

COVID-19 Guidance for OCMTs

Troop Meetings, Activities/Programs, Business/Practices & Additional Resources

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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 OCMT 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.

Girl Scouts' number one priority is the safety and well-being of our members and the families and communities we serve.

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 Health Authority to ensure your community 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
- Check in regularly with families to assess comfort level with respect to in person meetings, protocols, etc.
- Remind volunteers of the importance following local and national safety directives.
Continue to 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 in deference to each OCMTs individual country and local COVID-19 circumstances which change in response to risk factors.

The guidance which follows is separated into four categories:

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

Troop Meetings

Troop Meeting Size: As we move forward, USAGSO suggests that you defer to your local restrictions, first and foremost, as they can vary greatly and frequently change. When/if you do gather in person, utilize social distancing and follow all preventative guidance (such as face coverings).

For troops larger than local restrictions allow, stay connected with girls in other ways! Large troops are wonderful, so encourage them to stay together! Some ideas for volunteers:

- Host virtual troop meetings
- 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. Outdoor activity is recommended, as opposed to indoors, employing social distancing and safety measures. Defer to your local guidelines, where large gatherings are concerned.

OCMTs may consider larger group gatherings (10+ attendees) 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 preferred)

Can social distancing be maintained?

Always follow local guidance available 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 assure proper sanitary/safety measures are in place. Encourage volunteers to supplement any practices including hand sanitizer/wipes/extra masks, etc.

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 in areas where current COVID-19 risk restricting public meeting options, OCMTs *may wish* to evaluate in-home meetings on a case-by-case basis, considering the following:

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 (where applicable) 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. Abide by all safety guidelines issued by local health authorities and considering the following:

- 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.

Virtual Meetings: Meeting options may need to be flexible based on the fluid nature of local COVID-19 restrictions. Troops that are able to run online meetings as needed (or wanted) should continue to do so. Considering that COVID restrictions may shift over time, GSUSA/USAGSO recommends maintaining a virtual to in-person ratio of at least 20/80, maintaining virtual troop meetings around 20% of the time, to keep tech skills and virtual meeting habits fresh and the on the ready

Activities / Programs

Day trips and activities: In conjunction with Safety Activity Checkpoints, your local health guidance for gatherings (Troop Meetings and Day trips) should be adhered to. Call ahead to the facility or vendor to assess their safety/sanitary measures. Be prepared to provide additionally supplies (extra sanitizer, wipes, or masks).

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 as per USAGSO/GSUSA guidelines.

For the foreseeable future, volunteers must seek OCMT prior approval before planning **any** overnight activities and continue to practice hygiene and public health safety measures as outlined by your local health authorities. 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.)

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.

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 to make social distancing possible. 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.

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, please defer to all local governmental health authority guidance.

Hosting OCMT/Overseas Committee Events: As with hosting troop meetings above, OCMT hosted events should follow all GSUSA/USAGSO guidance, with deference to local health authority guidelines. Be particularly careful with respect to complying with country and local guidelines or restrictions concerning Large Gatherings. As said before, for any

event and being held at a third-party property or off-site facility, confirm the site's safety/sanitary measures and be prepared to fill in for areas where they may fall short. It is the OCMT's responsibility to ensure girl and guest safety, to the fullest extent possible. Comply with local health guidelines first and then to those outlined in this document, with 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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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

- Check and adhere to local restrictions for large and small gatherings in the OCMT community. Restrictions may change in response to risk levels.
- Check your local department of health to ensure compliance with its specific statutory norms and laws.

Volunteer awareness: 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
- Snacks are individually packaged or brought from home, where 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.

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.

Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation: Follow the resources developed by credible public health sources such as your local health authority, the WHO or CDC. Share these with girls and volunteers and ensure that they are practiced during meetings and activities. Reminders or signs while at the meeting or activity will remind girls and volunteers to engage in everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, including:

- 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 take temperatures prior to group interaction to confirm the individual is not running a fever and temperature is a normal 98.6 degrees. Members with fever should skip the in-person gathering until their temperature is normal

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](#) 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.).

Face Coverings (Masks): All girls and adult volunteers wear masks during in-person gatherings, this is mandatory no matter what city or country you are located in.

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.

Some girls or volunteers may not be able to wear masks, due to medical conditions. 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.

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