with OCMTs. Restrictions vary country to country, so check in with your OCC if this is allowed in your location. The following safety checkpoints should be taken into consideration:

- The home must be the home of registered, background checked, OCMT approved Volunteer.
- Girls may not meet in a home where a registered sex offender lives.
- Some OCMTs may require membership and background checks for all adults living in the home.
- The troop needs to be able to focus without disruptions from other household members.
- Animals should be kept in a place that is separate from the meeting space.
- Homeowners should consider any personal homeowner insurance implications. The Homeowner should ask their Homeowner's insurance carrier if there are any insurance exclusions regarding holding troop meetings at the home, in the event an accident or injury occurs.
- OCMTs should confirm with their OCMT's insurance broker that a Girl Scout volunteer homeowner would be covered under the OCMT's General Liability insurance carrier, in the event an accident or injury occurs during the course of a Girl Scout meeting at the home.
- Weapons must be completely out of view and stored in a locked space.
- Medication, dangerous cleaning products, or any poisonous substance must be stored in a secure space out of sight, preferably locked.
- Meetings should ideally be held outdoors, perhaps in the back or front yard of the home (*this is a COVID-19 specific precaution*).
- Ensure that the Hygiene and Risk Mitigation and all other guidance in this document are followed. (*this is a COVID-19 specific precaution*)

**Backyard Meetings.** For back and front yard meetings, make sure that the grounds are completely safe for children. For example, be careful that pools are fenced or otherwise safely sectioned off. The same goes for any equipment or tools or recreational apparatus that is deemed unsafe for girls such as outdoor trampolines. Make sure that pets are kept separate from the girls meeting space. Ensure that both the troop leader and co-leader can see girls and monitor their whereabouts at all times. Maintain the use of the buddy system for errands or bathroom breaks. If the property is large, ensure that the meetings space is kept distinctly separate from non-members.

**Troop Meetings on OCMT Premises.** Since regular troop meeting spaces may not be available, OCMTs may consider using OCMT property such as troop houses, service centers, camp properties and other program facilities for troops to meet. It is always best to opt for outside meetings than inside, whenever possible, until your jurisdiction is past the final phase of reopening. All safety guidelines must be carefully adhered to in accordance with WHO and CDC, country, local health authorities and as outlined in this document including:

- Re-opening phases and/or subsequent closures
- Restrictions by region and county
- Volunteer awareness
- Troop meeting Size
- Large gatherings (*when applicable, over 10 persons*)
- Hygiene and COVID-19 risk mitigation (*enforce social distancing*)
- First aid supplies
- Disinfectants and disinfecting
- Personal contact
- Face coverings
- Release & waiver of liability

Troop meetings on OCMT premises, as with normal Girl Scout programs, should abide with Safety Activity Checkpoints in terms of two unrelated adult volunteers, adult-to-girl ratios etc.

Especially for troop meetings indoors, taking temperatures prior to attendance may not always be possible – but it is certainly ideal. The Release & Waiver example provided in this document is very helpful because it asks the signer to attest to very specific COVID-19 related health factors such as being symptom free and having not been in high risk areas or in close contact with a known COVID-19 positive person within 14 days of the event. So, it's best to always use a Release & Waiver when hosting troop meetings on OCMT premises.

**Virtual Meetings.** Meeting options may need to be flexible based on the fluid nature of COVID-19 risk. Troops that are able to run online meetings as needed (or wanted) should continue to do so. GSUSA/USAGSO recommends maintaining a virtual to in-person ratio of at least 20/80, which means to maintain virtual troop meetings at least 20% of the time to keep tech skills and virtual meeting habits fresh and the on the ready, should a second wave occur or shelter in place restrictions resume. Use the Safety Activity Checkpoints for Virtual Meetings, to guide your meeting plans: [Virtual Troop Meetings](#).

Other helpful resources to support volunteers for virtual troop meetings and virtual activities, including the gsZoom page, Getting Started Guide and FAQs, can be found on gsConnect. Visit gsZoom on gsConnect for more information.

## Activities / Programs

**Day trips and activities.** In conjunction with Safety Activity Checkpoints, the guidance for Troop Meetings and Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation in this interim guidance should be used for day trips and special activities. Call ahead to the facility or vendor to confirm that they are following WHO, CDC, and community, region and country health department guidelines. If activity or sporting equipment is being provided, ask the provider if they wipe down equipment in between uses, similar to wipe downs in between uses for equipment at the gym. Make whatever appropriate accommodations that are necessary. For example, bring extra sanitizer or disinfectant wipes if none will be provided for public use at the activity location.

**Travel and overnight stay.** The timeframe for resuming travel will vary from country to country and even city to city in some cases. As always, regardless of COVID-19 restrictions, volunteers must follow guidance in Safety Activity Checkpoints.

For the foreseeable future, volunteers must seek OCMT prior approval before planning any overnight activities and continue to practice the Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation guidance outlined in this document. Once your local jurisdiction permits travel, proceed cautiously to integrate overnight travel back into Girl Scout programs. (It is important to note that even if a locale or country does not have current restrictions on “travel”, it still may have restrictions relating to the number of people who can gather, the number of households that can be present in each gathering, or other restrictions that would apply to group travel, as opposed to individual or family travel.)

Although travel plans are often arranged several months in advance, recognize that the COVID-19 risk is fluid; it can and will change, and contingencies should be planned ahead of time for re-scheduling, cancelling, or pivoting to a virtual activity. For all planned trips, create a timeline and identify a drop-dead date when decisions must be made about whether or not to move forward with the planned trip, based primarily on the safety of our girls, along with financial commitment deadlines and/or other factors. You should also consider purchasing travel insurance but be sure to read all fine print and ask questions to ensure COVID or pandemic-related cancellation is covered; it is often excluded.

When making decisions about whether or not to approve troop travel or proceed with planned OCMT-organized travel, use all current health and safety guidance available in your jurisdiction as well as for the destination jurisdiction to ensure the safety of girls. Also, be sure to check the CDC and WHO and advice with respect international travel. Also, consider using the [Event Risk Assessment Planning Tool](#), published by Georgia Tech. This helpful interactive map geographically tracks COVID-19 risk factors.

For planned international travel, continue to monitor all guidance from the CDC, WHO and your local and federal government. You can also check COVID trends over time for select countries by checking the Council on International Educational Exchange’s (CIEE) [Health Risk Index Report](#).

Once travel becomes possible again, travel approvals must be considered on a case by case basis, factoring in the risk associated with the specific type of travel being requested. For example, a troop might request to proceed with a camping trip, with girls and parents of separate households traveling separately, and sleeping and cooking in separate areas. For this type of trip, social distancing is possible and masks can be worn at all times other than when eating, and eating is occurring only within the family unit. But, as with all in-person activities, all guidance outlined in this chapter should be implemented; for example, follow the guidance in the section for Volunteer Awareness and for Pre-screening and Symptoms Check.

Always implement modifications to travel plans that make social distancing practicable. For example, as mentioned above, travelers from separate households practicing social distancing. Again, sustained contact within less than six (6) feet for longer than ten (10) minutes within an enclosed area creates high risk for virus transmission. For travel that include girls and adults from multiple households who must be in close proximity (e.g. sharing transportation or accommodations), consider guidance related to resident camp programs. See the [American Camp Association Resource Center for Camps](#) which include a [Field Guide for Camps](#). Strategies to mitigate COVID risk may include breaking the group up into smaller cohorts or instituting pre-trip quarantine and testing requirements, in addition to pre-screening and symptoms checks, which should take place before all in-person activities.

Check the CDC [Domestic Travel Guidance](#) details about various types of travel, risk factors, and steps to mitigate risk. Another additional resource to examine is the [Educator Travel Toolkit](#) created by the Student Youth Travel Organization (although this resource was created for trips planned with a tour provider, the suggestions are more broadly applicable.) Recommendations from this guide include: consider purchasing travel insurance (be sure to understand if the policy has COVID-19 or pandemic exclusions); plan to bring 1-2 adults beyond the ratio-required number of adults and to pre-book an extra accommodation space, in case it is necessary to isolate a traveler from the rest of the group.

See the Additional Resources located at the bottom of this document for travel related resources in addition to Safety Activity Checkpoints. Before implementing GSUSA/USAGSO guidance, first and foremost, always verify and stay in compliance with country and local governmental health authority guidance.

**Hosting OCMT/Overseas Committee Events.** As with hosting troop meetings above, OCMT hosted events must follow all GSUSA/USAGSO guidance provided in this document as well as those provided by WHO, CDC, country and local health authorities. Be particularly careful with respect to complying with country and local guidelines or restrictions concerning Large Gatherings. Similarly, if the event is being planned at a third-party property or off-site facility, call ahead to ensure the property or facility owners are following the same standard of guidelines and safety protocols. Be prepared to fill in for areas where they may fall short, bringing disposable masks for example. It is the OCMT's responsibility to ensure girl and guest safety, to the fullest extent possible. The GSUSA/USAGSO guidelines in this document apply, with special emphasis on the

following (same as Troop Meetings):

- Re-opening Phases and subsequent closures.
- Current Restrictions by community or county
- Pre-screening and Symptoms Check
- Volunteer Awareness
- Troop Meeting Size
- Large Gatherings (*when applicable, over 10 persons*)
- Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation (*enforce social distancing*)
- First Aid Supplies
- Disinfectants and Disinfecting
- Personal Contact
- Face Coverings
- Release & Waiver of Liability

When/if the attendees are coming from outside the OCMT's immediate jurisdiction, become familiar, whenever possible, with the risk factor involved with the location from which the guests are coming. If the risk is high, consider special accommodations or a contingency plan for how this risk can best be handled. Similarly, consider special accommodations or preparations needed when the event is being held off OCMT premises. To support this assessment, consider using the [Georgia Tech - Event Risk Assessment Planning Tool](#) created by the Georgia Tech College of Sciences which is an interactive map that tracks and provides the COVID-19 risk factor by inputting the *number of attendees* and the *county* in question. There is more information on this tool in the Resources section at the end of this document.

Especially for events indoors, taking temperatures prior to attendance may not always be possible – but it is certainly ideal. The Release & Waiver example provided in this document is very helpful because it asks the signer to attest to very specific COVID-19 related health factors such as being symptom free and, in accordance with WHO and CDC guidance, having not been in high risk areas or in close contact with a known COVID-19 positive person within 14 days of the event.

So, it is best to always use a Release & Waiver when hosting OCMT events.

**Family-Only Camp on OCMT Property.** Reasonable accommodations to support property revenue can be assessed individually at the OCMT level. One option is to permit family only overnight camp. Again, it is important to rely upon the guidelines for gathering as set forth in your OCMT's local jurisdiction as these may vary greatly and they will change as the risk of coronavirus shifts. Always practice pre-screening steps for all participants to eliminate coronavirus risk, as well as practicing mask usage and social distancing during the stay. Some OCMTs are offering, on a local level when the OCMT location is very low risk *and* overnight stays or travel is permitted in the host community, having families camp overnight. Only one household per site should be permitted at camp where safety hygiene, distancing and all COVID-19 protocols are to be followed completely. Families stay in their own safe "pod". In this case, OCMTs are controlling the premises and safety protocols as well as the number of the total



participants. As with public campgrounds, each individual family site is insulated from other families. No interactive activities or shared camping facilities should be involved or encouraged.

**American Camp Association (ACA).** While OCMTs are in the process of developing guidelines, volunteer training and communications suitable in each jurisdiction for camp, the American Camp Association (ACA) website offers a vast amount of COVID-19 specific recommendations, additional resources and suggested interim guidance that OCMTs should understand and implement. The ACA COVID-19 resources and guidelines should be followed whether an OCMT is ACA accredited or not.

An excellent source of guidance for OCMTs to follow is the ACA [Field Guide for Camps](#). The Field Guide for Camps is designed to provide camp directors and staff with a practical guide and toolkit to implement specific recommendations provided by WHO and CDC in relation to risk reduction and camps. It provides educational materials for camp staff to reduce potential exposures and spread. Helpful ACA links include:

[Field Guide for Camps](#)

[ACA COVID-19 Resource Center for Camp](#)

[ACA COVID-19 Resources for Parents](#)

[Suggested Interim Guidance for Screening and Initial Response for Campers](#)

[Example Health Screening Form for Campers](#)

[Pre-Camp Health Screening](#)

**Transportation (carpooling).** It is imperative to take all safety precautions when girls are travelling in motor vehicles. If possible, girls from different households should not carpool. 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. When transporting girls, always space out the girls to avoid crowding, have girls wear a mask and keep the windows partially open to provide ventilation. Make sure parents are aware ahead of time if girls will be in a car together. Always, for every in-person event, meeting, or transportation arrangement, conduct the pre-screening process to ensure that coronavirus does not touch Girl Scout gatherings.

Individual parent drop-offs and pick-ups are also an option. Public transportation should be avoided and not encouraged.

Remember:

- Girls and adults should wear masks when inside of a motor vehicle
- Keep car window opened, at least partially, to circulate fresh air.
- Consider the personal situation of your girls:
  - Do they live with an immune compromised person that they can put at risk? If so, perhaps make other accommodations for her with her parents.
- Prescreen all passengers
  - Have the families been isolating, and free from contagion? If so, the troop may essentially be a safe bubble.

Again, sustained contact within less than six (6) feet for longer than ten (10) minutes within an enclosed area creates high risk for virus transmission, so be very careful with carpool decisions.

WHO and CDC guidance for ride shares and drivers for hire may be helpful as an additional reference when evaluating motor vehicle transportation or car-pooling: [Ride Shares and Drivers for Hire](#)

**Public Transportation.** Public transportation should be avoided whenever possible as large groups of people, indoors, for longer than ten minutes are typical of most public transportation which increases transmission risk. Also, maintaining six feet social distance is often difficult or impossible with public transportation. However, when public transportation cannot be avoided the OCMT may approve it but only after communicating specific safety guidelines for public transportation circumstances:

- Avoid peak hours
- Allow extra time to wait and avoid crowded buses or subway cars or capacity restrictions
- Space out girls to avoid crowding (but keep to the buddy system)
- Consider grade level, age and maturity level of girls
- Always wear a mask
- Obtain parental or legal guardian permission, make sure they are aware
- Clean hands before and after public transportation travel.

**Cookie Booths.** For OCMTs that will be able to conduct in-person cookie sales, always opt for outside booths whenever possible. Also think about the structure of booths. Consider building in a protective barrier to act as a sneeze guard and help to prevent girls and customers from breathing the same air before it can circulate. Try to create contact-free ways to accept payments, especially cash, while maintaining a safe distance. Also consider operating cookie tables vertically instead of horizontally to ensure a greater distance is kept between girls and customers. Reach tools can be used to hand off cookies to customers. Remember that first aid, personal protective equipment and disinfectant should be in supply and easily accessible.

## **Business & Practices**

**Retail Shops.** In order to safely operate retail shops for business while complying with maximum occupancy and social distancing rules, consider a shopping by appointment and/or a curbside pickup protocol.

**Budget Considerations.** OCMTs are encouraged to plan ahead financially for the additional expenses needed for personal protective equipment, signage and disinfectants. Consider establishing a dedicated general ledger code or activity code for COVID-19 related expenses.

**Vaccines.** The following addresses girls, staff, camp staff and adult volunteers:

**Girl Members.** Vaccine and vaccine exemption laws with respect to COVID-19 will likely focus on public and private school attendance initially and more directly than they may for recreational youth organizations. Therefore, it is best to obtain local and country legal guidance and to proceed in accordance with the local and country laws and regulations as it applies to school attendance. If your volunteers have any questions about their obligation to communicate a girl's nonimmunization with other troop parents, they should be instructed to contact their OCMT to obtain the appropriate local legal guidance. Absent specific country or local laws that speak directly to the COVID-19 vaccine and communicating non-immunization with parents of youth groups, the guidance is to follow the standard and protocol as it pertains to school attendance.

**Council Staff.** Based on the current regulatory landscape, it is recommended that councils *strongly encourage* staff to voluntarily vaccinate. Certain councils (state specific) may be able to mandate COVID-19 vaccinations if they include legally required exemptions under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, and if they consider vaccinations to be business critical. If a staff member makes a request for an exemption on the basis of disability, councils need to determine whether allowing the unvaccinated staff member to enter the workplace will create a "direct threat" (meaning there would be a significant risk of substantial harm to the employee or others in the workplace) and if so, whether that risk can be reduced through reasonable accommodation without undue hardship to the council. Councils are encouraged to vet and approve vaccination policies with local legal counsel, since there is so much variance in vaccination-related laws from state to state and country to country. An example of such legal guidance is at: [Can Employers Adopt Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccinations - Hogan Lovells](#)

**Phases of Re-opening.** COVID-19 risk is fluid. Countries and communities may experience subsequent closures after an initial re-opening phase depending on the level of risk and scope of coronavirus spread. Accordingly, the guidance provided here does not supersede more recent government guidance or restrictions. OCMTs should be checking regularly for changes to reopening guidelines that apply in their communities with careful adherence to the phases of reopening or closures or additional restrictions as mandated in your OCMT's country and local jurisdiction. With respect to implementing COVID-19 specific precautions for re-opening and resuming in-person activities and events, it is encouraged to benchmark with other OCMTs and share plans and resources. Another benchmark is to become familiar with and consider following the health and safety protocols that are practiced in local public schools, though these may vary.

**Restrictions by Country.** Before implementing these guidelines, first and foremost:

- Check for local restrictions for large and small gatherings in the OCMT community. Restrictions will also change in response to risk levels.

- Check your local department of health to ensure compliance with its specific statutory norms and laws.

**Volunteer awareness.** Volunteers should be reminded, and acknowledge understanding, that COVID-19 is an extremely contagious virus that spreads easily in the community. Volunteers should take all reasonable precautions to limit potential exposure for girls, themselves and families. OCMTs should lift and highlight this important message in a way that promotes that awareness, preparedness, health and community service. It is an important time to be a safety-minded Girl Scout and demonstrate Girl Scout values.

Remind Volunteers of the importance of regularly checking and following real-time local and national safety directives and to survey families for their comfort level with respect to returning to troop meetings.

A short list of things that volunteers need to know for every in-person gathering:

- Pre-screening and Symptoms Check forms are used
- Girls and adults wear masks
- Outdoors is preferred to indoors, whenever possible
- Always maintain 6 feet distance
- Wash hands
- No touching the face
- Carry disinfectant and make sure girls are using it as appropriate
- Girls bring their own snacks and supplies whenever possible

**Pre-screening and Symptoms Check.** Prior to in-person troop meetings and activities, all participants should be screened to ensure:

- they are healthy and that they have not experienced symptoms that are associated with COVID-19 in the previous 72 hours;
- that they have not knowingly been in contact with someone that has exhibited symptoms or has been confirmed positive with COVID-19 or a person waiting to see
- if they are positive; and
- that they have not been to high risk geographical regions particularly those regions that require a 14-day or otherwise specific quarantine period.

Note: The CDC defines “**close contact**” as follows:

- You were within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more
- You provided care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19
- You had direct physical contact with the person (hugged or kissed them)
- You shared eating or drinking utensils

- They sneezed, coughed, or somehow got respiratory droplets on you

Whether your OCMT chooses to train volunteers to complete and retain a written questionnaire for each attendee or implement a verbal process and retain a log of Y/N responses, a pre-screening process is extremely important. GSUSA/USAGSO has prepared an example questionnaire outlining the pertinent questions on gsConnect: [Example Attendee COVID-10 Pre-Screening Questionnaire](#).

Volunteers and OCMT staff that are planning events should complete the Pre-Screening and Symptoms Check step prior to each in-person gathering. Please check with local legal counsel to confirm the optimal amount of time that the completed Pre-Screening checklist should be retained based on the standard in your community and country and also to ensure there are no health privacy issues with respect to retaining written forms. The purpose of the forms is to implement and demonstrate this important health and safety step. 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 be asked not to attend the gathering.

Please keep in mind that when adult volunteers are answering these questions, they need to answer them with respect to both their personal lives and their professional occupation. This fact is reflected within the caption of the [Example Attendee COVID-10 Pre-Screening Questionnaire](#).

When training staff and volunteers, please be sensitive to the fact that girls may be experiencing symptoms that are similar but completely unrelated to COVID-19 and not contagious such as menstrual body aches, headaches, allergies or a pre-existing condition. The goal is to keep the meeting safe from contagion and do the very best to ensure our girls are educated and healthy, not to make it unnecessarily difficult or uncomfortable for girls to gather safely.

**Record Retention.** Girl Scouts is *not* a covered entity under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). However, Girl Scouts takes the privacy and protection of our members data very seriously and does manage personal identifiable information (PII), personal health information (PHI) and other confidential information. Therefore, Girl Scouts does not retain personal data any longer than necessary and does not share personal data beyond a strict “need to know” basis.

OCMTs need to obtain local legal guidance with respect to the time element for retaining pre-screening forms and COVID-19 related documentation. Generally, with respect to paper pre-screening forms that are collected manually, the forms should be saved for the duration of the membership year. If the forms are collected at the very end of the membership year, they should be retained for approximately 3 months. Pre-screening forms should be shredded and disposed of thereafter. For OCMTs that are collecting the pre-screening forms electronically, understand the technology security

and record retention protocol so that you are prepared to answer parents' and legal guardians' inquiries.

Hygiene guidance you can share with your volunteers as follows:

**Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation.** Follow the resources developed by credible public health sources such as WHO and CDC or your local public health department. Share these with girls and volunteers and ensure that they are practiced during meetings and activities. Place signs in the meeting or activity space to remind girls and volunteers 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 these areas and other items that may not be sanitized.
- Volunteers, girls and parents should be reminded to make sure temperatures are taken prior to 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.

**Safety Activity Checkpoints.** GSUSA will insert these guidelines as an example template into the 2021 Edition of our national GSUSA Safety Activity Checkpoints. OCMTs should customize this COVID-19 guidance to gear it towards their volunteers and insert the customized guidance to replace the GSUSA template in your local version of Safety Activity Checkpoints. Your OCMT's local version of this COVID-19 guidance can also be shared more broadly. It is important to create a volunteer facing document to educate volunteers on pandemic and COVID-19 transmission avoidance and risk mitigation.

**Personal Contact.** Hugs, handshakes, "high-fives," and even activities like the friendship circle can transmit COVID-19 from person to person. Create a safe way for girls and volunteers to greet and end meetings instead (like tapping elbows). *Note: Use culturally appropriate messages, materials, and resources.*

**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, and always, of course, with their masks on.

*First Aid, Disinfectant and Face Covering guidance you can share with volunteers as follows:*

**First Aid Supplies.** Troop first aid supplies should include COVID-19 prevention items including hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol), hydrogen peroxide wipes, 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.

**First Aid / CPR Training.** Keep skills up to date for any emergency. Talk to your OCMT about alternative methods of training that may be available during this time, such as on-line training. For the time period that in-person training is not available, volunteers can receive on-line training with a OCMT approved training provider. Once possible in your jurisdiction, have volunteers resume in-person skills assessment.

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

**FDA Warning.** The FDA has advised consumers not to use certain hand sanitizers due to unsafe ingredients. The CDC provides an updated list of products that should never be used. Be sure to check [FDA updates on hand sanitizers consumers should not use](#) and stay away from products deemed unsafe.

**Face Coverings (Masks).** All girls and adult volunteers wear masks during in-person gatherings, this is mandatory no matter what city or country you're located in. In most locales, wearing a mask is required, though the age of requirement varies. Some locales require masks for anyone over two years old. Regardless of whether it is local law, girls and volunteers should always wear a mask when they gather in person.

Volunteers should remind girls that Girl Scouts wear face coverings, 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 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.

Some girls or volunteers may not be able to wear masks, due to medical conditions such as asthma. OCMTs should have an established protocol for handling such scenarios. It may be appropriate to require a doctor's note. Troops should inform families so they are aware if there is a member who will participate without wearing a mask due to medical exception. Volunteers should be instructed to contact their OCMT for guidance on how best to handle these exceptional circumstances.

**Release & Waiver of Liability.** GSUSA/USAGSO cannot provide legal advice to OCMTs. The template [Release and Waiver OCMT Template](#) provided here is an

example of what OCMTs can use to emphasize and document the assumption of risk and waiver of liability related to COVID-19 to protect the OCMT. However, always consult local legal advice. The waiver template language is not unique to any one jurisdiction, nor is it intended to replace the standard release for normal activities but rather provides COVID-19 specific language. It is best to consult with your attorney, who will consider local industry standards and the law in your jurisdiction. Also, OCMTs may want to consider combining the language so that they use only one release that includes both COVID-19 and a general release for activities, trips, events etc.

**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)
- Encourage girls not to share their food after having touched it, such as a bag of chips.
- Individually wrapped items are recommended.
- If providing snacks, especially if unwrapped, have one person, wearing gloves, hand out items to each person, such as with cupcakes or cookies.
- Use a serving spoon or scoop rather than reaching into a bag or bowl of snacks.
- Use a buffet line only if staffed with a safely protected server with mask and gloves.
- Avoid “serve yourself” buffets.
- Public dining only as permitted in your local jurisdiction.
- If serving family style, have one person, wearing clean gloves, serve everyone on clean plates
- Use disposable plates, forks, napkins, etc. when possible.
- Encourage girls to bring foods they can easily cook themselves (a prepacked foil pack) or hotdog for outdoor cooking.
- Ensure everyone handling food, those serving, girls, adults, wash hands (even if they will be wearing gloves) prior to any food prep or meals, following WHO and CDC handwashing guidelines.
- If sharing outdoor cooking utensils (roasting forks), they should be washed and sanitized between each use or bring enough utensils so that each person gets their own.
- Continue recommendation for 6 foot spacing during meals.

**Restrooms.** Be very careful in public restrooms. Most public restrooms will regulate the number of people using the restroom at the same time, depending on the size. If there is no regulator or signage, have volunteers ensure girls take appropriate turns to maintain social distancing and that they wear their masks in the restrooms. It is ideal to have automatic flushers and sensory faucets to wash hands. If these are not available, girls and adults should get in the habit of using tissue or paper towel to open doors and



latches, touching as little as possible. If the restroom is large, have girls use every other stall and avoid using stalls with a person in the stall next to them at the same time. Restrooms and toilets are fraught with germs normally, and more so now considering the contagion of coronavirus.

## [Additional Resources](#)

1) [Event Risk Assessment Planning Tool.](#)

This current interactive map published by Georgia Tech College of Sciences is a planning tool for troop meetings, service unit meetings and Girl Scout events. OCMTs can insert the size of a meeting (number of attendees) on the sliding scale to the left and then click on the destination on the interactive map. Once the map link is clicked, a likelihood percentage appears which indicates the risk of COVID-19 exposure or the likelihood of contracting COVID at a gathering given the levels of infection, by county, nationwide. Find out more information on this interactive tool by visiting the Georgia Tech college of Sciences homepage.

[Georgia Tech - Event Risk Assessment Planning Tool](#)

[Georgia Tech College of Sciences - Homepage](#)

2) [CDC One-Stop-Shop Toolkit.](#)

The One-Stop-Shop CDC page offers an array of topic specific COVID-19 guidance. [COVID-10 One-Stop Shop Toolkits](#)