

**Girl Scouts North-Central Alabama (GSNCA)
Troop/Service Unit Policies**

Adopted by the GSNCA Board of Directors: October 18, 2017
Revisions Approved by GSNCA Board of Director: August 15, 2018
Revisions Approved by the GSNCA Board of Directors: March 17, 2021
Revisions Approved by the GSNCA Board of Directors: October 26, 2022
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Revisions Approved by the GSNCA Board of Directors: January 22, 2025

A. General

- 1) Girl Scouts of the USA Safety Activity Checkpoints, *Volunteer Essentials*, the *Blue Book of Basic Documents* and following statements comprise the troop and service unit operating policy statements for Girl Scouts of North-Central Alabama, Inc. (GSNCA).
- 2) All GSNCA adult members will comply with the GSNCA Volunteer Personnel Policies approved by the GSNCA Board of Directors August 24, 2016, revised August 15, 2018, and January 22, 2025.
- 3) Girl Scout leaders may not sign hold-harmless agreements or waivers for a troop activity with an outside vendor providing any program activity. If a vendor requires a hold harmless agreement be signed, parents must be made aware of the potential risks and decide whether to sign the agreement for their own daughter(s) participation in the event; participation in the event will be optional. Parents who sign the activity waiver must also sign a council hold harmless agreement for the activity. The activity participation must be approved by the council by completing a troop activity application to ensure the activity meets the required Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- 4) Personal firearms are not permitted on any GSNCA property or at any GSNCA activity, to include stored in a vehicle, except by authorized law enforcement personnel or as part of a council-wide approved certified instruction program. There will be no hunting allowed on any GSNCA property. Individuals with firearms in their possession will be asked to leave property. A second offense will result in permanent ban from all GSNCA properties.
- 5) Smoking or vaping is not permitted on anywhere GSNCA property or in any GSNCA building, this includes vehicles parked on GSNCA property. There will be no designated smoking areas on anywhere on GSNCA properties.
- 6) No alcoholic beverages, controlled substances or illegal drugs are allowed on GSNCA owned property. Use of alcoholic beverages at adult-only events on GSNCA property must be requested and approved by the CEO in writing. If

the use of alcoholic beverages is approved supplemental/additional insurance must be purchased. Individuals with alcohol or narcotics in their possession will be asked to leave property. A second offense will result in permanent ban from all GSNCA properties.

- 7) Council and Troops must ensure that separate bathroom facilities, male and female, are designated for all day activities which involve family members; separate sleeping areas and bathroom facilities, male and female, must be designated for all overnight activities. Troops, Service Units and GSNCA may conduct family camping events with family shared units with the approval of the CEO.
- 8) All volunteer/service unit day camps must complete a day camp online application that is approved by the CEO and all registration and fees processed/passed-through GSNCA.
- 9) Financial assistance may be provided, based on financial need and the council operating budget, to active girl and adult members for the cost of membership dues, uniforms, GSNCA sponsored events and training approved by the council.
- 10) GSNCA supports and maintains environments that are free of child abuse and neglect as defined by Alabama State Law and prohibits any adult or girl participating in a Girl Scout activity to physically, mentally, emotionally, sexually, or verbally abuse or neglect any girl or adult. All volunteers are required to complete GSNCA provided Child Abuse and Prevention Training annually. If abuse or neglect is suspected, the incident should be reported to the Alabama Department of Human Resources at the number listed on the GSNCA emergency procedure card and complete a GSNCA incident report.
- 11) In emergency or crisis situations staff and volunteers must adhere to all crisis guidelines and procedures outlined in the GSNCA crisis management plan. In the case of any accident or media event that occurs during a Girl Scout sponsored event staff and volunteers must follow the instructions on the GSNCA emergency procedures card. The card will be provided annually to all troop leaders.
- 12) The corporation/council bylaws specify the delegate structure and the delegate's role in the governance of GSNCA; most recent approved bylaws are dated April 2021.

B. Troop Finances

- 1) Troops may have sponsors to include a meeting place sponsor and approved monetary and in-kind sponsors. Troop monetary sponsorships shall not

exceed \$350 unless approved by the CEO on a case-by-case basis. Any monetary or in-kind donations must be accepted and recognized by GSNCA in accordance with IRS guidelines. Sponsorship agreements will be submitted through the finance department to the CEO for approval. Exceptions to the \$350 amount for extended trips and community service projects must be requested and approved by the CEO. All contributions to a troop will be made as a “donor designated” donation to GSNCA. All sponsorships received by troops must be sent to the council for processing for the donor to receive an IRS tax deduction letter. The troop will receive an ACH deposit in the amount of the sponsorship from GSNCA and the donor will receive letter verification of their tax-exempt donation. Monetary or in-kind donations greater than \$350 received by a troop will be processed through the council and \$350 returned to the troop provided the higher amount has been approved by the CEO. Any sponsorship to a troop more than \$350 not approved by the CEO will be retained by GSNCA and excess funds placed in the girl scholarship fund.

- 2) All troop funds will be maintained in a bank account in the name of *Girl Scouts of North-Central Alabama, Inc., Troop ____* (insert troop number). At least two unrelated adult troop members must be signers on the account. Troop bank accounts will be opened with Girl Scouts of North-Central Alabama employer federal tax identification (EIN) number. A letter verifying the troop number, responsible signers and all required bank requested documents will be provided by the area membership staff to the troop leaders to open the troop account. After the account is opened, the troop leadership team will provide GSNCA all pertinent account information.
- 3) Funds in troop accounts may not be prorated or kept in separate accounts for the individual girl members in the troop. All girls in the troop will benefit equally from the fall product, annual cookie program and any other money-earning activities.
- 4) Girls must be registered members of Girl Scouts to participate in any troop activity including the fall product program, annual cookie program or money-earning activity.
- 5) Troop money-earning activities are limited to the fall product program, the annual cookie program and approved additional money earning activities. Troops that do not participate in the annual cookie program and fall product programs will not be allowed to conduct money-earning activities. Money-earning activities, other than the fall product program and the annual cookie program, require a money-earning activity application and approval by the GSNCA Chief Financial Officer prior to conducting the activity. Money earning activities should not take place during the annual cookie program and comply with United Way guidelines and restrictions for

the area. Money-earning activities for girl's highest award projects will be included as part of their project development and approval process and submitted to the fund development department for approval. If a troop is engaged in a project or trip that will require a large expenditure of funds, special permission to conduct additional money-earning activities may be requested from the CEO. For trip approval, the troop must have an extended trip application on file. If money earning for a community service project, the project must be outlined on the money-earning application. The funds for these extended trips and community service project should be noted as restricted on the troop financial report.

- 6) Troops can raise money for other organizations only as allowed in the Blue Book of Basic Documents. However, girls can vote to donate a portion of their troop funds to help causes they feel that benefit their communities.
- 7) Troops can participate in food and goods drives to benefit causes in their communities, if voted on by the troop.
- 8) In accordance with IRS guidelines all sub-units with an account opened with the GSNCA EIN must submit an annual financial report to the council not later than June 15th each membership year. A thirty-day extension may be requested. Failure to submit an annual financial report will render the troop ineligible to receive any additional troop incentives from the fall product and cookie programs and any other GSNCA incentive programs until the report is submitted.
- 9) In the event a troop disbands or does not meet or participate in any activities for a period of one year, the troop monetary assets will be turned into the council within one month of disbanding. Assets will be held for 12 months pending the reorganization of the troop. If the troop fails to reorganize within 12 month the funds will be transferred to the financial assistance account. Troop supplies and other assets will be turned over to the service unit manager to be used for start-up/new troops or service unit events. If girls from the disbanding troop transfer to another troop, the troop funds and assets will be transferred proportionally based upon the number of girls in the troop to their new troop.
- 10) All funds from GSNCA to the troop will be by direct deposit. Each troop must have an ACH form on file with the council to receive deposits. Exceptions to this policy must be approved by the CEO.
- 11) All payments to GSNCA for the fall product and annual cookie programs will be by automated clearing house (ACH) transactions.

C. Service Unit Finances

- 1) All service unit funds will be maintained in a bank account in the name of *Girl Scouts of North-Central Alabama, Inc., Service Unit _____ (insert service unit number)*. At least two unrelated adult service unit members must be signers on the account. Service unit bank accounts will be opened with Girl Scouts of North-Central EIN number with a signed letter with all required documents from the area membership staff. Once the account is opened the service unit leadership will provide GSNCA all pertinent account information.
- 2) All funds from GSNCA to the Service Unit will be a direct deposit. Each service unit must have an ACH form on file with the council for deposits. Exceptions to this policy must be approved by the CEO.
- 3) Service Units maintain custodial and administrative funds for the benefit of all girls in the unit and are generated by service unit sponsored events, membership, and product sales incentives. Service Units normally do not conduct money-earning activities. Exceptions for service unit money-earning activities must be submitted to the CEO for approval.
- 4) In accordance with IRS guidelines all sub-units, this includes service units, with an account opened with the GSNCA EIN must submit an annual financial report to the council not later than June 15th each membership year. A thirty-day extension may be requested. Failure to submit an annual financial report will render the service unit ineligible to receive any service unit rewards and incentives from the fall product and cookie programs and any other GSNCA incentive unit the report is submitted.

D. Troop Funding

All troops are encouraged to participate in the annual cookie program and the fall product program. Troops and girls that do not participate in the annual cookie program will not be entitled to an entrepreneurial rate for events, facility rental, day, and resident camp or to conduct money earning activities.

E. Troop Organization and Activities

- 1) All adult volunteers, except temporary advisors or program presenters, must be registered members of GSUSA.
- 2) All girls that participate in GSNCA activities, including troop meetings and activities, must be currently registered members of GSUSA.
- 3) Unregistered adults and children may attend and participate in day troop and GSNCA sponsored events and activities provided they are invited, no supplemental insurance is required. All adults that participate in overnight

troop, service unit and GSNCA sponsored events must be registered and background checked.

- 4) Troops must include a minimum of five girls, unless an approved older girl troop, and be willing to add more girls to the troop up to at least 12 girls. Troops that will not accept up to 12 girls should notify and request approval through their membership manager and the senior director of membership for approval by the CEO. Troops with less than five girls must request approval by completing the on-line form from the CEO to continue to function as a troop.
- 5) The minimum number of unrelated adult volunteers for each troop depends upon the level, grade, and the number of girls in the troop, refer to *Volunteer Essentials*. Troops should include two adult trained leaders (leadership team), fall product sales and cookie program manager(s) and an active troop committee. If the two leaders are related or residing in the same house, a third non-related adult must be a registered active member of the leadership team.
- 6) Health history forms will be completed and signed by each girl's parent and always in the possession of the troop leadership team for meetings, troop activities, events and trips. Digital copies are acceptable as long as they are accessible, even without internet access.
- 7) Troops must obtain council permission by submitting a troop activity application, for camping trips not on council properties, all water activities, horseback riding, caving, skiing, rappelling, trips outside council and other activities deemed high risk. All trips more than three nights in or outside the council jurisdiction must submit a trip application for approval.
- 8) Troop trips within the council area that are less than two nights and are outside normal meeting times and have no high-risk activities must be listed in the service unit trip activity log.
- 9) Every driver transporting girls on an activity must carry personal liability insurance. All drivers must be registered, have a background check and a valid motor vehicle record (MVR) before transporting girl troop members. All drivers must be over 25 years old and have a safe driving record, a valid license, a registered/insured vehicle and have completed and have on file the driver's safety checklist. All drivers must provide proof of personal liability insurance. A driver may not transport girls if convicted of any of the following within the past five years: DUI, DWI, hit and run, leaving the scene of an accident, reckless driving, three or more speeding tickets, driving without a license or a felony in a motor vehicle.

- 10) Vehicles used to transport girls must have fixed seat belts and must be worn by all passengers. All passengers under the age of 12 must ride in the back seat of the vehicle. Children must use a booster seat until they are tall enough for the vehicle's seat belt to fit properly, which is usually around 4 feet 9 inches tall and between 8 and 12 years old. The maximum capacity of vehicles must not be exceeded. A privately owned vehicle by a volunteer must be less than 12 passengers. In the event a 12-passenger vehicle is used, the following guidelines must be followed.
 - Driver must be a minimum of 25 years old.
 - Towing of trailers or anything on the top of the van is not permitted.
 - Night driving needs to be limited.
 - Daily safety checks need to be performed and recorded.
 - Seatbelt use in mandatory.
- 11) Service units may conduct two-day events at council properties if there is availability. Service units must make a reservation and pay the day use deposit. These no-cost usage days are for girl program opportunities and not service unit fundraising events.

F. Use of Chartered, Leased or Borrowed Vehicles

All contracts for charting, leasing, or borrowing a vehicle must be submitted to the CEO for approval. Proof of insurance in the amount of at least one million liability insurance must be attached to the request.

G. Use of Program Centers, Camps and Offices

- 1) Members may use the program centers, offices and the Girl Scout DreamLab, with council approval. Requests for use must be made through the GSNCA reservation specialist by completing the on-line reservation request. Keys and alarm codes will be issued to the responsible volunteer who reserves the space.
- 2) Members and non-members will be allowed to rent camps and the Girl Scout DreamLab on a paid fee basis. Reservations will be made through the GSNCA reservation specialist by completing the on-line reservation request. Deposits must be paid within two weeks of the date the reservation was made and the full fee paid within two weeks of the date of the event. If the rental is canceled with more than 30 days' notice, a 25% of the total cost administrative fee will be assessed. If less than 30days notice, a 50% of the total cost administrative fee will be assessed. This administrative fee will be deducted from the damage deposit held by GSNCA.
- 3) Users will be responsible for cleaning up and any damage to the program center. The cost of clean-up and repairs will be deducted from the damage

deposit. If damages exceed the damage deposit the renter will be billed for the additional costs.

- 4) Pets, other than service animals, are not permitted at any activity at the camps, offices and the Girl Scout DreamLab without permission from the CEO. This does not include animals owned by GSNCA used as part of program activities.

H. Social Media

- 1) Troops and service units are encouraged to use social media as a means of communication. Troops and service units should use closed social media sites as a means of sharing information and activities. If requested, GSNCA staff should be allowed to participate in the closed troop and service unit social media group.
- 2) GSNCA can ask troops and service units to remove posts from their sites that have misinformation, inappropriate content, embargoed information and have girls identified by first and last name.
- 3) GSNCA will remove posts from GSNCA sites that do not directly support the mission or contain derogatory remarks or misinformation and advertising of other goods and services.
- 4) GSNCA troops and service units will not list girls' names in photographs posted on social media sites. If names are posted only the first names of girls should be used.
- 5) GSNCA may ask members to not use email addresses that may be offensive to the mission of Girl Scouts as part of their volunteer work.

I. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion – Access and Racial Justice (DEI – A/RJ)

Girl Scouts of North-Central Alabama are committed to fostering, cultivating, and preserving a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The collective sum of the individual differences represents a significant part of not only our culture but our reputation as Girl Scouts. As Girl Scouts we embrace and encourage our differences in age, color, disability, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, language, national origin, physical and mental ability, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and other characteristics that make our world unique. As such GSNCA troops are open for all girls.

- **Diversity** is about difference. A group has diversity when the people present (e.g., our organization's girls, volunteers, staff) reflect differences across socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, physical ability, gender, sexual orientation, age, education, religion, political beliefs, and so on. Different groups reflect different forms and degrees of diversity.
- **Equity** is about seeking to give everyone access to the same opportunities while acknowledging that we don't all start from the same place. Through equitable practices, girls and adults are given the support they need to have a positive experience (e.g., participate in Girl Scouts).
- **Inclusion** is when girls and adults who are present feel a sense of belonging (e.g., have a voice, hold leadership positions, feel Girl Scouts is for them). In other words, equity is about being asked to participate.

As part of the new leader orientation and training a module on DEI-A/RJ must be completed.

J. Background Checks

Parents, guardians, and girls believe and trust that participation in Girl Scouts is a safe place for them. A criminal background check is required for all registered adults on the troop leadership team is one strategy used to ensure that all girl and adult members are safe. A criminal background check will be completed on all new volunteers and repeated for all volunteers every three years. Additionally, all adults that participate in overnight activities on GSNCA properties and as part of a troop trip or event must be registered and background checked.

GSNCA will not approve an adult as a volunteer or to attend an overnight activity if convicted of, pleaded guilty or adjudicated to the following crimes regardless of the time frame of the offenses: sexual offender, crimes against children, felony offenses against any person or child, felony offenses against a family member, public indecency, use of a weapon, any violent act, and residing with a registered sexual offender (may only participate as a parent or guardian); driving under the influence within the past five years is also a disqualifier. For other criminal offenses, outside of a five-year period, GSNCA will review the background check received and after the review approval on a case-by-case basis. The factors include but are not limited to nature and severity of the offense, position for which the person seeks to volunteer, length of time of the offense and number of offenses.

All adults not approved as a volunteer will be notified in writing.

K. Zero Tolerance of Abuse

GSNCA has a zero tolerance for sexual or physical abuse or molestation policy. Girl Scouts of North-Central Alabama is committed to providing all members, girls, and adults, with a safe space and will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of members. All volunteers are required to complete Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Training annually. Any mistreatment or abuse by a volunteer will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of volunteer service.

- Physical abuse is defined as physical injury inflicted on a child by other than accidental means. The statutes define physical injury as anything from severe or frequent bruising to more serious injuries. These acts include slapping, pinching, punching, beating, shaking, throwing, kicking, or biting.
- Sexual abuse or sex abuse, also referred to as molestation, is the abusive sexual behavior by one person upon another. It is often perpetrated using force or by taking advantage of a person. Molestation often refers to an instance of sexual assault against a small child, whereas sexual abuse is a term used for a persistent pattern of sexual assaults.

GSNCA requires that each year all volunteers that work directly with girls complete appropriate training, read the policy, and affirm that they understand and will adhere to the policy. The policy includes procedures for reporting suspected abuse and neglect cases of girls and adults in the troop.

GSNCA will investigate any reported incidents. If reported incidents are substantiated, volunteers will be immediately removed, and incident reported to local authorities.