

COVID-19 Troop/Group Meeting Guidelines

With new guidance from GSUSA and the CDC, and increasing statewide case numbers, we have revised our COVID-19 guidelines.

All troops, regardless of community alert level, are allowed to meet in-person. However, troops need to follow the guidelines in this document.

General Guidance: Prior to planning an in person gathering, check the [State of Alaska Department of Health and Human Services COVID-19 website](#) and determine which alert level your community is in. Then, use the below information to plan a safe, fun gathering of your Girl Scouts.

Before implementing Girl Scouts of Alaska's (GSAK) guidelines, please confirm your local COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions in your region to ensure you are in compliance. Always follow the **most restrictive** guidelines.

All trips, overnights or large gatherings must be approved by GSAK regardless of the alert level your community is under.

- ***As of 10/1/21 large gatherings are allowed regardless of alert level without council approval. A group of fourteen or more people is considered a "large gathering".***
- ***As of 10/1/2021 any overnights, extended travel must be approved by GSAK.***

These guidelines are in addition to the [Girl Scout Safety Activity Checkpoints](#).

Email customercare@girlscoutsalaska.org for assistance.

COVID-19 Troop/Group Meeting Guidelines

If there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 (at a location the participant or someone in the participant's household has visited) then those participants should not attend any in person meetings for 14 days after exposure. The rest of the troop may choose to meet virtually or may continue to meet in person following guidelines. (Note: this restriction does not apply to those who are a healthcare professional or live in a household with a healthcare professional. Healthcare professionals adhere to more rigorous personal protective equipment procedures in their workplace).

Troop Meetings: All troops are allowed to meet in-person. Troops are urged to meet outside if at all possible. Troops should meet in locations which allow for physical distancing. Troops may choose to continue to meet virtually. For details on virtual meetings, see the Virtual Troop Meeting Safety Checkpoints.

Troop Meeting Pre-Screening Questions: Prior to *each* in-person meeting, all participants (girls and adults) should be screened to ensure they are healthy, haven't experienced any COVID-19 symptoms in the previous 72 hours and haven't knowingly been in contact with someone who has COVID-19.

Leaders may use a written questionnaire or verbally ask questions and keep a written log of answers. Troops should keep a record of each participant's answers for each in-person meeting for 3 years. These records do not have to be turned into the council unless requested by Girl Scout staff.

The following questions should be included in each pre-screening:

1. Do you have a fever or above-normal temperature (above 100F)?
2. Have you taken fever reducers in the past 72 hours?
3. Have you been experiencing shortness of breath or having trouble breathing?
4. In the past 72 hours, have you had a dry cough, runny nose or sore throat?
5. Have you recently lost or had a reduction in your sense of smell or taste?
6. In the past 72 hours, have you had any other flu-like symptoms, such as stomach upset, headache, muscle pain or fatigue?

7. In the past 72 hours, have you had chills or repeated shaking with chills?
8. Have you been tested for COVID-19? If yes, what date was the most recent test and what was the result (positive, negative, awaiting results)
9. In the past 14 days, have you been in contact with someone who has a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 or respiratory illness (including at school)?

If a participant answers “yes” to any of the pre-screening questions they should not attend in-person meetings until 72 hours after symptoms end without the use of medication.

If a participant has been tested and is still awaiting results they should not attend in-person meetings.

If an unvaccinated participant has been in contact with a confirmed or suspected case (question 9) they should not attend in-person meetings for 14 days after exposure. Participants who are fully vaccinated should not attend in-person meeting for 14 days after exposure or until their test result is negative (getting tested 3-5 days after exposure).

Virtual Troop Meeting Size: Virtual gatherings should follow the following girl/adult ratios

- Daisy: 2 adults to 12 girls
- Brownie: 2 adults to 20 girls
- Junior/Cadette: 2 adults to 25 girls
- Senior/Ambassador: 2 adults to 30 girls

In-Person Troop Meeting Size: Indoor and outdoor In-person gatherings should follow the following girl/adult ratios

- Daisy: 2 adults to 12 girls
- Brownie: 2 adults to 20 girls
- Junior/Cadette: 2 adults to 25 girls
- Senior/Ambassador: 2 adults to 30 girls

Your community may have restrictions on gatherings which are stricter. Check your community guidelines and follow those if they are stricter than Girl Scout guidelines.

Troop Meeting Space: When meeting in person, it is strongly recommended that troops meet in outdoor spaces where social distancing can be maintained. Volunteers should get advance permission from property owners prior to meeting.

If meeting indoors troops should use a public location. **Indoor gyms and fitness centers are not allowed. Indoor private residences are not recommended and must be approved by the council prior to use.** Residence backyards may be used as long as volunteers can ensure the meeting space is kept distinctly separate from non-members. Before using a space ask the owners:

- 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)?

Large Gatherings: Large gatherings are allowed without council approval regardless of alert level. A group of fifteen or more people is considered a “large gathering.” ***Use outdoor venues whenever possible and ensure that social distancing is possible.***

Day Trips: Troops do not need council approval to take day trips. Call ahead and ensure the location is following all CDC, state and local guidance. If activity equipment will be used as the provider to sanitize it before use.

Overnights, Extended Travel: All overnights or extended travel must be approved by GSAK regardless of the alert level your community is under. If planning a trip troops should:

- Get council approval (email customercare@girlscoutsalaska.org)
- Call ahead to the facility to confirm they are following CDC and state COVID guidelines
- Ask if equipment/supplies are sanitized between uses
- Ensure that social distancing can be maintained
- Ensure that all participants (including vendors/instructors) wear face coverings

Transportation: If at all possible, girls from separate households should not carpool. If carpooling must happen, girls should be spaced out to avoid crowding, masks should be worn and windows should be partially open to increase ventilation. Make sure ahead of time that parents know girls will be carpooling.

Face Coverings: Face coverings are required indoors for girls and adults regardless of vaccination status. Masks need to be worn:

- If individuals are indoors (even for short amounts of time)
- If required by the local authorities
- If required by your meeting location
- If holding a large event where asking the COVID screening questions is not feasible

Hygiene: When holding an in-person gathering:

- Refrain from hugs, handshakes, “high-fives,” and even activities like the friendship circle. Create a safe way for girls and volunteers to greet and end meetings instead (like air high-fives)
- Stay home if you are sick or if someone in your household is 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 for at least 72 hours without the use of fever reducing medication.
- Ensure each girl has her own supplies (markers, scissors, etc) or that supplies are sanitized between each use.
- Caution should be used when using restrooms. Take turns to maintain social distance and wear face coverings. Use your foot or paper towels to flush toilets, turn off faucets and open doors.

Food: Be careful when handling and serving food and have girls take care with each other when eating. When handling, serving or eating:

- Encourage girls to bring their own food
- Food should not be shared after it is touched
- Individually wrapped items are recommended. If items are not individually wrapped they should be handed out by one person wearing gloves
- Wash hands prior to handling food (even if wearing gloves) and eating

Permission Slips: Permission slips are not needed for virtual meetings. If meeting in-person parents should sign and return a permission slip to the troop leader with details about the activity and the following COVID disclosure statement:

“COVID-19 is an extremely contagious virus that spreads easily through person-to-person contact. As with any social activity, participation in Girl Scouts could present the risk of contracting COVID-19. While Girl Scouts of Alaska (GSAK) takes every safety and preventative precaution, GSAK can in no way warrant that COVID-19 infection will not occur through participation in GSAK programs.”