



Returning to In-Person Troop Meetings and Activities

Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Volunteers

Edition date: 9/7/2020

As different regions—like San Diego and Imperial counties—experience decreasing COVID-19 infection rates, different activities will become available to the public. Conversely, if infection rates increase, health officials may need to eliminate some activities. Check [local health agencies in San Diego](#), and make plans appropriately. Then, monitor local guidelines and be prepared to adjust or cancel plans if the situation changes.

Girl Scout San Diego offices and campuses will remain closed to the public through the end of October. We will continue to keep you updated as we receive information.

As possibilities begin to expand, think about:

- Drive-by parades and one-at-a-time bridging or kickoff events.
- Girls' maturity and discipline—are they able to manage their masks, and staying apart from friends?
- Group size. County guidelines must be followed.
- Potential for family support. Are all families able to help? If not, will hosting an activity exclude some girls?
- Concerns about health vulnerability of girls and their families. Stay in close contact, and honor additional safety requests so that all girls can be included.
- Are decisions and plans girl-led? Ask girls to think of options if plans must be adjusted.

While it may not be time for your troop to return to in-person activities yet, you can think about and prepare for that time. This guidance is provided as of the Edition Date above (when a vaccine has not been made readily available). Girl Scouts San Diego 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.

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 high-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.

Food, Dining, and Snacks. Many troop meetings feature food, and snack time can be a chance to chat and connect. Use these tips to increase safety:

- Encourage girls to bring their own foods to eat (bag lunch or dinner)
- Encourage girls not to share their food after having touched it, such as a bag of chips.
- Individually wrapped items are recommended.
- If providing snacks, especially if unwrapped, have one person, wearing gloves, hand out items to each person, such as with cupcakes or cookies.
- Use a serving spoon or scoop rather than reaching into a bag or bowl of snacks.
- Use a buffet line only if staffed with a safely protected server with mask and gloves.
- Avoid “serve yourself” buffets.
- Public dining only as permitted in your local jurisdiction.
- If serving family style, have one person, wearing clean gloves, serve everyone on clean plates
- Use disposable plates, forks, napkins, etc. when possible.
- Encourage girls to bring foods they can easily cook themselves (a prepacked foil pack) or hotdog for outdoor cooking.
- Ensure everyone handling food, those serving, girls, adults, wash hands (even if they will be wearing gloves) prior to any food prep or meals, following CDC handwashing guidelines.
- Sanitize the snack area before and after eating.

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. The current suggested maximum is ten people (eight girls and two unrelated adult volunteers). However, keep an eye on [local health agency directives](#) 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 preventive guidance (such as face coverings). Get approval from council staff before planning any gatherings of more than ten people.

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. Carpooling may resume once our region is fully past its final re-opening stage. Guidance on wearing masks, keeping rides short, and other tips, will be published at that time. The CDC has provided guidance for ride shares and drivers for hire. It may be helpful as an additional reference when evaluating motor vehicle transportation or car-pooling: [Ride Shares and Drivers for Hire](#).

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](#).

Other helpful resources can be found here: sdgirlscouts.org/stayingconnected.

Day trips and activities. In conjunction with Safety Activity Checkpoints, follow the Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation information, below. 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 not permitted until after the home state is successfully past the final stage of its re-opening process. The timeframes will vary from state to state and even from county to county in some cases. As always, contact the council office for prior approval before planning any overnight stays and follow guidance in Safety Activity Checkpoints.

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:

- Maintain 6' social distance when possible.
- Wear a face covering over your nose and mouth (critical if 6' distance cannot be maintained).
- 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 their temperatures are taken prior to group interaction. 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 “air” friendship squeezes).

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., table tops, 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. Never use products containing methanol (wood alcohol) for cleaning. It is toxic when absorbed through the skin or ingested.

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. In the event of a COVID-19 positive test result, do NOT contact the parents or troop members. Promptly contact the council office at

619-298-8391 or at accidentreporting@sdgirlscouts.org. 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.

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