

Girl Scout Activity Safety Standards & Guidelines

Safety Activity Checkpoints (SAC) is a resource that provides safety standards and guidelines for Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA) approved activities.

GSUSA, local councils, and other units holding a credential – including USA Girl Scouts Overseas (USAGSO) – shall be responsible for seeing that all activities are planned and carried out in a manner that considers the health, safety, and general well-being of all participants in accordance with these guidelines.

This section provides general safety standards & guidelines by topic that will apply to all activities. Please read and become familiar with all topics in this section. These standards and guidelines are to be used together with the specific safety checkpoints for an individual activity.

Throughout *Safety Activity Checkpoints*, several individual activities, such as Paddling and Rowing, Climbing and Adventure, and Target Sports, are categorized under related sections to provide continuity as well as the grade level and skill progression.

Adult Supervision. There are different adult supervision requirements for Girl Scout troop meetings as compared to events outside of the regular Girl Scout troop meeting such as outings, activities, camping and travel. Activities and travel outside of the regular troop meeting space require more adult supervision.

For Troop Meetings

The adult-to-girl ratio is two unrelated volunteers, including one female, for up to this number of girls:

- 12 Girl Scout Daisies
- 20 Girl Scout Brownies
- 25 Girl Scout Juniors
- 25 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 30 Girl Scout Seniors
- 30 Girl Scout Ambassadors

There should be one extra adult for every additional:

- 1–6 Girl Scout Daisies
- 1–8 Girl Scout Brownies
- 1–10 Girl Scout Juniors
- 1–12 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 1–15 Girl Scout Seniors
- 1–15 Girl Scout Ambassadors

For Outings, Activities, Travel and Camping

The adult-to-girl ratio is two unrelated volunteers, including one female, for up to this number of girls:

- 6 Girl Scout Daisies
- 12 Girl Scout Brownies
- 16 Girl Scout Juniors
- 20 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 24 Girl Scout Seniors
- 24 Girl Scout Ambassadors

There should be one extra adult for every additional:

- 1–4 Girl Scout Daisies
- 1–6 Girl Scout Brownies
- 1–8 Girl Scout Juniors
- 1–10 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 1–12 Girl Scout Seniors
- 1–12 Girl Scout Ambassadors

Some high-adventure activities may require more adult-to-girl supervision than stated above. For those activities, the safety checkpoints will provide specific adult-to-girl supervision ratios. Remember, some activities are less safe for younger girls, particularly Daisies and Brownies. Younger girls may not be permitted to participate based on their age, as appropriate, and this will be specified on the individual activity. In cases where younger-girl participation is an option but only under certain conditions, this is indicated toward the top (on some occasions, with an asterisk that's followed by explanation further into the write-up).

Note: For mixed-grade level troops, use the ratio for the lowest grade level in the troop. For example, if the troop consists of Daisies and Brownies, the Daisy ratio should be followed.

Council Approval Requirement. At the top of each activity page you will see a field indicating whether your council's prior approval is required to perform the activity.

- **Required.** Required activities are considered high-risk activities. GSGLA has implemented a two-tier hierarchy for these activities.
 - **Tier 1** – Tier 1 high-risk activities can be approved by your Service Unit Manager (SUM) or Designee. If your SUM is not comfortable approving any tier 1 high-risk activity you will be asked to complete the Extended Travel/High-Risk Application eform.
 - **Tier 2** – Tier 2 high-risk activities are approved by your Service Unit Manager (SUM) AND the Council by use of the [Extended Travel/High-Risk Application](#) eform.
- **Not Required.** You do not need to check in with your council for prior approval.

Activities Not Listed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*. In a challenging, learn-by-doing environment like Girl Scouts, it's only natural that girls will sometimes want to take part in activities that are not specifically addressed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.

Remember to have a plan or process in place for addressing and handling requests for activities that are not specifically listed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.

- First, investigate whether the activity is similar to another activity and if the safety checkpoints can easily translate and apply to a covered activity.
- Consider whether the proposed activity requires any additional expert supervision or special certification for the instructor.
- Consult your council for clarification when needed and for approval before taking girls.

Activity Preparation. Communicate with your Girl Scout council and girls' parents/guardians about the activity, including details about safety precautions and any appropriate clothing or supplies that may be necessary. Follow council procedures for activity approval, certificates of insurance, and guidelines about girls' general health examinations. Girls are key to activity planning. Keeping their grade level abilities in mind, encourage girls to take proactive leadership roles in organizing details of the activity.

Review Safety Checkpoints with Instructors. These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, camp or your council as appropriate to determine if the safety checkpoints can be complied with. Take any questions or issues with safety compliance to your council for guidance and next steps.

Itinerary and Key Contacts. Give an itinerary to a contact person at home. Call the contact person upon departure and return. Create a list that includes girls' parent/guardian contact information, council contacts, and emergency services contacts. Keep this list on hand or post in an easily accessible location. Emergency and parent contact information should be saved to an adult's mobile phone on the trip and be provided to the contact person at home.

Safety Gear. Safety gear includes clothing and equipment girls will need to safely take part in the activity. These items are necessary to ensure safety. Always opt to take the safety equipment offered by an organization or facility, even if it is not specifically listed here. If the facility offers helmets, always accept the use of helmets for girls.

Required Gear. Required gear simply means the activity-specific gear that girls must have to participate in the activity. For example, skiing – a girl will need to bring or rent skis and poles.

Additional Gear. Additional gear may include items that support a safe and healthy outdoor learning experience. These are items that often make the experience with girls more comfortable. Recommended items, based on Girl Scout experience, include:

- Layers of clothing for wintertime or for activities on or by the water or mountains, where temperatures or wind can change dramatically within a short period of time
- Sunglasses, sunscreen, hat, sun visor, lip balm
- Change of clothes for water-related activities or those involving dirt or mud, such as spelunking
- Comfortable shoes and socks if hiking or spending long days outside, in order to prevent ticks and blisters
- Watch, compass, maps
- Insect repellent
- Towels for waterfront, pool, and paddling activities
- Bottle of drinking water, healthy snacks
- Backpacks—girls carry their own gear and supplies!

Always take additional gear into consideration when planning an outdoor activity or trip in

addition to the safety gear required for the specific activity.

Instructor Credibility. Verify instructor knowledge, experience, and maturity. Ensure the volunteers or on-site instructors possess the proper skill set, knowledge, training and certification, or documented experience required to meet your council's guidelines and as outlined in the specific approved activity.

With respect to instructing and safeguarding children, maturity level and years of experience can positively impact the support needed for volunteers to safeguard girls. For example, while the legal definition of an adult lifeguard is 18, qualified lifeguards of 21 years of age are preferred whenever possible.

General Insurance. Commercial general liability insurance protects the Girl Scout organization. The facility or vendor that hosts your troop event (for example, a riding stable, a hotel, or a bus company) should carry general liability insurance, and auto liability when motor vehicles are involved. A facility that carries valid general liability insurance has almost always been examined for risk by its insurance carrier. If a place does not carry general liability insurance, it's a red flag. It may not be safe, so it would be best to select another place.

When your council requires you to provide documented evidence of insurance, ask the facility for a certificate of insurance for your records. But be aware that some places do not provide documented evidence of insurance to all customers, or only provide a certificate of insurance when a group is large or if the group plans to pay a certain amount.

If you plan to enter into a written contract with a facility or are considering a new vendor, remember to consult your council for the proper insurance requirements and see if they use an approved vendor list. Check to be sure the certificate of insurance you will be obtaining validates the insurance limits outlined in your contract or agreement.

Activity Accident Insurance. Activity accident insurance is a supplemental health insurance that protects registered Girl Scout members. Registered members are automatically covered under activity accident insurance when participating in all Girl Scout events and activities including trips that involve two (or less) overnight stays. The Basic Plan does not cover trips of more than two overnight stays.

Important! Trips that are three overnights or more are not covered under automatic activity accident insurance. Also, non-members are not automatically covered and international trips are not automatically covered. Activity accident insurance must be individually purchased for coverage under these scenarios.

So, you will *need to purchase extra activity accident insurance* for outings and events that:

- Involve three or more overnight stays
- Take place outside U.S. territory
- Include non-members, such as siblings and friends

When planning trips, always consult your council to see if extra activity accident insurance is needed.

Leave No Trace. Search the web for tips on environmental responsibility, and remember our principle of [Leave no trace](#) (scroll down to the "How to Leave No Trace Outdoors" video)—and, in fact, Girl Scouts have a long tradition of leaving an area better than we found it. Doing so will

teach girls responsibility and also safeguard your troop and local council from complications or issues involving the use of public property.

Emergency Preparation. Familiarize yourself with basic first aid, emergency response requirements, and other precautions. Know how far away and where emergency medical and law enforcement services are located. Understand your surroundings in relation to the closest medical facility or hospital. Also, familiarize yourself with the forms of emergency communication and emergency transportation options that are available.

Weather Conditions. Always monitor the weather in the days preceding an activity or trip. Check the local weather report on the day of the trip. For circumstances in which forecasted weather could be a risk to safety, consider scheduling alternatives. In the case of severe wind, lightning, hail, ice, snow storm, flood warnings due to heavy rain, or a hurricane or tropical storm, make contingency plans for itineraries and transportation. Reschedule the event if the weather report is severe. Adhere to public safety announcements concerning staying indoors or evacuating the area. In extremely hot weather, girls should do outdoor activities in the morning and late afternoon hours, and during the hottest time of day stay in a shaded area or inside with air conditioning. It is important on extremely hot days to plan for easy access to plenty of drinking water to prevent heat exhaustion or dehydration.

If extreme weather or temperature conditions prevent a trip, be prepared with a backup plan or alternative activity.

Buddy System. Always use the buddy system with all ages of girls, which means pairing girls up as partners. Each girl is responsible for staying with her buddy throughout a trip or activity. A buddy can warn her partner of danger, give a helping hand, or get immediate assistance when the situation warrants it. All girls are encouraged to stay near the group so that if someone is injured or not feeling well, there are others, including an adult, close by to seek help.

Permission Slips. It is imperative to secure a signed permission slip from a girl's parent or guardian for any trip or special activity outside the troop meeting space. This applies to all girls under the age of 18. In most cases, one parental consent is legally acceptable. However, there may be circumstances regarding a custody situation or a particular standard in your council where dual parental consent is required. For international trips, both parents / guardians written consent is generally required. If there is a question about single versus dual parental consent, please consult your council and they can consult local or state laws for specific legal guidance.

Transportation. Keep in mind that 15-passenger model vans have historically been flagged as a safety concern by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and are therefore not recommended to transport girls. There are state specific laws which may regulate the use of 15 passenger vans for public transport. Prior council level approval is required to determine if the vehicle is statutorily permitted and meets safety criteria. Always consult your council for prior approval before opting to rent or lease these vehicles to transport girls. Commercially operated shuttles (as with an airport service) are permitted.

For chartered buses and vehicles, always verify safety credentials, commercial driving licenses, and the use of seatbelts. Make certain proper insurance is in place by requesting a certificate of insurance with a minimum of \$1 million in auto liability coverage.

Overnight Trips. Prepare girls to be away from home by involving them in the planning so they know what to expect. On trips where male volunteers are part of the group, it is not appropriate for them to sleep in the same space as girl members. Always support and maintain an all-girl

atmosphere for sleeping quarters. Men may participate only when separate sleeping quarters and bathrooms are available for their use. Men should not be in situation to walk through girls' sleeping quarters for entrance, exit or to access restrooms. In some circumstances, such as a museum or mall overnight with hundreds of girls, this type of accommodation may not be possible. If this is the case, men do not supervise girls in the sleeping area of the event and the adult volunteer-to-girl ratio is adjusted accordingly.

An exception is made for family members during events such as parent-daughter or family overnights where one family may sleep together in an area specifically designated to accommodate families. Also please make note of the following:

- Each participant has her own bed.
- Parent/guardian permission must be obtained if girls are to share a bed.
- Girls and adults do not share a bed; however, some councils make exceptions for mothers and daughters.
- It is not mandatory that an adult sleep in the sleeping area (tent, cabin, or designated area) with the girls, but if an adult female does share the sleeping area, there should always be *two unrelated adult females* present.

Airbnb, VRBO and HomeAway. See the [Travel/Trip](#) chapter for specific safety checkpoints when utilizing Airbnb, VRBO and HomeAway. There are specific steps that must be followed when utilizing these privately owned property rentals, steps that are not necessarily taken with every traditional commercially owned and operated property such as hotels.

Modeling the Right Behavior. Never use illegal drugs. Do not consume alcohol, smoke, vape or use foul language in the presence of girls. Do not carry ammunition or firearms in the presence of girls, unless given special permission by your council for target sport activities. Always obey the law, for example, by not talking on a phone or texting while driving.

Online Safety. Instruct girls never to put their full names, location or contact information online, engage in virtual conversation with strangers, or arrange in-person meetings with online contacts. On group websites, publish girls' first names only and never divulge their location or contact information. Teach girls the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge and ask them to read, understand, discuss and commit to following it.

Money-Earning Activities. Safety is an important consideration throughout money-earning activities, including Girl Scout Cookie sales and other council-sponsored product sales. During Girl Scout product sales, you are responsible for the safety of girls, money, and products. In addition, a wide variety of organizations, causes, and fundraisers may appeal to Girl Scouts to serve as their labor force. When representing Girl Scouts, girls cannot raise money for other organizations, participate in money-earning activities that represent partisan politics or are not Girl Scout-approved product sales and efforts. It is imperative that Girl Scouts do not partake in anything that can be construed as unrelated business income, in order to protect our organization's 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. If there is a questionable circumstance, consult your council.

Volunteer Essentials. A key resource for volunteers in Girl Scouting is Volunteer Essentials. While Safety Activity Checkpoints focuses on safety guidance and parameters, Volunteer Essentials will address an array of topics such as Engaging Girls and Families, Troop Management, Product Program, Troop Finances, and Leader's Guide to Success. All Girl Scout

volunteers are instructed to review, understand and practice the principles and standards in both Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints.

Understanding Which Activities Are Not Permitted

After being thoroughly investigated, some activities are clearly classified as “not permitted.” Each sport or activity on the “not permitted” list is evaluated annually with respect to safety factors, council feedback, insurability, and accident history. These activities pose a high risk of bodily injury, require extensive prior experience to safely participate, or may require a driver’s license such as with ATVs. Activities with a poor accident history based on loss data gathered from various industries are not approved and therefore “not permitted.” The purpose of prohibiting certain activities is first and foremost to protect girls, but also to safeguard the financial and reputational well-being of your local council and the Girl Scout organization.

GSUSA does not approve, endorse, or provide safety checkpoints for “not permitted” activities.

The following activities are in the **not permitted** category:

- Bungee jumping
- Flying in privately owned planes, helicopters, or blimps
- Hang gliding
- Untethered hot-air ballooning
- Hunting
- Snowmobiling
- Riding a motorbike
- Riding electric Scooters
- Using outdoor trampolines
- Parachuting or skydiving
- Parasailing
- Paintball tagging
- Riding all-terrain vehicles (ATVs)
- Stunt skiing
- Zorbing

Bungee Jumping. Bungee jumping is not highly regulated for safety or consistent in terms of facilitation from one place to the next. It is an activity that carries a significant risk of bodily injury. Most insurance companies that have access to the accident history of bungee jumping have deemed this activity high risk and dangerous.

Hang Gliding, Parasailing, Zorbing, Parachuting/Skydiving, and Untethered Hot-Air Ballooning are activities similar to bungee jumping in terms of safety regulations, consistency of facilitation, and insurance implications. These are activities that carry a significant risk of bodily injury. Insurance carriers with knowledge of these activities from a claims perspective view them as a high safety risk, meaning they see frequent and/or severe accidents associated with these sports.

Privately Owned Aircraft. Flying in privately owned aircraft is a very clear exclusion under GSUSA and (most) councils’ commercial general liability insurance policies. In the event of an

incident involving an aircraft accident, your council would be financially liable for potential liability and resulting lawsuits. Even with a specific non-owned aviation liability policy (if your council purchases this type of policy, which it may not), a private plane is a separate and distinct insurable interest (compared to a professional chartered aircraft tour). In other words, even under non-owned aviation insurance, privately owned and/or operated planes are often excluded.

Outdoor Trampolines. Outdoor trampolines, particularly those with stilted metal frames, pose a high risk of injury. The activity can result in sprains and fractures in the arms or legs—as well as potentially serious head and neck injuries. The risk of injury is high in the case of children that the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly discourages the use of trampolines at home. Outdoor trampoline park injuries also are an area of emerging concern. Indoor trampolines in a confined padded indoor facility with higher supervision are far safer, but still not recommend for children under six years old. See for reference: [AAOS](#)

Paintball Tag. Paintball tag is offered in specialized parks where participants shoot pellets of paint at each other throughout an obstacle course, woods, or maze. The pressure used in a paintball gun is quite strong. When hit by a paintball pellet, a girl is certain to experience some pain, swelling, and perhaps a bruise or welt for a couple of days. Shooting a girl with a paintball pellet is likely to cause a minor injury and has the potential to cause a more serious injury to eyes, mouth, ears, and throat. For these reasons, paintball tag is prohibited Target paintball shooting, however, is permitted.

Hunting. Hunting is a sport that requires handling firearms in the wilderness, high maturity levels, and the availability of expert guides. Shooting accidents are not uncommon during hunting trips. This is also a sport which rarely, if ever, comes up as a requested activity. A very large majority of councils do not commonly hunt or request hunting trips.

Jet Skis, Motor Bikes, ATVs, Snow Mobiles and Electric Scooters. Jet skiing, motor biking, and riding snow mobiles, ATVs and electronic scooters are prohibited due to the extremely high incidence of serious injury involved. Most insurance carriers are not comfortable with these activities due to poor accident history. Insurance companies require that an operator hold a valid driver's license. Adults and children riding on the back of motor bikes and jet skis as passengers are exposed to a high risk of serious injury with no active opportunity to actually learn the skill.

Chartered Aircraft Trips and Aviation

Small chartered aircraft trips require prior council approval for each and every trip. This activity is permitted *only with trip-specific council prior approval*. The safety factors involving chartered aircraft, equipment and pilots are transparent and readily verifiable, unlike private aircraft.

Confirm with your council ahead of time that chartered aviation participation is covered under your council's general liability policy or non-owned aviation liability insurance policy. Again, these policies will almost always exclude *privately owned aircraft*.

Your council will confirm that the aviation company has evidenced proper insurance showing at least \$1 million aviation liability insurance and \$5 million umbrella. It is strongly recommended that your council consult with their insurance broker and/or GSUSA Risk & Insurance via LShimborski@girlscouts.org for assistance with vetting insurance issues and implications.

Tethered Hot-Air Ballooning. Some outdoor parks may offer the opportunity to learn the skill of hot-air ballooning in a relatively safe and controlled environment utilizing a tethered hot-air

balloon. Consult your council so they can check their general liability insurance or non-owned aviation liability policy to determine if this activity is covered. A hot-air balloon is an aircraft and viewed the same as small planes or helicopters from an aviation risk perspective. Therefore the same standard applies—professionally chartered and tethered hot air balloon rides will be considered, but private hot air balloons will not – private hot air balloons are not permitted.

Other Actions Girls and Volunteers Should Not Take

For legal reasons, there are other activities that girls and volunteers are not permitted to participate in while representing Girl Scouts, in order to preserve the integrity of our organization. These include:

- Endorsement of commercial products or services
- Solicitation of financial contributions for purposes other than Girl Scouting
- Participation in political campaigns or legislative activities, unless the legislative activity has been council-approved

First Aid

What To Do If There Is An Accident

Although you hope the worst never happens, you must observe council procedures for handling accidents and fatalities. At the scene of an accident, first provide all possible care for the injured person. Follow established council procedures for obtaining medical assistance and immediately reporting the emergency. To do this, you must always have on hand the names and telephone numbers of council staff, parents/guardians and emergency services such as the police, fire department or hospital. Use this eform or the paper version, <https://www.gsglavolunteerapps.org/gsglaaccidentincidentreport/>

Council specific emergency contact information; **24-hour emergency line 1-877-423-4752**. After receiving a report of an accident, council staff will immediately arrange for additional assistance at the scene, if needed, and will notify parents/guardians, as appropriate. If a Girl Scout needs emergency medical care as the result of an accident or injury, first contact emergency medical services, and then follow council procedures for accidents and incidents. Your adherence to these procedures is critical, especially with regard to notifying parents or guardians. If the media is involved, let council-designated staff discuss the incident with media representatives.

In the event of a fatality or other serious accident, the police must be notified and a responsible volunteer must remain at the scene at all times. In the case of a fatality, do not disturb the victim or surroundings and follow police instructions. Do not share information about the accident with anyone but the police, your council and, if applicable, insurance representatives or legal counsel.

When Someone Needs Emergency Care

Girls need to receive proper instruction in how to care for themselves and others in emergencies. They also need to learn the importance of reporting to volunteers any accidents, illnesses or unusual behaviors during Girl Scout activities. You can help girls by keeping in mind the following:

- Know what to report.
- Establish and practice procedures for weather emergencies.

- Know the type of extreme weather to expect in your area (e.g. tornadoes, hurricanes and lightning). Please consult with your council for the most relevant information for you to share with girls.
- Establish and practice procedures for such circumstances as fire evacuation, lost persons and building-security issues. Every girl and adult volunteer must know how to act in these situations. For example, you and the girls, with the help of a fire department representative, should design a fire evacuation plan for meeting places used by the group.
- Assemble a well-stocked first-aid kit that is always accessible. First-aid administered in the first few minutes can make a significant difference in the severity of an injury. In an emergency, secure professional medical assistance as soon as possible, normally by calling 911, and then administer first aid, if appropriately trained.

First-Aid/CPR

For many activities, Girl Scouts recommends that at least one adult volunteer be first-aid/CPR-certified. For that reason, if you have the opportunity to get trained in council-approved first-aid/CPR, do it! You can take advantage of first-aid/CPR training offered by chapters of the American Red Cross, National Safety Council, EMP America, American Heart Association or other sponsoring organizations approved by your council.

As a partner of Girl Scouts, American Red Cross offers discounts on certification courses. Caution: First-aid/CPR training that is available entirely online does not satisfy Girl Scouts' requirements. Such courses do not offer enough opportunities to practice and receive feedback on your technique. If taking a course not offered by one of the organizations listed in the previous paragraph, or any course that has online components, get approval from your support team or council prior to enrolling in the course.

First-Aider

General First Aider. A general first-aider is an adult volunteer who has taken Girl Scout-approved first-aid and CPR training that includes specific instructions for child CPR, as well as AED (Automated External Defibrillator) training.

If, through the American Red Cross, National Safety Council, EMP America, or American Heart Association, you have a chance to be fully trained in first-aid and CPR, doing so may make your activity planning go a little more smoothly.

Advanced First Aider. An advanced first aider is an adult with general first aid certification with additional health, safety or emergency response expertise such as, for example, a physician; physician's assistant; nurse practitioner; registered nurse; licensed practical nurse; paramedic; military medic; wilderness training, certified lifeguard or emergency medical technician(EMT).

The Safety Activity Checkpoints always tell you when a first-aider needs to be present. Since activities can take place in a variety of locations, the presence of a first-aider and the qualifications they need to have are based on the remoteness and scope of the activity. For example, if you take a two-mile hike in an area that has cell phone reception and service along the entire route and EMS (Emergency Medical Services) is no more than 30 minutes away at all times the first-aider will not need to have knowledge of wilderness first aid. If, on the other hand, you take the same two-mile hike in a more remote area with no cell phone service and where EMS is more than 30 minutes away, the first-aider must have knowledge of wilderness first aid (see the chart below).

Access to EMS Minimum Level of First Aid Required	Level of First Aid Required
Less than 30 minutes	First Aid
More than 30 minutes	Wilderness First Aid (WFA) or Wilderness First Responder (WFR)

Although a WFR is not required, it is strongly recommended when traveling with groups in areas that are greater than 30 minutes from EMS.

It is important to understand the differences between a first-aid course, and a wilderness rated course. Although standard first-aid training provides basic incident response, wilderness-rated courses include training on remote-assessment skills, as well as emergency first-aid response, including evacuation techniques, to use when EMS is not readily available.

Note: The presence of an **advanced first-aider** is required at resident camp. For large events—200 people or more—there should be, additional to regular first aider(s), **one advanced first-aider** for every 200 participants. The following healthcare providers may also serve as advanced first-aiders for large groups: physician; physician’s assistant; nurse practitioner; registered nurse; licensed practical nurse; paramedic; military medic; and emergency medical technician.

First-Aid Kit

Make sure a general first-aid kit is available at your group meeting place and accompanies girls on any activity (including transportation to and from the activity). Please be aware that you may need to provide this kit if one is not available at your meeting place. You can purchase a commercial kit, or you and the girls can assemble a kit yourselves. The Red Cross offers a list of potential items in its Anatomy of a First Aid Kit. You can also customize a kit to cover your specific needs, including flares, treatments for frostbite or snake bites and the like.

In addition to standard materials, all kits should contain your council and emergency telephone numbers (which you can get from your council contact). Girl Scout activity insurance forms, parent consent forms and health histories may also be included.

Overall Health, Well Being, and Inclusivity

Health History. Girl Scout councils require an annual health history form to be completed and signed by one parent/guardian for every Girl Scout and filed with the troop leader.

Follow council guidelines to comply with this. The form should reflect any significant medical condition, health issue, or allergy and be updated each year. The form can also reflect any over-the-counter medication that a girl is not permitted to take, if there are any.

If parents send medication on trips or activities, it should be in an original labeled container, controlled and administered by one designated adult. Health history forms can be shared with the site or camp physician or nurse ahead of time.

Keep a current and signed health history form for each girl with you when traveling. For physically demanding activities, such as water sports, horseback riding, or skiing, an additional current health history form may be obtained to make sure all adults are aware of any current medical conditions or special needs. Councils will retain all health history forms in accordance with state record retention requirements and laws.

Health Exams. Some councils also require a health exam for any activity that is three overnights or longer, which may include resident camp. Again, follow your council guidelines with respect to health exams. In most cases, the health exam needs to have been completed within one year of the last date of the trip for a girl to participate. Your council may require a current health exam for adult volunteers who participate in trips of three nights or more, so ask your local council about their policy. A health exam can be given by a licensed physician, a nurse practitioner, a physician's assistant, or a registered nurse. The health exam form must be signed by the medical provider.

For large events or trips longer in duration, such as resident camp or a weeklong trip to a ranch, the designated health professional at the trip location is responsible for collecting all health exam forms and health history forms for girls and adults.

Health exam forms and health history forms are to be shared only with designated health professionals and your local council staff responsible for coordinating them. All health and medical information is private (by law) and must not be shared or publicly available, so keep it safe and secure. Only share information on a need-to-know basis.

Councils will retain all health exam forms in accordance with individual state record retention requirements and laws.

Vaccination and Immunization. Issues or questions with respect to vaccination exemption periodically arise with activity and trip participation. Vaccine exemption laws vary by state and focus on public and private school attendance more directly than they do for youth organizations. Therefore, it is best to obtain local state legal guidance and proceed in accordance with the state law as it applies to school attendance. A general overview of state laws regarding school immunization exemption is provided and annually updated on the [National Conference of State Legislatures website](#).

If you have any questions about your obligation to communicate a girl's non-immunization with other troop parents, contact your local Girl Scout council for legal guidance as privacy laws may apply. Absent state laws that speak directly to vaccines and communicating non-immunization with parents of youth groups, the guidance is to follow the standard and protocol as it pertains to school attendance.

Mosquitoes, Ticks, and Lyme's Disease Prevention. Mosquitoes, ticks, and insect bites are an inherent risk to any warm weather outdoor activity. Ensure parents and guardians are aware of the need to have their girls properly covered, preferably with closed shoes and light-colored clothing and socks. It is important to advise parents, guardians and girls of this risk and the safety precautions they should take. The understanding that your troop or council cannot be held responsible for tick bites which can be reinforced with a waiver reference on a permission slip

An excellent resource for learning more is the [Tick and Lyme disease prevention section of Up To Date](#).

To learn more about using insect repellent safely, visit the Environmental Protection Agency website at [EPA Using Repellents Safely](#). To learn more about safely using DEET directly on the skin and on children, check out [EPA DEET](#). And for more on skin-applied and clothing-only repellent education, review [EPA Insect Repellents](#).

Emotional Safety. Adults are responsible for making Girl Scouts a place where girls are as safe emotionally as they are physically. Protect the emotional safety of girls by creating a team-agreement and coaching girls to honor this agreement. Team agreements typically encourage behaviors like respecting diverse feelings and opinions, resolving conflicts constructively, avoiding physical and verbal bullying or clique behavior, practicing fairness, and showing positive, respectful and helpful communication with others.

Physical or Sexual Abuse. Physical, verbal or sexual abuse of girls is forbidden. Sexual pressure, sexual advances, improper touching, sexual communication such as text messaging and sexual activity of any kind with girl members is not tolerated. If you witness or experience any behavior of this nature, notify the appropriate council staff immediately. Volunteers are responsible for following their council's guidelines for reporting any direct information or concern around physical, verbal, or sexual abuse with respect to girls.

Child Abuse. All states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands have specific 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 your council immediately and follow your council's guidelines for reporting your concerns to the proper agency within your state.

For additional information please check the following resources:

- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services: [Child Welfare](#)
- How to Report Suspected Child Maltreatment: [Reporting Abuse](#)
- Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect: [Mandatory Reporters](#)
- Los Angeles County Report Line 800-540-4000
- Kern County Report Line 661-631-6011
- San Bernardino County Report Line 909-384-9233
- Ventura County Report Line 805-654-3200

Mental Health and Safety. As an adult volunteer overseeing the activities and behaviors of young girls, and similar to child abuse, you may witness other signs of harmful tendencies such as self-harm. Self-harm can take a physical form such as cutting, burning, bruising, excessive scratching, hair pulling or poisoning or drug use. Other tendencies of self-harm are suicidal ideations that can be expressed verbally or with the written word. Another harmful expression involves harm to others which can be detected verbally or with physical aggression. If a situation of this nature is observed or comes to your attention in any form, always notify an appropriate council staff member immediately and follow your council guidelines with respect to next steps.

Equal Treatment. Girl Scouts welcomes all members, regardless of race, ethnicity, background, disability, family structure, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic status. When scheduling, planning, and carrying out activities, carefully consider the needs of all girls involved, including school schedules, family needs, financial constraints, religious holidays, and the accessibility of appropriate transportation and meeting places.

Including Girls with Disabilities. Girl Scouts is committed to making reasonable accommodations for any physical or cognitive limitations a girl may have. Communicate with girls of all abilities and/or their caregivers to assess special needs and accommodations. To learn more about the resources available, visit [Disabled World](#). Whenever possible, the individual activity chapter will provide resources specific to that sport or activity so always check

when planning to include a girl with a disability, our goal is to include all girls with a desire to participate.

Transporting Girls

How parents decide to transport girls between their homes and Girl Scout meeting places is each parent's individual decision and responsibility.

For planned Girl Scout field trips and other activities (outside the normal meeting time and place) in which a group will be transported in private vehicles keep in mind the following:

- Every driver must be an approved volunteer at least 21 years old, and have a good driving record, a valid license and a registered/insured vehicle.
- Girls never drive other girls.
- If a group is traveling in one vehicle, there must be at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers in the vehicle, one of whom is female. In addition, the girl-volunteer ratios in the "Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need" section must be followed.
- If a group is traveling in more than one vehicle, the entire group must consist of at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers, one of whom is female, and the girl-volunteer ratios in the "Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need" section must be followed. Care should be taken so that a single car is not separated from the group for an extended length of time.

Private transportation includes private passenger vehicles, rental cars, privately owned or rented recreational vehicles and campers, chartered buses, chartered boats and chartered flights. Each driver of motorized private transportation must be at least **21** years old and hold a valid operator's license appropriate to the vehicle. In addition, state laws must be followed, even if they are more stringent than the guidelines here.

Anyone who is driving a vehicle with 12 or more passengers must follow all state laws regarding driving these vehicles. Note, you must check with your council to determine specific rules about renting large vehicles. Fifteen passenger vans are not permitted for use to transport girls.

Please keep in mind the following non-negotiable points regarding private transportation:

- Even though written agreements are always required when renting or chartering, you are *not* authorized to sign an agreement or contract, except for rental car agreements, even if there is no cost associated with the rental. Such agreements must instead be signed by the person designated by your council.
- Check with your council to make sure you are following accepted practices when using private transportation. This ensures that both you and your council are protected by liability insurance in the event of an accident.
- If your council has given permission to use a rented car, read all rental agreements to be sure you comply with their terms and avoid surprises. For example, in many cases the minimum age of drivers is 25, and the maximum age is often under 70. In addition, make sure the car is adequately insured and you know who is responsible for damage to, or loss of, the vehicle. Finally, ensure you have a good paper trail that shows the vehicle rental is Girl Scout-related.
- Obtain parent/guardian permission for any use of transportation outside of the meeting place.

Checklist for Drivers

When driving a car, RV or camper, take the following precautions and ask all other drivers to do the same:

- Ensure all drivers are volunteers at least 21 years old
- Girls should not be transporting other girls.
- Never transport girls in flatbed or panel trucks, in the bed of a pickup, or in a camper- trailer.
- Keep directions and a road map in the car, along with a first-aid kit and a flashlight.
- Check your lights, signals, tires, windshield wipers, horns and fluid levels before each trip, and recheck them periodically on long trips.
- Keep all necessary papers up to date including, but not limited to: your driver's license; vehicle registration; any state or local inspections; and insurance coverage.
- Wear your seat belt at all times and insist that all passengers do the same. Girls under 12 must ride in the back seats.
- Follow all the established rules of the road in your state, including the speed limit. Some additional guidelines include: keeping a two-car-length distance between you and the car ahead of you; not talking or texting on a cell phone or other personal electronic device while driving; not using ear buds or headphones while driving; and turning your lights on when your windshield wipers are on.
- Plan rest stops every few hours and avoid driving for extended periods at night. If traveling with others, prearrange stopping places along the way. When planning longer trips, arrange for relief drivers.
- Do NOT drive when you are tired or taking medication that makes you drowsy.
- Check with your council for any other specific guidelines or requirements they have.