

Returning to In-Person Troop Meetings and Activities Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Volunteers

Edition date: 9/1/2020



This guidance is being provided as of the Edition Date above (when a vaccine has not been made readily available). Southern Appalachians may modify this guidance, from time to time as circumstances change.

COVID-19 is an extremely contagious virus that spreads easily in the community. Take all reasonable precautions to limit potential exposure for girls, volunteers, and families.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to change as infection rates rise and fall in different areas. There may be regional differences or developments since this guidance was published. Continue to follow local and [national](#) directives. Discuss plans with families.

Use these questions and reminders to help decide how and when to return to troop activities.

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 had 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 and that they have not been to high risk geographical regions particularly those regions that require a 14-day quarantine period. The purpose of the screening form is to implement and demonstrate this important 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. Finally, please be sensitive to the fact that girls may be experiencing symptoms that are similar but completely unrelated to COVID-19 and not contagious at all such as menstrual body aches or headaches or 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.

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

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

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

Then, consider whether you can supplement any practices that are less ideal. For example, if you will arrive after another user group, plan to bring sanitizing wipes to get the space ready for

your troop. Another example: if faucets are manual, take some time to show girls how to shut them off with a paper towel. Use paper towels for doorknobs whenever possible.

Meetings may not be held in fitness centers or gyms, where a greater risk for contracting the virus may exist. Schools or churches may not permit outside groups on premises, so always check and confirm ahead of time.

Troop Meetings in the home. GSUSA strongly suggests no meetings in the home out of concern that there would be greater risk of exposure to other family members. The recommendation is to stay away from in-home meetings for the time being.

Troop Meeting Size. GSUSA's current suggested maximum is ten people (eight girls and two unrelated adult volunteers). However, [check your local restrictions](#) for small gatherings. If more restrictive, follow the local restriction. Restrictions vary greatly from state to state, county to county, and even from town to town--and frequently change. If a state allows more than ten to gather, utilize all social distancing practices and follow all preventative guidance (such as face coverings).

As of this edition date, here is the state guidance that affects troop meetings within our council:

Georgia:

- Starting June 1, 2020: Gatherings of more than 25 people in a single location are allowed if six feet of space is maintained between each person. Business categories and industry-specific guidelines are included [at this link](#).

Tennessee:

- Executive orders from the governor and/or local orders in counties with a locally run county health department (Hamilton, Knox, and Sullivan) continue to limit group sizes for participation in social and recreational gatherings and require persons or groups of certain sizes to maintain separation from other persons or groups outside their own group. Business categories and industry-specific guidelines are included [at this link](#).

Virginia:

- Social gatherings must be limited to 50% of the occupancy of the event space, if applicable, or 50 participants. Business categories and industry-specific guidelines are included [at this link](#).

If you have a large troop, stay connected while you wait for a safe time for everyone to gather. Large troops are wonderful, so stay together! Some ideas:

- 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.

Transportation. Individual parents drop off and pick up their own girls from meetings. Carpooling and public transportation should be avoided, where possible, to maintain social distancing.

Virtual meetings. Meeting options may need to be flexible based on the fluid nature of COVID-19 risk. Troops that are able to run online meetings as needed (or wanted) should do so. GSUSA 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. Use the Safety Activity Checkpoints for Virtual Meetings, to guide your meeting plans: [Virtual Troop Meetings](#)

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

Travel and overnight stays. Overnight trips are now permitted within our council's geography and with council approval. As part of the approval process, our staff will be inquiring about your COVID-related processes and plans including sanitization, transportation of participants, overnight sleeping arrangements, and pre-screening. For all travel, use all health and safety guidance available to ensure the safety of all participants such as COVID-19 guidance provided by this council, the CDC, state and local health authority guidance or restrictions and the Safety Activity Checkpoints. GSCSA reserves the right to withdraw approval if the COVID situation changes regionally. Troops are encouraged to review all vendor cancellation and refund policies prior to making payments. GSCSA is not responsible for non-refundable deposits or payments.

Overnight camping stays are now allowed on all three of our camp properties. We are limiting overnights to buildings that do not have HVAC systems to reduce COVID-19 virus exposure. We are also limiting capacity to 50% of what each unit will sleep to allow for physical distancing during overnights. The fields and trails are open for games, hiking, badgework, and more. You can see unit capacities on our [facility use chart](#) and inquire about reservations by calling us at (800) 474-1912 or emailing us at info@girlscoutcsa.org. (Sorry – no food service or staffed program activities are being scheduled at this time.)

Travel and Trips for Graduating Seniors – [Funds Extension Guidelines](#)

Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation. Follow the [resources developed by credible public health sources such as CDC](#) or your local public health department. Share these with girls and volunteers and ensure that they are practiced during meetings and activities. 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.
- 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.

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

Singing. Research and the CDC suggests that activities like singing or using a projected voice may project respiratory droplets in greater quantity and over greater distance, increasing the risk of COVID-19 transmission, particularly with prolonged exposure. According to the [State of Tennessee](#), any singing activities should take place outdoors and singers should maintain at least 15 feet of separation—and more if possible—between each other.

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

First Aid / CPR Training. Keep skills up to date for any emergency. Talk to your council about alternative methods of training that may be available during this time.

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

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

To prepare a bleach solution, mix:

- 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water or
- 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water

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

Face Coverings. Volunteers should remind girls that Girl Scouts wear face coverings (masks) not only to protect themselves but to protect others. Face coverings are a civic responsibility and a sign of caring for the community. Girls can bring their 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. Contact your council for guidance on how best to handle these exceptional circumstances as they arise.

Reporting and communicating a positive COVID 19 test. Troop leaders should keep a list of attendees, and if they become aware of a positive test, someone waiting for a test, or someone who has been asked to quarantine, they should contact Melissa Berry at 865-387-1679. A **council staff member** and NOT volunteers, will be responsible for:

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

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