

Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA)

Child Abuse Prevention Policies and Procedures

Upon Girl Scout membership, registrants agree to adhere to all abuse prevention policies and procedures as set forth by Girl Scouts of the USA and the local Girl Scout council. Policies and procedures may be amended occasionally, and the following are not inclusive of all supporting processes and training available in Girl Scouts to prevent abuse. The pertinent policies and procedures to prevent abuses in Girl Scouts include:

No Tolerance for Physical or Sexual Abuse

Physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse of youth is forbidden. Sexual pressure, sexual advances, improper touching, sexual communication, including text messaging, and sexual activity of any kind with Girl Scout members is not tolerated. If you witness or experience any behavior of this nature, including between youth, notify appropriate council staff immediately. Incidences of abuse of any kind will result in immediate council intervention and law enforcement notification when necessary. Volunteers are responsible for following their council's guidelines for reporting any direct information or concern around physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse with respect to members.

No Tolerance for Youth Violence and Bullying

Youth violence or bullying is not tolerated in Girl Scouts. Youth violence occurs when young people intentionally use physical force or power to threaten or harm others. Bullying is a form of youth violence. Volunteers should become familiar with the signs, risk factors, and preventive measures against this type of behavior. If you witness or experience any behavior of this nature, notify the appropriate council staff for guidance. The CDC provides excellent resources on this topic, including:

- [CDC Youth Violence](#)
- [CDC Bullying](#)
- [CDC Youth Violence Prevention](#)

Child Abuse and Mandated Reporter

All states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have laws which identify persons who are required to report suspected child abuse to an appropriate agency. Therefore, if you witness or suspect child abuse or neglect, whether inside or outside of Girl Scouting, always notify the appropriate council staff immediately and follow your council's guidelines for reporting your concerns to the proper agency within your state. For more information, please review these available resources:

- Child Welfare Information Gateway about [Child Abuse and Neglect](#)
- How to Report [Child Abuse and Neglect](#)
- [CDC Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention](#)

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Adult Supervision Requirements

Girl Scouts requires that whenever youth members meet, whether in person or virtually, there are to be *at least* two unrelated, registered, and Girl Scout–approved adults who have been background checked, and one of whom is female, supervising Girl Scout members. A registered and Girl Scout–approved adult volunteer is someone who has passed a background check and has been through the council’s volunteer onboarding and training process. The two adult volunteers must not be related to each other (for example, not a sibling, spouse, domestic partner, parent, child, or anyone who would be considered a family member) and may not live in the same residence.

This requirement applies to every Girl Scout gathering, including troop meetings (in person and virtual), day trips, camp, sleep-away travel, special events, activities, and projects. Members should be advised of this policy so that they can report to the council if there is a violation.

Troop leaders must always be adults. Youths or youth members are not permitted to substitute for adult supervision. This rule applies to every Girl Scout gathering, including troop meetings (in person and virtual), day trips, camp, sleep-away travel, events, activities, and projects. There are no exceptions to this rule.

Background Checks for All Adult Volunteers

All adult volunteers in Girl Scouts must successfully pass a background check in accordance with their local Girl Scout council’s procedures.

Adult-to-Child Communications

In Girl Scouts, adults are not permitted to make one-to-one contact with youth members. This also applies to social media and electronic/online communications such as e-mail, text, IM, chat, etc. Girl Scout volunteers and adults should not make private direct contact with youth members. There should always be at least one other supervising adult or parent involved when contacting troop members.

Child Abuse Prevention Training

In Girl Scouts, adult volunteers will receive periodic mandatory child abuse prevention training to promote the health and safety of children, to create a safe environment for children, and to learn how to recognize, respond and report concerns of physical or sexual abuse. Volunteers are expected to receive and abide by the mandatory abuse prevention training course according to the training cadence offered by your local Girl Scout council.