



# GSCSA Volunteer Handbook

Updated August 2024

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# Introduction

## The Girl Scout Promise

On my honor, I will try:  
To serve God\* and my country,  
To help people at all times,  
And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

\*The word God can be interpreted in a number of ways, depending on one's spiritual beliefs. When reciting the Girl Scout Promise, Girl Scout members may replace the word God with a word that more closely expresses their spiritual beliefs.

## The Girl Scout Law

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

## Council Relationship to GSUSA Headquarters

Girl Scout councils have a charter relationship with Girl Scouts of the United States of America; council employees are not employed by GSUSA. This charter relationship designates each council as a separate, independent legal entity with its own board of directors and staff. Each Girl Scout council has the (independent) authority and accountability for developing Girl Scout membership and for administering and supervising the Girl Scout program within its jurisdiction. The National Board of Directors of Girl Scouts of the USA is accountable to the National Council, from which it receives its authority, for the sound management of Girl Scouting throughout the USA. Individual Girl Scout councils and GSUSA work together to support effectiveness and inclusiveness, ensuring that the experiences of Girl Scouting will remain available for generations of girls to come.

## Volunteer Relationship to GSCSA

Volunteers are appointed by Girl Scouts of the Southern Appalachians to fulfill roles that impact the mission and vision of the organization. GSCSA's volunteers are managed in accordance with defined, board approved volunteer policies. The organization strives to develop and retain volunteers and utilizes coordinators in order to achieve this end. Depending on the role or roles a volunteer is appointed to, the assigned coordinator(s) may be one or more members of staff or service unit team volunteers.

## Contact Information

GSUSA      [www.girlscouts.org](http://www.girlscouts.org)

GSCSA      [www.girlscoutcsa.org](http://www.girlscoutcsa.org)      [info@girlscoutcsa.org](mailto:info@girlscoutcsa.org)      1-800-474-1912

## Volunteer Program Philosophy

GSCSA volunteers promote Girl Scouting by providing and administering the Girl Scout program. GSCSA strives to provide volunteer opportunities that increase participation and broaden experiences. The organization also strives to provide an environment in which volunteers provide good service, receive support, recognition, and appreciation for jobs well done. The volunteer policies enclosed in this handbook seek to reflect these commitments.

GSCSA will make reasonable efforts to stay abreast of the changing needs of the organization, new legislation, regulations, and trends to ensure that policies and procedures are revised to reflect internal and external changes. The terms specified in the Volunteer Handbook are based on prevailing business conditions and are subject to change based upon business necessity. With the passage of time, it may be necessary to revise, supplement, or rescind policies or portions of these policies.

## Volunteer Policies

The following policies apply to all volunteers of GSCSA. Policies provide consistency of action and direction, and they form the basis for an effective volunteer development system.

### Affirmative Action

The Girl Scout Council of the Southern Appalachians does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, sex, age (40 or above), disability, national origin, citizenship, marital status, sexual orientation, genetic information, or any legally protected status. GSCSA supports affirmative action in the selection, placement, training, assessment, and reappointment of individuals with disabilities and of persons from groups that are underrepresented ethnically and racially. GSCSA will make reasonable accommodations for physical and mental disabilities of volunteers consistent with the performance of essential responsibilities and the effective operations of the organization.

### Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment

Girl Scouts is committed to creating a respectful, courteous environment free of illegal discrimination and unlawful harassment of any kind. GSCSA does not tolerate sexual or other unlawful harassment by any employee, Board Member, volunteer, vendor, contractor, consultant, customer, girl or adult member, or visitor. Harassment is a breach of GSCSA policy and may be a violation of state and/or federal law. In addition to any disciplinary action that GSCSA may take, up to and including dismissal, offenders may also be personally liable for any legal and monetary damages.

Harassment is prohibited in all forms. Harassment can include unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical, or visual. The Girl Scout Council of the Southern Appalachians maintains a strict policy prohibiting unlawful harassment and discrimination. GSCSA will not tolerate harassing conduct that affects tangible role benefits, that unreasonably

interferes with an individual's role performance, or that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. GSCSA is committed to taking all reasonable steps to prevent such harassment and discrimination.

GSCSA is determined to resolve possible discrimination and harassment situations as quickly and confidentially as possible. If a volunteer believes another volunteer, Board Member, employee, vendor, contractor, consultant, customer, girl or adult member, visitor, or agent of the organization is harassing or discriminating against her/him, the volunteer is encouraged to tell the offender clearly that the behaviors and actions are unwelcome. The volunteer should immediately inform the Chief Executive Officer (or designee). If the complaint involves the Chief Executive Officer, then the complaint should be reported to the Board Chair. The volunteer should report the facts of the incident, including what happened, how often, and where the incident(s) took place, as well as the names of the individuals and witnesses involved. Any volunteer who is informed of, witnesses, or receives a complaint must report it to the Chief Executive Officer (or designee).

All harassment and discrimination claims will be investigated in a timely, fair, and thorough manner, and GSCSA expects all volunteers to cooperate fully in any investigation. All complaints will be investigated as discreetly and confidentially as possible. If the organization finds that discrimination or harassment has occurred, it will take appropriate corrective action up to and including dismissal of the offending volunteer (or other appropriate action if the offender is not a volunteer for the organization).

The Chief Executive Officer has the overall responsibility of maintaining effective enforcement of nondiscrimination and harassment policies. Each volunteer is responsible for following the procedures outlined in this policy to ensure that her/his complaint is handled promptly and appropriately.

## Sexual Harassment / Harassment

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination. Sexual harassment of a volunteer (female or male) by anyone (female or male), including any Board Member, coordinator, employee, volunteer, girl or adult member, customer, or vendor will not be tolerated.

Sexual harassment may consist of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical acts of a sexual nature where submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or a condition of an individual's continued volunteer role; where an appointment decision is based on an individual's acceptance or rejection of such conduct; or where such conduct interferes with an individual's role performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

GSCSA has a firm commitment to providing an environment where all volunteers and girl and adult members are treated with dignity and respect. All volunteers share responsibility and ownership for creating and maintaining a respectful and positive environment.

In accordance with this policy, GSCSA will neither condone nor tolerate:

- any overt display or demonstration of sexual activity between and/or among employed staff or volunteers;

- any overt display or demonstration of sexual activity between employed staff or volunteers and girl members;
- sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between employed staff or volunteers and girl members;
- use of the Girl Scout name, related activities, publications, and/or facilities as vehicles for public or private promotion of sexual orientation and/or practice; and
- infliction of sexually abusive behavior upon girl members, including sexual touching and bodily contact, exhibitionism, voyeurism, and/or involvement of girl members in pornographic materials.

Sexual harassment also encompasses other actions that create a hostile, offensive, or intimidating environment. Such actions can include, for example, inappropriate or overtly familiar touching, sexual innuendoes, obscene gestures, and jokes and remarks of a sexual nature, especially where exposure to such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's role performance or ability to complete her/his role.

Sexual harassment is a form of misconduct that undermines the integrity of the volunteer relationship and is incompatible with the values, traditions, and purposes of Girl Scouting as stated in the Constitution of Girl Scouts of the USA.

In addition to sexual harassment, harassment can also consist of unwelcome conduct or the creation of a hostile environment, whether verbal, physical, or visual, that is based on a person's protected group status. GSCSA maintains an environment that encourages any employed staff member or volunteer who believes that she/he has been the subject of sexual harassment or any form of harassment as defined in the council's policy to report the incident in writing to either the Chief Executive Officer or human resources. Any employee or volunteer who is aware of sexual harassment or any form of illegal harassment has a duty to report the matter to the appropriate authority. If the complaint involves the Chief Executive Officer, then the complaint should be reported to the Board Chair.

The Girl Scout Council of the Southern Appalachians reserves the right to refuse placement or reappointment and to dismiss or suspend from affiliation with GSCSA any volunteer who, in conducting a Girl Scout program, advocates, solicits, or promotes sexuality so as to create substantial risk that such conduct will be detrimental to girl members or to the environment, or involve girl members in matters outside the Girl Scout program.

Further, retaliation against anyone who has reported an allegation of harassment in good faith is expressly prohibited and if it occurs will be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

## Anti-Child Abuse Policy

Because some positions within the Girl Scout Council of the Southern Appalachians have direct contact with children, GSCSA supports and maintains environments that are free of child abuse and neglect. All 50 states have passed some form of mandatory child abuse and neglect reporting law in order to qualify for funding under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). CAPTA mandates minimum definitions for child abuse and sexual

abuse.

Child abuse or neglect is any recent act or failure to act:

...resulting in imminent risk of serious harm, death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation of a child by a parent or caretaker who is responsible for the child's welfare (the definition of 'child' may vary from state to state, but is usually a person under the age of 18).

Sexual abuse is defined as:

...employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct; or rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children.

Sexual abuse may also include sexual touching and bodily contact, exhibitionism, voyeurism, and/or involvement of children in pornographic material.

All states require certain professionals and institutions to report suspected child abuse. Failure to report suspected child abuse can result in criminal and/or civil liability. All states require the report to be made to some type of law enforcement authority or child protection agency. Reporting to a parent or relative will not satisfy the reporter's legal duty under the statutes. A report must also be made to the Chief Executive Officer or designee.

In accordance with these statutes, GSCSA will neither condone nor tolerate:

- infliction of physically abusive behavior or bodily injury upon girl members;
- physical neglect of girl members, including failure to provide adequate safety measures, care, and supervision in relation to Girl Scout activities;
- emotional maltreatment of girl members, including verbal abuse and/or verbal attacks.

GSCSA reserves the right to refuse membership, and to dismiss or to exclude from affiliation with the organization any employee or volunteer who is found guilty of child abuse or neglect or has been convicted of child abuse or neglect. Local (more stringent) prevailing statutes may supersede Girl Scout policies. A current volunteer who has been convicted or found guilty of child abuse or neglect must report the conviction to her/his coordinator within two days of the conviction's occurrence.

Volunteers working directly with girls are required to report suspected child abuse according to their state's reporting law. Volunteers are accountable for protecting the health and safety of program participants. This accountability includes protecting girls and their membership data from exposure to known criminal offenders who may frequently visit the household and/or meeting place of the group.

Tennessee considers any adult who has knowledge of or suspects child abuse or neglect to be a mandated reporter. Virginia and Georgia have similar laws for persons in certain

professions. GSCSA expects that any volunteer who suspects child abuse or neglect will make the required report to that state's reporting hotline (1-800-552-7096 in Virginia; 1-877-237-0004 in Tennessee; 1-855-GACHILD in Georgia).

## Anti-Retaliation Policy

GSCSA feels very strongly that it is important to provide volunteers with confidential, non-threatening alternatives for registering their concerns without fear of retaliation. GSCSA will not tolerate retaliation against anyone for stepping forward with a concern, complaint, or grievance.

An employee or volunteer may not retaliate against employees or volunteers in any way for registering a concern or complaint in good faith. Retaliation, in the context of this policy, is an adverse employment or appointment action against an employee or volunteer because the employee or volunteer has lodged or supported a complaint. Examples of strictly prohibited retaliatory action include (1) disciplining, changing the role assigned, providing inaccurate information to, or refusing to cooperate or discuss role-related matters with any volunteer because that volunteer has registered a complaint, or (2) intentionally pressuring, falsely denying, lying about, or otherwise covering up or attempting to cover up conduct such as that described above.

Examples of concerns or complaints include, but are not limited to:

- safety concerns (e.g., OSHA complaints);
- unlawful harassment or discrimination complaints, including sexual harassment;
- cooperation in a harassment or discrimination investigation;

All volunteers are expected to comply with this policy. Should any volunteer act contrary to this anti-retaliation policy, she or he may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Any implication or threat of retaliation because a volunteer has voiced a complaint or grievance should be brought to the immediate attention of the Chief Executive Officer (or designee).

## Substance Abuse

GSCSA is committed to providing a safe environment for all members and to fostering the well-being and health of its employees and volunteers. That commitment is jeopardized when any GSCSA volunteer illegally uses drugs before, during, or after a Girl Scout activity, possesses, distributes or sells drugs, or abuses alcohol while volunteering. Therefore, the illegal possession or illegal use of any drug is prohibited.

Any volunteer at a Girl Scout activity or who represents Girl Scouts visibly impaired will be deemed unable to perform required duties and will not be allowed to complete the work. If possible, the volunteer's coordinator (or a witnessing coordinator) will first seek another coordinator's opinion to confirm the volunteer's status. Next, the coordinator will consult privately with the volunteer to determine the cause of the observation,



including whether substance abuse has occurred. If, in the opinion of the coordinator, the volunteer is considered impaired, the volunteer will be sent home or to a medical facility by taxi or other safe transportation alternative—depending on the determination of the observed impairment—and accompanied by the coordinator if necessary. A drug or alcohol test may be in order. A volunteer who is impaired or appears to be impaired will not be allowed to drive.

## Volunteer Conduct

GSCSA expects and requires honesty, good judgment, and integrity in all interactions. Girl Scouting is founded on faith, trust, and confidence, and holds all volunteers to high standards in personal and professional conduct. Failure to comply with the volunteer code of conduct will lead to disciplinary action, up to and including possible dismissal from all volunteer roles.

All GSCSA Volunteers must:

- promote physical and emotional safety as appropriate for grade level in Girl Scout activities;
- be willing to let girls take the lead;
- comply with the letter and spirit of all applicable laws;
- faithfully adhere to policies, rules, regulations, and contracts;
- deal honestly, fairly, courteously, and respectfully with girl and adult members, other volunteers, customers, employees, and the general public;
- respect GSCSA's ownership of all equipment, supplies, records, and proprietary information;
- preserve the confidentiality of all proprietary information, plans, decisions, and any other information that is not designated for knowledge outside of the intended parties.

The following actions are considered inappropriate for all volunteers:

- failure to adhere to the principles of the Girl Scout Promise and Law, or any action inconsistent with a position of trust or positive role modeling or influence among girls, parents, other volunteers or the community at large;
- refusal to provide a physically and emotionally safe space, including but not limited to:
  - the use of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of girl members,
  - smoking in the presence of girl members,
  - fighting or threatening violence,
  - boisterous or disruptive behavior,
  - violation of Girl Scout safety guidelines,
  - abuse or mistreatment of girls, parents, volunteers, general public, or staff,
  - harassment or discrimination as defined in policies,
  - releasing confidential information,
  - refusal to include girls or adults who have disabilities,
  - discrimination of any kind,
  - the use of rude or disrespectful language when communicating verbally or in writing to girls or adults within the context of Girl Scouting,

- malicious gossip or derogatory attacks concerning anyone associated with the organization,
- bullying of girls or adults, including cyberbullying;
- theft, misappropriation of funds, or misuse of funds, equipment, or materials;
- falsification of records;
- negligence or improper conduct leading to damage of property;
- repeated failure to follow a coordinator's reasonable requests or carry out a reasonable assignment;
- gross misconduct or insubordination;
- excessive absenteeism without notice.
- behavior that tarnishes the reputation of GSCSA

## **ABUSE AND BULLYING PROHIBITION**

GSCSA is committed to an environment without abuse or bullying directed at any of its members or committed by one of its members. This also includes the prohibition of sexual harassment or sexual abuse as previously described in this handbook. Abusive conduct includes acts or omissions that would cause a reasonable person, based on the severity, nature, and frequency of the conduct, to believe that a member was subject to an abusive environment, which can include but is not limited to the following:

- Repeated verbal abuse, including derogatory remarks, insults, and epithets;
- Verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a threatening, intimidating, or humiliating nature; or
- The sabotage, bullying, or undermining of a member.
- A single act generally will not constitute abusive conduct, unless such conduct is determined to be severe and egregious.

Bullying is defined as aggressive behavior that is intentional, is repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take on various forms including:

- Physical bullying: When one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
- Verbal bullying: When someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful name.
- Nonverbal or relational bullying: When one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, or gossip. This type of bullying also includes intimidating another person by using gestures.
- Cyberbullying: The intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person by way of any technological tool, such as email, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs). Cyberbullying can involve:

- Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images.
  - Posting sensitive, private information about another person.
  - Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad; and
  - Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.
- Hazing: An activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers that person regardless of that person's willingness to participate.
  - Sexualized bullying: When bullying involves behaviors that are sexual in nature. Examples of sexualized bullying behaviors include sexting, bullying that involves exposures of private body parts, and verbal bullying involving sexualized language or innuendos.

## **ABUSE OR MISTREATMENT OF MEMBERS**

The Girl Scouts of Southern Appalachians has **zero tolerance** for abuse and will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of members in its programs. Any mistreatment or abuse by an employee or volunteer will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer service and cooperation with law enforcement

## **ABUSE OR MISTREATMENT OF ONE MEMBER BY ANOTHER MEMBER**

The Girl Scouts of Southern Appalachians has **zero tolerance** for abuse, mistreatment, or sexual activity among members within the camp/council. This council is committed to providing all Girl Scout members with a safe environment and will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one member by another member. Conduct by members that rises to the level of abuse, mistreatment, or sexual activity will result in intervention or disciplinary action, up to and including, dismissal from the program. In addition, our council will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying. and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, the council will take the necessary steps to eliminate such behavior including removal from their troop.

## **Conflict of Interest**

An actual or potential conflict of interest occurs when a volunteer is in a position to influence a decision that may result in a personal gain for that volunteer or a relative of that volunteer, or a gain for a competitor in the marketplace as a result of GSCSA's business dealings.

For the purposes of this policy, 'relative' may mean father, mother, step-parent, child, step-child, siblings, spouse, grandparent, grandchild, parents-in-law, siblings-in-law, or any individual who makes her/his home with a volunteer. Personal gain is defined as an advantage or benefit that results from a volunteer or relative having a significant ownership in a firm with which GSCSA does business, or when a volunteer or relative receives a kickback, bribe, substantial gift, or special consideration as a result of any transaction or business dealings involving GSCSA.

If a volunteer has any influence on transactions involving purchases, contracts, or leases, it is imperative that she or he disclose these influences to GSCSA as soon as possible so that safeguards can be established to protect all parties.

Additionally, a conflict of interest exists if a volunteer who holds a key leadership role including but not limited to, service unit manager or delegate also holds a position as staff or volunteer leadership for a competitor. GSCSA volunteers may not use their position, including voting rights, for the advantage of any Girl Scout competitor in the marketplace.

## Confidentiality

Information learned while serving as a volunteer is the exclusive (intellectual) property of Girl Scouts and should be carefully guarded. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to, non-public technical, business, and financial information and plans, Girl Scout logos and insignia, volunteer systems and girl program materials, as well as private information about girl and adult members, councils, volunteers, customers, suppliers, and employees. Confidential information must not be disclosed to unauthorized persons, including competitors, media of all types, or other volunteers whose duties do not require the use of such information.

## Ethics Policy

The realization of the council's mission and the Council's reputation depend upon the principles of fairness and ethical conduct of all council members, including volunteers. Our reputation for integrity and excellence requires careful compliance with the spirit and letter of all regulations and laws as well as personal commitment to the highest standards of conduct and integrity.

The success of the Girl Scout Council of the Southern Appalachians depends upon the trust of all our constituencies. We must preserve that trust. Volunteers have an obligation to act in a way that will always merit the continued trust and confidence of our members and the general public.

GSCSA volunteers will comply with all applicable laws and regulations, GSCSA policies, and community and industry standards. All volunteers must conduct council business in accordance with the letter, spirit, and intent of all applicable laws and regulations and refrain from any and all illegal, dishonest, or unethical conduct.

Generally, the use of good judgment will serve as proper guidance. However, if a situation arises where it is difficult to determine the proper course of action or if a volunteer feels she or he is being pressured to act improperly, the matter must be discussed with the volunteer's immediate coordinator. If the volunteer is uncomfortable discussing the matter with the immediate coordinator, the volunteer should contact her/his coordinator's supervisor, the Chief Operating Officer, or the Chief Executive Officer. The volunteer must take action.

Compliance with this ethics policy is the responsibility of each and every volunteer. Disregarding or failing to comply with this policy will lead to disciplinary action, up to and

including possible dismissal.

## Screening and Placement

The recruitment, screening, and placement of volunteer applicants and the annual reappointment of volunteers shall be based on the individual's knowledge, abilities, skills, experience, education, and/or training. In order to provide equal opportunities to all individuals, volunteer placement decisions at GSCSA are based on performance, qualifications, skills, and abilities. The Girl Scout Council of the Southern Appalachians does not discriminate in volunteer opportunities or practices on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, sex, age (40 or above), disability, national origin, citizenship, marital status, sexual orientation, genetic information, or any characteristic protected by law.

Eligibility for placement in a volunteer position with GSCSA will be based upon the following criteria.

### **GOVERNANCE VOLUNTEER ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

A governance volunteer is defined as any adult age 18 or over or any girl member age 14 or over who wishes to serve GSCSA in a voluntary, non-paid capacity as a council delegate, national delegate or a member of the board of directors.

All prospective governance volunteers may be asked to submit fingerprint samples, and/or additional character, employment, and education references.

All governance volunteers are required to become members of Girl Scouts of the USA upon appointment and to renew their membership annually, unless they choose to become a lifetime member.

### **OPERATIONAL VOLUNTEER ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

An operational volunteer is defined as any adult age 18 or over who wishes to serve GSCSA in a voluntary, non-paid capacity in a service unit, troop, or program role. This includes adults working directly with girls, adults who simply fulfill the adult requirement of the adult/girl ratio by grade level as detailed in Safety Activity Checkpoints, and administrative volunteers who handle large amounts of money or confidential information.

All prospective operational volunteers are required to give authorization for GSCSA to obtain a criminal record check using one or more third party vendors. Without such authorization, no applicant will be considered for any operational volunteer position with GSCSA. Prospective operational volunteers or current volunteers may also be asked to submit fingerprint samples, credit check authorizations, motor vehicle record authorizations, and/or additional character, employment, and education references. Any prospective or current volunteer who refuses to provide the authorizations required by GSCSA may be denied or removed from a volunteer role.

All operational volunteers are required to become members of Girl Scouts of the USA upon appointment and to renew their membership annually, unless they choose to become a lifetime member.

Effective Summer of 2024, all new volunteers and any current volunteers due for a background check will also be required to complete a motor vehicle check authorization.

## **SERVICE LEARNING VOLUNTEER ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

Service learning volunteer is defined as any student age 16 or over who wishes to serve GSCSA in a voluntary, non-paid capacity for the purpose of meeting education requirements such as TN Promise service hours, high school or college service hour requirements, or the completion of other approved service learning programs.

All prospective service learning volunteers may be asked to give authorization for GSCSA to obtain a criminal record check using one or more third party vendors, fingerprint samples, and/or additional character, employment, and education references. Service learning volunteers who have not given authorization for GSCSA to obtain a criminal record check will not be placed in a position working directly with girls, handling large amounts of money nor confidential information. Service learning volunteers are not required to become members of Girl Scouts of the USA if length of service will be less than 1 month in duration. Service learning volunteers whose length of service is anticipated to be 1 month or more in duration may be required to become members of Girl Scouts of the USA as a condition of continued service and to renew their membership annually, unless they choose to become a lifetime member.

## **EPISODIC VOLUNTEER ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

At times, GSCSA will partner with individuals, corporate teams or other groups of volunteers for one-time or short-term service projects. Volunteers serving in this capacity are considered episodic volunteers.

A prospective episodic volunteer may be asked to give authorization for GSCSA to obtain a criminal record check using one or more third party vendors, fingerprint samples, and/or additional character, employment, and education references. Episodic volunteers who have not given authorization for GSCSA to obtain a criminal record check will not be placed in a position working directly with girls, handling large amounts of money nor confidential information.

Episodic volunteers are not required to become members of Girl Scouts of the USA if length of service will be less than 1 month in duration. Service-learning volunteers whose length of service is anticipated to be 1 month or more in duration may be required to become members of Girl Scouts of the USA as a condition of continued service and to renew their membership annually, unless they choose to become a lifetime member.

## **BACKGROUND SCREENING**

1. Criminal Offenses. Every volunteer must have a completed criminal record check at initial appointment, after every 3 years of service, or as required by GSCSA or GSUSA. If GSCSA learns that an applicant or volunteer has been convicted of, has pleaded guilty to, or has pleaded no contest to a misdemeanor or felony, the following shall apply:

- A. For crimes against children, offenses against persons, offenses against the family,

crimes involving weapons, arson, or any violent crime, the person will not be allowed to serve in any capacity.

- B. Status as a registered sex offender is cause for automatic disqualification for any volunteer position at GSCSA.
  - C. For drug-related offenses, a first offense DWI (Driving While Intoxicated), DUI (Driving Under the Influence), or possession of marijuana under two ounces will not alone preclude volunteer service, if it has been five years or more since the date of disposition. Other than a first offense occurring five or more years earlier, the person will not be allowed to serve in any capacity. This may or may not apply to non-moving traffic violations and minor traffic offenses, depending on the offense.
  - D. Any person convicted of shoplifting, fraud, false pretense, embezzlement, worthless checks or related offenses may be allowed to serve in a restricted position, if it has been more than five years since the date of disposition. A person with any other criminal convictions, regardless of whether classified as a felony or misdemeanor, will not be able to serve if it has been less than five years since the date of disposition.
  - E. A prospective volunteer who has been rejected due to criminal record may appeal the decision to the GSCSA CEO and have his or her case reviewed. The decision whether to allow service will be the absolute and exclusive discretion of the GSCSA CEO and/or designated staff.
  - F. A volunteer who is not eligible to drive for Girl Scouts may be allowed to serve in a non-driving role, at the discretion of the GSCSA CEO and/or designated staff.
- 2. Pending Charges. If charges are pending related to any criminal offense other than minor traffic violations, involvement with GSCSA as a volunteer may be temporarily suspended pending disposition of the case.
  - 3. Contest of Criminal Records Check. Any applicant who disputes and desires to contest any information that appears on the criminal history transcript must do so in the manner described in the pre-adverse action letter, within five days of receipt of said letter. All costs associated with an appeal for the criminal history transcript provided to GSCSA are the responsibility of the individual. Further, it is the responsibility of the individual contesting the transcript, not GSCSA, to take all action necessary to contest or correct the criminal history transcript. GSCSA is entitled to rely upon the information contained in the criminal history transcript until such time as a corrected criminal history transcript has been provided. GSCSA does not control the information that is contained in criminal history transcripts. GSCSA has no liability to any person for the information contained in such transcripts or for its actions taken in reliance upon such.
  - 4. Continued Service. As a condition of continued service, each volunteer consents to a periodic review of his or her criminal records. All volunteers whose position require a criminal record check for appointment to the position will be subject to a new criminal record check, at a minimum, every three years.
  - 5. Motor Vehicle Record. In addition, each volunteer with driving responsibilities may be

required to consent in writing to a periodic review of his or her motor vehicle record. Whether or not a formal motor vehicle check is conducted, all persons who are otherwise eligible to serve in a volunteer position at GSCSA must follow the following restrictions based on their individual motor vehicle experience.

- A. No person with less than 5 years of driving experience should be allowed to transport girls. As such, all approved volunteers under age 21 are restricted from transporting girls in their volunteer placement.
- B. If a person has moving violations or at-fault accidents during the last three years, the following applies:

		Number of At-Fault Accidents During the Past 3 Years		
		0	1	2 or more
Number of Moving Violations During the Past 3 Years	0	May be placed in a position that transports girls.		Will be restricted from transporting girls in their volunteer placement.
	1	May be placed in a position that transports girls.		Will be restricted from transporting girls in their volunteer placement.
	2	May be placed in a position that transports girls.	Will be restricted from transporting girls in their volunteer placement.	
	3 or more	Will be restricted from transporting girls in their volunteer placement.		

- C. Any person with citations for reckless driving during the last three years will be restricted from transporting girls in any volunteer placement.

## PLACEMENT

Every attempt will be made to place volunteers in positions that meet both their needs and the needs of the council. In instances where this is not possible, the needs of the council will take precedence over the needs of the individual. Individuals not placed in a position for which they applied may be recommended for other positions. Further, the volunteer may decline an assignment or may request reassignment.

## Volunteer Service Policy

Volunteers recognize their involvement in the Girl Scout Movement as a voluntary service and generally do not accept, receive, or solicit any monetary reimbursement for their service.

Scholarship assistance may be available through GSUSA and GSCSA to help selected adults defray the cost of attendance at Girl Scout courses or special events. National



Council Session delegates elected by GSCSA may be provided all or part of the expenses entailed in attending the National Council Session Meetings. Consideration will be given to requests according to the type and cost of the event, the amount budgeted for the fiscal year, and the number of eligible applicants.

## Volunteer Development Policy

The Girl Scout Council of the Southern Appalachians recognizes and acknowledges that its volunteers are a critical component of program delivery and is totally committed to recruiting the best people, developing their talent to the fullest extent possible, and recognizing those who meet their goals.

GSCSA will provide volunteers with a description of their role, training for their role, and access to policies applicable to their role. Volunteer coordinators will provide new and returning volunteers with ongoing communication, support, and feedback, consistent with the council's operating objectives. The process depends on a continuous exchange of information between coordinator and volunteer. This shared responsibility provides a consistent means for evaluating performance, and recognizes individuals whose efforts and performance contribute to GSCSA's overall success.

GSCSA is aware that coordinators play an instrumental role in the development of volunteers. It is, therefore, fully committed to developing and supporting the staff, service unit team, and advisory volunteers responsible for coordination of various volunteer groups and holding them accountable for selecting, developing, retaining, and recognizing quality volunteers.

## Accident and Liability Insurance

All registered members are protected under Girl Scout Activity Accident Insurance, basic coverage. This plan provides coverage for accident medical expenses to members traveling to and from and participating in approved, supervised Girl Scout activities.

Volunteers receive information about emergency procedures in accordance with their role. The procedures will be followed in the event of a serious accident or fatality. Liability and sickness insurance is required of all troops traveling outside the U.S.A. and is available through GSCSA.

Any motor vehicle used to transport Girl Scouts must be duly licensed, insured, safety tested, and operated by a responsible adult (age 21 or older) with a valid driver's license. Georgia, Tennessee, and Virginia law require bodily injury and property liability; as well as, personal injury protection or its equivalent to be provided on privately owned or rented vehicles.

The organization does not assume responsibility for insuring a volunteer's personal property.

## Other Applicable Policies

GSUSA and GSCSA maintains additional policies which are the responsibility of all Girl

Scout members to uphold. These policies include, but are not limited to:

Blue Book of Basic Documents This publication contains all of the basic documents of Girl Scouts of the United States of America. It is the foundation for the work of all Girl Scout councils. This publication is revised by constituents of GSUSA and distributed electronically.

The Troop Teams Manual includes a chapter on basic safety policy in Girl Scouting, taken from Volunteer Essentials which is revised annually by GSUSA and distributed electronically. Additionally, this manual includes GSCSA's established policies which pertain to group finances and fund development.

Safety Activity Checkpoints (SACs) SACs are tailored for each activity girls might participate in, exist for a variety of activities, and must be followed for each activity involving girl members. SACs are revised periodically by GSUSA and available on the GSCSA website.

GSCSA By-laws This is the governance document for GSCSA. By-laws are revised by members of the Corporation, approved by the Board of Directors, and distributed electronically or in print on request.

## Volunteer Roles and Responsibilities

### Appropriate Attire

The Girl Scout Council of the Southern Appalachians believes that professional image is critical to the success of our mission and vision. Therefore, volunteers are expected to present a clean, polished appearance when representing the organization, whether they are on council-owned property or in the community. All volunteers are expected to use good judgment in their attire.

Volunteers are not required to wear a uniform for participation in most Girl Scout activities. Purchase of a uniform is at the volunteer's expense and is encouraged. Volunteers are encouraged to wear the Girl Scout Membership Pin when they are not in uniform. Volunteers may be expected to wear a Girl Scout uniform at certain functions; the event coordinator will indicate when this is required.

Girl Scouts at each grade level have one required element (tunic, sash, or vest), for the display of official pins and awards, that will be required when girls participate in ceremonies or officially represent Girl Scouting.

For adult members, the unifying look of the uniform is a Girl Scout official scarf, or tie for men, worn with official membership pins, combined with their own navy blue business attire. Optional navy-blue vests are available for purchase.

### Communications

Many volunteers are expected to communicate with others in a variety of methods in order to

fulfill their role. This may include sending communications via electronic mail and voice mail, discussion groups, and web logs or blogs. Set-up of websites, discussion groups, and web logs or blogs for the purpose of Girl Scouting must be approved by GSCSA staff. (Volunteers submit the Group Website Application found on the council website.) When representing the organization, content should always be presented in a professional manner and reviewed for correct spelling and grammar, especially when sent to outside or third parties.

While sending communication acting as a representative of the organization, volunteers may not, under any circumstances, transmit offensive, fraudulent, or defamatory images or text, such as pornography or off-color jokes, or anything that may be construed as illegally harassing or offensive to others;

The Girl Scout Council of the Southern Appalachians recognizes that a positive reputation is critical to supporting its mission and realizing its strategic objectives. As such, all volunteers have an obligation to uphold the Council's image. This duty and obligation encompasses volunteer Internet postings to both internal and external Web logs or blogs and other electronic forums in the public domain, including communications prepared and submitted by volunteers when off duty.

GSCSA recognizes that some volunteers may choose to express themselves by posting personal information on the Internet through personal websites, blogs, or chat rooms, by uploading content, or by making comments at other websites or blogs. GSCSA values its volunteers' creativity and honors their interest in engaging in these forms of personal expression on their own time, should she or he choose to do so. However, problems can arise when a personal posting identifies or appears to be associated with GSCSA or Girl Scouting, or when a personal posting is used in ways that violate the GSCSA's rights or the rights of other volunteers.

Specifically:

- Public defamation or libel of the Council, its employees, volunteers, and members, whether by name or implication, or dissemination of material contrary to the council's interests, is not permitted.
- Disclosure of proprietary or confidential information is prohibited.

GSCSA may, at its option, monitor internal and external sources to identify inappropriate use. Volunteers responsible for posting disparaging material or for other misuse will be subject to discipline, up to and including dismissal. GSCSA reserves the right to take legal action if necessary.

## Volunteer Categories

### **GOVERNANCE VOLUNTEERS**

Further definition of governance volunteer roles is in the GSCSA by-laws.

### **OPERATIONAL VOLUNTEERS**

Girl Scouts has operational volunteer opportunities for everyone, whether you have a little or

a lot of time to give. Every attempt is made to place volunteers in positions that meet both their needs and the needs of the Council. Operational volunteers must be 18 or older and will receive training for their role. Operational volunteer opportunities are available for both women and men. Operational volunteers include

Service Unit Team Volunteers: Service units are teams of volunteers who work together to provide a quality Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) for the girls in their community through events and other activities. Additional details are listed in the Volunteer Position Description for Service Unit Teams and the Service Unit Teams Manual.

Troop Team Volunteers: Troop volunteers work together to provide a quality Girl Scout Leadership Experience for girls through service to the girls assigned to their troop. The Team structure allows each volunteer to maximize his or her skills as they pertain to troop leadership. Additional details are listed in the Volunteer Position Description for Troop Teams and the Troop Teams Manual.

Program Volunteers: Outdoor volunteers work together to provide quality GSLE programs for girls through service to the girls and adults. Additional details are listed in the Volunteer Position Description for Program Volunteers.

## **SERVICE LEARNING VOLUNTEERS**

Service learning volunteers help with specific activities in order to fulfill the requirements of an educational or scholarship-providing organization.

## **EPISODIC VOLUNTEERS**

Episodic volunteers help with events and other activities occasionally. Episodic volunteers may help with one event a year, a monthly activity, or at other times that extra help is needed, and the volunteer is available.

# Volunteer Development

## Volunteer Training

Volunteer training varies by role and needs of the volunteer filling the positions. Trainings are held in person in both group and individual settings and/or online through self-directed learning and through group conference/webinar.

Available trainings are listed annually in the Go Guide and on the GSCSA website. Training outside of these dates and locations may be available upon request.

It is the responsibility of each coordinator to ensure that volunteers complete any required trainings. Failure to complete required trainings may result in a volunteer being dismissed from their current placement.

## Volunteer Records

Current volunteers have the right of prior consent regarding information released to

external sources, except when information release is required by law. A written release signed by the volunteer will be required prior to release of information unless required by law.

## Recognition

GSCSA's formal recognition system is consistent with GSUSA's publication of adult recognitions. GSCSA may choose to honor additional volunteers with local community recognitions. Complete information about recognitions is published electronically and communicated to volunteers annually.

## Conflict Resolution

GSCSA does not aim to intervene in or take responsibility for conflicts or disagreements between its members. However, some situations require action by GSCSA in order to preserve the integrity of Girl Scouting's safety and effectiveness. Such situations include, but are not limited to:

- Conflict between two volunteers that creates an unsafe or inappropriate environment for any girl members
- Conflict between two volunteers that creates an environment inconsistent with the Girl Scout Promise or Law
- Conflict between a volunteer and an employee that creates an environment where one or more parties are unable to successfully complete the objectives of their role

In such situations, GSCSA will facilitate a formal conflict resolution meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be the development of a mutually agreeable resolution through discussion in a safe, controlled environment. Formal conflict resolution meetings are an opportunity to move forward, not to find fault or blame. The parties involved in conflict will develop the agreement, focusing on future expectations. If individual performance problems are also present for one or more parties, those problems will be addressed through the coaching process, prior to a formal conflict resolution meeting.

The following may result in immediate release of one or more involved parties from any volunteer position with GSCSA:

- Failure to respond to staff requests for information (after reasonable accommodations have been made)
- Refusal to meet with staff (after reasonable accommodations have been made)
- Inability to resolve a conflict which affects girl members

## Reappointment

Prior to the completion of her or his term, each volunteer will receive confirmation of reappointment, appointment to a new position, or dismissal from volunteer service. Reappointment is based on past performance, adherence to GSUSA and GSCSA policy, support of the Girl Scout purpose, values, and GSCSA's goals, as well as positive

relationships with the community, parents, other volunteers, and employed staff. There will be mutual acceptance of position accountabilities, expectations, and time commitments. Some positions have term limits which prevent volunteers from reappointment to the same position.

## Resignation

Either GSCSA or the volunteer may initiate a release from a position. A volunteer is requested to give as much notice as possible when resigning. Upon notice of a volunteer's resignation or intent to resign:

- The resignation submitted will be acknowledged by the volunteer's coordinator.
- Any necessary staff members, volunteers, and parents will be notified, as appropriate.
- The volunteer records system will be updated to include the resignation.

## Volunteer Dismissal

Dismissal or resignation from the volunteer position does not cancel membership with GSUSA unless it is determined that she or he is unable to meet the membership requirements. The decision whether to dismiss or limit a current or prospective volunteer's participation is exclusively at the discretion of GSCSA Council Staff, regardless of the action.

### **Grounds for immediate disqualification or dismissal**

- Knowingly putting Girl Scouts' safety at risk. Some examples include, but are not limited to:
  - Threatening, intimidating or coercing any child, parent or other volunteer in the presence of girls
  - Harassment of any kind
  - Allowing known sex offender to be in the presence of Girl Scouts at any Girl Scout activity or program, including but not limited to, troop meetings and cookie booths
  - Profane/abusive language in the presence of minor Girl Scouts or toward any Girl Scout member
- Misappropriation of funds, troop and/or service unit
- Consumption of alcohol, tobacco, or illegal substances while in the presence of minor Girl Scouts
- Willfully or maliciously engaging in disruptive behavior, including defamatory remarks toward GSCSA or GSUSA, through social media, phone calls, texts, voice messages, email, online forums, or other modes of communication.
- Failing to observe and follow all applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations
- Failure to respond to staff requests for information or refusal to meet with staff (after reasonable accommodations have been made)
- Any other action or activity in noncompliance with the Girl Scout Law & Promise as determined by GSCSA Leadership

Once GSCSA Staff has made the decision to dismiss a volunteer, the Chief Operating Officer and/or the Senior Director of Membership will be notified. The volunteer will be notified of the decision by council staff directly, either in person or by phone, and by certified mail. It is up to GSCSA's discretion as to whether the meeting will be in person or via phone conversation.

No action will be taken on unsubstantiated information.

Volunteers are responsible for all property, equipment, materials, financial or written information issued to them or in their possession or control. Volunteers must return all GSCSA property immediately upon request or upon separation. GSCSA may also take all action deemed appropriate to recover or protect its property.

### **Partial or Complete dismissal from volunteer role(s)**

Sometimes the continued service of some volunteers is not in the best interest of the girls or the organization. Any action to release a volunteer will receive careful and confidential pre-consideration.

- GSCSA reserves the right to dismiss or reduce a volunteer's role at any given time for any reason GSCSA deems necessary. Volunteer roles are an appointment each year and it is GSCSA's discretion as to whether a volunteer will be re-appointed to any volunteer role.
- Situations may arise in which a volunteer may not be performing up to GSCSA or GSUSA standards. Once an incident regarding a performance problem or unsatisfactory volunteer behavior occurs, the volunteer may be contacted by GSCSA regarding the issue in a timely manner. The volunteer will receive a warning, either verbal or written. The volunteer may be given a grace period/time frame to improve behavior, which may or may not be specified, at the discretion of GSCSA.
- If volunteer does not improve behavior, GSCSA will dismiss the volunteer, either completely, or from certain roles within the organization.
- Once GSCSA Council Staff has made the decision to dismiss a volunteer, the COO and/or the Senior Director of Membership will be notified. The volunteer will be notified of the decision by council staff directly, either in person or by phone, and by certified mail. It is up to GSCSA's discretion as to whether any meetings will be in person or via phone conversation.
- If the volunteer is not dismissed from all roles, or is assigned a different role by Council staff, but continues to exhibit unsatisfactory or problematic behavior, GSCSA then reserves the right to dismiss the volunteer completely. At that point, the volunteer will be informed of complete dismissal from any roles by certified mail.

The seriousness of a volunteer's conduct, history of misconduct, volunteer record, length of time as a volunteer, the volunteer's attitude about the conduct, how the conduct affects GSCSA, and action for similar volunteer conduct will be taken into consideration with this policy.

Prior to release and in situations not involving misappropriation of funds or other grounds for immediate dismissal, reasonable efforts will be made at the discretion of GSCSA

leadership to either assist the volunteer to improve her/his performance or place the volunteer in another position suited to her/his qualifications.