

# Chapter 4: Safety-Wise

In Girl Scouts, the emotional and physical safety and well-being of girls is always a top priority. Here's what you need to know.

## Knowing Your Responsibilities

You, the parents/guardians of the girls in your group, and the girls themselves share the responsibility for staying safe. The next three sections flesh out who's responsible for what.

### Responsibilities of the Volunteer: Girl Scout Safety Guidelines

Every adult in Girl Scouts is responsible for the physical and emotional safety of girls, and we all demonstrate that by agreeing to follow these guidelines at all times.

1. **Follow the Safety Activity Checkpoints.** Instructions for staying safe while participating in activities are detailed in the Safety Activity Checkpoints, available from your council. Read the checkpoints, follow them, and share them with other volunteers, parents, and girls before engaging in activities with girls.
2. **Arrange for proper adult supervision of girls.** Your group must have at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers present at all times, plus additional adult volunteers as necessary, depending on the size of the group and the ages and abilities of girls. Adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old (or the age of majority defined by the state, if it is older than 18) and must be screened by your council before volunteering. One lead volunteer in every group must be female.
3. **Get parent/guardian permission.** When an activity takes place that is outside the normal time and place, advise each parent/guardian of the details of the activity and obtain permission for girls to participate.
4. **Report abuse.** Sexual advances, improper touching, and sexual activity of any kind with girl members are forbidden. Physical, verbal, and emotional abuse of girls is also forbidden. Follow your council's guidelines for reporting concerns about abuse or neglect that may be occurring inside or outside of Girl Scouts.
5. **Be prepared for emergencies.** Work with girls and other adults to establish and practice procedures for emergencies related to weather, fire, lost girls/adults, and site security. Always keep handy a well-stocked first-aid kit, girl health histories, and contact information for girls' families.
6. **Travel safely.** When transporting girls to planned Girl Scout field trips and other activities that are outside the normal time and place, every driver must be an approved adult volunteer and have a good driving record, a valid license, and a registered/insured vehicle. Insist that everyone is in a legal seat and wears her seat belt at all times, and adhere to state laws regarding booster seats and requirements for children in rear seats.
7. **Ensure safe overnight outings.** Prepare girls to be away from home by involving them in planning, so they know what to expect. Avoid having men sleep in the same space as girls and women. During family or parent-daughter overnights, one family unit may sleep in the same sleeping quarters in program areas. When parents are staffing events, daughters should remain in quarters with other girls rather than in staff areas.
8. **Role-model the right behavior.** Never use illegal drugs. Don't consume alcohol, smoke, 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 group marksmanship activities.
9. **Create an emotionally safe space.** 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 it. Agreements typically encourage behaviors like respecting a diversity of feelings and opinions; resolving conflicts constructively; and avoiding physical and verbal bullying, clique behavior, and discrimination.
10. **Ensure that no girl is treated differently.** Girl Scouts welcomes all members, regardless of race, ethnicity, background, disability, family structure, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic status. When

scheduling, helping plan, 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.

11. **Promote online safety.** Instruct girls never to put their full names or contact information online, engage in virtual conversation with strangers, or arrange in-person meetings with online contacts. On group web sites, publish girls' first names only and never divulge their contact information. Teach girls the [Girl Scout Online Safety Pledge](#) and have them commit to it.
12. **Keep girls safe during money-earning.** Girl Scout cookies and other council-sponsored product sales are an integral part of the program. 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 be their labor force. When representing Girl Scouts, girls cannot participate in money-earning activities that represent partisan politics or that are not Girl Scout–approved product sales and efforts.

## Responsibilities of Parents and Guardians

You want to engage each parent or guardian to help you work toward ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of girls. Clearly communicate to parents and guardians that they are expected to:

- Provide permission for their daughters to participate in Girl Scouts as well as provide additional consent for activities that take place outside the scheduled meeting place, involve overnight travel, involve the use of special equipment, and/or cover sensitive issues.
- Make provisions for their daughters to get to and from meeting places or other designated sites in a safe and timely manner and inform you if someone other than the parent or guardian will drop off or pick up the child.
- Provide their daughters with appropriate clothing and equipment for activities, or contact you before the activity to find sources for the necessary clothing and equipment.
- Follow Girl Scout safety guidelines and encourage their children to do the same.
- Assist you in planning and carrying out program activities as safely as possible.
- Participate in parent/guardian meetings.
- Be aware of appropriate behavior expected of their daughters, as determined by GSWESTOK and you.
- Assist volunteers if their daughters have special needs or abilities and their help is solicited.

## Responsibilities of Girls

Girls who learn about and practice safe and healthy behaviors are likely to establish lifelong habits of safety consciousness. For that reason, each Girl Scout is expected to:

- Assist you and other volunteers in safety planning.
- Listen to and follow your instructions and suggestions.
- Learn and practice safety skills.
- Learn to “think safety” at all times and to be prepared.
- Identify and evaluate an unsafe situation.
- Know how, when, and where to get help when needed.

## Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need

Girl Scouts adult-to-girl ratios show the *minimum* number of adults needed to supervise a specific number of girls. (Councils may also establish *maximums* due to size or cost restrictions.) These supervision ratios were devised to ensure the safety and health of girls—for example, if one adult has to respond to an emergency, a second adult is always on hand for the rest of the girls. It may take you a minute to get used to the layout of this chart, but once you start to use it, you'll find the chart extremely helpful.

	Group Meetings		Events, Travel, and Camping	
	<i>Two</i> unrelated adults (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus <i>one</i> additional adult for each additional number of this many girls:	<i>Two</i> unrelated adults (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus <i>one</i> additional adult for each additional number of this many girls:
Girl Scout Daisies (K–grade 1)	12	6	6	4
Girl Scout Brownies (grades 2–3)	20	8	12	6
Girl Scout Juniors (grades 4–5)	25	10	16	8
Girl Scout Cadettes (grades 6–8)	25	12	20	10
Girl Scout Seniors (grades 9–10)	30	15	24	12
Girl Scout Ambassadors (grades 11–12)	30	15	24	12

Here are some examples: If you’re meeting with 17 Daisies, you’ll need three unrelated adults (in other words, not your sister, spouse, parent, or child), at least one of whom is female. (If this isn’t making sense to you, follow the chart: you need two adults for 12 Daisies and one more adult for up to six more girls. You have 17, so you need three adults.) If, however, you have 17 Cadettes attending a group meeting, you need only two unrelated adults, at least one of which is female (because, on the chart, two adults can manage up to 25 Cadettes).

In addition to the adult-to-girl ratios, please remember that adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old or at the age of majority defined by the state, if it is older than 18.

## 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 time and place—in which a group will be transported in private vehicles:

- Every driver must be an approved adult\* volunteer 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, and the girl-volunteer ratios in *Volunteer Essentials* 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 *Volunteer Essentials* must be followed. Care should be taken so that a single car (with a single adult driver) is not separated from the group for an extended length of time.

\*“Adult” is defined by the age of majority in each state.

## Approaching Activities

How can you, as a Girl Scout volunteer, determine whether an activity is safe and appropriate? Good judgment and common sense often dictate the answer. What’s safe in one circumstance may not be safe in another. An incoming storm, for example, might force you to assess or discontinue an activity. If you are uncertain about the safety of an activity, call your council staff with full details and don’t proceed without approval. Err on the side of caution and make the safety of girls your most important consideration. Prior to any activity, read the specific Safety Activity Checkpoints (available on your council’s web site or from your support team in some other format) related to any activity you plan to do with girls.

When planning activities with girls, note the abilities of each girl and carefully consider the progression of skills from the easiest part to the most difficult. Make sure the complexity of the activity does not exceed girls’ individual skills—bear in mind that skill levels decline when people are tired, hungry, or under stress. Also use activities as opportunities for building teamwork, which is one of the outcomes for the connect key in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

## Health Histories (Including Examinations and Immunizations)

Each council handles health histories differently. Depending on the activity, staff may take care of obtaining and storing girls’ health histories—which may include a physician’s examination and a list of immunizations—as needed. Or, you may be asked to maintain these records for your group. Either way, keep in mind that information from a health examination is confidential and may be shared only with people who must know this information (such as the girl herself, her parent/guardian, and a health practitioner).

The Health history record is available online at [www.gswestok.org](http://www.gswestok.org) or at the GSWESTOK offices.

For various reasons, some parents/guardians may object to immunizations or medical examinations. Councils must attempt to make provisions for these girls to attend Girl Scout functions in a way that accommodates these concerns.

It is important for you to also be aware of any medications a girl may take or allergies she may have.

- Medication, including over-the-counter products, must never be dispensed without prior written permission from a girl’s custodial parent or guardian. (Your council can provide this form.) Some girls may need to carry and administer their own medications, such as bronchial inhalers, an EpiPen, or diabetes medication.
- Common food allergies include dairy products, eggs, soy, wheat, peanuts, tree nuts, and seafood. This means that, before serving any food (such as peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, cookies, or chips), ask whether anyone is allergic to peanuts, dairy products, or wheat! Even Girl Scout Daisies and Brownies should be aware of their allergies, but double-checking with their parents/guardians is always a good idea.

## Girl Scout Activity Insurance

A portion of the individual annual membership dues pays for supplementary insurance for the member only. This insurance provides up to a specified maximum for medical expenses incurred as a result of an accident while a member is participating in an approved, supervised Girl Scout activity, after the individual’s primary insurance pays out. This is one reason that all adults and girls should be registered members. Non-registered parents, tagalongs (brothers, sisters, friends), and other persons are not covered by basic coverage.

This insurance coverage is *not* intended to diminish the need for or replace family health insurance. And it does not duplicate medical-expense benefits collected under other programs, so after approximately \$100 in benefits have been paid under this plan, the family's medical insurance takes over. If there is no family insurance or healthcare program, a specified maximum of medical benefits is available.

An optional plan of activity insurance is available for Girl Scouts taking extended trips and for non-members who participate in Girl Scout activities. These plans are secondary insurance that individuals are entitled to receive while participating in any approved, supervised Girl Scout activity. Optional insurance coverage is available for any Girl Scout activity that involves non-Girl Scouts or lasts longer than three days and two nights. Contact your council to find out how to apply. Your council may make this mandatory, in some cases, particularly for overseas travel.

Insurance Forms are available online at [www.gswestok.org](http://www.gswestok.org) or at the GSWESTOK offices.

## Providing Emergency Care

As you know, emergencies can happen. 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 adults any accidents, illnesses, or unusual behaviors during Girl Scout activities. To this end, you can help girls:

- **Know what to report.** See the “Procedures for Accidents” section later in this chapter.
- **Establish and practice procedures for weather emergencies.** Certain extreme-weather conditions may occur in your area. 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 responses.** Every girl and adult 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 mean the difference between life and death. In an emergency, secure professional medical assistance as soon as possible, normally by calling 911.

## First-Aid/CPR

Emergencies require prompt action and quick judgment. 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. Try to take age-specific CPR training, too—that is, take child CPR if you're working with younger girls and adult CPR when working with older girls and adults.

**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 you're 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.

### *First-Aider*

A first-aider is an adult volunteer who has taken Girl Scout–approved first-aid and CPR training that includes specific instructions for child CPR. 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. The Safety Activity Checkpoints always tell you when a first-aider needs to be present.

There are two categories of first-aiders:

- **First-aid (level 1):** The presence of a first-aid (level 1) is required many group activities. The course required to be a first-aid (level 1) is one that offers standard first-aid and CPR, preferably with a focus on children.
- **First-aid (level 2):** The presence of a first-aid (level 2) is required at resident camp, and at any camp activity with more than 200 participants. In addition, some activities require a first-aid (level 2); the Safety Activity Checkpoints state clearly whether a first-aid (level 2) is needed. First-aiders (level 2) pass the same course as first-aiders (level 1), and also have emergency response/first response, sports safety, wilderness first-aid, and/or advanced first-aid and CPR training. Each organization has a different name for its training, so be sure to ask before you take the course whether a training course fulfills the level-2 requirements.

**Note:** The following healthcare providers may also serve as first-aiders (level 1 or 2): 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 Girl Scout first-aid kit, you can buy 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](#). (Note that the Red Cross’s suggested list includes aspirin, which you will not be at liberty to give to girls without direct parent/guardian permission.) 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 be included, as well.

## First Aid/CPR Course Descriptions

### *First-Aid/CPR Training*

A Girl Scout First Aider is an adult who has taken Girl Scout council-approved First-Aid training. All of these courses include CPR. (When a policy references a First Aid requirement, this pertains to current CPR).

### *First Aid Certification & Re-Certification Course*

Each troop must have one person trained in CPR and one trained in First Aid per year.

Cost: \$20\*

Length of Course: 2 Hours

Prerequisite: None

#### ***Bring:***

Paper and Pen

Something to restrain long hair

Dress comfortably (*participants may be practicing skills on the floor for demonstration*)

Conducted by a certified American Red Cross First-Aid instructor. The First-Aid content has been approved and meets GSUSA course requirements. The instructor has the appropriate qualifications and is able to provide written certification for First-Aid. First-Aid Certification expires after two years.

\*When both First Aid and CPR/AED courses are taken during the same session (on the same day), the cost is \$28 for both sessions.

## ***CPR/AED Certification & Re-Certification Course***

Cost: \$20\*

Length of Course: 2 Hours

Prerequisite: None

### ***Bring:***

Paper and Pen

Something to restrain long hair

Dress comfortably (*participants may be practicing skills on the floor for demonstration*)

Conducted by a certified American Red Cross CPR/AED instructor. The CPR/AED content has been approved and meets GSUSA course requirements. The instructor has the appropriate qualifications and is able to provide written certification for CPR/AED. Adult and child CPR/AED will be taught. CPR/AED Certification expires after two years.

\*When both First Aid and CPR/AED courses are taken during the same session (on the same day), the cost is \$28 for both sessions.

### ***Challenges***

A person holding a current CPR or First Aid card may contact the CPR/FA Coordinator to arrange for a one-time challenge. The appropriate exam will be administered. If the participant scores a passing grade of 80% or better, a certification will be issued. Failure to pass the exam would require enrollment in a regular certification course.

## **Procedures for Accidents**

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 sick or 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 emergency technicians. Check with your council for emergency contact information.

### ***GSWESTOK Council Emergency Procedures***

***The adult at the scene gives priority to providing all possible care for the injured person or persons.***

Follow first aid procedures in caring for an injured person(s). For major emergencies, always notify police. (Follow procedure on Major Emergency Procedure Card included in your Troop Packet. All adults with the troop should have one and carry it with them at meetings, at events, and on trips.)

Call 911

Have another adult call the GSWESTOK service center:

(405) 528-GIRL or 800-698-0022 Speak with CEO Cathy Stackpole or COO Susan Bohl.

Cathy Stackpole cell phone: (405) 974-1187

Susan Bohl cell phone: (405) 706-2005

Provide permission slip, medical authorization, health history form and Girl Scout activity insurance information to the Girl Scout adult who goes with injured person in the ambulance. Confirm which hospital the injured person will be taken.

Have another Girl Scout adult remain with the girls who are not involved and move them to a secure location away from the scene. Do not talk to any media about any accident or incident. All public comments for media distribution will come from a council representative.

***Keep accurate records of the accident. (WRITE EVERYTHING DOWN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE) DO NOT USE CAMP NAMES***

- *What time* was the accident, emergency, incident, etc.?
- *Who* was called and at what time - ambulance, police, doctor, etc.?
- *What statements* were given to medical personnel or police, and who made the statements?
- *Who* was involved in accident - names, ages, injuries, etc.?
- *Were there* any witnesses and what did they see - names, ages, addresses, telephone numbers?
- *Who called* the council and to whom at the council was the information given?

Make a sketch of the scene of an accident or take photos if you have a camera.

After receiving a report of an accident, council staff will immediately arrange for additional assistance, if needed, at the scene. She or he will notify custodial parents/guardians or other appropriate adults. 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 these representatives.*

In the event of a fatality or other serious accident, notify the police. A responsible adult must remain at the scene. In the case of a fatality, do not disturb the victim or surroundings. 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.

Complete the Accident/Incident Report form and return it to the COO within 24 hours accompanied by all permissions, medical records and pertinent information. Keep a copy for troop records.

### ***Accident/Incident Report Form***

This form is to be distributed to all volunteers and staff who are working with girls in troop and/or events. The form is included in this document and is available at the service center and from your CDE.

An "Accident/Incident Report" form is to be completed when an accident or illness occurs requiring hospitalization, now or in the future, such as automobile accidents, horse or boating accident, child abuse/neglect, or death. An "Accident/Incident Report" form must be completed when a situation occurs during any Girl Scout activity.

Information should relate only to the facts, not on speculation. No statement placing blame is to be made on the Accident/Incident Report form. Usually the cause is not known immediately and must be established by proper authorities.

*Within 24 hours of the incident, the Incident Report form is to be completed and submitted to the staff in charge of the activity and to the COO of GSWESTOK. If the incident occurs on council property, a report must be completed immediately and given to the camp ranger or staff in charge and within 24 hours to the COO or CEO.*

Any materials relevant to the incident should also be included with the Incident Report form such as photographs of the site, names and addresses of witnesses, police reports, or case numbers, etc.

The leader in charge of the event, the activity director or staff member, or the adult in charge when the incident occurred might complete the Incident Report form. Some sections of the report may need to be completed by the on-site health supervisor.

### ***Suspected Child Abuse***

*It is the law in Oklahoma: Suspicion of child abuse must be reported.* All council staff and volunteers should be alert to the physical and emotional state of all children each time the children report for an activity. If there are any signs of suspected abuse, appropriate steps must be taken.

A report should be made when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child or adolescent has been abused or neglected or is in danger of being abused. A report of suspected abuse is only a request for an investigation. The person making the report does not need to prove the abuse nor will their names be

released. Investigation and validation of child abuse reports are the responsibilities of child protection service workers.

When there is suspicion of child abuse, the individual to whom it has been reported or who observes it will immediately inform both the Department of Human Services (DHS) and Girl Scouts-Western Oklahoma, Inc., COO.

*Report to the DHS and the CEO will be made on the same day the abuse is suspected.*

A report can be made to any county office of the Department of Human Services (DHS) or to the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-522-3511. This number is answered 24 hours a day.

*Notify the CEO.* Call the GSWESTOK service center (405) 528-GIRL. Or the CEO's cell phone (405) 974-1187

The "Incident Report" form is submitted within 24 hours to the CEO. In the case of child abuse or neglect, it should be completed and mailed directly to the CEO at 6100 N Robinson, Oklahoma City, OK, 73118.

Mark the envelope — *CONFIDENTIAL.*"

All council staff and volunteers are to be sensitive to the need for confidentiality in the handling of information in this area. Council staff and volunteers are instructed to discuss matters pertaining to abuse or suspected neglect only with the GSWESTOK CEO, investigating police officer, or the DHS social worker assigned to the case.

No one (neither council staff nor any volunteer) is to contact the children or parents involved in an alleged child abuse incident without the permission of the CEO.