

## Returning to In-Person Troop Meetings and Activities Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore

### Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Volunteers Edition date: May 10, 2021

From the start of the pandemic, Girl Scouts have proven themselves to be strong community supporters, going above and beyond to keep themselves and others safe. COVID-19 remains an extremely contagious virus that spreads easily in the community. Volunteers should take all reasonable precautions to limit potential exposure for all members and their families, and to prevent additional community transmission.

### Effective May 10, 2021, Girl Scouts Michigan Shore to Shore has established the guidelines below for troops and service units who are ready to meet in person.

- These guidelines are based on measures shared by the [State of Michigan](#) and are subject to change.
- All GSMISTS guidelines are in place regardless of vaccination status and must be adhered to whether the individuals involved are vaccinated or not.
- In addition to the guidelines listed, all Girl Scout policies and procedures must be followed, including [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#), when applicable.
- Troop leaders and families should thoughtfully discuss if they are ready to meet in-person. Families who are not yet comfortable with activities in-person should be provided a way to stay connected to the troop. In-person troop meetings and activities are not required. Each troop/family should weigh their participation based on their own health concerns and tolerance for risk. Members and troops who prefer to continue with virtual meetings and activities may continue to do so.

### Permission Slips

Prior to resuming in-person troop meetings or activities, an [Annual Permission and Health History Form](#) must be completed and signed by a parent/guardian for each girl who will be participating. The troop leader must retain the permission slips.

### COVID-19 Response Form

Prior to resuming in-person troop meetings or activities, a [COVID-19 Response Form](#) must be completed and signed by a parent/guardian for each girl who will be participating. The troop leader must retain this form.

### Troop Meeting Capacities

Follow the current [MDHHS Epidemic Orders](#) on capacity limits. This information is updated on a regular basis. Be sure to check prior to planning meetings/activities.

### Social Distancing

Social distancing is a best practice which helps reduce the spread of COVID-19. To practice social distancing, stay at least 6 feet from other people who are not from your household in both indoor and outdoor spaces. Social distancing will be practiced at GSMISTS council-run activities.

## Face Coverings

Follow the current [MDHHS Epidemic Orders](#) on face covering. This information is updated on a regular basis. Be sure to check prior to planning meetings/activities. Face coverings may be required during some/all of GSMISTS council-run activities. There are girls or volunteers who may not be able to wear masks, due to medical conditions such as asthma. If a girl or volunteer is unable to wear a mask they can participate virtually, or the troop leader can require to see a written medical clearance from a physician (the troop leader should not keep the written medical clearance).

## Day Trips and Activities

For day trips and activities held at public facilities (for example, roller skating rink, movie theater, museum, etc.) the gathering limitations/size of group and face covering guidance is based on what is posted/provided by the facility. Remember it is best practice to social distance. In conjunction with [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#), follow the Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation guidance in this document. Call ahead to the facility or vendor to confirm that they are following CDC and state health department guidelines. If activity or sporting equipment is being provided, ask the provider if they wipe down equipment in between uses, similar to equipment at the gym. Make whatever appropriate accommodations that are necessary. For example, bring extra sanitizer if none will be provided for public use at the activity location.

## Travel and Overnight Stays

GSMISTS will approve travel and overnight stays occurring June 7, 2021 and after. All travel and overnights must be approved by GSMISTS.

- The [Activity/Trip Application](#) for overnights, day trips lasting longer than 8 hours, and high adventure/high risk activity (any activity in *Safety Activity Checkpoints* that requires GSMISTS approval) needs to be submitted to GSMISTS at least 4 weeks prior to date of overnight/activity.
- The [Activity/Trip Application](#) for extended trips of three (3) or more nights needs to be submitted to GSMISTS at least 6 weeks prior to date of travel.

As you plan for travel and overnights:

- Consult with girls and families to measure comfortability levels with traveling during the pandemic.
- Research the COVID-19 situation at the destination to assess potential risks and exposure.
- Be prepared to follow the COVID-19 guidelines of the location you are traveling to.
- Develop a plan for what you will do if someone becomes ill during the trip/overnights. This will be required for GSMISTS approval.

Review [GSMISTS Activity and Trip Planning Guide](#) for more information.

## Transportation

Carpooling and public transportation should be avoided, to maintain social distancing.

## Troop Meeting Space

Outdoor spaces where social distancing can be maintained are strongly recommended for meetings. Get advance permission from the property owner or the jurisdiction that provides the location.

Grand Haven Little House is open for troop and service unit use (no overnights).

Ludington Little House, Betsy Cutler House, and Camp Woodlands (outside use only due to construction), and Camp Anna Behrens are open for troop and service unit use, with overnights beginning June 7, 2021.

Adjusted capacities of GSMISTS facilities for inside, overnight accommodations:

- Betsy Cutler House maximum 25 people
- Camp Woodlands maximum 12 people
- Ludington Little House maximum 12 people
- Camp Anna Behrens
  - Brinkert's Troop House maximum 12 people
  - Meijer Yurt maximum 6 people
  - Wege Yurt maximum 6 people
  - White Pine Cabins maximum 24 people
  - Lodge Pole Cabins maximum 24 people
  - Sky Way maximum 2 people per cabin

Reservations for all facilities are made through our Reservation Calendar located at <https://www.gsmists.org/en/properties/rental-information.html>.

For meetings held at public facilities, contact the facility ahead of time and ask:

1. Is the space cleaned, and touch surfaces (i.e., tabletops, light switches, chairs, etc.) sanitized, at least daily?
2. Who else uses the space (how often, what size is the group)? Is the space cleaned between groups? Can you clean the space yourself prior to your meeting?
3. What type of faucets/soap dispensers are available in the restroom (sensory or manual)? Then, consider whether you can supplement any practices that are less than ideal. For example, if you will arrive after another user group, plan to bring sanitizing wipes to get the space ready for your troop. Another example: if faucets are manual, take some time to show girls how to shut them off with a paper towel. Use paper towels for doorknobs whenever possible. Meetings may not be held in fitness centers or gyms, where a greater risk for contracting the virus may exist. Also, schools or churches may not permit outside groups on premises, so always check and confirm ahead of time.

### **Troop Meetings/Activities at the Home**

GSMISTS allows troops to meet at a volunteer's home if the house has been approved. Follow the current [MDHHS Epidemic Orders](#) on capacity limits. Review [Guidelines for Girl Scout Meetings/Activities in the Home](#) for more information on obtaining permission for meeting at the home.

### **Personal Contact**

Hugs, handshakes, "high-fives," and even activities like the friendship circle or squeeze can transmit COVID-19 from person to person. Refrain from these gestures for the time being. Create a safe way for girls and volunteers to greet and end meetings instead (like tapping elbows).

### **Singing**

Singing and shouting both project germs farther than talking, ask your girls to either hum their closing song, or sing quietly.

### **Food, Dining and Snacks**

Be careful when handling and serving food and have girls be careful with each other when eating. Safety recommendations for food, dining and snacks include:

- Encourage girls to bring their own foods to eat (bag lunch or dinner)
- Encourage girls not to share their food after having touched it, such as a bag of chips.
- Individually wrapped items are recommended.

- If providing snacks, especially if unwrapped, have one person, wearing gloves, hand out items to each person, such as with cupcakes or cookies.
- Avoid “serve yourself” buffets.
- Public dining only as permitted in your local jurisdiction.
- If serving family style, have one person, wearing clean gloves, serve everyone on clean plates.
- Use disposable plates, forks, napkins, etc. when possible.
- Ensure everyone handling food, those serving, girls, adults, wash hands (even if they will be wearing gloves) prior to any food prep or meals, following CDC handwashing guidelines.
- Social distancing practices and preventative guidance (such as face coverings) should be followed at all times.

## Restrooms

Most public restrooms will regulate the number of people using the restroom at the same time, depending on the size. If there is no regulator or signage, have volunteers ensure girls take appropriate turns to maintain social distancing and that they wear their masks in the restrooms. It is ideal to have automatic flushers and sensory faucets to wash hands. If these are not available, girls and adults should get in the habit of using tissue or paper towel to open doors and latches, touching as little as possible. If the restroom is large, have girls use every other stall and avoid using stalls with a person in the stall next to them at the same time. Make sure girls wash hands and use hand sanitizer after leaving the restroom.

## Reporting and Communicating a Positive COVID-19 Test

In the event of a COVID-19 positive test result, do not contact the parents or troop members. Promptly contact GSMISTS Manager of HR & Governance, [hr@gsmists.org](mailto:hr@gsmists.org), in this situation. After receiving guidance, the troop leader will be responsible for:

- Confirming and tracing the positive tester
- Contacting via e-mail the parents of anyone who may have been exposed (or other volunteers)
- Notifying a facility or homeowner where a troop has met

Let other volunteers know that the troop leader will notify parents and others about a positive test result and that the tester’s identity is confidential. Remember that girl and volunteer health information is private and strictly confidential and should only be shared on a need-to-know basis with a council staff member.

## Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation

Follow the [resources developed by credible public health sources such as CDC](#) or your local public health department. Share these with girls and volunteers and ensure that they are practiced during meetings and activities. Place signs in the meeting or activity space to remind girls and volunteers to engage in [everyday preventive actions](#) to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Signs should include:

- Stay home if you are sick.
- Cough and sneeze into a tissue, throw the tissue in the trash, and wash or sanitize your hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Wash hands if you do touch.
- Volunteers, girls and parents should be reminded to make sure temperatures are taken prior to group interaction to confirm the individual is not running a fever and temperature is a normal 98.6 degrees. Members with fever or temperature higher than 98.6 should skip the in-person gathering until their temperature is normal.

## **First Aid Supplies**

Troop first aid supplies should include COVID-19 prevention items including hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol), tissues, disposable facemasks, and disinfectants. Trash baskets or bags should be supplied for meeting and activity spaces, if not already available. Make sure that the trash baskets (or bags) are easily accessible for girls. Disposable or no-contact thermometers may be added to supplies if available and not cost prohibitive, however, parents should be checking temperatures and allowing their girl(s) to join group activities only when temperatures are normal.

## **Disinfectants and Disinfecting**

[Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces](#) and objects that are frequently touched (i.e., tabletops, markers, scissors, etc.). Use a household disinfectant cleaner or see the [EPA's list of effective cleaners](#) approved for use against COVID-19. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.). See the [CDC's website](#) for more on cleaning and disinfecting community facilities.

## **FDA Warning**

The FDA has advised consumers not to use certain hand sanitizers due to unsafe ingredients. The CDC provides an updated list of products that should never be used. Be sure to check [FDA updates on hand sanitizers consumers should not use](#) and stay away from products deemed unsafe.