



**Girl Scouts of Southwest Indiana
Policies, Standards,
Volunteer & Child
Protection Guidelines
2023-2024**

**Girl Scouting
builds girls of
courage,
confidence,
and character,
who make the world
a better place.**

girl scouts 
of southwest
indiana

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Council Structure

Policy Making –Council Board of Directors:

Girl Scouts of Southwest Indiana, Inc.'s (GSSI's) volunteer board of directors consists of elected officers and directors-at-large from various areas within the GSSI service area. Elected delegates from GSSI's service units give input to the board of directors to aid them in policy and decision-making. The board performs long-range planning on an annual basis and evaluates and reviews the results of those plans. The board of directors has authority to make policy decisions in the areas of: Membership Services (Program, Adult Learning, and Membership), Finance, Public Relations, Community Relations, and Management of the organization. The board of directors shall have the right, in its sole discretion, from time to time, to amend the policies and standards.

Abbreviations and Terminology Used:

- GSSI – Girl Scouts of Southwest Indiana, Inc.
- GSMG – Girl Scout Member Groups, i.e. troops, series or event groups, clusters, day camps, service units, etc.
- Pathway Group – organized group of girls and adults registered in a troop, travel, camp, series, or event

Girl Scouts of Southwest Indiana Policies and Standards:

- **Policies** – An established course of action that must be followed by all members and volunteers. Exceptions to policies are not permitted.
- **Standards** – A guideline for a course of action to be followed by all members and volunteers. If there is a question concerning the application of a standard, a volunteer must immediately consult with a staff member at GSSI.

Policies: The following policies shall apply:

- A. GSSI adheres to the policies of Girl Scouts of the USA and is guided by the standards of Girl Scouts of the USA. Policies of Girl Scouts of the USA are found in the *Leader's Digest Blue Book of Basic Documents*, as updated by GSUSA. Standards of Girl Scouts of the USA are found in *Safety Activity Checkpoints* (accessible at www.girlscouts-gssi.org).
- B. The policies and standards of GSSI supplement Girl Scouts of the USA policies and standards and must be used together to determine GSMG action.

- C. GSSI adheres to its volunteer management system, including but not limited to policies, standards and guidelines concerning volunteer personnel matters, background checks and procedures, position job descriptions, volunteer recognition system, training procedures and progressions, entry system, operations, cycle of operational meetings, service team manual, all as may be amended from time to time, as well as such other policies and procedures as determined by GSSI. Notwithstanding, GSSI, in its sole discretion, may deviate from any of the policies, standards and guidelines described in this subsection if such deviation is in the best interest of GSSI.
- D. Each applicant who seeks a volunteer assignment with GSSI, including, but not limited to, as a group volunteer, parent helper, adult accompanying on overnight events, council facilitator, group cookie manager, and service team member, must complete a background screening and is required to disclose, in writing, the details of any felony and/or misdemeanor crime for which the applicant has been convicted or to which the applicant has pleaded “Guilty” or “No Contest”. Any applicant who knowingly omits requested information or provides false responses on a volunteer application shall be disqualified for appointment as a volunteer and, if already assigned by GSSI, will be subject to immediate suspension from duties and/or dismissal.
- E. All contracts and agreements must be submitted to GSSI for review. Upon approval, said contracts and agreements will be signed by a designee of the board of directors.
- F. Each Girl Scout must have an Annual Permission Form signed by a legal guardian on file prior to attending/participating in any approved Girl Scout activities (accessible at www.girlscouts-gssi.org). This permission form covers all approved Girl Scout activities throughout the membership year excluding Overnights (1 or more nights), Council-Sponsored Events, Camps, Cookie Program, and/or Sensitive Issues. These activities require a separate permission (accessible at www.girlscouts-gssi.org).

Girl Scouts who do not return signed permission forms may not participate in Girl Scout activities. When a girl is not permitted to participate, based on lack of permission on file, there must be adequate adult supervision of the girl until a parent or guardian picks her up.

- G. A *Special Activities Application* for activities involving trips outside the council, all overnight activities, and any activities with special risks, must be reviewed and approved by council staff.
- H. The adult supervision rule at Girl Scouts is a strict standard that requires that whenever girls meet, either in person or virtually, there must be *at least* two registered, approved adult volunteers who are unrelated (for example: 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 is female. Troop leaders must always be adults. Youth or youth members are not permitted to substitute for adult supervision. This rule applies to every Girl Scout gathering including troop meetings (in person and virtual), day trips, camp, sleep away travel, events, activities, and projects. There are no exceptions to this rule.
- I. GSMGs holding overnight activities such as sleepovers, indoor cabin or RV camping, lock-ins, hotel stays, backyard camping, etc., must include a registered adult Girl Scout who has been certified by GSSI in trip planning (*Overnights, Trips & Travel Certification* – previously On the Go).

- J. GSMGs cooking outdoors must be accompanied by a registered adult Girl Scout who holds a current GSSI-approved First Aid and CPR certification. GSMGs accompanied by a registered adult Girl Scout who has *Fire Building and/or Basic Outdoor Cooking* Certifications are permitted to cook on an outdoor wood fire or with charcoal. GSMGs accompanied by a registered adult Girl Scout who holds *Troop Camp Training* Certification are permitted to use wood fires, vagabond stoves, solar cookers, charcoal, or other approved types of camp stoves as defined in *Safety Activity Checkpoints* (accessible at www.girlscouts-gssi.org). Liquid fire starters may not be used.
- K. GSMGs holding outdoor overnight camping must be accompanied by a registered adult Girl Scout who holds a current GSSI approved First Aid and CPR certification and a registered adult Girl Scout who has been certified by GSSI in outdoor education (certifications in *Overnights, Trips & Travel and Troop/Group Camp Training* are required for camping. *Fire Building and Basic Outdoor Cooking* certifications are only required if these activities are planned while camping.)
- L. All funds of GSMGs must be held in an account in a federally insured financial institution. The tax identification number for each account shall be GSSI's tax identification number. The account must include GSSI's name, the identifying name or number of the group, and the signature of at least two currently registered members, both of whom must be over the age of twenty-one (21) years; any additional signer may be a teen (18 or older) adult Girl Scout. The authorized signers cannot be related to one another by blood or marriage. Authorized signers must be current volunteers and have approved criminal background checks on file with GSSI. At least two authorized signers must sign all disbursements. ATM cards, and internet/electronic transfers are not permitted for GSSI accounts. No individual name may be listed on the account or the face of any checks.
- M. Funds in a GSMG account belong to GSSI and for the benefit of the GSMG. All authorized signers on the account should have knowledge of each and every transaction and activity that occurs with regard to the account. All individuals authorized to sign on an account are personally responsible for the safekeeping of the funds, the appropriate use of the funds, and accurate financial records.
- N. Funds earned by a GSMG may not be transferred to another GSMG without the prior written approval from GSSI.
- O. When a GSMG desires to open a new account or change one or more authorized signers on an account, GSSI's *Authorization for Opening Account or Changing Authorized Signers for Non-Profit Accounts* form must be completed. This form can be requested from GSSI. After the required information is completed, the form is reviewed by staff and signed by the CEO. The approved and signed form is then given to an authorized signer on the account who may then take it to the bank to open a new account or change authorized signers on an existing account.
- P. A Group Checking Account Information Report (accessible at www.girlscouts-gssi.org) detailing the GSMG checking account shall be submitted to GSSI, within a week of opening a new account.
- Q. Lead Adult Volunteers of every GSMG (such as Daisy, Brownie, Junior, or teen troops, Event or Series groups, service units, day camps and clusters) must submit to GSSI a completed Group Finance Report (accessible at www.girlscouts-gssi.org) (or group-specific report) detailing the finances and summary of programs completed that program year. GSMG finance reports reflect a full 12-month year or from the time the group is organized through June 1. Copies of all bank

statements for that period should be attached to the report. In the event of a change of leadership without a smooth transition of records, the new lead adult volunteers should submit copies of as many bank statements and records as they have in their possession or can access.

- R. Pathway groups not re-registered by October 1 for the program year immediately following must surrender checkbooks, bank records, and account funds to GSSI by October 15.
- S. If a Pathway group is not re-registered by January 1 of a program year, it is considered a disbanded group. The funds from a disbanded group's bank account will be held in GSSI's custodial fund. If the former Pathway group is re-activated on or before September 30 of the program year, the funds held by GSSI shall be distributed back to the group. Pathway groups that are not reactivated on or before September 30 of a program year shall forfeit all funds. Forfeited funds shall be held by GSSI and given to new GSSI groups, to the extent funds are available. GSSI shall determine, in its sole discretion, whether to distribute funds to a new group and the amount distributed.
- T. GSSI may conduct one Cookie Program per calendar year.
- U. GSSI may not undertake any money-earning activities during the Cookie Program.
- V. Per *Safety Activity Checkpoints*, adults must accompany Girl Scout Daisies, Brownies, and Juniors when they are selling, taking orders, or delivering Cookie Program products. Adults oversee Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors, and must be aware of how, when, and where the girls are selling products.

Standards: The following standards shall apply:

Girl Scouts of Southwest Indiana Policies and Standards That Pertain To Meeting Locations

See policy E

Standards:

1. All places selected for activities and meetings should be easily accessible to all members, including those with disabilities.
2. Church buildings, schools, and community buildings are recommended as meeting places for groups. It is strongly recommended that group meetings are not held in a private home.
3. Meeting times should take into account the age of the girls and the availability of adults. Meeting times for Brownie and Daisy groups should end as early in the evening as possible.
4. Groups should meet often enough to fulfill the needs and interests of the girls and to maintain program continuity.

Girl Scouts of Southwest Indiana Policies and Standards That Pertain To Permission Forms

See policy F

Standards:

1. All permission forms should include a waiver/hold harmless agreement and guardian consent.
2. Permission forms should be saved for three years after the end of the program year in which the activity/outing took place. Permission forms should be passed to new adult lead volunteer or given to the GSSI office if a lead volunteer vacates the position. In case of an incident (occurrence which involves or could potentially involve injury to persons or property), an Incident Report (accessible at www.girlscouts-gssi.org) must be filed with the GSSI council office. If the incident involves a girl/minor, the original Annual Permission Form and Activity Permission Form (if applicable) must be attached with the Report. The Council will return a copy of all forms to the volunteer once the incident is processed.

Girl Scouts of Southwest Indiana Policies and Standards That Pertain To Camping and Overnight Activities

See policies G, H, I, J and K

Standards:

1. A Daisy group may stay overnight provided it stays within the Girl Scouts of Southwest Indiana guidelines for the Daisy Girl Scout age level.
2. A registered adult Girl Scout who holds *Troop Camp* Certification may use kerosene, propane, or butane lanterns for temporary lighting in an outdoor setting away from tents.
3. Candles may not be used in any camping program except in ceremonies under controlled conditions away from tentage. Staked or handheld torches may never be used.

Girl Scouts of Southwest Indiana Policies and Standards That Pertain To Travel

See policies E, F, G, H and I

Standards:

1. The purpose of all travel/trips should be to enrich ongoing Girl Scout program and should be planned and carried out in accordance with the *Safety Activity Checkpoints* (accessible at www.girlscouts-gssi.org), and other pertinent policies, standards, and resources.
2. Daisy group travel/trips should be within the council's boundaries. If traveling more than thirty (30) miles outside the council's boundaries approval is required from GSSI. These travels/trips should be age appropriate.
3. All groups should evaluate the kind of transportation needed, understand the safety requirements, and determine the best method of transportation for each trip in accordance with *Safety Activity Checkpoints* and other GSSI-produced materials and resources. Manufacturers' guidelines for seating should be followed. For example, most air bag recommendations require children and adults of small stature to ride in the back seat. Children up to the age of 8 must be properly secured in a booster seat as directed by Indiana State Law.

Girl Scouts of Southwest Indiana Policies and Standards That Pertain To Finances

See policies K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, and S

Standards:

1. Funds should be retained in the group treasury after finishing year-end activities. Keep in mind that the monies left from the previous year will be needed to run the group until funds are received (either through dues or when Girl Scout Cookie Program funds are received, approximately March).
2. A petty cash fund of no more than \$25 may be kept on hand by the GSMG.

Girl Scouts of Southwest Indiana Policies and Standards That Pertain To Money-Earning Projects

See policies S, T, and U

Standards:

1. Money-earning projects should be a valuable program activity for girls, compatible with Girl Scout Standards in *Safety Activity Checkpoints* (accessible at www.girlscouts-gssi.org).
2. All Girl Scout girl members are encouraged to participate in the Cookie Program.
3. In special instances, a group may have a specific need for additional funds. The following guidelines should be observed:
 - a. Girl Scout Daisies may only participate in council-sponsored product sales.
 - b. Girl Scout Brownies, Juniors, and teen groups may have additional money-earning projects each year in addition to the Girl Scout Cookie Program or other council-wide fundraising program based on documented need. Approval from the council must be obtained in writing.
 - c. In the event of a special group project, where additional money is needed for special program activities, approval for additional money-earning activities should be secured from the council in writing.
 - d. Participation in the council-wide product sale is expected prior to approval being granted for any additional money-earning projects.
 - e. Money-earning projects should be service-oriented rather than product-oriented.
 - f. Endorsement of commercial products or services is not allowed.
4. Girl Scouts may not earn money for other organizations. However, girls may contribute a portion of their group treasury to organizations or projects they consider worthwhile and that are in keeping with the principles of Girl Scouting.

Girl Scouts of Southwest Indiana Standards That Pertain To Service Projects

Standards:

1. All service projects should be adequately supervised by adults in accordance with the standards listed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints* (accessible at www.girlscouts-gssi.org) and the nature of the project.
2. Emergency procedures should be arranged in accordance with the nature and scope of the project.
3. Written clearance from the proper authorities and/or property owners should be obtained during the planning process.
4. Girl Scouts should not be used to replace paid workers in any agency or organization.
5. Girls and volunteers may not engage in the following activities when representing Girl Scouts:
 - a. Solicitation of financial contributions for purposes other than Girl Scouting
 - b. Participation in political campaigns or legislative activities, unless the legislative activity has been council-approved
6. Girls may assist with the preparation of materials for sales, i.e. bagging candy, stuffing envelopes for charitable organizations.
7. Service projects involving distribution of materials from other organizations or groups, and/or educational literature, should be handled in the following manner:
 - a. Girl Scout Daisies and Brownies – Booth or council sponsored activities only. Adults must accompany girls.
 - b. Girl Scout Juniors and teens– Booth activities or door-to-door campaigns. If door-to-door, girls should work in pairs with adult supervision.



Girl Scouts of Southwest Indiana Adult Volunteer Guidelines

Volunteer Philosophy

All volunteers are expected to support and promote the *Girl Scout Promise and Law*, and the ideals, principles, policies, and standards of Girl Scouts of the USA and GSSI. We maintain that the strength of the Girl Scout movement rests in the voluntary leadership of its adult members who strive to build girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. It is through voluntary leadership that the Girl Scout movement serves girls. To ensure volunteer satisfaction and to utilize the skills and talents of volunteers effectively, it is essential that the following guidelines be established and maintained for all volunteers.

A volunteer is defined as: Any person who willingly gives his/her service without concern for monetary compensation. **No information in these guidelines is intended to create an employment relationship and nothing in these guidelines shall be deemed to create any additional rights for volunteers or create additional obligations or liabilities for GSSI.**

All volunteers are expected to maintain high standards of productivity, cooperation, attendance, efficiency, and economy in their volunteer role for GSSI.

Volunteer Wellness

Volunteer service can involve multiple commitments. Enthusiasm, energy and positive attitudes are essential to providing girls 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. GSSI is committed to providing enriching quality experiences to both girls and adults.

ADVANTAGES OF VOLUNTEERING WITH GIRL SCOUTS

Volunteers receive:

- Resources and support available to ensure success in volunteer position
- Training and other learning opportunities
- Opportunities to contribute to the community through Girl Scout service
- Opportunities to gain marketable skills and experience
- Social contacts and peer recognition
- Accident and liability insurance coverage during Girl Scout activities.

Volunteers are encouraged to enhance and develop their skills while serving with the council. When appropriate, GSSI will help volunteers broaden their skills through assignment to new volunteer positions involving additional and/or greater responsibilities.

Equal Opportunity for Volunteers

There shall be no discrimination against an otherwise qualified adult volunteer on the basis of disability, age, race, color, ethnicity, gender, creed, national origin, sexual orientation, religion, citizenship, ancestry, marital status, veteran status, socioeconomic status, or other characteristics protected by federal, state or local law.

To ensure that the membership and volunteers of GSSI reflect the diversity of the population groups within its jurisdiction, GSSI is committed to equal opportunity in:

- The recruitment, selection, placement, development, and recognition of volunteers and members
- The extension of Girl Scouting to girls and adults in all communities within the council's jurisdiction

Membership Registration

All adult volunteers participating in the Girl Scout Movement shall be registered as members with Girl Scouts of the United States of America and individually pay the annual membership dues, except those adults who are lifetime members or who are working in a temporary advisory or consultative capacity. The Girl Scout membership year is October 1 through September 30.

Any adult handling money, driving girls to/on Girl Scout outings, or participating with the troop on a regular basis must register with Girl Scouts of the USA. Accident insurance is provided for every registered girl and adult member while engaged in Girl Scout activities. The cost of insurance is covered by membership dues paid to Girl Scouts of the USA. The Basic Accident Insurance is secondary medical coverage to each family's primary medical insurance carrier. Lifetime membership is available in Girl Scouting for members 18 years of age and older. Reduced lifetime membership fees are offered to graduating Girl Scout Ambassadors and volunteers with 10+ years in a role.

Recruitment

The recruitment process consists of a number of methods to attract qualified volunteers, who will be matched to appropriate open or newly created positions.

Written position descriptions that define specific responsibilities and expectations will be used in the search to identify the most qualified candidate. Prospective volunteers will be provided a position description for each position for which they are being considered or that matches their interests.

Selection

Each volunteer is selected based on:

- Ability to perform the volunteer position (experience, knowledge, skills)
- Volunteer and council need
- Ability and willingness to attend training
- Ability to work as a team member with other Girl Scout adults
- Phone screen and criminal background check outcomes, when applicable

- Ability and willingness to abide by all volunteer policies and requirements
- Expressed commitment to the Girl Scout Promise and Law and willingness to become a registered member of GSUSA

The safety of girl members is a top priority. It is thereby essential that GSSI take specific steps to ensure the integrity and suitability of its adult volunteers. Depending on position, a volunteer may be required to complete an application, provide references, sign position description(s), and undergo a phone screen and criminal background check prior to being selected. Volunteering is a privilege and is not guaranteed to all applicants. It is GSSI's sole discretion whether to accept an individual as a volunteer.

Criminal Background Checks

Criminal background checks will be conducted for all applicants prior to appointment. GSSI may request a criminal background check on any volunteer at any time during the volunteer's appointment.

Any criminal background check will be conducted in accordance with the Federal Fair Credit Reporting Act. The council may extend an offer of appointment contingent upon the successful completion of a criminal background check.

The Federal Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) promotes the accuracy, fairness, and privacy of information in the files of consumer reporting agencies. Each prospective volunteer will consent to a criminal background check by completing the request on the online portal provided by GSSI before or after member registration. The background check is valid for three (3) years.

Grounds for Disqualification

Grounds for disqualification include:

- Refusal to submit to background screening
- Registered sex offender status*
- Any felony offense
- Crimes against a child
- Crimes involving the use of weapons
- Crimes involving violence
- Crimes involving arson
- Crimes involving public indecency
- Misdemeanors involving DUI, DWI or possession of any controlled substance within the last five years
- Other misdemeanors as GSSI may determine, including but not limited to theft, fraud, forgery or traffic violations
- Other matters that GSSI believes, in its sole discretion, are in the best interest of GSSI and its members

***Registered sex offenders are not eligible for membership in Girl Scouts of the USA and may not participate in any capacity with Girl Scout programs, activity or business. Volunteers shall not knowingly hold meetings or associate with Girl Scout members with a registered sex offender present.**

If GSSI learns (via criminal background check or otherwise) that a prospective or current volunteer has been convicted of one of these crimes under Indiana or other U.S. state laws, or it is otherwise not in the best interest of GSSI for an individual to serve as a volunteer, a volunteer's participation may be denied, revoked or limited at any time at GSSI's discretion.

Limitations on handling money: For misdemeanor crimes involving theft, fraud, forgery or dishonesty of any kind, the applicant may be accepted as a volunteer, but will be restricted from management of Girl Scout or troop money.

Unresolved situations: If there is an open warrant for the arrest of the applicant, or if there is a pending charge with no disposition, the application will not be approved. The volunteer will not be placed unless and until the situation has been satisfactorily resolved and the criminal background check has been updated and approved. It shall be the applicant's obligation to notify GSSI of the resolution of the outstanding matter. After six (6) months, an individual shall be required to restart the application process. If the volunteer is already serving in a volunteer position, her/his participation will be suspended pending disposition of the case or resolution of the open warrant.

Other circumstances: For all other criminal offenses GSSI shall review the applicant's situation on a case-by-case basis.

Placement

Every attempt will be made to place the volunteer in positions that meet both her/his needs and the needs of the council. In instances where this is not possible, the needs of GSSI will take precedence over the needs of the individual. An individual not placed in a position for which she/he applied may be recommended for other positions, and she/he may request reassignment.

Volunteers will be contacted after the submission of their background check authorization. Adults selected for volunteer positions will be placed, nominated, or appointed based on qualifications including but not limited to:

- Willingness to become a Girl Scout member
- Ability to perform the volunteer position
- Availability to participate in training
- Willingness to carry out the responsibilities of the position

Appointment and Confirmation

Upon successful completion of the application process, the prospective volunteer may be asked to sign a position description to confirm her/his appointment. The position description will state the responsibilities and seasonal commitment of the position. It will also include a statement that a volunteer may be released at any time due to failure to fulfill the requirements of the position, a change in needs of GSSI, or any reason that GSSI deems in the best interest of GSSI and its members.

Every volunteer must agree to abide by the policies, procedures, and principles of GSSI and of Girl Scouts of the USA. An authorized service team member, volunteer supervisor, or staff member will notify the volunteer of appointment, at which time the volunteer should receive information regarding orientation for the position.

Orientation

Orientation is necessary for all volunteers, regardless of their position. This training consists of an overview of the Girl Scout organization and its purpose, council information, and the support systems available to help volunteers in their particular position.

Most volunteers begin training by completing *GSSI's Onboarding* training. Those without internet access at home may use a computer in their community or at their local resource center or study a printed version of the online module.

Training

All volunteers will receive basic training for their position. They may also be required to complete additional training within a specified time frame, as indicated on the position description, unless council staff determines they are exempt. Training will ensure that each volunteer has the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in her/his work.

Volunteers will receive opportunities to participate in self-paced training, online training, training classes and events, conferences, and workshops to enhance their performance in their position and to allow further skill development.

All volunteers must complete the required orientation for their position.

Other required trainings: Additional training may be required for other positions or functions such as camping, cooking, first aid, and product program. Required training will be outlined in the position descriptions. Trainings will be offered in a variety of ways at a variety of locations. Optional supplementary workshops and other training opportunities are available on many levels and are designed to meet ongoing needs of volunteers as they develop and grow in their position.

Supervision and Assessment

Volunteer supervisors or staff will coach and mentor volunteers in each position served. Supervisors will help the volunteer assess whether a position is a satisfactory fit, evaluate changes to be made, and suggest resources or new positions to help the volunteer be successful. Throughout her/his relationship with GSSI, a volunteer will receive coaching on volunteer development plans, to inspire her/him as a good role model, and to help build the leadership qualities inherent in Girl Scout programming for girls.

Volunteer supervisors or staff will maintain in-person, phone or email contact with the volunteer to resolve concerns proactively and to provide feedback and recommendations. Near the end of each term, or at any time a supervisor, staff, or volunteer deems necessary, the volunteer supervisor or staff will conduct a performance assessment with the volunteer to discuss merits, field concerns, recommend reappointment and/or explore alternative positions.

Recognition

Volunteers serve in Girl Scouting because they believe in the goals of the Movement. Volunteers achieve personal growth and satisfaction from serving others. Recognition awards are available at many levels to express appreciation for volunteer efforts. The council's formal recognition system is consistent with the Girl Scouts of the USA adult recognition system.

Volunteers, staff, and parents may nominate any volunteer for a service recognition award. Nomination forms may vary and are available online. All nominations are approved by a team of volunteers at the council or service unit level.

Succession Planning and Reappointment

Succession planning is a process whereby GSSI ensures that volunteers are recruited and developed to fill each key role within the organization. GSSI matches and nurtures the skills of each volunteer, allowing her/him to take on new or broader roles within the organization. Reappointment is an integral part of this process.

Reappointment is based on:

- Past position performance
- Adherence to council and GSUSA policies and standards
- Support of the Girl Scout purpose, values, and council goals
- Positive relationships with the community, parents, other volunteers, and employed staff
- The volunteer needs of GSSI, as determined in its discretion

Reappointment takes place only after completion of a satisfactory performance assessment. If reappointed, the volunteer and an authorized volunteer supervisor or staff must confirm acceptance of position accountabilities, expectations, and time commitments.

In some cases, a volunteer may not be reappointed to her/his position. However, she/he may be appointed to a new or different position. Council may limit or extend the term of any volunteer position on a case-by-case basis.

If the volunteer agrees to a new position, a description must be provided. A volunteer may request reassignment to another position at any time. A volunteer who is not reappointed to her/his position or disagrees with the reassignment has the right to utilize GSSI's Conflict or Complaint Resolution procedure.

In the case of non-reappointment after an unsatisfactory annual performance assessment, a volunteer will receive documentation confirming the reason for her/his non-reappointment. A volunteer who disagrees with the non-reappointment may submit written documentation to the membership representative for her/his area to request an alternate resolution. The council will then implement the Conflict or Complaint Resolution Procedure.

Release or Termination

Situations may arise whereby GSSI may release or terminate a volunteer from one or all positions prior to the end of the assignment term. Any action to release a volunteer will receive careful and detailed consideration.

GSSI may release or terminate an individual because of, but not limited to:

- Restriction of positions or elimination of the volunteer's position
- Inability or failure to complete the requirements or meet the competencies and expectations of the position
- Conduct inconsistent with the principles of the Girl Scout Movement as indicated by the Girl Scout Promise and Law
- Misappropriation of funds; co-mingling of council, service unit and/or troop funds with personal funds; or debt incurred to the council, service unit or troop
- Refusal to comply with GSSI or Girl Scouts of the USA policies
- Failure to support or abide by GSSI's policies, activities, and/or goals
- Refusal or failure to adhere to financial guidelines of GSSI
- Any reason GSSI deems to be in its best interest or that of its members

Release or termination from the position does not cancel membership with Girl Scouts of the USA unless it is determined that the volunteer is no longer able to meet the membership requirement.

Step 1: When the possibility of release or termination is indicated, one or more GSSI representatives will be designated to gather and evaluate the facts.

Step 2: A designated GSSI representative will discuss the situation with the individual concerned and explain why there is concern about the volunteer's performance. The council representative will indicate in writing the outcome of the meeting and of any further action necessary, if any.

Step 3: When the facts indicate that release or termination is necessary, as determined in GSSI's sole discretion, the individual may be given the opportunity to resign or withdraw voluntarily by submitting her/his immediate resignation in writing.

Information regarding volunteer release and terminations shall be limited to individuals deemed by GSSI to be necessary to have such information. However, GSSI reserves the right to notify relevant GSSI and GSUSA staff and volunteers, and/or the proper authority (including appropriate law enforcement), if the situation warrants. A current record of terminated volunteers will be kept on file at all times for reference during volunteer selection and appointment.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, GSSI reserves the right at any time to release or terminate a volunteer, in its sole discretion, in the interest of GSSI.

Resignation

A volunteer may choose to resign at any time. A volunteer is encouraged to give as much notice as possible when resigning, or a minimum of two weeks. Resignations should be submitted to her/his volunteer mentor or membership support staff in writing. Resignation from a position does not cancel membership with Girl Scouts of the USA.

A volunteer choosing to resign from her/his position should provide documentation of:

Discussion/written notification: Reason(s) for resignation should be discussed with or submitted in writing to her/his volunteer mentor or membership support staff. Some volunteer positions may require the return of paperwork or supplies; these items will be identified by her/his volunteer mentor or membership support staff.

Acknowledgement: The volunteer mentor or membership support staff will acknowledge any resignation submitted either verbally or in writing. At that time, the volunteer mentor or membership support staff will request any additional paperwork or supplies that are required from the volunteer. The resignation letter will be kept in the volunteer file.

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest exists when the interests or concerns of any volunteer (or any member of her/his 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 GSSI. A volunteer and her/his family members cannot utilize their connections to GSSI for personal, professional, political, or monetary gain. They may not act for GSSI on behalf of any group, organization, or business to which they have allegiance or obligation.

A volunteer cannot use, for personal advantage or for the advantage of any private business or other organization, confidential information, or material acquired in the discharge of her/his duties (such as rosters, mailing lists, telephone directories, email distribution and Girl Scout gatherings). Neither a volunteer nor any member of her/his family may accept any gift, entertainment, services, loans, or promises of future benefits from any person who personally or whose employer might benefit or appear to benefit because of the volunteer's connection to GSSI.

Any matter of question or interpretation that arises relating to this policy should be brought to the volunteer mentor or staff for consideration. Each volunteer must promptly and fully disclose to a volunteer mentor or staff member when engaging in a potential conflict of interest situation. The volunteer will be asked to ameliorate or cease any conflicting activity. Further corrective or disciplinary action may be taken.

Role Models

Girl Scouts exists for girls. The female role model is essential to fulfilling the purpose of Girl Scouting. Interaction with women in leadership positions is of particular importance in developing the self-image of young girls. Therefore, Girl Scouts of the USA and GSSI require that men serving in group leadership roles do so as co-leaders with women. At least one member of the leadership team must be an adult

female, 18 years of age or older, who is unrelated to the male leader. An unrelated female adult must be present at all group gatherings/events for the duration of the gathering/event.

Group leadership teams shall be made up of at least two unrelated adults, one of which must be a female 18 years of age or older.

Uniforms

The Girl Scout uniform is a symbol and mark of distinction in the organization. While a uniform is not required for participation in Girl Scouting, it may be required for some official functions (e.g., national convention, flag ceremonies, community events). Volunteers are encouraged to purchase a uniform and/or components. Wearing the Girl Scout uniform is suitable for almost all Girl Scout functions. Wearing a Girl Scout pin is always appropriate.

The individual and collective appearance directly reflects on the organization's image. A volunteer should be careful about what she/he wears and consider whether the attire is appropriate for the function. Behavior while in uniform should honor the organization. GSSI reserves the right to discuss inappropriate attire choices with individuals when they arise.

The official Girl Scout adult uniform consists of a membership pin worn with a scarf for women, or a tie for men. The dress/business uniform includes the addition of navy-blue business attire. All pieces, including casual adult Girl Scout attire, are available at council stores.

Conflict and Complaint Resolution

All volunteers shall have the opportunity to present concerns and resolve issues and conflicts. GSSI recognizes the importance of resolving issues and conflicts promptly and efficiently. The initiation of these procedures will not restrict GSSI from taking immediate and appropriate action with respect to the volunteer, when necessary.

Definitions:

- A *"conflict"* is any kind of disagreement between two or more people.
- A *"complaint"* may be submitted if there is a dispute over the interpretation or application of a council policy, practice or procedure.

Conflict Resolution for Volunteers

GSSI desires to provide individuals with a neutral process to resolve issues and conflicts. Recognizing that each individual has personal interest in and a share of the responsibility for resolving an issue or conflict, in which she/he is involved, the council favors a collaborative adult resolution process.

Step 1: Volunteers should discuss concerns directly with the individuals involved, in a problem-solving tone. If this does not resolve the issue or conflict, the volunteers should proceed to step two.

Step 2: The parties should jointly discuss the situation with volunteer leadership or staff for support or guidance. If this does not resolve the issue, the volunteers should proceed to step three.

Step 3: The volunteers participate in negotiation and dialogue facilitated by a GSSI staff member or designee. If this does not resolve the issue, the volunteers should proceed to step four.

Step 4: The chief executive officer or designee will make a final decision.

Complaint procedure for volunteers

Step 1: The volunteer should discuss the complaint with the local service unit chair/volunteer support organizer. If this does not resolve the issue, the volunteer should proceed to step two.

Step 2: The person must submit the complaint in writing to the service unit chair/volunteer support organizer or appropriate staff member. The signed and dated document must be specifically titled “Complaint Resolution Request,” identify the person with whom the complaint is registered (if applicable) and cite the policy or procedure that has allegedly been misapplied.

Step 3: The service unit chair/volunteer support organizer or appropriate staff member will review the submission and offer direction. Additional written documentation may be requested. If this does not resolve the issue, the volunteer should proceed to step four.

Step 4: The volunteer shall submit the “Complaint Resolution Request” to the appropriate GSSI department head. The appropriate department head will become involved to offer direction and resolution. If this does not resolve the issue, the volunteer should proceed to step five.

Step 5: The volunteer shall submit the “Complaint Resolution Request” to the GSSI chief executive officer. The chief executive officer or her/his designee will assist in resolving the complaint and upon reaching a final decision and will document the outcome in writing.

Step 6: If the Complaint Resolution Request involves the chief executive officer, then it shall instead be submitted to the chair of the board, who will assist in resolving the complaint and upon reaching a final decision will document the outcome in writing

It is the responsibility of the chief executive officer or designee to implement the decision in either procedure. The council reserves the right to deviate from these steps, in its sole discretion.

Bullying

GSSI will not tolerate bullying behavior and prohibits volunteers from participating in bullying behavior, intentional and unintentional. GSSI considers the following types of behavior examples of bullying:

Verbal Bullying: slandering, ridiculing, or maligning a person or his/her family; persistent name calling which is hurtful, insulting or humiliating; using a person as the butt of jokes; abusive and offensive remarks

Physical Bullying: pushing; shoving; kicking; poking; tripping; assault, or threat of physical assault; damage to a person’s property

Cyber Bullying: sending/forwarding mean-spirited text messages or emails, spreading rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites, and posting embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles

Gesture Bullying: non-verbal threatening gestures, glances which can convey threatening messages

Exclusion: socially or physically excluding or disregarding a person in Girl Scout-related activities

In addition, the following examples may constitute or contribute to evidence of bullying:

- Persistent singling out of one person
- Shouting, raising voice at an individual in public and/or in private
- Using verbal or obscene gestures
- Not allowing the person to speak or express him/herself (i.e., ignoring or interrupting).
- Personal insults and use of offensive nicknames
- Public humiliation in any form
- Constant criticism on matters unrelated or minimally related to the person's job performance or description
- Ignoring/interrupting an individual at meetings
- Public reprimands
- Repeatedly accusing someone of errors which cannot be documented
- Deliberately interfering with mail and other communications
- Spreading rumors and gossip regarding individuals
- Encouraging others to disregard a volunteer or staff's instructions
- Deliberately excluding an individual or isolating her/him from Girl Scout-related activities
- Unwanted physical contact, physical abuse or threats of abuse to an individual or an individual's property (defacing or marking up property)

If a volunteer believes she/he has been the subject of bullying behavior involving a GSSI activity, program, function or business, the individual should immediately inform GSSI's senior director or the chief executive officer (or designee). If the complaint involves the chief executive officer, then the complaint should be reported to the board chair. The individual should report the facts of the incident, including what happened, how often, and where the incident(s) took place, as well as the names of the individuals and witnesses involved. All complaints received will be reported directly to the senior director or the chief executive officer (or designee).

All bullying claims will be investigated in a timely manner. If it is determined that bullying has occurred, GSSI will take appropriate corrective action up to and including dismissal of the offending volunteer (or other appropriate action).

Harassment

GSSI supports an environment in which relationships are characterized by the Girl Scout Promise and Law. GSSI prohibits volunteers from participating in any form of harassment on the basis of disability, age, race, color, ethnicity, gender, creed, national origin, sexual orientation, religion, citizenship,

ancestry, marital status, veteran status, socioeconomic status, or other characteristics protected by federal, state or local law.

Harassment refers to a wide spectrum of offensive behavior and sometimes refers to behavior intended to disturb, threaten, or upset.

Any volunteer who believes that she/he has been subjected to or is a witness to harassment of any type, whether by another volunteer, council staff member or any agent of the organization, should promptly report the incident to her/his volunteer mentor, membership support staff, or to the chief executive officer. The volunteer mentor or membership support staff, upon receiving such a complaint, must report the matter to the chief executive officer, who will conduct an investigation and, depending on the findings, report to authorities.

GSSI reserves the right to refuse a volunteer opportunity, membership, or reappointment, and to release or terminate from affiliation with GSSI any volunteer who, in conducting or participating in Girl Scout activities, harasses another volunteer, GSSI employee, Girl Scout member or other individual.

Sexual Harassment

GSSI prohibits volunteers, male or female, from participating in any form of sexual harassment of another volunteer, employee, or Girl Scout member of the same or opposite sex. GSSI reserves the right to refuse membership or reappointment, and to release or terminate from affiliation with GSSI any volunteer who, in conducting or participating in Girl Scout activities, sexually harasses another volunteer, employee or Girl Scout member of the same or opposite sex.

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.

Any volunteer who feels that she/he has been sexually harassed should promptly report such behavior to the volunteer mentor, membership support staff, or the chief executive officer. Upon receiving a complaint, the volunteer mentor or staff person will report the matter to the chief executive officer who will conduct an investigation and, depending on the findings, take appropriate corrective action.

Child Abuse

GSSI supports, requires, and maintains environments that are free of child abuse and neglect as defined by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act ("the Act"). The Act defines child abuse and neglect as "the physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, negligent treatment or maltreatment:

- of a child under the age of 18, or the age specified by the child protection law of the state in question;
- by a person who is responsible for the child's welfare;
- under circumstances which indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or threatened."

The Act also defines sexual abuse as the use, persuasion, or coercion of any child to engage in any sexually explicit conduct (or any simulation of such conduct) for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct or rape, molestation, prostitution, or incest with children. Child abuse and neglect are unlawful acts. It is strictly against GSSI's policy for any volunteer, male or female, to physically, sexually, mentally, emotionally, or verbally abuse or neglect any girl member. GSSI reserves the right to refuse membership or reappointment, and to release or terminate from affiliation with GSSI, any volunteer implementing, conducting, or participating in Girl Scout activities, programs or business who is found guilty of child abuse and neglect or has been convicted of child abuse and/or neglect.

See [GSSI's Child Protection Guidelines](#) below for more specific information.

Substance Abuse

Possession or use of alcohol or intoxicants or the illegal use of drugs at any time on GSSI premises, when implementing, conducting, or participating in Girl Scout activities, programs or business, or in the presence of girl members is strictly prohibited. Any such suspected use or possession will be reported to the appropriate authorities.

Exception: Alcohol may be served at adult fundraising/donor events or adult-only gatherings with prior authorization from the chief executive officer.

Information Technology and Individual Privacy

GSSI 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 e-mail and telephone.

Contents of all electronic communications shall conform to laws and GSSI policies, including regarding protection of intellectual property, copyright, patents, and trademarks. The Girl Scout brand is the sole property of GSSI and GSUSA, and its use must be pre-approved in writing by a member of the GSSI Marketing Department.

The misuse of electronic communications for GSSI purposes or involving GSSI programs, activities, functions or business in any of the following manners is prohibited:

- Using electronic communications resources for any purpose restricted or prohibited by laws, regulations or GSSI policies.
- Accessing and displaying any type of sexually explicit images or documents.
- Using electronic communications resources for personal purposes, including monetary gain, or for commercial purposes that are not directly related to GSSI business or otherwise authorized by appropriate GSSI authority.
- Using electronic communication in such a way that directly or indirectly causes strain on the electronic communications resources.

- Using electronic communications to harass or intimidate others or to interfere with the ability of others to conduct GSSI business.
- Representing, giving opinions, or otherwise making statements on behalf of GSSI 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 e-mail so it appears to be from someone else).
- Unauthorized access to electronic communications or breach of any security measure.
- Unauthorized distribution of any members' personal information.
- 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.
 - Intentionally engaging in other practices such as "denial of service attacks," i.e., flooding the network with traffic.

GSSI prohibits the use of computers and e-mail systems in ways that are disruptive, offensive to others, or harmful to morale. No volunteer of GSSI should expect any privacy in the sending or the receipt of electronic mail communications. Online communication is available for Girl Scout business only on GSSI computers.

Policy Violation

Notwithstanding anything specifically set forth in these Guidelines, GSSI reserves the right to refuse membership, appointment, reappointment, and to release or terminate from affiliation with GSSI, any volunteer who violates any volunteer, GSSI, or GSUSA policy. Further, violation of any volunteer policy may result in such other action as may be permitted by law, including being reported to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.



GSSI Child Protection Guidelines

Girl Scouts of Southwest Indiana (GSSI) is committed to the safety and well-being of the youth we serve. Activities are planned and carried out in accordance with national safety guidelines established by Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA). GSUSA documents safety guidelines in **Volunteer Essentials** and **Safety Activity Checkpoints** which are updated annually. Co-leaders are notified of these guidelines during their initial onboarding, and guidelines are posted on the GSSI website.

Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect

The definitions provided usually pertain to child abuse from adults and caregivers. Within GSSI, child-on-child abuse can take the form of bullying or other types of abuse. We are committed to preventing abuse from occurring at all levels by educating youth and adults within our organization.

Child Abuse Defined

Abuse can be physical, sexual, or emotional, or it can be any form of neglect. The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) defines abuse as “any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm.” This applies to any person 17 years or younger.

Abuse may result from excessive discipline or punishment. The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) prohibits the use of the following types of discipline or punishment: corporal punishment; physical exercise (e.g., push-ups, running, etc.); requiring or using force to make a child take an uncomfortable position; verbal remarks that ridicule a child; denial of an emotional response; denial of essential services (e.g., health care, food, clothing, bedding, sleep, etc.); placement in a locked room; and holding with physical, mechanical or chemical restraints.

- **Physical Abuse Defined**

Physical abuse is any physical injury caused by hitting, beating, punching, shaking, kicking, biting, burning – or any other physical harm to a child. The injury may or may not be intentional, could be the result of a single episode or repeated episodes, and can range in severity.

- **Sexual Abuse Defined**

Sexual abuse involves engaging in or assisting any other person to engage in any sexual activity with a child. This includes sexual contact that is accompanied by enticement, force, or threat of force, regardless of the age of the participants. It includes any sexual contact between an adult and a child, regardless of deception or if the child understands the sexual nature of the activity. Sexual contact between an older and a younger child can be abusive if there is a significant disparity in age, development, or physical size. Sexually abusive acts may include sexual penetration, sexual touching, or non-contact sexual acts such as exposure or pornography.

- **Emotional Abuse Defined**

Emotional abuse involves injury to the mental or psychological capacity or emotional stability of a child. It includes acts or omissions by parents or other caregivers that have caused, or could cause, serious behavioral, cognitive, emotional, or mental disorders. Emotional abuse may also include extreme or severe acts of punishment. Children who are physically or sexually abused are usually emotionally abused as well.

- **Neglect Defined**

While there are several forms of neglect, including educational, emotional, environmental, medical, and developmental, child protection agencies usually use the term to mean physical neglect. Physical neglect is the failure to meet a child's basic physical needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and hygiene. Neglect is a form of abuse.

Child Abuse Prevention

All GSSI staff and volunteers are annually provided GSSI's Child Protection Guidelines and required to abide by them. Guidelines on child abuse prevention methods are outlined to ensure youth participating in GSSI programming are protected from incidents of abuse. These guidelines empower staff members and volunteers to recognize, prevent, and react responsibly to all forms of child abuse, and ensure GSSI programming takes place in safe, nurturing environments that foster healthy relationship building. All youth served by GSSI, their parents and caregivers, GSSI staff members, and GSSI volunteers must be confident that such a positive environment exists.

To prevent child abuse from taking place, GSSI requires the following: effective screening of all staff and volunteers; formal child protection training for staff and volunteers providing direct services to youth; clear guidelines on appropriate interactions between youth, staff, and volunteers; strategies for establishing safe environments; and written directives for responding to inappropriate behavior, breaches in policy, and allegations and suspicions of child abuse if they should occur. These directives include state-mandated reporting of child abuse if it is suspected, witnessed, or reported by a child, regardless of whether the abuse may be occurring inside or outside of the GSSI program environment.

Child Abuse Prevention Guidelines

1. **Staff and Volunteer Screening and Selection**

All GSSI staff and volunteers will be screened through background checks prior to appointment; screenings are conducted in accordance with the **Federal Fair Credit Reporting Act**. (Please reference *GSSI Policies, Standards and Volunteer Guidelines* above for more information on screening and qualifications.) In addition, staff references are checked prior to their work for the organization. Staff and volunteers providing direct services to youth will be trained in child protection issues before beginning their regular involvement with youth.

2. **Child Abuse Prevention Training**

All GSSI staff and volunteers providing direct services to youth are required to complete the virtual "Don't Wait, Make the Call," 48-minute training from the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) on responsibilities and procedures for abuse reporting. Individuals can access the "Don't Wait, Make the Call" training **HERE**. Training should be completed within the first month of appointment and documented through submission of **THIS ONLINE FORM**.

Any GSSI staff member who works directly with children will be required to take Darkness to Light, Stewards of Children, a 2.5 – 3-hour child abuse prevention training that teaches adults how to recognize, prevent, and react responsibly to child sexual abuse. All GSSI volunteers are offered and strongly advised to take this training within the first year of appointment. Training is offered in the fall and spring annually.

3. **Guidelines on Interactions between Youth, Staff, and Volunteers**

GSSI provides a nurturing environment by supporting positive child development, helping children feel valued, and providing caring connections that serve as protective factors. To promote and ensure positive interactions between youth, staff, and volunteers, clear examples of appropriate and inappropriate interactions are provided.

Verbal Interactions

- Appropriate: praise; positive reinforcement for good work or behavior.
- Inappropriate: sexually provocative or degrading comments or put downs; risqué jokes; or use of obscene language.

Physical Interactions

- Appropriate: pats on the back or shoulder, high fives, side hugs verbally or physically initiated by youth. Note that the use of any physical contact should be used with discretion.
- Inappropriate: hugs verbally or physically initiated by staff or volunteers, patting the buttocks, intimate/romantic/sexual contact; corporal punishment (involving physical contact or inflicting pain or discomfort); or involving youth in any pornographic activities.

Additional Interaction Guidelines

- Staff, volunteers, and youth must utilize GSSI's standard Volunteer Resource Guides (**Safety Activity Checkpoints**, **Leader's Guide to Success**, and the Child Protection Guidelines) to ensure positive interactions and what constitutes inappropriate or harmful interactions.
- GSSI requires that more than one adult is always present with one or more children. One-on-one interactions are not allowed, unless with direct family members (i.e., mother and daughter). Male volunteers are welcome, but at least one female volunteer must always be present.
- If one of the two adults temporarily leaves a room in which children are present, the door must be fully open and, when possible, an extra floater adult will be made available. Appropriate choices will vary and will depend on the location of the activity.
- GSSI incorporates a buddy system to help prevent isolation of children with staff or volunteers. (Please reference **Safety Activity Checkpoints** for buddy system guidance.) Additionally, this system is monitored by staff and/or volunteers to prevent child-on-child abuse.
- As with all GSSI programming, adults (including staff, volunteers, and parents or guardians), are encouraged to drop in unannounced. Unscheduled visits are known to help safeguard youth from all types of inappropriate situations. If drop-in adults want to assist with activities, as a helping hand, background screening and membership should be obtained for consistent participation.

4. **Ensuring Safe Environments**

GSSI evaluates the level of risk by considering the location and time of day of each activity. Whenever possible, activities and programs will take place in open, visible, and well-lit buildings and outside areas in which multiple people can view activities.

Critical Strategies for Ensuring Safe Environments

- Girl Scouts' adult-to-girl ratios show the minimum number of registered adult volunteers with current, approved background checks needed to supervise a specific number of girls. This information is provided in **Safety Activity Checkpoints** under "Standard Safety Guidelines."
- If the class or program is in an isolated location designated solely for the staff, volunteers, and children participating with GSSI, ensure that individuals from outside the program are excluded or monitored.
 - Staff and volunteers will establish access control for admitting and releasing youth when reasonable.
- Troops/groups must receive advanced approval from GSSI to hold an activity at a private residence; the private residence must also meet the safety requirements outlined in **Safety Activity Checkpoints** under "Troop Meeting Space."
- Privacy is essential when youth, volunteers, and staff are toileting, showering, and changing clothes, unless individuals require special supervision for such activities. Special supervision for youth participants should be authorized by the legal guardian in writing to the lead adult.
- Lighting is available in all areas.
- When carpooling, one adult and one child are not permitted to ride together unless with direct family members. Specific directives for transporting youth to and from activities and events are provided in **Safety Activity Checkpoints** under "Transporting Girls."

Internet Safety

- If youth are engaged in an activity which requires use of the internet, staff and volunteers will closely monitor internet usage. All youth, as well as their parents or guardians, must read, agree to, and abide by the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge when online. The pledge is provided in **Safety Activity Checkpoints** under "Computer Internet Safety Pledge" and outlines specific internet safety guidelines for children, including but not limited to:
 - Use only first names, and never include last names. Do not give out personal information such as your address, telephone number, email address, or Girl Scout meeting locations and times without the permission of a parent or guardian.
 - Notify an adult immediately if you notice any information that makes you feel uncomfortable.
 - Never agree to meet with someone you have met online without first checking with a parent or guardian. If the parent or guardian agrees to the meeting, make sure that it is in a public place and never go alone.

- GSSI follows the guidelines of the **Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)**, which protects the personal information of children under the age of 13. This applies to individually identifiable information about a child that is collected online, such as full name, home address, email address, telephone number or any other information that would allow someone to identify or contact the child. The Act and Rule also cover other types of information, hobbies, interests, and information collected through cookies or other types of tracking mechanisms—when they are tied to individually identifiable information. Staff, volunteers, and parents and guardians are all encouraged to read and understand **COPPA**.

5. **Monitoring Behavior**

GSSI uses formal and informal supervision to observe, monitor, and document staff and volunteer interactions with youth. For such supervision and documentation to take place, staff and volunteers are made aware of their defined roles and responsibilities. Staff and volunteers will follow the Council’s protocol in promptly responding to, and reporting of, inappropriate or harmful behavior, potential risk situations, and boundary violations. Alleged or suspected child abuse or neglect must be reported to Indiana’s Child Protective Services (CPS) as outlined in the next section, “Allegations and Suspicions of Child Abuse.”

6. **Allegations and Suspicions of Child Abuse**

GSSI staff and volunteers providing direct services to youth are required to know the GSSI Child Protection Guidelines and Indiana State Law for reporting suspected abuse, including to whom, and in what format, reports are made. This is covered in the required staff and volunteer child abuse training (see page 2).

Indiana is a mandatory reporting state; anyone who suspects a child has been neglected or abused must by state law make a report.

To Report Alleged Abuse: CPS operates a **toll-free hotline (1-800-800-5556)** for people to call and report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. Although reports can be made in person or by correspondence, most of the child abuse and neglect reports are made via telephone. **CPS receives and initiates investigations of child maltreatment on a 24-hour basis.**

What will you need to provide when making a report?

- If you call to make a report, an intake specialist will ask for information about the circumstances creating a risk of harm to the child including:
 - who was involved
 - what occurred
 - when and where it occurred
 - the extent of any injuries sustained
 - any other relevant information
- You may be asked for detailed information including names, addresses and phone numbers for the child, parent or guardian, or alleged perpetrator. Even if you are unable to provide all the information, please contact the hotline to make a report if you suspect a child is a victim of abuse or neglect.

- **Indiana's Child Protective Services (CPS)**, protects Indiana's children from further abuse or neglect and prevents, remedies, or assists in solving problems that may result in abuse, neglect, exploitation, or delinquency of children. The Family Preservation Program carries out the agency's goals to prevent unnecessary separation from their families by identifying family problems and assisting families in resolving them.

GSSI Required Internal Documentation Once Report is Made

- A GSSI **Incident Report** form must be filed within 24 hours by the staff or volunteer who first learned of the abuse or suspected abuse. The staff member or volunteer will not investigate allegations or conduct their own investigations. The Incident Report must include the nature and extent of the abuse, the alleged perpetrator, and other relevant information required in the Incident Report as well as when the report was made to the proper authorities. The staff member or volunteer reporting the initial allegation will submit the Incident Report.
- The **Incident Report** and related documentation will be kept confidential and maintained in GSSI's council headquarters with limited access. CONFIDENTIALITY is crucial in cases of allegations of child abuse. GSSI's confidentiality policy is consistent with state legal requirements which includes withholding the names of potential victims, the accused perpetrator, the individual who made the report to authorities, and reporting the case only on a need-to-know basis to the appropriate individuals. This shall hold true for staff and volunteers regarding an allegation of abuse.

Responses to Cases of Child Abuse

- An allegation does not equate guilt; however, GSSI must take steps to protect the children in its care. If the alleged offender is a staff member or a volunteer, the alleged offender will be placed on suspension immediately after the report of the case to external authorities. The suspension will remain until the case is resolved legally. GSSI holds an appeal process in which individuals found not guilty of abusive behaviors may apply to return to their former program/position. The volunteer suspension and appeal processes are outlined in the *GSSI Policies, Standards and Volunteer Guidelines*.

7. **Guideline Violation**

Notwithstanding anything specifically set forth in these Guidelines, GSSI reserves the right to refuse membership, appointment, reappointment, and to release or terminate from affiliation with GSSI, any volunteer who violates any volunteer, GSSI, or GSUSA policy/guideline, as stated in the *GSSI Policies, Standards and Volunteer Guidelines*. Further, violation of any volunteer policy may result in such other actions as may be permitted by law, including being reported to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

Summary

Child abuse is a complex issue that can have long-term consequences. GSSI is privileged in the role of nurturing and caretaking of youth. In that role, we strive for healthy environments for every young person in our care and beyond.

Following the Girl Scout Safety Guidelines

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

1. **Follow the Safety Activity Checkpoints.** Instructions for staying safe while participating in activities are detailed in the Safety Activity Checkpoints, available from GSSI. Read the checkpoints, follow them, and share them with other volunteers, parents, and girls before engaging in activities with Girl Scouts.
2. **Arrange for proper adult supervision of Girl Scouts.** The adult supervision rule at Girl Scouts is a strict standard that requires that whenever girls meet, either in person or virtually, there must be *at least* two registered, screened and approved adult volunteers who are unrelated (for example: 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 is female. Troop leaders must always be adults. Youth or youth members are not permitted to substitute for adult supervision. This rule applies to every Girl Scout gathering including troop meetings (in person and virtual), day trips, camp, sleep away travel, events, activities, and projects. There are no exceptions to this rule.
3. **Adult-to-Girl Ratios.** There are specific adult-to-girl ratio requirements for Girl Scout troop meetings as compared to events outside of the regular Girl Scout troop meeting, such as outings, activities, camping, and travel. Activities and travel outside of the regular troop meeting require more adult supervision.
4. **Get parent/guardian permission.** Annual Permission Forms are required for Girl Scouts to attend troop meetings and basic troop outings. Topics discussed that could be considered sensitive require an additional Sensitive Issues Permission Form. Overnights and trips (1 or more nights) require Overnights or Extended Trips Permission Form. All can be found under Forms and Documents on the website.
5. **Report abuse.** Sexual advances, improper touching, and sexual activity of any kind with girl members are forbidden. Physical, verbal, and emotional abuse of girls is also forbidden. Follow GSSI's guidelines for reporting concerns about abuse or neglect that may be occurring inside or outside of Girl Scouting.
6. **Be prepared for emergencies.** Work with girls and other volunteers to establish and practice procedures for emergencies related to weather, fire, lost girls/volunteers, and site security. Always keep handy a well-stocked first-aid kit, girl health histories, and contact information for Girl Scouts' families.
7. **Travel safely.** When transporting Girl Scouts to planned field trips and other activities that are outside the normal time and place, every driver must be an approved adult volunteer, over the age of 21 and have a good driving record, a valid license, and a registered/insured vehicle. Insist that everyone is in a legal seat and wears their seat belt at all times and adhere to state laws regarding booster seats and requirements for children in rear seats.

8. **Ensure safe overnight outings.** Prepare Girl Scouts to be away from home by involving them in planning, so they know what to expect. Avoid having men sleep in the same space as girls and women. During family or parent-daughter overnights, one family unit may sleep in the same sleeping quarters in program areas. When parents are staffing events, daughters should remain in quarters with other girls rather than in staff areas.
9. **Role-model the right behavior.** Never use illegal drugs. Don't consume alcohol, smoke, or use foul language in the presence of girls. Do not carry ammunition or firearms in the presence of Girl Scouts unless given special permission by your council for group marksmanship activities.
10. **Create an emotionally safe space.** Adults and volunteers are responsible for making Girl Scouting a place where girls are as safe emotionally as they are physically. Protect the emotional safety of Girl Scouts by creating a team agreement and coaching girls to honor it. Agreements typically encourage behaviors like respecting a diversity of feelings and opinions; resolving conflicts constructively; and avoiding physical and verbal bullying, clique behavior, and discrimination.
11. **Ensure that no Girl Scout is treated differently.** Girl Scouts welcomes all members, regardless of race, ethnicity, background, disability, family structure, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic status. When scheduling, helping plan, and carrying out activities, carefully consider the needs of all girls involved, including school schedules, family needs, financial constraints, religious holidays, and the accessibility of appropriate transportation and meeting places.
12. **Promote online safety.** Instruct Girl Scouts never to put their full names or contact information online or engage in virtual conversation with strangers. Girls should never arrange in-person meetings with online contacts, other than to deliver cookies and only with the approval and accompaniment of a parent or designated adult. On group websites, publish girls' first names only and never divulge their contact information. Teach girls the **Girl Scout Online Safety Pledge** and have them commit to it.
13. **Keep Girl Scouts safe during money-earning activities.** Girl Scout cookies and other council-sponsored product programs are an integral part of the program. During Girl Scout product sale, you are responsible for the safety of girls, money, and products. In addition, a wide variety of organizations, causes, and fundraisers may appeal to Girl Scouts to be their labor force. When representing Girl Scouts, girls cannot participate in money-earning activities that represent partisan politics or that are not Girl Scout-approved product program and efforts.

