

Criminal Background Check Screening Procedures

Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) and Girl Scouts of Alaska (and its predecessors) are organizations with solid reputations and records for youth safety. Our highest priority is the safeguarding of the girls in our charge. Our volunteers make up 99 percent of the Girl Scouting “workforce,” with 80 percent of them providing direct service to girls. They are, without a doubt, on the frontlines of Girl Scouting. Therefore, our first line of defense for girls is to effectively screen our volunteers and place the right adults in volunteer positions. This document provides recommendations on how to conduct and interpret background screening.

In order to ensure the safety and well-being of the all members of Girl Scouts of Alaska Council (the "Council"), reserves the right to disqualify or restrict the duties of any person who has been convicted of certain crimes; who has pled guilty or no contest to certain crimes; who has been placed on probation or deferred adjudication for certain crimes and/or who resides on the same premises as a person subject to the Alaska Sex Offender Registration Act.

The criminal background search is one component of the Council's volunteer placement procedure, the goal of which is to screen prospective volunteers in order to place capable and qualified adults in all operational positions. Prospective Council volunteers must complete and sign a form authorizing the Council or its agents to conduct a criminal background search. Without a completed and signed authorization form, a person cannot serve in or be appointed to a volunteer position with direct contact with girls.

Simply put, *volunteer screening* is the process of authenticating the information supplied to an organization by a volunteer applicant. *Criminal background checking*, one type of volunteer screening, is the process of looking into the history of an individual to determine whether she or he has a criminal record.

Girl Scouts of Alaska will conduct criminal background screening, including a check of sex-offender registries, for volunteers working directly with girls. Volunteers fulfilling the adult requirement of the adult/girl ratio by grade level as detailed in *Volunteer Essentials* and the Safety Activity Checkpoints should be the volunteers screened.

Girl Scouts of Alaska will conduct criminal background screenings for administrative volunteers who handle large amounts of money (for example, the Service Unit Cookie Manager).

Girl Scouts of Alaska will repeat the screening process at least every three years.

The Council will conduct a criminal background search on all, but not limited to:

- prospective troop/group leaders, and/or any other adult volunteers who work directly with Girl Scouts (including overnight and trip chaperones)
- day camp volunteers
- service unit and troop/group product sale managers
- adults working with special interest groups (program)
- day camp volunteer instructors
- volunteers driving Girl Scouts

- service unit team members
- community managers
- all signers on troop and service unit bank accounts
- adults residing in a private residence where group meetings are held

The Council's primary concern is always to safeguard the safety and best interests of all members. The criminal offenses that will disqualify a person from volunteer participation in the Council, as well as the process used to determine disqualification of a person from volunteer participation, are set out in greater detail below. As a general matter, the decision whether to exclude altogether or limit a prospective volunteer's participation in the Council is exclusively within the discretion of the Council. Factors to be considered by the Council in making such determinations include, but are not limited to, the nature and severity of the criminal conduct, and the length of time since the criminal conduct occurred.

Criminal Background Check Procedure

1. **Self-Directed Background Check:** Volunteers are strongly encouraged to use the online portal to complete their background check. The link and instructions will be emailed out to volunteers by their the Council's background check vendor, Sterling Volunteers.
2. **Background Check Authorization Form:** This form is only used if volunteers do not have access to the internet. Volunteers must sign the authorization form for the Council or its agents to conduct a criminal background check.

Criminal Background Checks

Sterling Volunteers provides criminal background checks in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, all U.S. territories, and Canada. Sterling has coupled superior search logic with the industry's leading criminal background searches database to offer the most comprehensive coverage available.

Advanced Criminal Locator Search

The criminal background searches an instant multi-state search of criminal records, including the District of Columbia. Each Advanced Criminal Locator Search report contains a wealth of information, including felony and misdemeanor records, sex-offender record, inmate records, and arrest information.

3. **Accuracy of Information Submitted Online or by Authorization Form.** Providing false information on the application, including driver's license number, social security number and date of birth, is grounds for automatic exclusion from participation in the Council, regardless of the result of the criminal background search.

4. Challenging the Accuracy of the Criminal Background Record.

It is the applicant's responsibility to challenge the report on the applicant's background history and to arrange for any corrections, if necessary. The Council has no control over the information maintained by the reporting agencies. The Council cannot be liable to any person or entity for the information provided by reporting agencies to the Council or its agents, or for any actions taken by the Council in reliance on such information. The Council is entitled to and shall rely upon the information contained in

the criminal history report until such time as a verified corrected criminal history transcript has been provided. Even if an applicant submits verified corrected criminal background information, the Council retains exclusive discretion to exclude or limit an applicant's participation.

Background reports are prepared for the Girl Scouts of Alaska by: 1 State Street Plaza New York, NY 10004.

Sterling Volunteers permit candidates to dispute the information in their report and request reinvestigation. Phone: 1-855-326-1860

Disqualification From Volunteer Participation or Activities

The following rules shall apply if the Council learns (via a criminal background search or otherwise) that a prospective volunteer has been convicted of, has pled guilty to, has received deferred adjudication for, or has pled no contest to one of the following crimes under the laws of the State of Alaska, another state or the United States:

1. Automatic disqualification:

- Crimes against children
- Violent felony offenses against persons
- Crimes defined as public indecency
- Crimes involving the use of weapons
- Arson
- Residing on same premises as a person subject to the Alaska Sex Offender Registration Act *

* Registered sex offenders are not eligible for membership in Girl Scouts of the USA and may not participate in any capacity with Girl Scouts of Alaska.

Any adult living on the premises with a registered sex offender may participate only as a parent or in a role that has no direct contact with girls.

2. Possible Disqualifications:

- For a first offense DWI, DUI or possession of a controlled substance under two ounces, the decision whether to allow participation shall be within the absolute and exclusive discretion of the Council. The date of disposition, nature of the controlled substance, and frequency of use will be the determining factors. For other than a first offense, that person shall not be allowed to serve in any driving capacity.
- Crimes involving theft, fraud, and forgery will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The date of disposition, amount and frequency will be the determining factors.

3. Motor Vehicle Record:

The following is a sample grid the Council uses to determine the acceptability of a driver. Regarding violations, any major violation such as those listed below the chart should be viewed as rendering the candidate a “poor” candidate even though that offense may be the driver’s only violation. See chart at the bottom for descriptions of major and minor violations.

Number of Minor Violations	Number of At-Fault Minor Accidents (In the past 5 years)			
	0	1	2	3
0	Yes	Yes	No	No
1	Yes	Yes	No	No
2	Yes	No	No	No
3	No	No	No	No
4	No	No	No	No

Major motor vehicle violation descriptions:

- Driving under influence of alcohol/drugs
- Refusal to submit to breath test upon arrest for same (this is added because this is an equal crime, and often the only crime that can be proved if the person refuses the test)
- Failure to stop/report an accident where damages were greater than \$2,000 or personal injury was involved
- Reckless driving/speeding contest
- Driving while impaired
- Making a false accident report
- Homicide, manslaughter or assault arising out of the use of a vehicle
- Driving while license is suspended/revoked
- Any 7 point or greater traffic violation
- Attempting to elude a police officer

4. Other: For all other criminal offenses the Council shall review the applicant's situation on a case-by-case basis. The decision whether to allow service shall be within the absolute discretion of the Council. If a person is charged with any criminal offense, other than traffic violations classified as Class C misdemeanors, involvement with the Council as a volunteer will be temporarily suspended pending disposition of the case.

Confidentiality. The Council will maintain the confidentiality of all criminal background search information, including information regarding disqualification decisions disclosing solely on a need-to-know basis.

Privacy Statement. Upon receipt at Council office, volunteer applications containing privileged information, including social security and driver's license numbers are kept in locked files in volunteer records. To protect privacy of volunteers, information is not placed in electronic storage with general access nor made available to volunteers or staff outside of GSAK.