

2023 - 2024



GSNEO Member & Volunteer Policies



I. INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the policies of Girl Scouts of North East Ohio (GSNEO). It is not the intent of this document to repeat national policies, but to adopt specific policies to clarify those areas needed to be defined for local use.

All members of Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) are responsible for adhering to the policies, practices, procedures, and guidelines in the Blue Book of Basic Documents, Volunteer Essentials, and Safety Activity Checkpoints. These documents are published by GSUSA and are used throughout the national organization. Links to these documents can be found at gsneo.org.

In addition to all the standard volunteer policies, board members have additional policies and standards of conduct that apply to that particular position that are reviewed after election to the board. A board member may not, while serving as a member of the GSNEO Board of Directors, serve in any operational volunteer position for GSNEO.

Within this document, the term GSNEO is used interchangeably with the words "the council." Also, the term "volunteer" is defined as any person who is not a paid staff member but delivers Girl Scout programming, and whose participation affects the health, safety, and/or finances of the girl or adult membership.

There is a glossary of terms at the end of this document.

II. VOLUNTEER PHILOSOPHY

Volunteers are Girl Scouts of North East Ohio's (GSNEO's) greatest asset in guiding generations of Girl Scouts to become leaders in their own lives and in the world. It is through this volunteer leadership that the Girl Scout Movement serves girls and realizes its mission to build girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. To ensure job satisfaction of volunteers and to utilize the talents of volunteers effectively, it is essential that the following policies be established and maintained. Together we can work to ensure the safety and well-being of all members.

III. VOLUNTEER WELLNESS

Volunteer service can involve multiple commitments. Enthusiasm, energy, and positive attitudes are essential to providing Girl Scouts and adults with worthwhile and enjoyable leadership experiences. To this end, it is vital that adult volunteers not overextend themselves by volunteering for too many overlapping roles. Building a broader base of adult support by encouraging others to participate increases and expands the opportunities for everyone to grow and share. GSNEO is committed to providing enriching quality experiences for both girls and adults.

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POLICY: EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

GSNEO maintains a strong policy of equal opportunity. In keeping with GSUSA's Blue Book of Basic Documents; we recruit, train, promote, and dismiss volunteers on the basis of competence and volunteer position performance, without regard to race, ethnicity, creed, color, nation origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, parental status, family structure, pregnancy status, disability, family medical history or genetic information, socioeconomic background, political affiliation, military or veteran status, or any other category protected by law. GSNEO is committed to a policy of equal opportunity and outreach in the recruitment, selection, placement, development, and recognition of volunteers and in the extension of Girl Scouting to all communities within its jurisdiction. GSNEO is committed to recruiting and retaining members with diverse identities and backgrounds that are reflective of the communities that we serve.

Any volunteer who engages in or encourages discrimination in any form is subject to release from their volunteer position at the discretion of GSNEO. Adults and volunteers are responsible for making Girl Scouting a place where Girl Scouts are as safe emotionally as they are physically. When scheduling, helping plan, and carrying out activities, carefully consider the needs of all Girl Scouts involved (e.g., financial constraints, religious holidays, accessibility of appropriate transportation, and meeting places).

POLICY: MEMBERSHIP

All Girl Scouts and adults participating in the Girl Scout Movement must be registered as members with GSUSA and pay membership dues as outlined by GSUSA. At times there are adults who are working on a short-term project, such as cookie delivery, or in a temporary advisory or consultative capacity, who do not work with Girl Scouts or Girl Scout funds directly, in which membership is not a requirement.

Girl Scouts does not permit members to have multiple profiles, memberships, or registrations in our system. GSNEO requires either permission from the current primary caregiver listed on the child's Girl Scout account or documentation showing a change in custody in order to make changes to a household.

Typically, Girl Scouts participate in one troop. Some scenarios when a Girl Scout may participate in multiple troops include:

- Travel Groups
- High Adventure Groups
- Troops which meet during school days as a partnership with GSNEO
- Other partner programs
- Split residency*
- Shared custody arrangements*

*Approval from GSNEO's Volunteer Relations Team is required if families wish for a girl to participate in more than one troop/group (e.g., troops that meet on day(s) when each parent/caregiver has custody and can participate). Families in these situations should work together with troop/group leaders to ensure an optimal Girl Scout Leadership Experience and should consider the following;

- Duplicity of program experiences; both troops/groups may be working on the same Journeys or badges.
- Clarity about the Magazine & Snack and Cookie Program; dividing up the orders and efforts of the Girl Scout so that it is clear prior to the start of the programs.
- Troop number on vest
- Program expenses

POLICY: VOLUNTEER ROLE

A volunteer is any adult (18 years of age or older) who, without compensation or expectation of compensation, performs a task on behalf of the council. A volunteer should be appointed prior to performing the task. Volunteers must be at least two years older than the Girl Scouts they are supervising.

All adults accompanying troop/group meetings or activities on a regular basis, or attending any overnight activity or who at any time assume care, custody, or control of girl members and/or Girl Scout money must be both a registered adult member of GSUSA and an approved, appointed volunteer of GSNEO.

Volunteer eligibility is determined and acceptance is completed online. Prior to applying for the position it is the responsibility of the prospective volunteer to review the Volunteer Position Description for the role for which they are applying. Volunteers agree to follow the Girl Scout Promise and Law, as well as any responsibilities and commitments identified in the position description for their role(s).

Volunteers are appointed on an individual basis and must renew their role annually by visiting the online myGS member community, including lifetime members. Some positions have term limits, as stated in Volunteer Position Descriptions. A volunteer may be released at any time due to failure to fulfill the requirements of the position or a change in the needs of the council.

All volunteers must be thoroughly familiar with the information in the Safety Activity Checkpoints and be responsible for ensuring that all Girl Scout activities meet required safety standards.

All troops/groups must have at least two registered, approved, adult volunteers, including at least two of whom are unrelated (i.e., not a sibling, spouse, domestic partner, parent, child, or anyone who would be considered a family member), and who do not live in the same residence with a minimum of one who identifies as female present with Girl Scouts at all times.

POLICY: LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

Girl Scouts is a girl-centered space, and we expect our members to be a sister to every Girl Scout. Girl Scouts welcomes all girls to join the Girl Scout Movement, regardless of sexual orientation, diverse gender identity, and regardless of sex assigned at birth (meaning we include both cisgender and transgender girls). Non-binary and youth (with the exception of cisgender male youth) who are comfortable in spaces that focus on and are driven by the experience of girls are welcome to participate. Some members may begin to question or explore their gender identity after joining. Girl Scouts supports these members and acts in their best interests. If after joining, a child comes to a new understanding of their gender identity and still feels that Girl Scouts is the right place for them, that child is welcome to continue with Girl Scouts.

GSNEO also welcomes all adults who are champions of this girl-centered mission. Adults of all sexes, sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions are welcomed and encouraged to participate.

Volunteers are invited to complete GSNEO's *LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Girl Scouts* training on gsLearn to learn more.

POLICY: REPRESENTING GIRL SCOUTS

While in uniform or representing Girl Scouts, both Girl Scouts and adults must behave in an appropriate, mature manner that embodies the Girl Scout Movement and aligns with the Girl Scout Mission. Volunteers must act in the best interest of GSNEO by conducting themselves professionally and in accordance with the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

GSNEO volunteers are permitted to serve on community boards that are in alignment with Girl Scout values (Self-expression, Community, Inclusion, Integrity, and Discovery) through their affiliation with GSNEO. These individuals must represent themselves accurately as a volunteer for GSNEO, and may not commit GSNEO resources (e.g., staff/volunteer time, finances, property) without prior approval from the Chief Executive Officer or their designee.

POLICY: TRAINING

In order to ensure volunteers are prepared to deliver high-quality programming and leadership, they need to complete training for their role. Volunteers are encouraged to continually enhance and develop their skills throughout their leadership volunteer experience.

All volunteers who work with Girl Scouts or adults and deliver the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) are required to complete basic leadership training. Additional required training expectations are outlined on each volunteers' position description and in Safety Activity Checkpoints.

Volunteer training is offered in a variety of ways to best meet varied and unique learning styles: written resources, face-to-face learning, and interactive online learning. Volunteers who are in need of accommodations in order to be successful in the training process are encouraged to reach

out to Customer Care to request assistance. GSNEO is committed to providing an equitable and successful training experience for all volunteers.

Training records are kept on file by GSNEO. Volunteers should also keep personal records of their training history.

Troops may decide to cover the cost for volunteer training as a troop expense.

POLICY: RECOGNITION

GSNEO will create a culture of appreciation that includes both formal and informal methods to recognize volunteers for their time, talent, and impact. This system will include service unit, council, and national level Volunteer Recognition Awards. Awardees must be current members in good standing and meet the required criteria in order to be eligible for consideration. Council and national level awardees are selected by the Volunteer Recognition Committee and approved by the GSNEO Board of Directors. Service unit level awardees are selected and approved by the local service unit team.

POLICY: SIZE OF GROUPS

Girl Scout groups are large enough to provide a cooperative learning environment and small enough to encourage individual development. Group sizes will vary based on the method of program delivery (i.e., virtual, in-person).

Girl Scouts' volunteer-to-girl ratios show the minimum number of adults needed to supervise a specific number of Girl Scouts (council may also establish maximums due to size or cost restrictions). These supervision ratios were devised to ensure the safety and health of the Girl Scouts—for example, if one adult must respond to an emergency, a second adult is always on hand for the rest of the group.

Multi-level troops should follow volunteer-to-girl ratios for the youngest Girl Scout in the troop.

During the summer in between program years, troops must use the younger ratio even if the troop bridges in spring (e.g., a Daisy troop that bridges to Brownies in May still needs to use Daisy ratios until the start of the new program year on October 1).

See Volunteer Essentials for volunteer-to-girl ratio chart.

Troops must have a minimum of five (5) Girl Scouts to remain active, with the exception of troops meeting the following criteria:

- 2-4 unrelated Girl Scouts
- 2 unrelated, approved volunteers, at least one of whom is in a Primary Troop Volunteer role (Troop Leaders or Troop Admins)
- Open bank account
- Open on the Participation Catalog to a total of 5+ Girl Scouts

Troops who do not meet these criteria as determined by GSNEO will be disbanded/retired and the Girl Scouts will be transferred to Juliette, or Individually Registered, status. Exceptions can be made at GSNEO discretion.

POLICY: APPROPRIATE AGE LEVEL TROOPS/GROUPS

Girl Scouts participate in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience in groups or independently, in these program age-levels:

- Girl Scout Daisies: Grade K-1
- Girl Scout Brownies: Grade 2-3
- Girl Scout Juniors: Grade 4-5
- Girl Scout Cadettes: Grade 6-8
- Girl Scout Seniors: Grade 9-10
- Girl Scout Ambassadors: Grade 11-12

Certain situations, such as a troop leader with multiple children close in age, may lead to the creation of a multiage-level troop. For guiding principles on multiage-level troops, and to ensure that all Girl Scouts are receiving a Girl Scout experience appropriate for their age level, see Troop Leader Basics training on gsLearn.

Parents/caregivers may choose to send Girl Scouts to GSNEO summer programming designated for the Girl Scouts' previous or upcoming grade level (e.g., a Girl Scout going into second grade could attend either Daisy or Brownie camps). GSNEO encourages Girl Scouts to register for the grade they will be going into as a best practice, but also acknowledges that parents/caregivers are the best judges of whether their Girl Scout is socially/emotionally ready and may register her for the younger program if they feel it would be a better fit. Pre-K Girl Scouts entering Kindergarten in the fall who purchase the extended-year membership may participate in Girl Scouts starting May 1, but are not eligible to attend Girl Scout camp.

Girl Scouts with cognitive, intellectual, or developmental disabilities should be registered as closely as possible to their chronological age. Girl Scouts with these disabilities may choose to retain their girl membership at ages 19, 20, and 21, and then move into an adult membership category at age 22.

POLICY: UNIFORMS

Girl Scouts at each level have one required element (tunic, sash, or vest) to display official pins and awards when they participate in ceremonies or officially represent Girl Scouts. For Girl Scout Daisies, Brownies, Juniors, and Cadettes, the unifying look is a tunic, vest, or sash combined with their own solid white shirts and khaki pants or skirts. Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors have the option of wearing a scarf that unites their look with that of Girl Scouts around the world. Girl Scout Daisies and Brownies also have a full uniform ensemble available. Scoutship is available upon request for families with financial barriers.

Girl Scout badges, awards, and other insignia should be presented, worn, and displayed only after Girl Scouts have completed the requirements outlined in official program materials.

Adult volunteers are encouraged to wear official membership pins when representing Girl Scouts (e.g., troop meetings, field trips, cookie booths). Pins and fun patches may be displayed on the official GSUSA adult vest following specified GSUSA guidelines. Adults are never permitted to wear Girl Scout-earned insignia (e.g., badges, highest awards). For formal Girl Scout events (e.g., Volunteer Recognition Celebration, Women of Distinction, Board meetings) adults should wear an official Girl Scout scarf or tie, official membership pins, and their own navy blue business attire.

POLICY: PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Volunteers will be provided with the opportunity to review their performance and obtain feedback from their volunteer or staff supervisor. Responsibilities, duties, and expectations of each volunteer position will be established and outlined in the position description.

The purpose of a performance review is to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of GSNEO volunteers, to provide coaching, evaluate changes that need to be made, help assess whether a position is a good fit, or make any other recommendations to help the volunteer be successful in their role. Generally, performance reviews are conducted at the end of a volunteer's position term, although a performance review and coaching may occur throughout the year.

In the case of unsatisfactory performance, the volunteer will be asked to make changes or to fulfill specified requirements to correct the unfavorable behavior within a specified timeframe. Failure to improve performance will subject a volunteer to redirection or release.

POLICY: REDIRECTION/RELEASE

A volunteer may be released from a volunteer position or redirected to a new position because of these reasons, among others:

- Restructuring of volunteer positions;
- Abuse, neglect, mishandling, or mistreatment of Girl Scouts or adults;
- Conviction of a felony;
- Misappropriation of funds or outstanding debt;
- Acts of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, creed, color, nation origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, parental status, family structure, pregnancy status, disability, family medical history or genetic information, socioeconomic background, political affiliation, military or veteran status, or any other category protected by law;
- Failure to maintain strict confidentiality when handling sensitive or privileged information;

- Membership in an organization whose goals are not compatible with those of GSUSA or GSNEO (i.e., known hate groups as identified by the U.S. Department of Justice and/or ACLU);
- Ineffectiveness or inability to perform the assignment;
- Unsatisfactory completion of objectives or failure to take corrective action;
- Excessive absence or tardiness from volunteer assignment;
- Violation of GSUSA policies or GSNEO policies;
- Misalignment with council business processes, procedures, or program;
- Actions not consistent with the Girl Scout Mission, Promise, and/or Girl Scout Law.

Volunteers who are released or redirected from their volunteer position are still considered members of GSUSA and GSNEO unless it is determined that they are not able to meet the membership requirements related to accepting the principles and beliefs of the Girl Scout Movement or by supporting the mission and values of the organization.

Volunteers who are released or redirected from a volunteer position may or may not be restricted from attending and/or participating in Girl Scout activities/events depending on the nature of the situation.

All volunteers who are redirected or released will be notified in writing. GSNEO will maintain confidentiality, however, it may be necessary to notify other members impacted by the change in volunteer status.

A redirected or released volunteer who wishes to dispute GSNEO's decision must submit their dispute in writing within 30 days to appeals@gsneo.org.

If a volunteer applicant previously worked for GSNEO and was terminated, GSNEO reserves the right to restrict that individual's ability to participate as a volunteer at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer or their designee.

POLICY: RESIGNATION/TEMPORARY LEAVE OF ABSENCE

GSNEO understands that sometimes our volunteers may need to take a step back for medical or personal reasons to support themselves and/or their family members. We support this. Please reach out to GSNEO staff to let us know how we can help manage a smooth transition.

A volunteer may resign or take leave from their position at any time. Here are the steps:

1. Prior to giving notice, we encourage them to discuss the reason(s) with their assigned staff.
2. The volunteer should submit written notice outlining the specific position(s) from which they are resigning or taking leave, and the reason(s). If taking leave, the volunteer should provide an estimated return date.

3. When applicable, we ask that the volunteer assist in identifying a replacement or interim coverage and communicate their decision with members of the service unit team.

The volunteer will be required (if applicable) to balance Girl Scout funds/accounts and return property and records. The volunteer and their supervisor will be responsible for completing all necessary steps to ensure a smooth transition.

POLICY: VOLUNTEER DISQUALIFICATION, RESTRICTIONS, SUSPENSIONS, & APPEALS PROCESS

The safety of our members, both youth and adults, is a crucial consideration in the appointment of a volunteer. To become an approved volunteer (with or without restrictions), you must:

- Be a registered member of GSUSA.
- Agree to the terms outlined in the volunteer position description.
- Complete a required Criminal Background Check (CBC) conducted by GSNEO and its approved vendor before volunteer appointment and at least EVERY THREE (3) YEARS if you:
 - Work with, drive, or supervise Girl Scouts;
 - Work with Girl Scout money or products (e.g., cookie, magazine, and snack programs);
 - Work with Girl Scouts or adult members' personal information; or
 - Attend an overnight activity.
- Girl Scouts are not to be left in the care of adults who are not registered and approved by GSNEO.
- Only registered and approved adult volunteers are authorized to handle Girl Scout funds.

GSNEO reserves the right to disqualify or restrict the duties of any person who has:

- been arrested and/or charged with certain crimes as described below;
- has pending adjudication against them;
- been convicted of certain crimes as described below;
- has committed acts that are considered contrary to the community standards of justice, honesty, or good morals;
- pled guilty or no contest to certain crimes as described below.

Volunteer Disqualification

GSNEO follows Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) automatic disqualification guidelines. See <https://jfs.ohio.gov/cdc/docs/ProhibitiveConvictionsOct2017.stm> for a non-exhaustive list of offenses that may disqualify a prospective volunteer. Individuals with a Federal

or State felony conviction within the past ten (10) years are not eligible to volunteer. Certain crimes (e.g., endangering children) lead to automatic disqualification during the person's lifetime. Additionally, if the applicant has been convicted of three (3) or more misdemeanor offenses with at least one occurring in the last five (5) years, if they knowingly provide false information during the CBC screening process, or if they have an outstanding warrant, they are ineligible to volunteer.

Registered sex offenders are not eligible for membership in GSUSA and may not participate in any capacity, including as a volunteer, with Girl Scout programs. Volunteers may not knowingly hold activities where a registered sex offender is present, and registered sex offenders may not knowingly be present where Girl Scout activities are being held. No registered sex offender is permitted to attend Girl Scout meetings, events, or activities whether in-person or in a virtual space. Holding Girl Scout activities at the home/dwelling of a registered sex offender, whether indoors or outdoors, is strictly prohibited. Registered sex offenders are not permitted on Girl Scout properties.

GSNEO volunteers residing with registered sex offenders are eligible to volunteer with the following restriction:

- Girl Scout meetings and activities, including product program pick-up, may not be held at their home.

The Primary Troop Volunteers and Service Unit Director will be notified if GSNEO becomes aware that the parent/caregiver of a Girl Scout belonging to the troop is a registered sex offender.

Volunteers should make every effort to ensure the Girl Scout is not treated differently and should not call unnecessary attention to the matter.

For all other conduct and offenses, the council will review the applicant's situation on a case-by-case basis. The decision whether to allow volunteer participation will be within the discretion of the council.

The factors used to determine disqualification of a person from volunteer participation is as follows: the age of the person at the time of the offense, nature and seriousness of the offense, time elapsed since discharge from imprisonment/probation/parole, whether the person is a repeat offender, and the position for which the person seeks to volunteer.

Volunteer Restrictions

Volunteer approval may be restricted to specific roles for any reason including criminal offenses or misconduct.

Volunteer approval may include a *funds handling restriction* if there are 1-2 finance related misdemeanor offenses (e.g., petty theft) within the past five (5) years. Volunteers with a funds handling restriction may take on limited roles at the troop level (see Position Descriptions). Volunteers with a funds handling restriction are not permitted to hold the roles of Troop Treasurer, Cookie Program or MSP Program Manager, Troop Leader, Troop Admin, or any

Service Unit Team role. They may not serve as GSNEO bank account signers, collect or spend troop funds, or oversee cookie booths and money-earning activities.

Volunteer approval may include a *driving restriction* if there are two (2) driving related misdemeanor offenses (e.g., reckless operation) with at least one (1) occurring in the past five (5) years, or any operating vehicle while impaired (OVI) offenses within the past five (5) years. Volunteers with a driving restriction are not permitted to hold the roles of Field Trip Driver, Troop Leader, Troop Admin, or any Service Unit Team role. They may not drive in an official Girl Scout capacity, including transporting Girl Scout members, Girl Scout gear, cookies, or other products. They may transport members of their own household, personal gear, personal cookies, or products.

Volunteer approval may include an *administrative role restriction* if there are two (2) misdemeanor offenses within the past five (5) years or if there is misconduct as a GSNEO volunteer which does not warrant complete dismissal. Volunteers with an administrative role restriction are not permitted to hold Service Unit Team roles, council level volunteer roles including trainers, or Primary Troop Volunteer roles (Troop Leader or Troop Admin).

Volunteer Suspensions

GSNEO reserves the right to re-screen any volunteer on a periodic or episodic basis as needed. If a volunteer is charged with any misconduct or offense, involvement with the council as a volunteer may be temporarily suspended during disposition or investigation of the occurrence. If a volunteer is arrested or charged with anything that leads to automatic disqualification, their role will be immediately suspended during the legal investigation. It is the responsibility of all volunteers to report their own policy violations and convictions, and those of fellow volunteers of which they become aware. Additionally, it is the responsibility of all volunteers to report illegal activity which occurs in a Girl Scout setting to both law enforcement and GSNEO by filing an Incident/Accident Report Form within 24 hours.

Appeals Process

Any applicant who wishes to dispute the accuracy of the information provided by the reporting agency must file a written notice with the council within 30 days of being notified that their CBC for volunteer participation has been determined ineligible and/or restricted. The volunteer will have an opportunity to review the criminal history report provided by the reporting agency. It is the applicant's responsibility to appeal against the report received from the reporting agency and to arrange for any corrections to be sent to GSNEO.

An applicant may also submit a written appeal to the council if they feel they should still be considered despite their convictions and wish to further explain the results of their CBC. These appeals will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the council.

If a person becomes ineligible to volunteer or if they are given restrictions, they may be considered for reinstatement or restriction removal by sending a written request to appeals@gsneo.org within 30 days. The person making the request may:

- Be required to take additional training

- Be required to pass another CBC
- Be reconsidered after a waiting period determined by GSNEO
- Be asked to provide character reference letters
- Be denied at council discretion

If an ineligible volunteer does not request to be reconsidered, suspensions and restrictions are considered indefinite.

POLICY: CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflicts and disagreements are an inevitable part of life, and when handled constructively can enhance communication and relationships.

Volunteers agree to follow the GSNEO Conflict Management process, which is found in the Volunteer Relations Conflict Management Roadmap.

When possible, volunteers are encouraged to try to work out a solution through the Self Resolution Meeting process outlined in the Volunteer Relations Conflict Management Roadmap.

All volunteers are expected to continuously uphold the Girl Scout Promise and Law in words and actions.

If a conflict persists, engage your local service unit team and/or staff support team for assistance.

Conflicts that are escalated will be handled by GSNEO's Volunteer Relations team. When mediation or other type of meeting is recommended by the Volunteer Relations team, failure to participate may jeopardize ability to continue in volunteer roles. If mediation does not satisfactorily resolve the conflict, arbitration may take place by the Director of Volunteer Support & Services or their designee, and all determinations are considered final.

POLICY: CONFIDENTIALITY

Personal, medical, and/or financial information about any Girl Scout or adult member which becomes known to a volunteer must be treated as confidential and may only be shared when necessary to access Scoutship or other support available from GSNEO for that individual, and only through established systems or the appropriate GSNEO staff member/process. Health or medical information may be disclosed to the extent necessary solely for treatment or emergency purposes.

Confidential information about members must not be published through any means including any internet channels or social media.

Volunteers should be aware that most emails are not necessarily sent through secure channels, and must only send content which is not confidential. Steps must be taken to properly secure and protect personal information in the possession of volunteers, whether in paper or electronic form.

Volunteers must exercise good judgment and care at all times to avoid unauthorized or improper disclosures of confidential information. Conversations in public places should be limited to matters that do not pertain to information of a sensitive or confidential nature.

The privacy of all current and former members must be respected and protected; contact information is available only to those parties who have current access based on present troop or service unit affiliations. Designated troop volunteers and service unit team members have access to membership information of those in their troops or service units for communication purposes. People currently connected as caregivers within the same family/household also have access to one-another's information.

Contact information (e.g., names, email addresses, phone numbers, addresses) of Girl Scouts and adults must not be shared with any individual or business outside of Girl Scouting except as required for safety or for emergency purposes.

Certain volunteer positions may be asked to sign a Confidentiality Non-Disclosure Agreement if their role allows them access to Looker software information.

POLICY: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND INDIVIDUAL PRIVACY

GSNEO encourages the use of electronic communications for legitimate and authorized Girl Scout program purposes. An electronic communication is defined as any communication that is broadcasted, created, sent, forwarded, replied to, transmitted, stored, held, copied, downloaded, displayed, viewed, read, or printed by any electronic communications service, including email and phone. Contents of all electronic communications conform to law and policies set forth by GSUSA and GSNEO regarding protection of intellectual property, copyright, patents, and trademarks.

Electronic surveys may not be created and distributed by volunteers to Girl Scouts under the age of 18, in accordance with The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). This act specifically protects the privacy of children under the age of 13 by requesting parent/caregiver consent for the collection or use of any personal information of the users. Volunteers must follow COPPA regulations.

Additionally, the misuse of GSNEO's electronic communications in any of the following manners is prohibited and may lead to, at minimum, ineligibility to volunteer for GSNEO and/or criminal charges:

- For any purpose restricted or prohibited by law, regulation, or GSNEO policies;
- Accessing and displaying any type of sexually explicit images or documents;
- For personal purposes, including monetary gain, or for commercial purposes that are not directly related to GSNEO business or otherwise authorized by appropriate GSNEO authority;
- Capturing, opening, intercepting, or obtaining access to electronic communications, except as otherwise permitted by the appropriate GSNEO authority;

- To harass or intimidate others or to interfere with the ability of others to conduct GSNEO business;
- Representing, giving opinions, or otherwise making statements on behalf of GSNEO unless authorized to do so;
- Employing a false identity (the name or electronic identification of another), directly or by implication;
- Forging e-mail headers or content (i.e., constructing an email so it appears to be from someone else);
- Obtaining unauthorized access to electronic communications, members' personal information, or breach of any security measure;
- Performing unauthorized distribution of any members' personal information; or
- Interfering with the availability of electronic communications resources, including but not limited to:
 - Sending or forwarding e-mail chain letters or their equivalents in other electronic communications services;
 - "Spamming," (i.e., sending electronic junk mail or junk newsgroup postings);
 - "Letter-bombing," (i.e., sending an extremely large message or sending multiple messages to one or more recipients to interfere with the recipient's use of electronic communications resources); or
 - Participating in denial of service attacks or any disruption of GSNEO websites or the GSNEO wide-area network.

POLICY: PUBLIC RELATIONS

Girl Scout publicity should be focused on interpretation of the objectives and accomplishments of the Girl Scout Movement.

Media permission, which reads, "When participating in Girl Scout activities I may be photographed for print, videotaped, or electronically imaged. Images may be used in promotional materials, news releases, and other published formats (print or electronic) for either the local Girl Scout Councils or Girl Scouts of the USA. The images will be the sole property of either the local Girl Scout Council or Girl Scouts of the USA." is granted during online membership registration. Parents/caregivers may choose to restrict their child from being photographed during online registration. Volunteers must ensure that parent/caregiver permission has been granted prior to photographing or videotaping any Girl Scout member.

In any situation involving public information on behalf of GSNEO or GSUSA, statements can be made solely by the Chief Executive Officer, the Chair of the Board of Directors, or their designee.

POLICY: SOCIAL MEDIA AND FAMILY COMMUNICATION

GSNEO has partnered with Rallyhood as our preferred online communication and collaboration platform for troops/groups and service units. Rallyhood is an all-in-one solution that integrates the many functions our volunteers need to communicate, collaborate, share files, organize events, collect money, and build a strong, connected Girl Scout community. GSNEO covers the cost of using Rallyhood. The only cost associated would be processing fees for Stripe if choosing to use the payment feature for events or activities. The gsLearn - Rallyhood Training series consists of a training library of bite-sized video content that covers the suite of tools available on the Rallyhood platform.

Whether choosing to use Rallyhood or another communication platform, volunteers agree to assume responsibility for ensuring the safety and well-being of all Girl Scout members and the integrity of the Girl Scout brand when creating and utilizing social media/web sites, and agree that GSNEO is not responsible for the content of these unofficial sites. The following guidelines are in place so that Girl Scouts are protected online, especially if posting pictures and/or meeting dates and times on social media.

- Pages/groups must include in the page/group description: “This [page/profile] is not officially endorsed by Girl Scouts of North East Ohio (GSNEO). It is not officially run or regularly monitored by GSNEO staff, and is run by volunteers within the GSNEO council footprint.”
- Designate at least two unrelated, registered, and background checked adult volunteers as administrators to help monitor the group page. Service unit page administrators must be active in a service unit team role and/or appointed by a GSNEO staff member. If service unit team members and/or designated page administrators leave their volunteer roles, they must designate their Community Support Coordinator or Specialist as the page administrator in the interim until new service unit team members are in place or other volunteers are appointed.
- Pages/groups may use the solid Girl Scout trefoil but not the official service mark for GSNEO or GSUSA. Contact the council Marketing Department at marketing@gsneo.org with copyright questions and for permission to use Girl Scout images and logos. Pages/groups must adhere to Girl Scout brand guidelines which can be found at gsneo.org/brand (See "Branding and Copyright" policy).
- GSNEO staff must be granted access to view and/or be made a page administrator of service unit or troop/group social media pages upon request. GSNEO has jurisdiction over affiliated Girl Scout specific platforms; if the page administrators are contacted by GSNEO or GSUSA and asked to remove any content/links or to add/delete members, they must comply with the request. It is important to reflect the Girl Scout Promise and Law (see “Representing Girl Scouts” policy). When sharing links to commercial sites, ensure they are in line with the Girl Scout brand (see "Conflict of Interest" policies).
- Maintain privacy by creating a “closed” group and utilizing appropriate privacy settings. Only service unit members, volunteers, parents/caregivers, and Girl Scouts older than age 13 in that service unit or group/troop (and GSNEO staff members) should be allowed to join. Use caution when posting members’ last names and location information.

Any social media page that violates GSNEO policy will be considered out of compliance, and the volunteer administrators may jeopardize their volunteer roles.

Volunteer Personal Social Media

Volunteers who choose to affiliate with GSNEO/GSUSA/Girl Scouts on their personal social media pages (i.e., "Troop Leader at GSNEO" in "About" section) may be asked to remove the affiliation if reported for content not aligned with the Girl Scout Promise and Law. Volunteers may also choose to include the following disclaimer on their personal social media pages, if choosing to affiliate with GSNEO/GSUSA/Girl Scouts: "The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent the positions, strategies, or opinions of Girl Scouts of North East Ohio or Girl Scouts of the USA." Please note that GSNEO volunteers are expected to uphold the Girl Scout Promise and Law at all times and may be removed from their roles for public statements in direct conflict with the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

Family Communication

Troops must include all parents/caregivers, and service units must include all volunteers who wish to be included on social media, unless there is a legal or GSNEO based restriction. If any member of the page violates GSNEO policies or creates an uncomfortable environment, page administrators may request to remove that member by consulting with GSNEO staff.

Whether through social media or other channels (phone, email, newsletter, etc.), troop leaders must establish clear communication with all parents/caregivers who request to be included, unless there is a legal or GSNEO based restriction.

Refer to policies regarding cyberbullying in the section "Anti-Harassment," sharing of information in the section "Emergencies," and virtual meeting guidelines, including the Internet Safety Pledge in Safety Activity Checkpoints.

POLICY: BRANDING AND COPYRIGHT

The Girl Scout brand and all Girl Scout trademarks and copyrights are the sole property of Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) and their use must be preapproved in writing by the Girl Scouts of North East Ohio (GSNEO) Marketing Department.

Designs that include GSUSA trademarked/licensed assets (e.g., trefoil; see list below) must adhere to GSUSA branding specifications and be approved by the council marketing and communications department before printing or finalizing. Contact marketing@gsneo.org for approval. Girl and volunteer members can access brand guidelines for flyers, banners, t-shirts, cake decorations, etc. at gsneo.org/brand.

Please note, for products that will be sold or given away in connection with a fee-based event, GSUSA is responsible for approving the product and graphic rendering of any mark (Girl Scout name, service mark, or other Girl Scout marks or symbols). Additionally, regional licensed vendors must be used when merchandise is given away at fee-based events or activities.

Proprietary information and publications (i.e., badge or Journey requirements) are the property of GSUSA and are for personal use.

Copyright and Trademark Information for GSUSA

Girl Scouts has the sole and exclusive right by virtue of its Congressional Charter, 36 U.S.C. § 80301 et. seq., to have and use all service marks, trademarks, emblems, badges, descriptive or designating marks, and other words now or heretofore used in carrying out its program and is the owner of the GIRL SCOUTS name, service mark, and trademark, and of all other associated names, marks, slogans, insignias, logotypes and designs, including but not limited to the distinctive TREFOIL design mark, the GSUSA uniforms and other indicia, the names and marks "Girl Scouts of the United States of America," "Girl Scout Daisies," "Girl Scout Brownies," "Girl Scout Juniors," "Girl Scout Cadettes," "Girl Scout Seniors," and "Girl Scout Ambassadors," and such trademarks and service marks as WHERE GIRLS GROW STRONG, FOR EVERY GIRL EVERYWHERE, GIRLSPORTS, and GIRL SCOUT.

GSUSA Copyright/Trademark FAQ link: <https://www.girlscouts.org/en/footer/faq/copyrights-trademarks-faq.html>

POLICY: SENSITIVE ISSUES

Girl Scouts of the USA is a nonpartisan, nonpolitical organization and does not take a position on or develop materials pertaining to sex education. Our role is to equip Girl Scouts with the self-confidence and decision-making skills that will help them make wise choices in all areas of their lives. Parents/caregivers make all decisions regarding Girl Scout program participation that may be of a sensitive nature.

Volunteers agree to seek written parent/caregiver permission through the Sensitive Issues Consent Form prior to engaging in planned discussions or programs with Girl Scout members that may be considered sensitive (e.g., reproductive health, religious beliefs). If unplanned discussions of a potentially sensitive nature are brought up by Girl Scouts, volunteers are encouraged to use their best judgement in determining whether the discussion can be postponed until parent/caregiver permission is received. If the topic is timely and volunteers find it crucial to address for the health and well-being of the troop (e.g., a Girl Scout starts her period at camp, and some of the other Girl Scouts are expressing fear, concern, or are sharing information), they may engage in a limited conversation and inform parents/caregivers as soon as possible. Volunteers are encouraged to explore GSUSA's blog "Raising Awesome Girls" (<https://www.girlscouts.org/en/raising-girls.html>) or take the GSNEO training "She Said What?!" to learn more about addressing sensitive issues with confidence.

POLICY: FLYERS/INFORMATION IN MAILBOXES

It is against federal law to insert flyers in mailboxes. Girl Scouts and Girl Scout volunteers may not place any matter not bearing postage into a mailbox. This includes flyers, Cookie Program information, letters, etc.

POLICY: CONTRACTS

As designees of the Chief Operating Officer, appointed Service Unit Directors (or service unit bank account signers if no Director in place) may sign contracts/agreements on behalf of their service unit or their troops when the maximum obligation assumed by the service unit and/or one of the troops in the service unit is no more than \$1,000.

As designees of the Chief Operating Officer, appointed Primary Troop Volunteers (Troop Leaders or Troop Admins) may sign contracts/agreements on behalf of their troops when the maximum obligation assumed by the troop is no more than \$250.

Additionally, approved drivers may sign rental car agreements on behalf of the troop/group/service unit for Girl Scout related travel.

No other volunteers are authorized to enter into any contract or agreement on behalf of GSNEO or any subordinate unit. Volunteers needing contracts signed should contact Customer Care.

POLICY: RECORDS RETENTION

Permission forms must be retained by troop leadership in a secure location for the current program year and submitted with a GSNEO Incident/Accident Report Form (required) if an incident occurred during a Girl Scout meeting or trip.

Personal Health and Medical Forms must be retained by troop leadership in a secure location for the current program year in accordance with the "Health and Medical Policy," and outdated forms should be shredded.

Financial records, including receipts, must be kept on file by troop bank account signers in a secure location for seven years in accordance with IRS regulations, even after a troop has disbanded/retired or graduated. Troop bank account signers may retain hard copies or store files digitally for convenience.

POLICY: PROPERTY

No person should use or alter GSNEO property or equipment for personal gain or for the purposes of solicitation or distribution of literature for non-sanctioned Girl Scout events without permission from GSNEO.

No sale or solicitation of materials or services of any type is allowed on GSNEO properties without the written permission of GSNEO.

"Solicitation" means requesting another person to purchase goods and/or services, donate goods, services, or money to any person or organization, or sign petitions for any purpose.

POLICY: BEHAVIOR

Relationships

Relationships built through Girl Scout activities are intended to be platonic (i.e., friendly and not romantic or sexual). Public displays of affection (i.e., PDA or romantic touching) during GSNEO events are discouraged. This policy applies to all members of GSNEO, including Girl Scouts, volunteers, and employees.

Adult Behavior

Any adult, member or otherwise, whose behavior is not in keeping with the standards outlined in the Girl Scout Promise and Law, Volunteer Essentials, their respective position description, as well as those set forth by this council may be ineligible to volunteer, may be terminated from their position, may be barred from attending Girl Scout activities, and/or may be barred from GSNEO properties. All adults are compelled to comply with the guidelines set forth in the *Parent/Caregiver Support Agreement*.

Youth Behavior

GSNEO encourages volunteers to use the *Girl Scout Code of Conduct Agreement* to set behavioral expectations and consequences within a troop setting. Volunteers must work with council staff to attempt to resolve behavior issues that negatively impact the troop environment. Council staff will make reasonable efforts to engage the parent/caregiver of the Girl Scout in question for assistance in resolving behavioral issues. GSNEO reserves the right to remove a Girl Scout from a troop or limit participation in any other capacity (e.g., service unit or council events) after reasonable efforts have been made to correct behavior not aligned with Girl Code of Conduct Agreement or when there is a concern for safety.

See *Safety Activity Checkpoints* and GSNEO's *No Prob-Llamas: Conflict Resolution for Girls* curriculum for additional guidelines and resources about youth violence and bullying.

POLICY: ANTI-HARASSMENT

The council is committed to an environment and climate in which relationships are characterized by dignity, respect, courtesy, and equitable treatment. It is the policy of the organization to provide all with an environment free from all forms of unlawful or unwelcome harassment, hostility, and bullying; and therefore, it will not be tolerated.

This policy includes physical violence as well as intimidation, stalking, coercion, display of weapons, threats, and talking or joking about harassment or hostility, whether in person or through some other means of communications such as writing, phone, voice mail, email, or any form of social media.

Bullying/Cyberbullying:

According to the US Department of Health and Human Resources, "bullying" is defined as aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength, typically repeated over time.

Cyberbullying is bullying that occurs online. Whether cyberbullying occurs in email, a text message, an online game, or on a social networking site, it is prohibited. This includes rumors or images posted online where other people may see them. GSNEO will cooperate with police, schools, and other organizations that share our values who are attempting to enforce laws, regulations, and rules regarding cyberbullying regardless of the potential punishment.

Anyone, regardless of volunteer or member status, who violates this policy and/or refuses to abide by this policy, is prohibited from holding volunteer positions with GSNEO and from attending Girl Scout activities, events, and meetings. Any volunteer who engages in or encourages bullying is subject to release from their volunteer position.

Sexual Harassment:

The council reserves the right to refuse membership or reappointment and to dismiss or suspend from affiliation with the council any volunteer who is guilty of sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual acts or favors, abusing the dignity of another through insulting or degrading sexual remarks or conduct, and threats or suggestions that a volunteer's status is conditioned upon toleration of or acquiescence to sexual advances. Some examples of sexual harassment that could create a hostile environment include telling of sexual jokes or stories, the presence of sexually explicit photographs or other materials, making sexual comments about another person's body, making sexual comments or innuendoes, asking personal questions about another person's social or sexual life, staring, leering, and making sexual gestures.

POLICY: CHILD ABUSE

The council supports and maintains environments that are free of child abuse and neglect as defined by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act.

The council reserves the right to refuse membership endorsement or reappointment, and to dismiss or to exclude from affiliation with the council, any volunteer who in the judgment of the council poses a risk of injury to a minor or is believed to have abused or neglected any child or who has been convicted of any crime against a child. Child abuse and neglect are unlawful acts and it is against the council's policy for any volunteer member to physically, sexually, or mentally abuse another member or neglect any child. The Girl Scouts of North East Ohio has zero tolerance for abuse and will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of members in its programs.

If any volunteer reasonably suspects or reasonably believes a Girl Scout member is being abused, that volunteer should immediately report these suspicions to the Department of Job and Family Services, by calling 855-O-H-CHILD (855-642-4453). Reports can be anonymous, and should be made in the county in which the child lives or was abused. The volunteer must also complete and file a GSNEO Incident/Accident Report Form within 24 hours.

If a volunteer is uncomfortable reporting their suspicions, the Volunteer Relations team at GSNEO may assist by making the official report, as GSNEO staff are mandated reporters.

All adults who work with Girl Scout youth members are REQUIRED by GSNEO's insurance carrier to complete virtual Youth Protection Training on gsLearn. This training covers GSNEO policies, warning signs of child abuse and neglect, as well as how to report suspected abuse, and prevention strategies for keeping Girl Scout members safe.

POLICY: WHISTLE BLOWER

Retaliation against anyone who has reported an allegation of harassment, sexual harassment, or any violation of any council policy is expressly prohibited and, if it occurs, will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination of the person who has engaged in the retaliatory behavior.

POLICY: CONFLICT OF INTEREST

GSNEO relies on dedicated and trusted volunteers to promote the mission of building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

A conflict of interest exists when the interests or concerns of any volunteer member, any member of their family, or any party, group, or organization in which the volunteer is actively involved may be seen as competing with the interests or concerns of GSNEO.

Volunteer members or any member of their family, acting individually, or on behalf of another entity to which they have allegiance or obligation, should not utilize their position with GSNEO for any personal advantage or for the advantage of another entity.

Volunteers should not use for personal advantage or for the advantage of another entity, confidential information or material acquired through their position at GSNEO (including but not limited to rosters, mailing lists, phone directories, branded materials, social media pages, and the like).

POLICY: ANIMALS

Animals may not be brought onto any GSNEO property without the written permission of the Chief Executive Officer or their designee. Volunteers must follow Safety Activity Checkpoints for Animal Interaction when engaging with animals in programs activities. In accordance with ADA law, exceptions will be made for registered service animals needed to assist persons with disabilities. Individuals with service animals are not required to disclose the medical reason, and privacy should be respected. Emotional support animals, trained or untrained, are not permitted.

POLICY: SMOKING/VAPING/TOBACCO

The use of smoking/vaping/tobacco products is prohibited whenever youth members are present in any environment, including vehicles transporting youth members.

Smoking/vaping/tobacco products may not be in view of youth members in any environment.

Smoking/vaping/tobacco products may not be used inside GSNEO offices or camp buildings.

Smoking/vaping/tobacco products are permitted only in designated outdoor areas at GSNEO camps as indicated in The Compass for each camp property.

POLICY: DRUGS/ALCOHOL

No person may purchase, consume, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs/substances, prescription, or over-the-counter medications which impair performance or judgment on GSNEO property, in the presence of youth members, during any GSNEO-sanctioned activity (including volunteer meetings), while conducting council business, or in Girl Scout branded clothing.

Alcohol or any substance which may impair one's judgment must never be used by volunteers, adult members, or any other adult in the presence of a youth member immediately prior to, or during a Girl Scout activity. Alcoholic beverages may be served to/consumed by adults of legal age at council events when youth members are not present only when previously approved by the council Board of Directors or Chief Executive Officer.

Youth members may be permitted to attend functions at locations where alcohol is incidentally being purchased by adults and then taken away to be consumed elsewhere, away from youth members. For example, an event taking place at an arena, stadium, theme park, movie theater, or places where alcoholic beverages are sold at a concession stand and taken away to be consumed is permissible.

POLICY: FIREARMS/WEAPONS

Firearms and/or weapons are prohibited at any Girl Scout activity and on council-owned or leased property except when in the possession of a sworn officer of the law, a certified instructor, licensed wildlife control personnel, and/or trained adult while conducting a council-approved Girl Scout program activity.

POLICY: FIRST AID/CPR/AED TRAINING

A general first-aider is an adult who has taken Girl Scout approved first-aid and CPR training that includes specific instructions for child CPR, as well as AED (Automated External Defibrillator) training through the American Red Cross, National Safety Council, EMP America, or American Heart Association. General first-aiders are required to be present for any troop activities beyond a regular troop meeting. GSNEO strongly encourages all troops to have a general first-aider present at all times, and makes certification accessible and affordable. Additionally, troops must always have a first aid kit present.

POLICY: EMERGENCIES

If an emergency occurs, Girl Scout volunteers must follow the GSNEO Emergency Action Plan, found at gsneo.org/emergency. These guidelines ensure that safety is the number one concern in any emergency situation, and volunteers are guided to seek help and report the incident efficiently and effectively. Volunteers should not make statements of ANY KIND to the media. Do NOT give out any names or information. Ask the media to contact GSNEO. If you have an emergency after business hours, call the emergency phone line at 330-472-2389. Volunteers must also refrain from posting and/or sharing pictures or comments on social media related to the emergency situation.

Volunteers are required to submit an Incident/Accident Report Form to GSNEO within 24 hours of an incident/accident.

If a volunteer is subpoenaed regarding an incident that occurred during Girl Scouts, the volunteer must notify the council.

POLICY: HEALTH AND MEDICAL

GSNEO respects the privacy of its members. Personal Health and Medical Forms are to be completed upon registration and then reviewed annually for all Girl Scouts and adult volunteers. A new form should be completed every three (3) years, and the original form can be initialed by the parent/caregiver or adult member in subsequent years. One copy stays in the troop leader/event coordinator's possession, and one goes with the adult driver/chaperone if applicable (note that this information should be kept confidential; you may wish to keep the forms in a sealed envelope in case of emergency).

It is important for you to be aware of any medications a girl or adult volunteer may take or allergies they may have. Keep in mind the following:

- Medication, including over-the-counter products, must never be dispensed without prior written permission from a Girl Scout's parent/caregiver. Permission should be indicated on the Girl Scout's Personal Health and Medical Form.
- Some Girl Scouts may need to carry and administer their own medications, such as bronchial inhalers, EpiPens, or diabetes medication. You must have documentation from the Girl Scout's parent/caregiver that it is acceptable for the Girl Scout to self-administer these medications.
- Common food allergies include dairy products, eggs, soy, wheat, peanuts, tree nuts, and seafood. Before serving any food, ask whether anyone has food allergies and make any necessary accommodations.

Staying Healthy – Preventing Communicable Diseases

Volunteers should take reasonable precautions to limit exposure and prevent transmission of communicable diseases (e.g., chicken pox, COVID-19, influenza, measles, pink eye)

1. Remind potential participants to stay home if they are sick or showing signs of illness.

2. Maintain good hygiene. Allow for and encourage handwashing.
3. Clean and sanitize high-touch surfaces, equipment, and shared supplies.

If known exposure of a communicable disease occurs at a Girl Scout meeting or event, follow guidance from the Ohio Department of Health and the CDC. Notify participants that they were exposed while maintaining confidentiality of the individual who is ill. If you don't know the event coordinator (for example, attended a partner-led event or attended a council-sponsored program), please submit a GSNEO Incident/Accident Report Form. Council staff will make reasonable attempts to notify participants who were in close contact.

POLICY: TRAVEL/TRIPS

Permission Forms:

To be considered a Girl Scout trip/activity, the troop/group leader must provide parents/caregivers with written details (date, time, locations, and brief description) of the trip/activity prior to its occurrence. The trip/activity must meet all requirements in Safety Activity Checkpoints, and either the Annual Permission Form or Permission Form must be signed by the parent/caregiver and returned to the troop/group leader. The Annual Permission Form allows for troop trips/activities that are 1) located within one hour's driving time of the regular meeting place, 2) not exceeding six hours, and 3) not considered high risk activities as outlined in Safety Activity Checkpoints (e.g., high ropes, zip line, equestrian). Trips/activities outside of these parameters require a separate Single Activity Permission Form. Activity Consent, Hold Harmless, and Release Agreements may be required, depending on the activity.

Council Approval:

When taking an overnight trip beyond GSNEO properties and GSNEO programs, all troops/groups must acquire proper council approval through the trip application process as well as written parental permission. The Simple Overnight Trip Application is used for trips of two (2) or less nights duration. Applications should be submitted at the time of initial planning and no later than six (6) weeks prior to the date of departure. The Extended and International Trips Application is used for domestic travel of three (3) or more nights duration and international travel of any length. An initial application should be submitted at the time of initial planning. As a courtesy, GSNEO also recommends sharing trip information with the local Service Unit Director.

Additional activity insurance purchased through GSNEO is required for Girl Scouts taking extended trips of longer than three (3) days and two (2) nights and for all foreign travel.

Required Training:

- General first aider must be present for all travel/troop trips (see "*First Aid/CPR/AED Training*" policy)
- Trip Planning training required for extended trips (three or more nights) and international trips

- Outdoor Essentials training required for camping trips
- Follow all Safety Activity Checkpoints

Privacy/Sleeping Arrangements

For health and safety reasons, privacy and personal space should be respected and maintained for all Girl Scout members. Please note the following:

- Each participant has their own bed. Parent/caregiver permission must be obtained if Girl Scouts are to share a bed.
- Youth members and adults do not share a bed; however, exceptions may be made for family members.
- It is not mandatory that an adult sleep in the sleeping area (i.e., tent, cabin, or designated area) with youth members, but if an adult female does share the sleeping area, there should always be two unrelated adult females present.
- Unless supervised by adults, youth members should be grouped with others of an appropriate age range. For example, Girl Scout Daisies should not share a tent with Girl Scout Ambassadors. A best practice is for Girl Scouts to share lodging with one age level above or below (e.g., Juniors with Brownies OR Cadettes).
- When possible, provide private changing and shower spaces. If limited facilities are available, the best practice is to utilize a sign-up sheet. If a universal bathroom is used, the door must have a working lock, or a system for notifying others that the bathroom is in use. This system should be reviewed and understood by all Girl Scouts and adults.
- In accordance with federal and state guidelines, transgender, non-binary, and gender diverse Girl Scouts are to use the sleeping areas, bathrooms, and other facilities that most closely align with their gender identity and create the safest and most comfortable environment for the Girl Scout.
- If a Girl Scout in your group is transgender, non-binary, or gender diverse, make accommodations as necessary so that all participants have a safe and welcoming sleeping environment. If you require additional support, the Volunteer Relations staff team will work through options for accommodations. Volunteers are invited to complete GSNEO's *LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Girl Scouts* training on gsLearn to learn more.

Additional Considerations for Men

- On trips where volunteers who identify as male (men) are part of the group, they must have separate sleeping accommodations (e.g., tent, hotel room) from girls and women.
- If possible, men should have their own designated bathroom. Men should not have to walk through the youth sleeping or changing area to get to the bathroom.
- In public venue overnights, such as museums or at malls, ask if there are separate sleeping area and bathrooms for men. If no such areas exist, designate an area out of the way or off

to the side so that male volunteers are not sleeping alongside the girls. The volunteer-to-girl ratio should be adjusted accordingly.

- An exception is made for family members during events such as parent/caregiver-child or family overnights where one family may sleep together in an area specifically designated to accommodate families. Organizers should clearly explain sleeping arrangements prior to the event. More than one family may use a tent or single-room cabin during these events only if both families agree.

Considerations if Including Additional Adults and/or Family Members

When planning trips, please note that troop funds may only be used for registered members of GSNEO. Girl member and required chaperone fees should be prioritized before covering additional registered adult members (See *Volunteer Essentials* for volunteer-to-girl ratio chart). The spirit of Girl Scout trips, especially extended/international trips, is that Girl Scouts gain independence and Girl Scout experiences in a safe, supportive environment. GSNEO supports family engagement (see "Girl Scouting for Families" policy) but encourages troops to exercise caution if inviting families on Girl Scout trips. Family members are expected to follow all Girl Scout policies if they attend a Girl Scout trip or event. If the trip includes an overnight, all adults must become registered volunteers and complete a Criminal Background Check (CBC). Family funds must not be intermingled with the troop bank account and additional liability insurance is available for non-members (e.g., siblings). These plans cover participants taking part in any council-approved, supervised Girl Scout activity. See Girl Scout Activity Insurance Enrollment Form at gsneo.org.

See Travel/Trips section of *Safety Activity Checkpoints* for additional information.

For property rentals (e.g., AirBNB, VRBO, HomeAway) see additional requirements in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.

POLICY: TRANSPORTATION

Volunteers who drive vehicles for Girl Scout trips must be eligible volunteers at least 21 years of age, with a minimum of three years driving experience, a valid driver's license, and current motor vehicle insurance in compliance with Ohio State Law. Accidents and violation records will be reviewed by GSNEO staff. A driving restriction may be placed on an individual prohibiting them from driving members on behalf of GSNEO based on the number and severity of violations or accidents. The primary volunteer in charge of a Girl Scout outing or trip should inquire with all drivers that they are eligible volunteers, without a driving restriction, have a valid driver's license, and a current auto insurance policy. It is not necessary for the primary volunteer to maintain a copy of these documents.

When the troop/group is arranging transportation, youth members are not permitted to drive other youth members to Girl Scout activities. How parents/caregivers decide to transport youth between their homes and Girl Scout meeting places is their decision and responsibility.

15 Passenger Vans:

GSNEO does not permit volunteers to operate 15 passenger vans, flagged as unsafe by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, for transporting Girl Scouts. If a volunteer is licensed to operate 15 passenger vans, contact the council to request an exception. These rules do not apply to commercial or professionally operated services such as airport shuttles. Professionally operated commercial vans designed for 15 passengers are permitted. 12 passenger vans and smaller do not require special licensing to drive and are permitted for transporting Girl Scouts.

Taxis and Ride-Sharing Services:

Taxis and ride-sharing services, including Uber and Lyft, may be used with these guidelines:

- An adult should ride in each vehicle with youth members when multiple vehicles are being used.
- Wait for your ride in a safe place. For taxis, when possible, call (or ask your hotel to call), rather than hailing from the street. Use a taxi stand at airports. Stand away from traffic while waiting.
- For taxis: Check that the taxi is appropriately marked.
- For ride-sharing services:
 - Check that the vehicle's license plate, make, and model match what is shown in the app.
 - Compare the app's photo with the driver. Ask for their name and be sure it matches the app.
 - Ask, "who are you here to pick up?" They should have your first name, but not other info about you.
 - If you feel uncomfortable for any reason, do not get in the vehicle. If you become uncomfortable, end the ride. Report your experience to the taxi service or ride-sharing app.
 - Send your in-town contact the name of the driver and your destination. Most apps have a sharing feature for this purpose.
 - Do not share information about the group or where you are staying to any stranger.
 - Each passenger must wear a seat belt. Enter and exit curbside.
 - In foreign countries, consult a local expert about how to best call for taxis or rides. Reputable practices vary.
 - For additional safety, check your ride-sharing app settings and, if applicable, enable the "Verify Your Ride" setting. This setting enables a PIN for you and your driver to confirm you're getting in the right vehicle.

Checklist for Drivers:

When driving a car, RV, or camper, take the following precautions and ask all other drivers to do the same:

- Ensure all drivers are approved volunteers at least 21 years old.
- Youth members should not be transporting other youth members.
- Follow *Safety Activity Checkpoints* (e.g., *Parades and Other Large Gatherings, Hayrides*) if transporting Girl Scouts in flatbed trailers or in the bed of a pickup truck.
- Never transport Girl Scouts in panel trucks or camper-trailer.
- Keep directions and a road map in the car, along with a first-aid kit and a flashlight.
- Check your lights, signals, tires, windshield wipers, horns, and fluid levels before each trip, and recheck them periodically on long trips.
- Keep all necessary papers up-to-date including, but not limited to: your driver's license; vehicle registration; any state or local inspections; and insurance coverage.
- Wear your seat belt at all times and insist that all passengers do the same. Girl Scouts under 12 must ride in the back seats.
- When applicable, the caregiver will supply and install the booster seat in the designated vehicle. For further information please refer to the Ohio Child Booster Seat Law.
- Follow all the established rules of the road in your state, including the speed limit. Some additional guidelines include: keeping a two-car-length distance between you and the car ahead of you; not talking or texting on a cell phone or other personal electronic device while driving; not using ear buds or headphones while driving; and turning your lights on when your windshield wipers are on.
- Plan rest stops every few hours and avoid driving for extended periods at night. If traveling with others, prearrange stopping places along the way. When planning longer trips, arrange for relief drivers.
- Do NOT drive when you are tired or taking medication that makes you drowsy.

POLICY: GIRL SCOUTING FOR FAMILIES

Girl Scouts is a girl-led, female-empowering environment. GSNEO also embraces the family in Girl Scouting and strives to provide opportunities for family engagement. Adult family members are encouraged to engage through volunteer opportunities. Troop, service unit, and council-sponsored activities may be open for participation by family and friends. Family members should respect and follow troop, service unit, and GSNEO guidelines for such events (e.g., specified times for Girl Scouts to check in to campsites).

We encourage volunteers to use inclusive language when planning events; family diversity should be embraced, respected, and normalized in Girl Scouts. With this in mind, consider event titles such as "Girl Scouts and their Grown-Ups" instead of "mother/father" events, as Girl Scout

families come in all shapes and sizes. Other examples include "Me and My Gal," "Me and My Guy," or "Special Someone."

It is recommended to purchase non-member insurance through GSNEO whenever you expect that non-members (e.g., siblings, parents/caregivers) might be attending an event. Every registered Girl Scout and registered adult member in the Girl Scout Movement is automatically covered under the basic activity insurance plan upon registration. Non-member insurance is low-cost, easy to obtain, and available for events where non-members may accompany a troop.

See Girl Scout Activity Insurance Enrollment Form at gsneo.org.

POLICY: PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

While participating in Girl Scouts, members may sometimes participate with other organizations (e.g., field trips, partnerships at school events). In these situations, all Girl Scout policies must be followed. A clear understanding of roles and responsibilities between the organizations should be established (e.g., liability insurance, program materials, branding).

Marketplace Confusion:

To protect the integrity of the Girl Scout brand and reinforce our programming as unique, championing girl ambition, and best in class, we must ensure that activities in which our members participate are exclusive to the Girl Scout program. Activities must be conducted under the appropriate supervision of Girl Scout volunteers, and follow Safety Activity Checkpoints, GSNEO Member & Volunteer Policies, and other requirements.

Protecting Use of Girl Scout Materials:

Girl Scout materials are to be used only for purposes of Girl Scouts and are protected as intellectual property of Girl Scouts of the USA. Materials include but are not limited to: Girl Scout logo, tag lines, and/or program and badge requirements. See *Branding and Copyright Policy* for additional details.

POLICY: MEETING PLACES

Always choose a safe meeting space. Careful considerations should be used to find appropriate facilities for the age of the Girl Scouts to be served and the activities to be conducted. A meeting place needs to provide a safe, clean, and secure environment that allows for the participation of all members. You might consider using meeting rooms at schools, libraries, houses of worship, community buildings, childcare facilities, and local businesses. For teens, you can also rotate meetings at coffee shops, bookstores, and other places they enjoy spending time.

Here are a few points to keep in mind as you consider meeting locations:

- **Accessibility:** Ensure the space can accommodate youths and accompanying adults with disabilities.
- **Allergen-free:** Ensure that pet dander, smoke, and other common allergens will not bother susceptible Girl Scouts and accompanying adults.

- **Availability:** Ensure the space is available for the day and the entire length of time you want to meet.
- **Communication-friendly:** Be sure your cell phone works in the meeting space or there is a land line for emergencies. Internet accessibility is also helpful.
- **Cost:** The space should be free to use. However, you may wish to develop a partnership to provide service or offer a donation toward maintenance or utilities.
- **Facilities:** Sanitary toilets are critical. When possible, spaces that offer gender neutral and ADA accessible facilities should be selected. This is especially important for groups with open transgender, non-binary, and gender diverse and/or disabled Girl Scouts or accompanying adults.
- **Resources:** Determine what types of furnishings come with the room and ensure that the lighting is adequate. A bonus would be a cubby or closet of some sort, where you can store supplies.
- **Safety:** Ensure that the space is safe, secure, clean, properly ventilated, heated (or cooled, depending on your location), free from hazards, and has at least two exits that are clearly marked and fully functional. Also be sure first-aid equipment, smoke detectors, and a fire extinguisher are on hand.
- **Size:** Make sure the space is large enough to accommodate the whole group and all planned activities.

Meeting in Private Homes:

GSNEO does not recommend holding troop meetings in a private home. In addition to the above, please remember to ensure these standards:

- The private home must be the home of registered, council approved volunteer.
- Communicate with troop families and ensure they are comfortable with meeting in a volunteer's home.
- Girl Scouts may not meet in a home where a registered sex offender lives.
- All adults accompanying troop/group meetings or activities on a regular basis, attending any overnight activity, or who at any time assume care, custody, or control of youth members and/or Girl Scout money must be both a registered adult member of GSUSA and an approved, appointed volunteer of GSNEO.
- The troop needs to be able to focus without disruptions from other household members.
- Animals should be kept in a place that is separate from the meeting space.
- Homeowners should consider any personal insurance implications. The homeowner should ask their personal homeowner's or renter's insurance carrier if there are any insurance concerns with troop meetings at the home. If an incident occurs during a troop meeting in a volunteer's home, the homeowner's/renter's insurance must be contacted, in addition to filing a GSNEO Incident/Accident Report.

- Weapons must be out of view and in a locked space.
- Medications, cleaning products, or any poisonous substances must be stored in a secure space out of sight, preferably locked.

POLICY: SOCIAL JUSTICE

Girl Scouts provides all members a place where they feel heard and where they have the resources and support they need to raise their voices and change their corner of the world. We respect the rights of each individual Girl Scout and adult member of our Movement to make their own decisions about participating in demonstrations, protests, or marches in support of causes they care about.

Troops and service units wishing to participate in social justice causes should follow the following guidelines:

- Ensure that the activity is girl-led and based on the Girl Scouts' passions and interests.
- Activity must not be funded by, raising funds for, or campaigning for any political party.
- Cause must be in alignment with Girl Scout values (Self-expression, Community, Inclusion, Integrity, and Discovery).
- Association with known hate groups as identified by the U.S. Department of Justice and/or ACLU is prohibited.
- Refer to Safety Activity Checkpoints for "Parades and Other Large Gatherings."
- Be mindful of the possibility of violence and ensure parent/caregiver written permission for any Girl Scouts who participate.

Girl Scouts are permitted to wear their uniform and represent Girl Scouts at parades/gatherings meeting the above criteria. Contact the council for additional guidance.

See GSUSA's Social Issues FAQ (<https://www.girlscouts.org/en/footer/faq/social-issues-faq.html>) for information regarding Girl Scouts' stance on various issues.

Volunteers are invited to participate in GSNEO's Social Justice Seeker challenge by visiting the Events calendar at gsneo.org.

POLICY: BANK ACCOUNTS

All troops, groups, day camps, and service units must open a separate business checking account into and out of which all funds flow. Once a troop is considered "active" (three Girl Scouts/two unrelated volunteers) and begins meeting, volunteers should submit the Request to Open Bank Account form within four weeks, and should submit new bank account information to GSNEO within the following two weeks (extensions may be granted at the discretion of GSNEO during summer months). Troops must have a bank account open and on file with GSNEO to participate in Product Programs. All Girl Scout accounts must have two signers who are responsible for funds. Bank account signers cannot be related (i.e., not a sibling, spouse, domestic partner, parent,

child, or anyone who would be considered a family member) or live in the same residence. If there is a "family-like" relationship between the volunteers, GSNEO recommends choosing a different bank account signer, or adding a third signer for the protection of all parties. Bank account signers must be authorized by GSNEO to handle finances and be active in one of the following roles: Troop Leader, Troop Admin, Treasurer, Product Sales Manager, or Service Unit Team position. These accounts, the signers, and the use of GSNEO's Employer Identification Number (EIN) must be authorized in writing by GSNEO. One additional savings account per troop is permitted, which must be authorized in writing by GSNEO. Each troop, group, day camp, and service unit may only have one checking and one savings account at any given time.

Bank Account Management

Subordinate units must follow GSNEO procedures when opening accounts, closing accounts, or changing bank account signers at a financial institution. The council has the authority to change bank account signers, request bank statements, or close unit accounts whenever it deems necessary.

GSNEO has established relationships with preferred banks providing numerous benefits including improved customer service. Additionally, certain banks do not comply with GSNEO policies and volunteers are not permitted to open Girl Scout accounts. Existing bank accounts at prohibited banks are not required to close, however, changes are not permitted (i.e., new signers) and accounts must be closed and transferred to a permitted bank if changes are needed. Troops may choose to bank with other non-preferred banks (excluding prohibited banks), with the understanding that they may be charged fees, and GSNEO cannot provide the same level of assistance on their behalf. Troops and service units deemed as requiring additional financial oversight by GSNEO may be required to only use preferred banks.

The unit may obtain no more than two debit/check cards. The debit/check card must not be used for personal purchases. The cardholder(s) are responsible for obtaining purchase receipts, securing the card(s), and are legally responsible for the transactions posted to the card. Online banking is permitted.

If troops, groups, day camps, or service units need to change bank account signers on existing troop bank accounts, they must complete the "Request to Change Bank Account Signers" form. Bank accounts are subject to being closed by GSNEO if the account is not in compliance with policies (e.g., signer no longer on troop roster; signer's membership is not renewed; signer is no longer in approved role).

Signers on **service unit bank accounts** must be active in a service unit team role, and one of the two signers must be in the role of Service Unit Treasurer. Service unit team members must hold an approved volunteer role within a troop to cosign on the troop bank account. Volunteers may request to serve as a bank account signer on up to three bank accounts (e.g., three troops; two troops, and one service unit) in which they actively participate in the approved roles; to sign on additional accounts requires approval from the Volunteer Support and Services Director or their designee.

Appropriate Use of Funds

These accounts must only be used to support the Girl Scout program; money earned by Girl Scouts can only be used to fund their Girl Scout experience. Examples of appropriate uses for troop funds include community service and Take Action projects, Girl Scout troop meeting supplies and trips, and other girl-led Girl Scout troop activities. Troop funds may be used to purchase annual GSUSA membership for girl members and adult volunteers. Volunteers may not use troop funds to purchase lifetime memberships for adult volunteers, unless this was a girl-led decision (e.g., a gift from a graduating troop to a long-time leader). Recurring membership fees to warehouse clubs (e.g., Sam's Club, Costco) or online services (e.g., Amazon Prime) and the like are not permitted to be purchased with Girl Scout funds because the perception of personal benefit for the adult volunteer is not appropriate. Volunteers may use their personal memberships and purchase items at these locations, if they choose.

Deposit of Funds

All Girl Scout funds must be deposited into the unit account within 72 hours (\$100 or less may be kept on hand as petty cash) and all itemized receipts of purchases, bank receipts/deposits, and monthly bank statements must be kept on file in accordance with GSNEO's records retention policy. Funds collected via Cheddar Up must be transferred to the FDIC insured GSNEO bank account within seven days of collection.

Co-Mingling of Funds

Funds of more than one troop/group may not be co-mingled in one bank account; each troop/group must have its own bank account. Co-mingling of funds will be regarded as misappropriation. Troops can host an event and invite all members of their service unit to attend. In this case all funds collected for the event would be deposited in the troop bank account. All expenses would be the responsibility of the troop and be paid for out of troop funds. This includes venue rental, food, and any supplies needed to run the event.

Service units may ask a troop to take on planning and running an event for the service unit (e.g., World Thinking Day). In this case all funds collected for the event, including any donations, would be deposited in the service unit bank account. The troop would work with the Service Unit Treasurer to plan and purchase items for the event using the service unit debit card. If the troop used any troop funds, they would present the receipts to the Service Unit Treasurer within 30 days for reimbursement (See *Reimbursements* section under *Financial Accountability* policy). The troop would neither receive any profits nor spend troop funds for this event, unless it was an approved Money-Earning Activity.

POLICY: FUND OWNERSHIP

By law, all troop, group, day camp, and service unit funds are the property of GSNEO. Leaders of these units are appointed stewards of these funds until they are no longer in that role.

Equipment purchased with Girl Scout funds is the property of GSNEO and not the personal property of any individual.

In accordance with IRS regulations, Girl Scout funds do not belong to individual Girl Scout members or adults. Funds never become the property of any individual Girl Scout or adult member, and no separate accounting of funds earned should be kept for any reason at any time. All Girl Scouts in a troop should benefit evenly from the troop funds and there should be no individual benefit.

Funds Collection

The best way for members to make electronic payments to a troop/group or service unit is with a consumer bank-to-bank transfer by adding the troop/group or service unit as a vendor. To collect funds at an event, GSNEO allows Third-Party Service Organizations (TSOs) that transfer funds directly to the bank account authorized by GSNEO. TSOs are to be set up under the council's tax ID 34-0726094 when being used for Girl Scouting purposes. Troop bank accounts are to be directly linked as the depository bank for TSOs.

GSNEO has approved the following TSO vendors as their application allows each troop/group to setup their account with the council's tax ID with deposits going directly to the troop/group account:

- Rallyhood using Stripe
- CheddarUp
- Zelle
- Facebook Pay
- Paya

Troops/groups and service units are prohibited from opening PayPal, Venmo, CashApp, and similar accounts that do not send collected funds directly to the GSNEO bank account.

Violating this policy may result in volunteers or parents/caregivers receiving a 1099 tax form, per the new IRS rules for digital payments in excess of \$600/year. This is particularly important when collecting funds during product programs; parents/caregivers must only collect payments via approved methods (cash, Digital Cookie, Paya). ***Any 1099 tax forms received and the associated tax burden are the responsibility of the person receiving them, and GSNEO will not intervene on their behalf.***

Troop Splits and Transfers

Troops may choose to split for a variety of reasons (e.g., different grade levels, too many members, different interests, conflict between leadership). Merging, reorganizing, or splitting troops should consult with their Community Support Coordinator or Specialist to determine next steps. GSNEO's Volunteer Relations team will make a decision about any transfer of funds; if funds are split, they will be divided equally by the number of Girl Scouts in the troop at the time of the troop split and follow them to wherever they will be participating. Product program participation is never a factor when dividing troop funds, and funds always belong to the troop as a whole.

When a Girl Scout chooses to transfer to a new troop, funds are not required to follow, however, troop members can vote to donate a portion of their treasury to support the Girl Scout's new troop if they choose. If remaining in a troop is no longer an option due to a conflict, a portion of the treasury should follow the Girl Scout to their new troop at the discretion of GSNEO's Volunteer Relations team.

POLICY: FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Volunteers who oversee Girl Scout funds whether for troops, groups, service units, day camps, or any other reason, are accountable to GSNEO and to the membership of the group in all financial matters.

The appointed leaders are responsible for good stewardship of funds including up-to-date recordkeeping, monthly review of bank statements, responsible management of funds, and submission of timely reports to affected Girl Scouts, their parents/caregivers, and GSNEO. Bank account cosigners, or "second signers" have an important role in ensuring financial transparency and accuracy; both signers have equal responsibility for the management of funds.

Receipts showing how the money was spent must document all cash withdrawals. If cash is collected, receipts must be provided that document the reason for the payment. Leaders are encouraged to recruit a volunteer with administrative skills to handle bank account record keeping. Failure to exercise proper stewardship over finances will result in a funds restriction or release from volunteer appointment.

Reimbursements

When making purchases, the best practice is for volunteers to use the troop or service unit debit card and/or checkbook. If purchases are made by individuals without access to the debit card and/or checkbook with the intention of reimbursement from the troop, service unit, or council, then troop/service unit/council leadership should give pre-authorization. Receipts must be provided and reimbursements made within 30 days of purchase. For the purpose of checks and balances, volunteers are not permitted to issue reimbursements to themselves (e.g., writing a check to themselves, the other bank account signer should sign the check).

It is optional for volunteers to request reimbursement from troop funds for travel beyond the regular meeting space when transporting Girl Scouts other than those in their own household. The IRS Charitable Mileage Reimbursement Rate is 14 cents per mile. A log must be kept of miles traveled and tolls accrued to be reviewed by Girl Scouts and families.

Annual Finance Report

All troops, groups, day camps, and service units are required to submit an annual finance report to GSNEO. This is required for all bank accounts opened prior to the annual due date of the second Wednesday in June. Day camp finance reports are due on September 1 following the event. Parents/caregivers can view completed troop finance reports on the Volunteer Toolkit, therefore it is important to comply with this policy as financial transparency at all levels of Girl Scouting encourages trust and confidence. Additionally, any registered Girl Scout and their

parents/caregivers will be given access to view financial records upon request. GSNEO will communicate with families in troops who miss the finance report deadline in an effort to increase transparency.

Troops, groups, day camps, and service units that fail to submit their annual finance report may be denied approval for money-earning and/or trip applications. If troops, groups, day camps, or service units remain non-compliant with submitting annual finance reports, additional consequences could be applied at GSNEO discretion, up to and including: revocation of volunteer roles, transfer of account to a GSNEO preferred bank, and/or closing of bank accounts. Bank account signers who violate GSNEO finance-related policies may be restricted or removed from their volunteer roles and/or the bank account after reasonable notice is given.

Note that only Primary Troop Volunteers (Troop Leader or Troop Admins) and Troop Treasurers have access to the Finance tab on the Volunteer Toolkit to submit the finance report.

Financial Review

GSNEO reserves the right to review subordinate unit accounts.

If a troop/group or service unit fails to submit its annual finance report, it is subject to financial review by GSNEO. Other situations that may result in a financial review include but are not limited to: complaints from parents/caregivers, suspected misuse, mismanagement, or theft of funds, other policies broken, change of bank account signers or leadership, or discrepancies between annual finance report and bank statements. Service unit bank accounts will undergo a financial review when there is a change in Service Unit Director, approximately 30 days prior to the outgoing Service Unit Director's term ending. Financial reviews may be initiated at the full discretion of GSNEO.

If a troop or service unit with an account at a non-preferred or prohibited bank is selected for a financial review, and statements cannot be obtained or volunteers are not cooperative, GSNEO may close the bank account. Funds will be held by GSNEO until the troop or service unit reopens a bank account with a preferred bank.

Both current and former GSNEO bank account signers must comply with financial reviews if selected, even if no longer affiliated with GSNEO. Failure to comply with a financial review may result in suspension of volunteer roles, collections, up to and including legal action.

POLICY: FINANCIAL MISCONDUCT

Adults with funds or outstanding property due to GSNEO or any related entity (e.g., troop, service unit) more than 30 days past due are not permitted to handle money, product, or merchandise for GSNEO, and any of their current volunteer roles may be suspended. When the amount is paid in full and/or property is returned, the volunteer may request to be reinstated, which is done at the discretion of the council. GSNEO reserves the right to restrict or terminate volunteer participation of any person with a history of financial misconduct. Adults with an outstanding balance due to GSNEO or any related entity (e.g., troop, service unit) are ineligible

to volunteer, and Girl Scouts in their household are restricted to online sales and cookie booth sales during product programs.

Restriction, redirection, or dismissal may occur as a result of delinquent and/or mismanagement of funds. Reappointment to a volunteer position is at the discretion of GSNEO.

GSNEO will make a good faith attempt to collect any monies owed and reserves the right to use outside collection agencies. If restitution is not paid within 30 days, GSNEO retains the right to file criminal and/or civil charges.

GSNEO reserves the right to take legal action if the funds owed are not remitted. Legal action includes, but is not limited to, taking out a warrant to appear in small claims court, report to law enforcement, and submission to legal and/or collection agency.

GSNEO volunteers who are check signers are personally responsible for all financial consequences of overdrafts that they initiate.

POLICY: MONEY-EARNING

Non-Council-Sponsored Group Money-Earning

Troops/groups and service units may participate in approved non-council sponsored money-earning activities in which they are the sole beneficiary of the profit after they have supported GSNEO through participation in both Girl Scout-sponsored product programs. The definition of participation is determined before the start of each sale and communicated in the product program manuals.

See Money-Earning Modules under Money Matters training in gsLearn.

- All non-council sponsored money-earning activities (troop and service unit) must be approved by GSNEO prior to planning and/or implementation of the activity.
- Parent/caregiver permission is required prior to Girl Scouts participating in any money-earning activities.
- Money-earning projects must be purposeful and occur only when there is a need for such funds to support the Girl Scout program.
- In accordance with IRS regulations, Girl Scout funds raised by a troop, group or unit belong to the troop, group, or unit treasury to be used by the members of the troop, group, or unit equally. Funds never become the property of any individual Girl Scout or adult member; and no separate accounting of funds earned should be kept for any reason at any time.
- All money-earning activities must comply with state and local laws regulating sales by minors, food handling, etc.

In order to remain in compliance with National Policies and/or IRS Regulations, the following restrictions are in place. Girl and adult members MAY NOT participate in the following activities when earning money in the name of Girl Scouts (see Volunteer Essentials for an appropriate list of money-earning activities):

- Product demonstration parties (e.g., PartyLite, Scentsy, Thirty-One)
- Raffles, 50/50 raffles, drawings, games of chance (gambling)
- The sale or endorsement of commercial products sold at retail (e.g., event tickets, wrapping paper)

NOTE: an exception is made for small concession stands (e.g., sales of bottled water and other single-serve pre-packaged food items as an accompaniment to approved Money-Earning Requests.)

- The re-sale of Girl Scout merchandise for profit
- “Give-back type” fundraisers (e.g., in-restaurant fundraisers) as these endorse other establishments/organizations
- Raising or collecting money for other organizations (see below)
- Merchandise sales transacted on the internet in the name of Girl Scouts (e.g., Etsy, Craigslist, Facebook)
- Online campaigns that directly solicit cash (e.g., GoFundMe)

Girl members may not directly solicit cash (including a donation jar). See “Gift Acceptance/Fundraising” policy for adult member guidelines.

Additionally, to prevent unfair competition among troops and the risk of overwhelming the community, Girl Scouts may not conduct non-council-sponsored money-earning activities during the weeks of cookie booth sales.

Raising Money for Other Organizations

No Girl Scout member, in their Girl Scout capacity or in Girl Scout uniform, may raise or solicit money for any other organization or participate in walkathons, telethons, bell-ringing, or similar activities that raise money for other organizations. Girl Scout members may support other 501(C)(3) organizations through contributing a portion of their treasury or through volunteer service projects. Violation of this policy could risk the tax-exempt status of GSNEO and the tax-deductibility of donations.

Troops/groups may be financed in any of the following ways:

Council-sponsored product programs, additional money-earning projects (which must be preapproved by the council), and if necessary, through dues. Funding for Girl Scout activities is primarily the responsibility of the troop/group, the Girl Scouts, and their families.

The money-earning project must be appropriate for the Girl Scouts’ age level.

According to GSUSA Guidelines:

- Daisies may only participate in GSUSA sponsored Product Programs
- Brownies may participate in up to one non-Girl Scout sponsored money-earning activity
- Juniors may participate in up to two non-Girl Scout sponsored money-earning activities

- Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors may participate in an appropriate number of money-earning activities to support the budget of their planned activities

See Money-Earning Application at gsneo.org in the "Forms" section.

Money-Earning for Service Units

Service units may be approved to conduct up to two money-earning activities per membership year. Funds raised must be used to support a project or event that benefits all the Girl Scouts in the service unit. For example, proceeds from a service unit dance may be used as a money-earning activity to pay for a camping trip for the entire unit. At least 75% of the service unit must participate in both council-sponsored sales before participating in non-council-sponsored money-earning.

Service units may charge a reasonable fee for volunteer training events or Girl Scout programs (e.g., campout). It is expected that service units will charge fees for these training events and programs sufficient to avoid the risk of incurring a loss on the event; covering the cost of the event would not be considered a money-earning activity.

Scholarships:

If service units are interested in using funds for graduating senior scholarships or to support highest awards (Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award), they must obtain approval from the Director of Girl Experience or their designee. Service units must develop a transparent and equitable process for awarding scholarships (see below) and be in good financial standing with the council (current bank account and finance report on file). Scholarships should be awarded on behalf of Girl Scouts to the institution they are attending.

To ensure a fair and equitable selection process, consider the following:

- Clear and easily accessible application process made available to all graduating seniors
- Clear rubric with requirements for applicants
- Committee who reviews applicants
- Anyone with a close personal connection to applicants should not be included in selection process (e.g., parent/caregiver, troop leader)
- Funds should be held in the service unit bank account

One way to issue scholarships is to give an equal amount of money to all graduating seniors or all Gold Awardees in the unit, regardless of their participation level.

Troops may not issue scholarships, as this is a direct personal benefit from troop members' money-earning efforts, which is prohibited by the IRS.

Money-Earning for Juliettes:

Individually registered Girl Scouts (Juliettes) may **not** participate in additional money-earning activities, unless they are working on their Gold Award and have permission from the Director of Girl Experience or their designee. In accordance with IRS regulations, all monies earned by individually registered Girl Scouts belong to the council, not to any individual Girl Scout.

Money-Earning for Gold Award:

Girl Scouts planning Gold Award projects or special service projects that require funds need to develop proposals that must be approved by the Gold Award Committee and the Director of Girl Experience or their designee before money-earning activities are implemented.

Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors seeking their Gold Award are permitted to solicit cash donations, with prior approval from the Gold Award Committee and the Director of Girl Experience or their designee. GSNEO does not permit direct asks for money or donations on social media (e.g., GoFundMe) to fund Gold Award projects or special service projects. Money-earning activities can be promoted (e.g., advertising an upcoming approved bake sale) and information about the Gold Award projects or special service projects can be shared on social media.

See Money-Earning Application at gsneo.org in the "Forms" section.

Money-Earning for Travel Troops:

Designated travel troops must follow all GSNEO financial policies and IRS guidelines and are not permitted to keep individual accounting for each Girl Scout. Contact Customer Care for additional best practices and guidelines.

POLICY: GSUSA SPONSORED PRODUCT PROGRAMS

The selling of Girl Scout Cookies or other Girl Scout-sponsored products is an integral program of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, focusing on financial literacy and entrepreneurship. Girl Scouts learn to set goals, budget, plan, market to others, work as a team, and many other skills necessary for a successful sale activity. Adults serve in a supporting role but should never assume sole responsibility for sales. Troop/group leaders are required to present the opportunity to participate in Girl Scout-sponsored product programs to the Girl Scouts they lead, and make the information available to their parents/caregivers.

GSUSA Sponsored Product Programs are fully supported by the GSNEO Council and have quality control, promotion, and public acceptance at the national level. Additionally, these programs help support services to Girl Scouts and volunteers.

Participation in any Girl Scout sponsored product programs is based upon the following:

- Voluntary participation;
- Written permission of a parent/caregiver;
- Council guidelines;
- Girl Scouts should not be penalized for non-participation;
- Other policies regarding product programs will be distributed via the appropriate product program handbook before the appropriate product program;
- An understanding of, and ability to interpret to others, the troop/group goals;
- Correct business procedures;

- Observance of local ordinances related to involvement of children in money-earning activities, as well as meeting health and safety laws;
- Adherence to guidelines for personal protection;
- Planned arrangements for safeguarding the money; and
- Adherence to guidelines for internet sales.

Money-earning applications are **not** required for participation in Girl Scout sponsored product programs.

All Girl Scouts may sell via Girl Scout Product Program online platforms. Troops must have at least five Girl Scouts and an active bank account with two unrelated signers (i.e., not a sibling, spouse, domestic partner, parent, child, or anyone who would be considered a family member, and who does not live in the same residence) in order to participate in Girl Scout Product Programs with in-person sales. Special permission may be granted to established troops of 2-4 Girl Scouts at GSNEO discretion. Girl Scouts in troops that do not meet this criteria may participate in the Product Programs as Juliettes, and funds will be held at council until the troop is in compliance with GSNEO policy. See *Juliette Funds Policy* for additional information.

Product Programs for Juliettes:

Individually registered Girl Scouts (Juliettes) **may** participate in GSNEO product programs. All money received from their participation in these product programs will be held in a fund by GSNEO. Parents/caregivers may request funding from this account to apply to any GSNEO programming, for membership registration (girl and parent/caregiver), and/or for use in the council shop (in-store only). See “Juliette Funds” policy for additional guidelines.

POLICY: GIFT ACCEPTANCE/FUNDRAISING/DONATIONS

Fundraising, or direct solicitation of cash or cash equivalent (i.e., gift card), is an adult-only activity that should only be done when purposeful and for a specific goal. Adult members of GSNEO are permitted to fundraise for the purpose of Girl Scouting by soliciting cash donations, gift cards, or gifts in-kind (e.g., supplies). Online campaigns that directly solicit cash (e.g., GoFundMe) are never permitted when soliciting funds for Girl Scouts.

Amounts under \$250

Notification and approval by GSNEO is not required when seeking monetary or in-kind donations valued at under \$250. Adult members may submit a request to GSNEO if a Donation Request Letter is required by the company for an amount under \$250. A monetary gift of less than \$250 specifically earmarked for a troop/group or service unit may be sent directly to that troop/group or service unit. The funds must benefit the entire troop/group or service unit, not a specific individual. No notification to the council is required unless the donor requests documentation for tax purposes, in which case GSNEO will issue an acknowledgement.

- The troop/group or service unit is responsible for thanking the donor.

- Documentation of tax deductibility of the donation cannot be provided by the troop/group or service unit.
- Documentation for a gift of any size can only be provided if notification is made to the council.
- All monetary gifts must be reported on the annual finance report to the council.

Amounts between \$250 and \$1000

Notification and approval by GSNEO is required when seeking monetary or in-kind donations between \$250 and \$1000. Solicitation must be approved by GSNEO through a Money-Earning/Fundraising Application. A Donation Request Letter will be provided upon approval. GSNEO approval is also required prior to contacting corporate headquarters or grant-making organizations.

A monetary gift or gift card of \$250 to \$1000 specifically earmarked for a troop/group or service unit requires notification to the GSNEO Fund Development department in writing for federal reporting purposes and so that a formal acknowledgement can be sent to the donor. The funds must benefit the entire troop/group or service unit, not a specific individual.

Amounts over \$1000

Monetary gifts donated directly to troop/groups or service units or given through the council and restricted for troop/groups or service unit are limited to a combined total of \$1000 per membership year (October 1 through September 30). Troops/groups or service units with special circumstances may request pre-approval for donations exceeding \$1000 from the Chief Executive Officer or their designee.

Gifts-in-Kind; Employer Matching Grant Programs

Gifts-in-kind are donations made to a troop/group or service unit of goods or services (i.e., food for event, supplies for project, etc.) and do not need to be reported on the annual finance report. Notify the Fund Development Department if an acknowledgement is desired; gift-in-kind donors are recognized in the Annual Report.

Employer matching grant programs are permitted and must be processed through GSNEO.

POLICY: DUES

Troop dues are an optional way to fund troops and can be used to help offset the cost of site rental fees, badges and patches, activity supplies, and program admission fees throughout the year. Dues must be purposeful, and families should be engaged in a discussion to set the amount. Money should never be a barrier for Girl Scouts to participate and troop leaders should make accommodations when necessary.

Service units cannot require but may request a reasonable suggested donation from troops annually to offset the cost of service unit programs and resources made available to troops (e.g., meeting space fee, printing materials, storage unit fee). Service units cannot penalize or exclude

in any way troops who choose not to make a donation. Service units may charge a nominal administrative fee for events; see *"Money Earning for Service Units"* section for additional information.

POLICY: SCOUTSHIP AND FINANCIAL AID

The council will designate funds for Scoutship and Financial Aid based on need and without regard to race, ethnicity, creed, color, nation origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, parental status, family structure, pregnancy status, disability, family medical history or genetic information, socioeconomic background, political affiliation, military or veteran status, or any other category protected by law.

Financial Aid is used to pay for girl membership when there is a need as deemed by the parent/caregiver. Financial Aid may be applied to girl membership registration during the registration process only by the parent/caregiver. Adults unable to pay for membership who want to select a Primary Troop Volunteer role (Troop Leader or Troop Admin) should contact their Community Support Coordinator or Specialist, or Service Unit Director for assistance, if needed.

Scoutship awards are based on household income and size, previous product program participation, and may be requested when personal circumstances are an obstacle to fully engaging in Girl Scout events, activities, or programs. Scoutship may be used for Girl Scouts towards uniforms, books, and participation in council-sponsored events. The amount awarded is dependent on whether the Girl Scout is in a bridging year (Daisy to Brownie, etc.) to reflect the additional cost of a full new uniform.

POLICY: DISBANDING/RETIRING TROOPS

When a troop disbands/retires, either by circumstance or due to graduation, troop volunteers are responsible for notifying GSNEO by completing the Troop Disbandment/Retirement Form. Disbanding/retiring troops must complete the annual finance report by the second Wednesday in June; their account balance should be \$0.00 at the time of disbandment.

Girl Scouts may elect how to spend remaining funds for the purpose of Girl Scouting by the end of the current membership year (September 30); funds belonging to graduating troops must be spent by the end of the program year in which girls graduated. Appropriate examples include:

- Final celebration event or trip;
- Membership renewal or lifetime membership purchase if graduating senior troop;
- Donating funds to another troop or the service unit;
- Donating funds for a highest award project (Bronze, Silver, or Gold) that is in progress;
- Donating funds or purchasing items for a 501(c)(3) organization/cause of their choice.

Funds cannot be dispersed to individual Girl Scouts or adults as cash or gift cards.

Unspent funds should be divided proportionately based on the number of registered Girl Scouts at the time of disbandment/retirement to troops receiving Girl Scouts from the disbanded/retired troop, to the Juliette account for Girl Scouts continuing as Juliettes, and/or to GSNEO for Girl Scouts not continuing. Leaders should transfer funds (check or cashier's check recommended) to troops receiving Girl Scouts before closing bank account. Funds for Girl Scouts continuing as Juliettes or not continuing in Girl Scouts should be disclosed on the Troop Disbandment/Retirement Form, and then a cashier's check including troop number should be sent to:

Girl Scouts of North East Ohio
Attn: Audit & Accounting Specialist
1 Girl Scout Way
Macedonia, OH 44056

Funds from a disbanding/retiring troop will be held by GSNEO for a period of one year after date of the disbandment notification for the purpose of facilitating the return of former Girl Scout youth. After one year, funds are used to support GSNEO Girl Scouts through financial aid, Scoutship, etc.

As stated in Fund Ownership policy, equipment purchased with Girl Scout funds are the property of GSNEO and not the personal property of any individual. Equipment belonging to a disbanding/retiring troop may be donated to another troop or the service unit (e.g., tents, gear).

Disbanding/retiring troops must still comply with Records Retention policy.

POLICY: ABANDONED TROOPS

For troops which appear to be abandoned (i.e., Girl Scouts and adults have not renewed their membership) GSNEO will begin closing troop bank accounts annually starting in mid-December after making reasonable attempts to contact the troop leadership. Funds will be returned to GSNEO if no election has been made by the Girl Scouts as to the disposition of the funds. Once the account is closed and funds are transferred to GSNEO, members of an abandoned troop are not authorized to request or spend these funds. If former troop members renew their membership and a new bank account is opened in accordance with GSNEO policy, funds can be reimbursed from GSNEO to the troop account.

POLICY: JULIETTE FUNDS

Juliette Girl Scout members may have funds available from their disbanded/retired troop and/or participation in GSNEO product programs. All money received for a Juliette will be held in an account at GSNEO. Parents/caregivers may request funds for their Juliette's experience; Juliettes age 16 and older may also request funds.

Juliette Funds Request JotForm: <https://form.jotform.com/gsneowebmaster/juliette-funds-request>

Juliette funds can be used for:

- Membership (girl and caregiver)
- GSNEO shop purchases (in-store only – all locations)
- Programs/events that are booked on the GSNEO Event Calendar
- Girl Scout Destinations
- Girl Scout Gold Award projects
- Service Unit Events

Juliette funds cannot be used for:

- Travel Troop/Group events: Girl Scouts should join the travel troop/group for this purpose
- Non-GSNEO programming (Program that registration is not completed on GSNEO.org/events)
- Non-GSNEO shop purchases including GSUSA (online shopping) and other council purchases

Funds never become the property of any individual Girl Scout or adult member.

Refunds for cancelled programs, etc. will be reapplied to the Juliette Fund.

Reimbursements for qualifying purchases (see above) must be requested by the parent/caregiver of the Juliette with available funds within 30 days of purchase.

Juliette funds available to graduating senior Girl Scouts must be spent by the end of the program year in which the Girl Scouts graduated.

POLICY: SALES TAX EXEMPTION

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, volunteers may use the GSNEO sales tax exempt form when purchasing supplies and materials for Girl Scout troop/group/service unit use.

POLICY: REFUNDS

Membership Refunds

A membership to Girl Scouts of the USA is non-refundable. Purchasing a Girl Scout membership does not guarantee criminal background check approval or volunteer placement.

Other Refunds

Current specific policies for other refunds (e.g., events, camping, retail) are available on the gsneo.org website or by contacting Customer Care.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Administrative Volunteer Roles- SUT roles, council level volunteer roles, trainers, Primary Troop Volunteer roles

CBC- Criminal Background Check, required for GSNEO volunteers.

Community Support Coordinator/Specialist- GSNEO staff member who support volunteers, troops, and service units within a specific geographical area

Fundraising- the act or process of soliciting funds. Fundraising is an ADULT activity.

gsLearn- online training platform used by GSNEO volunteers, located at gsneo.org.

GSNEO- Girl Scouts of North East Ohio; local Girl Scout council serving 18 counties. Girl Scouts of North East Ohio serves girls in grades K-12 and adult members in Ashtabula, Carroll, Columbiana, Cuyahoga, Erie, Geauga, Huron, Lake, Lorain, Mahoning, Medina, Portage, Sandusky, Seneca, Stark, Summit, Trumbull, and Tuscarawas Counties.

GSUSA- Girl Scouts of the USA; national Girl Scout organization.

Juliettes- an individually registered Girl Scout member, who participates independently from a troop.

Money Earning Activities- activities for the purpose of earning money to accomplish a financial goal for a troop/group activity. Money-earning is a YOUTH activity.

Primary Troop Volunteers- volunteers in troop leadership roles of either Troop Admin or Troop Leader

Service Units- a community of troops, usually aligned with a school-district.

Service Unit Teams (SUTs)- a group of volunteers in leadership roles within the service unit, led by the Service Unit Director

Subordinate Unit- a unit serving as an extension of GSNEO, including but not limited to troops, groups, service units and day camps.

Troops- a group of at least five Girl Scout members and two Primary Troop Volunteers.

Volunteer Toolkit- a customizable digital planning tool for Primary Troop Volunteers, with view-only access for parents/caregivers