Girl Scouts of Gateway Council

TROOP ADMINISTRATOR HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

Girl Scouts of Gateway Council would like to welcome you to your role as Troop Administrator. You will be providing a vital function within the Troop Team Model. We have designed this handbook to assist you in your new role and introduce you to Girl Scouting.

Your role is to work with a team of adult Volunteers to provide a quality Girl Scouting experience for the girls in your Troop. You will have the amazing opportunity to coordinate with your Troop team and to assist your girls in acquiring the leadership skills needed to plan their programs and events. You and the other Volunteers will assist your girls in age-appropriate goal setting and decision making. Above all you will facilitate and ensure a safe experience for every girl while developing a close connection with one another. You will also have the opportunity to serve as partner and role model to our girls.

We will first introduce you to the Girl Scout Promise and the Girl Scout Law which is the basis for every decision that we make in Girl Scouting. We will provide you with information regarding Troop operations, registrations for Troop members, record keeping, effective communication tools, and Volunteer management. This handbook is to be used in conjunction with your other Council publications: Volunteer Essentials, Safety Activity Checkpoints, and Troop Team Manual which contains additional detail regarding many of the topics covered here.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for volunteering your time to support our girl’s in Girl Scouting. We could not do it without your help. We understand that you have taken on a significant responsibility, but it is also an amazing one because it will provide you with an amazing opportunity to see our girls learn and grow together as a team. We hope that your time in Girl Scouts will be filled with inspiring moments as you get to watch our girls discover new adventures, meet challenging goals, and step outside of their comfort zones. Ninety percent of our members are in Troops and each and every one of them relies on Volunteers like you to mentor and guide them through their developmental years. Again, Thank You, Thank You, Thank You!!!!!!
The Girl Scout Mission

Admit it. When you think about Girl Scouts, what immediately comes to your mind? Your first thought probably started with three Cs; cookies, camp, and crafts. This is because our cookie program is a well-known financial literacy and business ethics program in which most Girl Scouts participate. The Girl Scout camping program provides an exceptional life experience opportunity designed specifically with girls in mind and many of the Girl Scout activities incorporate crafts. However, what we would love for you to think about when you hear the name Girl Scouts are three very different Cs: courage, confidence, and character. These three Cs are in the Girl Scout Mission. Girl Scouting is about building girls of courage, confidence and character, who make the world a better place. This is the long-term outcome that is achieved by every girl who follows The Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) program.

Girl Scout Mission, Promise and Law

The Girl Scout Mission, Promise, and Law are the foundation of the Girl Scout Movement and are shared by every member of Girl Scouting. The Girl Scout Promise is the way Girl Scouts agree to act every day toward one another and other people, and the Girl Scout Law outlines a way to act towards one another and the world. Girls love the handshake and hand sign. Please ensure that you commit this to memory and encourage everyone (Girls, Volunteers, and yourself) to live by it each and every day.
TROOP TEAM MODEL

Girl Scouts has recently redesigned the Troop structure. They have taken the duties of the Leader and Co-Leader and have distributed them across several volunteer positions known as a Troop Team. The Troop Team Model allows for more active involvement by a group of Volunteers. This will decrease the amount of time the Leader and Co-Leader currently needs to devote to planning and implementing Girl Scout related activities and eliminate the stress involved with this process. We believe this structure will enable everyone to take on a more active role in our Girl Scout’s lives thus enriching the experience for everyone. An African proverb proclaims, “A child’s upbringing is a communal effort.” Just as this proverb states, we here at Girl Scouts of Gateway Council believe that it is each of our responsibility (Staff, Volunteers, and Caregivers) to assist the girls through their Girl Scout experience.

The Troop Team Model enables each individual to identify the area that bests fits their individual skills and abilities. Below is a list of positions that we have created for the new Troop structure.
Troop Team Roles and Responsibilities

Each role within the Troop Team Model is designed to assist our girls in their leadership development. We have briefly outlined the roles that we feel are important to their support. With the exception of Troop Treasurer, several people can take the duties of each role or you may decide to rotate the roles between several Volunteers throughout the year. You will need to decide what works best for your Troop and your Volunteers. Just remember that no matter what role or roles each person decides to do, they will need to complete the required training for that role(s).

**Girl Program Mentor (Required)**
The Girl Program Mentor is a required position within the Troop Team. This is your meeting and event facilitator who will encourage a girl-led environment and ensure that activities align with the Girl Scout philosophy of Discover, Connect, and Take-Action.

**Troop Administrator (Required)**
The Troop Administrator is a required position within the Troop Team. You are the go to person for all of your Troops communications and records. Your responsibilities will include, but are not limited to, Troop registrations, annual membership renewal for Girls and Volunteers, maintaining records, and ensuring effective communications.

**Troop Treasurer**
This individual will be responsible for maintaining financial transparency and ensuring the financial stability of your Troop. Responsibilities will include opening the Troop’s bank account, maintaining accurate financial records, submitting bi-annual financial reports, and purchasing additional insurance coverage (if required).

**Troop Safety Specialist**
This person will be your Troop’s Safety Compliance Officer. They will act as your designated First Aider and will familiarize themselves with the Safety Activity Checkpoints and ensure compliance with it prior to any activity outside your Troop’s regular meeting space. They will maintain your Troop’s Health Records and First Aid Kit.

**Troop Event Coordinator**
This Volunteer will be responsible for organizing and planning Troop events. They will coordinate with your other team members to ensure safety compliance, activity payment, and discuss event schedules.

**Troop Product Sales Manager**
This will be your “Cookie Mom or Dad.” They will organize and carry out the Troop’s product sales. The Troop Product Sales Manager will assist with individual and Troop goal setting; product ordering; pick-up and delivery; and the gathering of monies to submit to the Troop Treasurer for Council payment. They will be Cookie Central!

**Troop Outdoor Coordinator**
This person will be responsible for your arranging your Troop’s outdoor sporting and camping activities. They will coordinate with your Safety Specialist to ensure safety compliance and work with your Troop Treasurer (if needed). They will have received specialized Council training in Basic Troop Camping Skills.

*** The Troop Team does not have to fill all 7 positions to start or operate as a Troop***

*** A volunteer can take on more than one position, except Girl Program Mentor and Troop Administrator cannot be the same person ***

**MANAGING VOLUNTEERS**

As Troop Administrator, you will be in charge of managing the group of Volunteers that will assist your Troop. You will need to ensure that they have completed the necessary requirements for registration and training for the position(s) they will fill within your Troop.

**GSUSA Volunteer Registration Procedures**

All adult Volunteers will need to complete the following steps prior to meeting with your Troop for the first time. It is your responsibility to ensure this is done for every Volunteer over the age of 18.

- Submit the online registration process
- Complete a Verified Volunteer Background Screening
- Register as a member of Girl Scouts of the USA

You may complete the above three steps on our website under the Volunteer tab/Volunteer Today.

**Volunteer Training**

Training is the foundation in which every Troop is built. Therefore, every Volunteer needs to complete an online training, even if you only help out one time like spending a Saturday at a cookie booth as a chaperone. You will need to ensure that your Volunteers comply with the appropriate training related to the position they choose; you can locate the specific training for each position on our website under the Volunteer tab/Volunteer Resources. Please note that all Volunteers (regardless of position) will need to complete the GS 101 45-minute online training.

Guide your Volunteers to this 45-minute online training:
- Girl Scouting 101 (GS 101) Online Training
Each approved Volunteer should become familiar with the Volunteer Essentials as it provides vital information regarding Girl Scout operations. Please ensure that every Volunteer either has a printed copy or has access to the online version.

- Volunteer Essentials

TROOP RECORDS

Keeping Track of Forms
As Troop Administrator, you are essentially the paper pusher! You will ensure that all of the required paperwork is completed for each and every participant (male or female; young or not-so-young) in your Troop. These forms will include the following and may be located on our website under the Forms tab:

- Volunteer Position Agreement (Adult Volunteers only)
- Health Form (Adult or Minor)
- Photo Release Form (Non-Girl Scout Adult or Minor)

You will be required to submit additional forms to Council if your troop decides to travel away from your regular meeting location. These additional requirements are discussed in further detail in our Troop Event Coordinator and Troop Safety Specialist Handbooks.

All Records should be kept in a secure place that is easily accessible to you. You will want to exercise caution and maintain discretion with these forms because you will be handling very personal and confidential materials.

Participation Records
Since you are the record keeper in your Troop, you will be responsible for storing the entire stock of Troop Records. Although you may not be responsible for compiling the various individual records, you will need to ensure the completion, safety, and confidentiality of them.
Every position within the Troop structure will take on the responsibility for specific forms. We have briefly outlined those responsibilities here:

- Girl Program Mentor: Attendance, Activities, Awards Received, Community Service
- Troop Treasurer: Troop Dues, Product Sales Receipts
- Troop Product Sales Manager: Awards Received, Community Service, Product Sales Receipts
- Troop Safety Specialist: Health History, Medicine
- Troop Outdoor Coordinator: Attendance, Activities, Awards Received, Community Service

As Troop Administrator, you will need to coordinate with your Troop Volunteers to gather the necessary forms.

CONNECTING WITH EVERYONE

The key to a good relationship between all of us (girls, Volunteers, caregivers, and Council staff) is always communication. If we all desire to meet and exceed one another’s expectations, then these expectations should be communicated between all of us from the very beginning. Therefore, we have provided you with some tools to facilitate you in the process.

**Council Communications**

Girl Scouts of Gateway Council will send out periodic email communications that will keep you and your Troop informed of Council events and current happenings, so you will want to make sure you don’t miss out on anything.

- Provide us with a valid personal and/or Troop email address, so you will receive our communications
- Add our general email address to your list of approved contacts:

  communications@girlscouts-gateway.ccsend.com
Meeting Cancellations
Sometimes unforeseen events may occur and a meeting will need to be cancelled at the last minute. Just in case, you should designate one person who will ensure that this is communicated to every caregiver in your Troop. Make sure that this person has everyone’s phone number, so that they can either text or call them with this important information. It is best to not send an email for last minute cancellations as some people may not have the ability to frequently check their email communications.

Communicating with Caregivers
One of your greatest resources as a Troop Administrator will be your girls’ caregivers. Beyond keeping them informed about what is happening with your Troop, you will want/need their assistance-like providing snacks for meetings, helping with cookie booths, or having enough adults to meet the girl-adult ratios when you go on trips. Caregiver involvement will not only enrich your girls’ experience, but will enable you to focus your time elsewhere. We have provided you with some tips to assist you in developing a wonderful caregiver relationship.

Hold Occasional Caregiver Meetings
This will allow each of you to get to know one another. If possible, have the parents meet in one room while the girls are being supervised by approved adult Volunteers in another. This will be the perfect venue for you to discuss the caregiver responsibilities and share your expectations. You can set up Troop finances and discuss what kind of financial support they are able to offer. It is also an excellent time to garner additional caregiver support and recruit Volunteers for your Troop. The goal for your meetings should be to: gather caregiver support, provide vital Troop information, generate enthusiasm, and to build a functioning Troop team.

Establish a Method of Communication
In your role as Troop Administrator, you are the main source of information for the entire group of girls, including your Troop Team and caregivers. Maintaining reliable contact information (phone and email) is critical. So much happens in our girl’s lives during Girl Scouting that we feel it is important that you keep everyone informed. You will need to establish a method of communication. Ask yourself what works best for your Troop. Will the girls receive a flyer to take home that informs everyone about Girl Scout Activities? Will the caregivers receive phone calls, text messages, or emails with Troop communications? We are sure you are already aware of this but girls should not be relied on to share important information to caregivers. As Troop Administrator, you will be communicating with them on a regular basis.

An excellent communication tool is a Troop Newsletter. Your Troop will want to include
information about upcoming meeting dates, information about previous meeting activities, discussions about upcoming meeting activities, reminders on individual responsibilities, and should include the Troop’s financial information like income and expenses. This is your Troop's newsletter, so include anything that is relevant to your group.

**Greet the Caregivers**
As each caregiver drops off or picks up their girl(s) from the Troop meeting, be sure that someone is there to greet them and communicate with them about today’s meeting, discuss any future activities, and relay any information that you feel is important or relevant to their girl(s).

**Keep in Touch with Caregivers**
We realize that it may not be realistic to contact every caregiver on a weekly basis—however, make it a point to connect with them as frequently as possible. Every caregiver would like to know how their girl(s) is/are progressing including any awards or badges they’ve earned. They would like to know about their achievements and would love to know about any concerns that you may have. A simple conversation will go a long way in improving caregiver support.

**Encourage Caregivers to participate in the last 10 minutes of your Troop Meetings**
Invite caregivers to join in on your Troop’s closing ceremony—whether it is retiring flags, friendship circles, or a song. This is the perfect time to discuss what the girls have learned during the Troop meeting and remind them when the next meeting will be held.

**Recognize the Caregivers**
Above all, remember to thank your caregivers for their support of your Troop and Girl Scouts. You may wish to send a thank you note, mention them in your Troop’s newsletter, or publically thank them at the close of your Troop meetings. In addition, don’t forget to thank your Troop Volunteers. They also provide an important service to your Troop.

**VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION**

People volunteer for varying reasons. However, many Volunteers are motivated by the quality of their performance. When Volunteers know that their time and energy are
appreciated and that they are valued by Girl Scouts, they will commit themselves to your Troop. Volunteers also want to know that their service is helping everyone and that together we made a difference in girl’s lives. By making a difference in girl’s lives they have made a difference in the world. This is why Volunteer Recognition is one of the most powerful tools to retain the invaluable men and women who volunteer for you. The keys to successfully recognizing your Volunteers include: Doing it well, Doing it Often, and Making it Meaningful.

Creating a Culture of Appreciation
A culture of appreciation is one where anyone working for the Girl Scout Mission feels respected and valued for their service and contribution. You can create this type of culture by acknowledging their accomplishments regardless of their role and length of service. Key elements for successful recognition include inclusiveness, accessibility, and consistency. Ensure that you consider how your recognition efforts affect retention and Volunteer re-engagement. It is great to thank your Volunteers at the end of their term, but it is even better and more effective that everyone continuously recognize their contributions throughout the year.

Informal Rewards for Volunteers
These are day-to-day ways to say “Thank You” to your Volunteers. They are intangible benefits and heartfelt displays of recognitions. These sincere expressions of appreciation are based on specific contributions and are given in a timely matter throughout the year. Informal recognitions are powerful and effective because your Volunteers will feel valued by your Troops members. Examples of meaningful recognitions include:

- A handwritten card or letter
- Have your girls make your Volunteer a drawing
- Take a photograph of the Troop and have everyone sign it
- Make a homemade treat
- Offer to babysit for the Volunteer’s children so they may have a night out
- Donate to Girl Scouts or their favorite charity in their name
- Prepare dinner for the Volunteer and their family
- Thank them in a letter to the editor of your local news publication
- Nominate your Volunteer for a formal Girl Scout award (contact the Training Department for a nomination form and to discuss award options and requirements)

Keep in mind that these thoughtful gestures would be greatly appreciated by any of your Troop Volunteers at any time throughout the year!
SAFETY FIRST

Safety is our number one priority. To provide for the wellbeing of girls, Volunteers are provided with the Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints. GSUSA supplies these resources that aim to create a safe and welcoming experience for all girls and adult Volunteers. These resources are available on our council’s website and include the national program standards and guidelines for common Girl Scout activities. All new Volunteers will need to complete a required criminal background check and welcome video. As a part of your annual membership dues, GSUSA provides supplemental insurance to each member when participating in Girl Scout sponsored activities.

How Many Volunteers Does Your Troop Need

Girl Scout Troops are large enough to provide a cooperative learning environment and small enough to allow for the leadership development of individual girls. All Troops will need to meet the minimum requirements of five girls registered to continue running as a Troop; otherwise we will need to register each girl as a Juliette.

The “ideal” troop size for two registered adult Volunteers will ensure that each Troop does not exceed the maximum number of girls and will enable them to deliver a quality Girl Scout program. These supervision ratios were also devised to ensure the safety and health of your girls. For example, if one adult needs to respond to an emergency, then a second adult will be available to chaperone the rest of the girls. Remember that the two adult Volunteers must be unrelated and one must be female. GSUSA safety guidelines are listed in the following charts. It may take a moment to become familiar with the following charts, but they will be extremely useful to everyone.
Safety is our number one priority!

VOLUNTEER STRUCTURE FOR TROOP MEETINGS
(ONE VOLUNTEER MUST BE FEMALE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GIRL SCOUT GROUP MEETINGS</th>
<th>MAXIMUM NUMBER OF GIRLS FOR TWO UNRELATED ADULT VOLUNTEERS</th>
<th>ADD ONE ADULT PER THIS NUMBER OF GIRLS ONCE YOU HAVE EXCEEDED THE TROOP MAXIMUM IN THE PREVIOUS TABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daisies (Grades K-1)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownies (Grades 2-3)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juniors (Grades 4-5)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We are an inclusive organization and hope to place any girl who is interested in joining a Troop. Remember that we are a sister to every Girl Scout and we ask that you think about her as if she were your own child who was wishing to join. Therefore, all Troops are considered “Open for Placement” and we will continue to place girls in your Troop until such time that it reaches the maximum number allowed by the above GSUSA guidelines. We kindly ask that you let us know if there are extenuating circumstances that will not allow you to accept additional girls. We are your “sisters” and will work with you to “close” your Troop to additional girls if needed. Out of consideration, we simply request that you let us know in advance, so we do not inconvenience you or the girl(s) unnecessarily. Remember-We will work with you!!

For more information on about Safety and adult-to-girl ratios, check out the Volunteer Essentials and/or the Safety Activity Checkpoints on our website.
### Volunteer Structure for Activities Away from Your Usual Troop Meeting Place

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girl Scout Group Meetings</th>
<th>Maximum Number of Girls for Two Unrelated Adult Volunteers</th>
<th>Add One Adult per This Number of Girls Once You Have Exceeded the Troop Maximum in the Previous Table</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daisies (Grades K-1)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownies (Grades 2-3)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juniors (Grades 4-5)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadettes (Grades 6-8)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniors (Grades 9-10)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambassadors (Grades 11-12)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information on about Safety and adult-to-girl ratios, check out the Volunteer Essentials and/or the Safety Activity Checkpoints on our website.
RESOURCES

It may be important for you to familiarize yourself with the resources available to you. In addition to the national program portfolios (*Journeys* and *Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting*); the Volunteer Essentials; and the Safety Activity Checkpoints; there are various other avenues that you may follow.

Don't forget to tap into the resources here at Council. You can also utilize the web because there is a vast amount of information available out there. Social media websites like Facebook, Pinterest, and YouTube will provide you with an array of information. Every Girl Scout Council operates independently, so this is a wonderful avenue to proceed; just check out their websites. There are also a variety of blogs out there on the web in reference to Girl Scouts. You can find an unlimited amount of information out there just be typing in your desired question into the website’s search engine. Don't hesitate to explore all of these options and don't forget that we are here to answer any of your questions. You only need to ask!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learn more about Troop Management:</th>
<th>Learn more about ensuring the safety and security of your Troop:</th>
<th>Learn more about behavior management:</th>
<th>Learn more about earning petals/badges:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online registration or paper forms to download <a href="http://www.girlscouts-gateway.org/en/about-our-council/forms-documents.html">http://www.girlscouts-gateway.org/en/about-our-council/forms-documents.html</a></td>
<td>Safety Wise - Chapter 4 of Volunteer Essentials <a href="http://www.girlscouts-gateway.org/content/dam/gateway/forms-and-documents/VE2014_15.pdf">http://www.girlscouts-gateway.org/content/dam/gateway/forms-and-documents/VE2014_15.pdf</a></td>
<td>Learn more about Troop Finances:</td>
<td>Learn more about building leadership skills:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning your calendar and events <a href="http://www.girlscouts-gateway.org/en/for-volunteers/online-support-for-volunteers.html">http://www.girlscouts-gateway.org/en/for-volunteers/online-support-for-volunteers.html</a></td>
<td>Gateway Council Troop Support Specialist for your Community - <a href="http://www.girlscouts.org/MyCalendar">www.girlscouts.org/MyCalendar</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Learn more about Girl Scouting:</td>
<td>Learn more about planning your first (and subsequent) meetings:</td>
<td>Learn more about planning activities:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>