

girlscouts  
of michigan  
shore to shore



Effective August 1, 2025

# **VOLUNTEER POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

# Girl Scout Promise, Law, and Mission

## Girl Scout Promise

*On my honor, I will try:*

To serve God\* and my country,  
To help people at all times,  
And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

## Girl Scout Law

*I will do my best to be*

honest and fair,  
friendly and helpful,  
considerate and caring,  
courageous and strong, and  
responsible for what I say and do,

*and to*

respect myself and others,  
respect authority,  
use resources wisely,  
make the world a better place, and  
be a sister to every Girl Scout.



## Girl Scout Mission

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

\*Girl Scouts of the USA makes no attempt to define or interpret the word “God” in the Girl Scout Promise. It looks to individual members to establish for themselves the nature of their spiritual beliefs. When making the Girl Scout Promise, individuals may substitute wording appropriate to their own spiritual beliefs for the word “God.” Note: This disclaimer appears in the National Leadership Journey adult guides, but not in the girls’ books. It is included here as a reminder to you, as a volunteer, that it is your responsibility to be sensitive to the spiritual beliefs of the girls and adults in your group and to make sure that everyone in the group feels comfortable and included in Girl Scouting. Please feel free to share this information with girls’ families.

# Introduction

The Volunteer Policies & Procedures of Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore (GSMISTS) are established upon the principle that the direction and success of Girl Scouting rests in the voluntary participation of its adult members.

This document outlines the policies and procedures of GSMISTS. It is not the intent of this document to repeat national policies, but to adopt specific policies to clarify those areas needed to be defined for local use. These policies and procedures are intended to provide the basis for reasonable and consistent guidance for our volunteers. Volunteers are not employees of Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore, and the policies and procedures contained herein do not constitute an employment contract and are subject to change at the discretion of the Board of Directors of Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore.

All members of Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) are responsible for adhering to the policies, practices, procedures, and guidelines in GSUSA's [Blue Book of Basic Documents](#), [Volunteer Essentials](#), and [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#). These documents are published by GSUSA and are used throughout the national organization.

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

Within this document, the term "GSMISTS" is used interchangeably with the words "the Council." The term "Volunteer" is defined as any person who is not a paid staff member, who is approved and appointed by GSMISTS and delivers Girl Scout programming. Their participation affects the health, safety, and/or finances of the girl or adult membership.

These policies and procedures will be reviewed annually to assure they reflect the volunteer management goals GSMISTS, the current policies and trends in Girl Scouts, as well as current legislative requirements.

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# Part 1: Policies

## **COMMITMENT TO PLURALISM**

GSMISTS is committed to achieve pluralism through respect for and appreciation of the religious, racial, ethnic, social, and economic diversity of this Country by reflecting that diversity in its membership, leadership, and programming.

We believe this commitment is an integral part of all that we do as an organization. Only individuals willing to accept the basic tenet that Girl Scouting is for all girls may serve in volunteer leadership.

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY**

GSMISTS maintains a strong policy of equal opportunity. In keeping with GSUSA's [Blue Book of Basic Documents](#); we recruit, train, promote, and dismiss volunteers on the basis of competence and volunteer position performance, without regard to race, creed, color, ethnicity, religion, lineage or citizenship, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, familial status, age, socioeconomic background, source of income, disability, genetic information, predisposing genetic characteristics, carrier status, domestic violence victim status, or any other characteristic protected by law. Furthermore, to assure the membership of GSMISTS reflects the diversity of population groups within its jurisdiction; GSMISTS is committed to a policy of equal opportunity and outreach in the recruitment, selection, placement, development, and recognition of volunteers and in the extension of Girl Scouting to adults in all communities within its jurisdiction.

Adults and volunteers are responsible for making Girl Scouting a place where girls are as safe emotionally as they are physically. Girl Scouts welcomes all girls in grades K-12, regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, family structure, religion, and socioeconomic background. When scheduling, helping plan, and carrying out activities, carefully consider the needs of all girls involved (e.g. financial constraints, religious holidays, accessibility of appropriate transportation, and meeting places).

Any volunteer who engages in or encourages discrimination in any form is subject to release from their volunteer position at the discretion of GSMISTS.

## **MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION**

All girls and adults participating in the Girl Scout Movement must be registered as members with GSUSA and pay the annual membership dues as outlined by GSUSA, except those adults who are lifetime members. At times there are adults who are working on a short-term project, in a temporary advisory or consulting capacity, who do not work with girls or Girl Scout funds directly, in which membership is not a requirement. Members agree to abide by the policies, principles, and procedures of GSUSA and GSMISTS

## **VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS & BENEFITS**

### Basic Volunteer Requirements

- Membership Registration - Adult volunteers participating in the Girl Scout Movement must be registered as members with GSUSA and individually pay the annual membership dues, except those adults who are lifetime members or who are volunteering in an episodic capacity.
- Must complete and pass a criminal background check.
- Belief in the Girl Scout Mission.
- Acceptance of the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
- Time to perform the duties and responsibilities of the position.
- Completion of required training.
- An understanding that services are given without payment.
- Accept supervision and provide feedback.

Benefits to volunteers include:

- GSMISTS newsletter and publications.
- Learning opportunities and support from GSMISTS staff.
- Supplementary accident insurance as part of GSUSA membership.
- Volunteer experience that may be useful for career development.

### Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

Volunteers are a valuable resource to GSMISTS, its staff, and members. Volunteers shall be extended the right to be given meaningful assignments, the right to be treated respectfully, the right to effective supervision, the right to full involvement and participation, and the right to appropriate recognition for work done.

In return, volunteers shall agree to perform their duties to the best of their abilities, to support the goals and policies and procedures of GSMISTS and to ask for assistance and/or guidance from the service team or GSMISTS staff if they find themselves in a situation that they are unsure of or may conflict with those goals and policies of GSMISTS, as detailed in the Conflict Resolution section of this document.

Further, volunteers shall agree that they will not use the Girl Scout name, related activities, publications and/or facilities for public or private promotion of their own views and opinions on topics unrelated to Girl Scouting (including, but not limited to, views on sexual orientation, religion, family situations, politics, etc.).

## **VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT**

GSMISTS is committed to the highest ethical standards and we expect all volunteers to act in the best interest of the organization and its mission. This mission demands that we, as stewards, act in an ethical manner to uphold the public trust and the values of responsibility, integrity, openness, honesty, accountability, and respect in all that we do in the name of Girl Scouts.

I agree to uphold these values and I will:

1. Affirm the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
2. Take all required trainings and comply with GSMISTS policies, procedures, and safety guidelines.
3. Welcome girls and adults from a variety of backgrounds and include them in activities. Make an intentional effort to learn about, experience, and appreciate cultures other than my own.
4. Honor the leadership role of the girls and support their decisions.
5. Act responsibly when overseeing Girl Scout funds, maintain accurate records, and file required reports. Girl Scout funds are only to be used in direct support of Girl Scout programs and to pay for appropriate Girl Scout expenses.
6. Model the behavior that shows respect for local, state, and federal laws and ordinances, as well as follow GSMISTS Volunteer Policies & Procedures, [Volunteer Essentials](#), [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#), and in GSUSA's [Blue Book of Basic Documents](#).

## **CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK**

Caregivers and girls trust that Girl Scouts is a safe place, and we do not take that trust lightly. GSMISTS is committed to maintaining policies and procedures that create a safe environment for our members. One of those policies is to conduct a criminal background check for all new volunteers and repeat them every three years. GSMISTS also reserves the right to conduct checks on volunteers regarding abuse and neglect cases.

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## **Frequently Asked Questions on Criminal Background Check**

### **How do I complete a criminal background check with Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore?**

After selecting to be a volunteer from the GSMISTS website and completing the membership registration be on the lookout for an e-mail from our trusted vendor's website ***Sterling Volunteers*** that offers screening services for our volunteer program. They are the only screening provider that allows volunteers to own and share their criminal background check in a safe, tamper-free environment. During the Sterling Volunteers verification process you will enter the necessary information to process your own criminal background check online and receive an e-mail from [theadvocates@sterlingvolunteers.com](mailto:theadvocates@sterlingvolunteers.com).

### **Who are The Advocates?**

The Advocates are the Sterling Volunteers customer care team. They are available via phone and e-mail and can help with platform-usage questions and general inquiries. They can be reached at [theadvocates@sterlingvolunteers.com](mailto:theadvocates@sterlingvolunteers.com) or 1-855-326-1860, Option 3.

### **How long will the background search take?**

The majority of searches will be returned in 48-72 hours, although that is not a guarantee. In some cases, especially if we find criminal information or if a candidate has lived in multiple locations, the search can take up to a month.

### **Why are my DOB and SSN required?**

There are three pieces of information needed for an accurate, thorough criminal background check: 1) legal first name and legal last name, correctly spelled; 2) date of birth; and 3) Social Security Number (SSN).

### **I started the criminal background check and did not finish. I went back in and it did not work. What should I do?**

Once you create a username and password, you will be able to log back in at any time to complete your criminal background check. If for some reason you cannot regain access to your account, contact [theadvocates@sterlingvolunteers.com](mailto:theadvocates@sterlingvolunteers.com) or by phone at 1-855-326-1860.

### **How much does a criminal background check cost?**

GSMISTS is currently covering the cost of criminal background checks. If you would like to make a charitable contribution to GSMISTS to help defray the cost of the criminal background check, your contribution will be used to enhance the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. This option can be selected in the final processing of your criminal background check.

### **What does GSMISTS check for? Are you checking my credit?**

We only perform a criminal background check. We do not check financial information or credit.

### **I had a criminal background check done at my work. Do I still need to complete one with GSMISTS?**

Sterling Volunteers is the criminal background check vendor that is used by GSMISTS. At this time, **we do not accept** criminal background checks from other vendors.

### **What could exclude me from volunteering with Girl Scouts?**

#### **Volunteer Disqualification**

- Providing false information during the Criminal Background Check screening process, such as driver's license number, Social Security number, or date of birth is grounds for automatic disqualification as a Girl Scout Volunteer, regardless of the result of the criminal background check.
- Registered sex offenders are not eligible for membership in GSUSA and may not participate in any capacity with Girl Scout programs. Volunteers may not knowingly hold activities where a registered sex offender is present. No registered sex offender is permitted to attend Girl Scout meetings, events, or activities. Troop meetings and activities may not be held or conducted at any residence where a member of the household is a Registered Sex Offender.

- A non-exhaustive list of conduct or offenses that may disqualify a person from volunteer participation, as well as the process used to determine are below.

**Automatic disqualification:**

- Federal or State felony conviction within the past ten years (subject to GSMISTS review)
- Federal or State felony offenses against persons, including family members
- Federal or State felony drug-related offenses
- Crimes against children, the elderly, the disabled, and other vulnerable populations
- Sexual offenses
- Residing with a registered sex offender
- Crimes defined as public indecency
- Crimes involving the use of weapons
- Arson
- Any violent crime
- Any offense involving driving under the influence, driving while intoxicated, reckless operation of a vehicle, loss of driver’s license, or equivalent within past five years (subject to GSMISTS review)
- Any offense involving stealing, petty theft, misuse of credit cards, or passing bad checks.
- Any misdemeanor in the last five years.

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

The factors used to determine disqualification of a person from volunteer participation is as follows. The nature and severity of the criminal conduct, the position for which the person seeks to volunteer, length of time since the criminal conduct occurred, the circumstances under which the crime was committed, degree of rehabilitation and the number of crimes committed by the prospective volunteer.

**GSMISTS reserves the right to disqualify or restrict the duties of any person who has been:**

- Arrested;
- Convicted of certain crimes;
- Placed on probation or deferred adjudication for certain crimes, and/or who has committed acts that are considered contrary to the community standards of justice, honesty, or good morals, or has, plead guilty or no contest to certain crimes.

**Drivers:**

Volunteers who drive vehicles for Girl Scouts trips must be volunteers with a valid driver’s license and carry current motor vehicle insurance in compliance with Michigan State Law. Accidents and violation records will be reviewed by GSMISTS staff. A driving restriction may be placed on an individual prohibiting them from driving members on behalf of GSMISTS based on the number and severity of violations or accidents.

The troop leader in charge of a Girl Scout activity or trip should inquire with all drivers that they are volunteers, without a driving restriction, have a valid driver’s license, and a current auto insurance policy. It is not necessary for the troop leader to maintain a copy of these documents.

### **How do I dispute a decision made by Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore?**

Any applicant who disputes or desires to contest the information provided by the reporting agency must file a written notice with GSMISTS within 30 days of being notified that her or his criminal background check for volunteer participation has been determined ineligible and/or restricted. The volunteer will have an opportunity to review the criminal history report provided by the reporting agency. It is the applicant's responsibility to appeal the report received from the reporting agency and to arrange for any corrections to be sent to GSMISTS.

GSMISTS reserves the right to re-screen any volunteer on a periodic or episodic basis as needed. If a person is charged with any misconduct or offense, involvement with GSMISTS as a volunteer may be temporarily suspended during disposition or investigation of the occurrence.

### **SEX OFFENDERS AND OTHER CRIMINAL ACTS**

A Registered Sex Offender may not serve as a volunteer with GSMISTS in any capacity and they may not participate in any way, either in troop, service unit, or in GSMISTS activities where girl members may be present. Troop meetings and activities may not be held or conducted at any residence where a member of the household is a Registered Sex Offender.

Troop leaders, assistant troop leaders, troop volunteers, and parents or guardians of girl members are required to immediately notify GSMISTS if she or he is, or an immediate family or household member is, or become aware that any troop leader, troop assistant leader or other troop volunteer, or troop family member is a Registered Sex Offender, has pending charges, has pled guilty or no contest, or has been placed on probation or deferred adjudication, regarding sexual offenses.

In addition, the individuals identified above are also required to immediately notify GSMISTS if they have been convicted, have pending charges, are placed on probation for a crime, or become aware of another person in their household or other adult associated with a troop has been convicted, has pending charges or has been placed on probation.

When GSMISTS in its discretion determines that it is reasonably necessary to safeguard girl members, GSMISTS may notify the parents or guardians of all girl members of a troop regarding: (a) the status of a troop leader, assistant leader, volunteer or family member as a Registered Sex Offender; (b) the requirements of this Policy; and (c) the steps taken by GSMISTS to comply with the policy (for instance, the dismissal of, or written notice as described above to, the Registered Sex Offender.) For instance, if a family member of a Registered Sex Offender withdraws his or her girl member from the troop, or if a troop leader, assistant troop leader, or other troop volunteer has been dismissed, GSMISTS may determine it is not necessary to give notice to the parents or guardians of the other girl members of his or her status as a Registered Sex Offender.

## **HARASSMENT/HOSTILITY/BULLYING**

GSMISTS is committed to an environment and climate in which relationships are characterized by dignity, respect, courtesy, and equitable treatment. It is the policy of GSMISTS to provide all volunteers, staff, and members (girl and adult) with an environment free from all forms of unlawful or unwelcomed harassment, hostility, and bullying; and therefore, it will not be tolerated.

Harassment on the basis of race, creed, color, ethnicity, religion, lineage or citizenship, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, familial status, age, socioeconomic background, source of income, disability, genetic information, predisposing genetic characteristics, carrier status, domestic violence victim status, or any other characteristic protected by law will not be tolerated, and is grounds for release.

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

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

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

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

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

GSMISTS prohibits sexual harassment and retaliation against its applicants, interns, contractors, volunteers, or employees by another individual. Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and is unlawful under federal, Michigan State, and local law. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome conduct which is either of a sexual nature or which is directed at an individual because of that individuals’ sex or gender, gender identity or gender expression (including, but not limited to, transgender status), and/or sexual orientation. Sexual harassment can be verbal, visual, or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion towards an individual based on sex or gender, gender identity or gender expression, and/or sexual orientation. This includes but is not limited to sexual advances or flirtations, requests for sexual favors, obscene or vulgar comments or gestures, sexual jokes or comments about a person’s body, and propositions or suggestive or insulting comments of a sexual nature. It is unlawful and against this policy for males to sexually harass females or other males, and for females to sexually harass males or other females.

In accordance with this policy, GSMISTS will not condone or tolerate the following:

- Any display or demonstration of sexual activity between volunteers or between volunteers and girl members.
- Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between volunteers and girl members.
- Infliction of sexually abusive behavior upon girl members, including sexual touching and bodily contact, exhibitionism, voyeurism, and/or involvement of girl members in pornographic materials.
- Unwelcome sexual conduct/harassment of any Girl Scout member, volunteer, or employee of the same or opposite sex.
- Any other similar inappropriate behavior in accordance with federal, state, and local law.

GSMISTS maintains an environment that encourages any volunteer who believes that she/he has been the subject of any unlawful or unwelcome harassment as defined in GSMISTS policy, to report the incident to the Director of Human Resources & Governance or her/his designee. Similarly, a volunteer who believes that a girl member is the victim of any form of harassment must immediately report the fact to the Director of Human Resources & Governance or her/his designee. The Director of Human Resources & Governance or her/his designee will initiate an investigation and, depending on the findings, take appropriate corrective action.

If the harassment involves unwanted physical touching, coerced physical confinement or coerced sex acts, the conduct may constitute a crime. Contact the local police department or, in an emergency, dial 9-1-1.

GSMISTS reserves the right to refuse appointment/reappointment to any position and to dismiss or suspend from any position or affiliation with GSMISTS, any volunteer who, participating in Girl Scout activities, violates the aforementioned policy.

GSMISTS complete Anti-Harassment Policy and Sexual Harassment Policy are available by contacting GSMISTS Human Resources.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

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

Volunteer members or any member of their family, acting individually, or on behalf of another entity to which they have allegiance or obligation, should not utilize their position with GSMISTS for any personal advantage or for the advantage of another entity. A volunteer or any member of his/her immediate family shall not engage in conduct or activities which constitute a conflict of interest.

The purpose of the conflict of interest policy is to protect GSMISTS's constituents when volunteers are contemplating entering into a transaction or arrangement that might benefit the private interest of a volunteer or family member holding a leadership position over Girl Scout members or other volunteers.

Volunteers are prohibited from soliciting directly or indirectly any Girl Scout member or their families for any business relationship, charitable organization, or vendor relationship that may be perceived as a conflict of interest.

**Duty to Disclose:** Volunteers shall disclose in writing a full description of any activity, interest or relationship that might create or appear to create a conflict of interest as soon as practicable, prior to the inception of the activity, interest, or relationship.

In connection with any actual or possible conflict of interest where a volunteer or family member is expected to gain financially, the volunteer must disclose the existence of the financial interest and be given the opportunity to disclose all facts to their service unit leadership and GSMISTS staff representative to consider the proposed transaction or arrangement.

If a volunteer has brought legal action against GSMISTS or has caused GSMISTS to initiate legal action, GSMISTS has the right, at its discretion, to decline to appoint that person to a volunteer position within GSMISTS, or to remove that volunteer from her or his position if currently in place. Legal action includes any or all remedies of existing federal and state law.

This policy statement is not intended to apply to gifts and/or similar entertainment of nominal value that clearly are in keeping with good business ethics and do not obligate the recipient.

Any matter of question or interpretation that arises relating to this policy should be referred to the Chief Executive Officer for decision.

All volunteers are expected to observe the Conflict of Interest Statement.

All members of the Board of Directors will be required to sign an appropriate Conflict of Interest Disclosure.

This policy is intended to supplement but not replace any applicable state and federal laws governing conflicts of interest applicable to nonprofit and charitable organizations.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary, privileged, or sensitive information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer, whether this information involves a staff member, volunteer, member (girl or adult), or other person, or overall GSMISTS or personal business. Confidential information includes but is not limited to, non-public technical, business and financial information and plans, as well as private information about councils, girls, volunteers, customers, suppliers and employees. Information may include names, addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and information that might relate to family health, circumstances, living arrangements, or financial matters.

Personal, medical and/or financial information about any girl or adult member which becomes known to a volunteer must be treated as confidential and may only be shared when necessary and only through established systems or the appropriate GSMISTS staff member/process. Health or medical information may be disclosed to the extent necessary solely for treatment or emergency purposes.

Names, addresses, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers of girls and adults must not be shared with any individual or business outside of Girl Scouting except as required for safety or for emergency purposes. Confidential information about members must not be published through any means including any internet channels or social media. Volunteers should be aware that most e-mails are not necessarily sent through secure channels and must only send content which is not confidential. Steps must be taken to properly secure and protect personal information in possession of volunteers, whether in paper or electronic form. Volunteers must exercise good judgment and care at all times to avoid unauthorized or improper disclosures of confidential information. Conversations in public places should be limited to matters that do not pertain to information of a sensitive or confidential nature. The privacy of all members must be respected and protected.

Any volunteer who belongs to multiple youth serving organizations is expected to protect the confidential information, brand, program pieces, and reputation of Girl Scouts. Using or sharing our information with competing organizations is strictly prohibited and may be a basis for release, suspension, or cause for not being reappointed to a position.

Failure to maintain confidentiality may result in release of the volunteer's relationship with GSMISTS. Volunteers in certain key positions may be asked to sign GSMISTS Confidential Non-Disclosure Agreement or other similar documents.

### **WHISTLEBLOWER**

Retaliation against anyone who has reported an allegation of harassment, sexual harassment, or any violation of any GSMISTS policy is expressly prohibited and, if it occurs, will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including releasing the person who has engaged in the retaliatory behavior from their volunteer position. No volunteer making a good faith report shall be subjected to any retaliation from GSMISTS.

### **CHILD ABUSE**

Upon Girl Scout membership, registrants agree to adhere to all abuse prevention policies and procedures as set forth by Girl Scouts of the USA and GSMISTS.

GSMISTS maintains and supports environments that are free of child abuse and neglect as defined by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act. Child abuse and neglect are unlawful acts and it is against GSMISTS policy for any volunteers or employed staff, male or female, to physically, sexually, or mentally abuse or neglect any child.

Physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse of youth is forbidden. Sexual pressure, sexual advances, improper touching, sexual communication, including text messaging, and sexual activity of any kind with Girl Scout members is not tolerated. If you witness or experience any behavior of this nature, including between youth, notify appropriate GSMISTS staff immediately. Incidences of abuse of any kind will result in immediate council intervention and law enforcement notification when necessary. Volunteers are responsible for following their GSMISTS guidelines for reporting any direct information or concern around physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse with respect to members.

Youth violence or bullying is not tolerated in Girl Scouts. Youth violence occurs when young people intentionally use physical force or power to threaten or harm others. Bullying is a form of youth violence. Volunteers should become familiar with the signs, risk factors, and preventive measures against this type of behavior. If you witness or experience any behavior of this nature, notify the appropriate GSMISTS staff for guidance. The CDC provides excellent resources on this topic, including:

[CDC Youth Violence](#)

[CDC Bullying](#)

[CDC Youth Violence Prevention](#)

GSMISTS has adopted the “GSUSA Girl Scouts Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Course” training. It is included in the mandatory GSMISTS New Leader Training. Existing volunteers can access it on demand on their gsLearn dashboard. This training should be revisited every two years.

The 50-minute on demand training prepares supervising adults of Girl Scout youth to recognize, respond to, and report concerns of child abuse and neglect. Additionally, supervising adults will be empowered to prevent abuse by learning

Girl Scout recommended practices, policies and procedures. Girl Scout practices, policies and procedures are proactive measures designed to prevent abusers from interacting with Girl Scouts to foster a safe space for children to thrive.

GSMISTS reserves the right to refuse membership endorsement or reappointment, and to dismiss or to exclude from affiliation with GSMISTS, any volunteer who in the judgment of GSMISTS poses a risk of injury to a minor or is believed to have abused or neglected any child or who has been convicted of any crime against a child.

According to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), GSMISTS volunteers are not mandated reporters. If any GSMISTS volunteer reasonably suspects or reasonably believes a girl member is being abused, they should report these suspicions to MDHHS, by calling 855-444-3911. Reports to MDHHS can be anonymous. The reporting GSMISTS volunteer should also complete and file a GSMISTS [Accident/Incident Report Form](#).

For more information, please review these available resources:

[Child Welfare Information Gateway about Child Abuse and Neglect](#)

[How to Report Child Abuse and Neglect](#)

[CDC Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention](#)

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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

For purposes of this policy, a conflict is defined as any kind of disagreement between two or more people.

GSMISTS is committed to providing individuals the right to a safe and neutral process to resolve conflicts. Recognizing that each individual has both a personal interest in and a share of the responsibility for resolving conflicts in which she or he is involved, GSMISTS uses a progressive conflict resolution process for volunteers.

The most effective way of resolving complaints and concerns is usually by calm, open discussion between the individuals involved by telephone or in person. For this reason, prior to any kind of escalation, the involved parties are encouraged to try to resolve the matter informally among themselves. Adding a recommended cooldown period of 24 hours should be considered to allow all involved to have thoughtful calm conversations. E-mail exchanges, text messages, and social media communication are generally not conducive to a prompt and efficient resolution and, therefore, are not considered an effective way of resolving conflict and should be avoided.

Below are potential scenarios and steps to follow before escalating a conflict or concern. Please use the [Conflict Management Notes](#) worksheet to guide the conversation.

- **Girls in a Troop:** Has the troop leader addressed this situation? Has the troop leader worked with the girls, parents, and other troop volunteers to resolve this matter? If it cannot be resolved at the troop level, has the service unit director been asked to assist as a mediator for the troop?
- **Adults Within a Troop:** Has the troop leader addressed the situation? Has the troop leader mediated with the parties involved? If it cannot be resolved at the troop level, has the service unit director been asked to assist as a mediator for the troop?
- **Volunteers:** Has the troop leader/service unit team member/volunteer worked to address the situation? If it cannot be resolved between the volunteers, has the service unit director been asked to assist as a mediator for the troop?

### Conflict/Problem Resolution Procedures

If all steps above have been taken to resolve the conflict informally but the matter has not been resolved, then the appropriate members of GSMISTS staff should be informed. You will be asked to provide the member of GSMISTS staff with a completed [Conflict Management Notes](#) worksheet.

Upon the member of GSMISTS staff being notified and given the [Conflict Management Notes](#) worksheet the information gathering process will begin. This process can include phone calls, e-mails, and/or in person meetings with all parties involved. Please note that this information gathering can take a minimum of 10 business days. Once all information has been gathered, the member of GSMISTS staff will provide a resolution to all affected parties.

If deemed necessary by the member of GSMISTS staff, a mediator from outside GSMISTS may be brought in to assist in resolving any situation.

## **DELINQUENT FUNDS**

Members with amounts due to GSMISTS more than 45 days past due are not permitted to handle money, product, or merchandise for GSMISTS until the amount owed is paid in full. GSMISTS reserves the right to restrict or remove from GSMISTS any person who owes money to GSMISTS.

Restriction or dismissal may occur because of delinquent and/or mismanagement of funds. Reappointment to a volunteer position is at the discretion of GSMISTS. GSMISTS will make a good faith attempt to collect any monies owed and reserves the right to use outside collection agencies. If restitution is not paid within 45 days, GSMISTS retains the right to file criminal and/or civil charges.

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

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

A volunteer owing a debt to GSMISTS for more than 4 months will be removed from their volunteer position. She/he will not be eligible to be reappointed or serve in an appointed volunteer position until such time as that debt is paid in full. When the debt is paid in full, the volunteer may serve only in a volunteer role that does not have financial responsibilities for one full Girl Scout year or upon reevaluation. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to contact GSMISTS and request a review of her/his volunteer eligibility status.

Additional restrictions or actions may be applied for specific circumstances; the volunteer will be notified in writing of any restrictions or actions taken.

Volunteers, both at troop and service unit levels, must follow the policies and procedures as related to Finances and Money-Earning as detailed in both this document and [Volunteer Essentials](#). This includes but is not limited to:

- Adhering to requirements for submitting annual finance reports by the established deadlines
- Following requirements and guidelines for appropriate money-earning activities

## **CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS**

No volunteer may waive the liability of a third party on behalf of GSMISTS. Volunteers may not enter into any contract or agreement other than those designated in this policy. Volunteers may sign rental car contracts or agreement paperwork after the Activity & Trip Application has been approved. A copy of this paperwork must be turned into GSMISTS prior to the trip. Bus rentals must be approved, and contracts signed by a GSMISTS designee.

## **ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE**

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

Violators of the alcohol and drug policy will be asked to leave GSMISTS property or activity site. Any violation of this policy will be grounds for appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including removal from volunteer role.

Alcoholic beverages may be served to/consumed by adults of legal age at GSMISTS events when girls are not present only when previously approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

## **TOBACCO/MARIJUANA/SMOKING/VAPING**

Volunteers function as role models at all times, and therefore the use of tobacco/marijuana/smoking/vaping products is prohibited whenever girl members are present in any environment. This policy applies to all types of smoking/vaping and similar apparatus and the use of tobacco in any form.

## **WEAPONS**

Firearms and/or weapons are prohibited while on GSMISTS's property (owned or leased), driving a GSMISTS - owned, rented or leased vehicle, or at meetings, events, or trips. Weapons include firearms, knives, explosives, and other items with the potential to inflict harm. Any violation of this policy will be grounds for appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including removal from volunteer role.

Excluded from this provision, would be any equipment that a volunteer would use in a typical camping environment while engaged in camping activities or by a trained adult while conducting a GSMISTS-approved Girl Scout program activity, and must be used according to the guidelines for such in [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#).

## **UNIFORMS**

Girl Scouts of the USA is a uniformed organization in which the uniform is a symbol of pride and respect and a mark of distinction. Although wearing a uniform is encouraged, it is not required for participation.

The official emblem of the Girl Scout Movement in the United States is the trefoil. The badges, insignia, and uniforms of Girl Scouts of the United States of America shall be protected to the fullest extent possible and shall be made available to and used only by members registered with Girl Scouts of the United States of America, or persons authorized by the National Board of Directors.

For adult members, the unifying look of the uniform is an official Girl Scout official scarf or tie for men, worn with official membership pins and combined with their own navy blue business attire. Volunteers are encouraged to wear the Girl Scout pin when they are not in uniform and participating in Girl Scout activities, i.e. at meetings, during cookie booths.

## **ANIMALS**

Animals may not be brought onto any GSMISTS property or into any activity without the written permission of the Chief Executive Officer or her/his designee. Exceptions will be made for animals needed to assist persons with disabilities and for fulfilling program activities.

## **PROPERTY**

No person should use or alter GSMISTS property or equipment without permission from No person should use or alter GSMISTS property or equipment without permission from GSMISTS.

The use of GSMISTS properties and/or equipment, for personal gain or for the purposes of solicitation or distribution of literature for non-sanctioned Girl Scout events is prohibited.

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

“Solicitation” means requesting another person to purchase goods and/or services; donate goods, services, or money to any person or organization; or sign petitions or the like for any purpose.

## Part 2: Procedures

### **VOLUNTEER PHILOSOPHY**

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

GSMISTS will create a culture of appreciation that includes both formal and informal methods to recognize all volunteers for their time, talent, and impact. Volunteers can also be nominated or nominate other volunteers for more formal council and national recognition consistent with the GSUSA guidelines, Adult Recognitions in Girl Scouting. More information can be found in GSMISTS [Adult Recognitions Handbook](#).

### **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 do 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. GSMISTS is committed to providing enriching quality experiences for both girls and adults.

### **VOLUNTEER/STAFF PARTNERSHIP**

GSMISTS staff is employed to provide full-time managerial and specialist expertise, research capability, and continuity to support the delivery of program to girls through volunteers. Volunteers and staff are partners in implementing the Mission, the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, and the goals of GSMISTS. It is essential that each partner understands and respects the needs and abilities of the other.

### **VOLUNTEER ROLE**

A volunteer is any adult (male or female, 18 years of age or older) who, without compensation or expectation of compensation, performs a task on behalf of GSMISTS. A volunteer must be approved (registered member of Girl Scouts and background check approved) and appointed by GSMISTS prior to performing the task.

All adults attending troop meetings or activities on a regular basis (more than 1 time); or attending any overnight activity; or who at any time assume care, custody, or control of girl members and/or Girl Scout money must be both a registered adult member of GSUSA and a volunteer of GSMISTS.

## **GSMISTS has two main categories of volunteers:**

- **Operational Volunteers:** Adult members who provide the direct/indirect services to girls and adults. Operational volunteers are appointed for a term of up to one year, depending on the volunteer position held.
  - Episodic volunteers are also operational volunteers who serve on a one-time or limited basis. These volunteers may not go through the same appointment process based on responsibilities/tasks of their assignment.
- **Governance Volunteers:** Members who communicate ideas and feelings, influence proposals, and make decisions that govern GSMISTS and its members. They are accountable to the voting members of GSMISTS. Governance volunteers are elected or appointed. Volunteers are primarily 18 years of age or older, although girls age 14 and above may serve as Delegates or Alternates.

Unless otherwise specified, Volunteer Policies & Procedures apply to all volunteers.

### **POSITION DESCRIPTIONS**

Each volunteer position will have a volunteer position description that defines specific responsibilities, clarifies expectations, and forms the basis for assessment of volunteer performance, reappointment, rotation to another position, and/or release. This position description must be signed and returned to GSMISTS.

### **ACCEPTANCE AND APPOINTMENT OF VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteer eligibility is determined, and acceptance is completed online. Prior to applying for a volunteer position, it is the responsibility of the prospective volunteer to review the volunteer position description for the role for which they are applying.

Girl Scout volunteers must be appointed to their position by GSMISTS staff, using the procedures below. It is the responsibility of the prospective volunteer to complete all the required steps. GSMISTS reserves the right to limit volunteer involvement until all steps have been completed.

1. Prospective volunteer reviews volunteer position descriptions located on GSMISTS website to determine their interest in becoming a volunteer.
2. Prospective volunteer joins Girl Scouts by registering online, selecting the appropriate volunteer role, and paying the membership dues.
3. Prospective volunteer successfully completes required criminal background check. Criminal background checks are conducted every 3 years for current/active volunteers. GSMISTS will notify volunteers as to when their criminal background check needs to be reran.
4. Prospective volunteer receives notification that her/his criminal background check has been approved. If the position is mutually agreed upon after reviewing the volunteer position description, the new volunteer accepts the position by signing and returning their volunteer position description to GSMISTS.
5. The new volunteer appointment is conditional based on successful completion of required training for their position.

## Appointment Terms

- **Operational volunteers** may be appointed for a term of up to one year and will be reappointed based upon completion of responsibilities as outlined in volunteer position description. Please see the Volunteer Supervision, Performance Assessment, and Reappointment section of this document for more information.
- **Terms for governance volunteers** (including delegates, members and Officers of Board of Directors and its committees, etc.), vary, and are detailed in [Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore Bylaws \(4/22/2017\)](#).

## TRAINING AND SUPPORT

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

All new Girl Scout troop leaders and assistant leaders must complete the following mandatory training upon acceptance of their leadership role:

- **GSMISTS New Leader Training:** an overview of the Girl Scout purpose and organization, GSMISTS information, and the support systems available to help them in their work.

Existing Girl Scout troop leaders and assistant leaders should complete the “GSMISTS Troop Leader Refresher” training annually. This on demand training is available on their gsLearn dashboard.

GSMISTS has adopted the “GSUSA Girl Scouts Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Course” training. It is included in the mandatory GSMISTS New Leader Training. Existing volunteers can access it on demand on their gsLearn dashboard. This training should be revisited every two years.

The 50-minute on demand training prepares supervising adults of Girl Scout youth to recognize, respond to, and report concerns of child abuse and neglect. Additionally, supervising adults will be empowered to prevent abuse by learning Girl Scout recommended practices, policies and procedures. Girl Scout practices, policies and procedures are proactive measures designed to prevent abusers from interacting with Girl Scouts to foster a safe space for children to thrive.

Additional required training expectations are outlined in each volunteer position description. Other training may be offered to be completed within specified timeframes. Additionally, there may be mandatory training or refresher workshops for all volunteers that coincides with their criminal background check renewal process.

Volunteer training is offered in a variety of ways to best meet varied and unique learning styles: written resources, face-to-face learning, and interactive online learning.

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

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

## **VOLUNTEER SUPERVISION, PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT, AND REAPPOINTMENT**

Volunteers are essential in providing support, guidance, and supervision to other volunteers. In addition, GSMISTS staff shall be available to all volunteers for consultation and assistance. To have the best experience, volunteers are encouraged to utilize this support system to help navigate new roles or challenges.

Supervision of volunteers may include periodic verbal and/or written coaching based upon expectations outlined in the volunteer position description. The purpose of the coaching could be to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of GSMISTS volunteers, to evaluate changes that need to be made, to help assess whether a position is a good fit or make any other recommendations to help the volunteer be successful in her/his role.

Volunteers are automatically reappointed to their current volunteer position(s) unless otherwise notified by GSMISTS staff. In the case of unsatisfactory performance, the volunteer will be asked to make changes or to fulfill specified requirements to correct the unfavorable behavior within a specified timeframe. Failure to improve performance will subject a volunteer to redirection or release. At any time, a volunteer may be appointed to another Girl Scout position, removed from a position, or may resign from a position.

Service unit team members will be reappointed based on past performance, adherence to GSMISTS and GSUSA policies and procedures, support of the Girl Scout mission, promise, and law, supporting GSMISTS goals, as well as positive relationships with the community, parents, other volunteers, and GSMISTS staff. Service unit team positions are a one-year term. Service unit team members will be evaluated on their performance by GSMISTS staff, prior to reappointment. There will be mutual acceptance of position accountabilities, expectations, and time commitments.

Volunteers with financial responsibility to troops/groups or to GSMISTS will not be reappointed to a position if required financial responsibilities have not been met.

Although troop finances can be managed by any approved, registered adult listed to the troop, the troop leader will ultimately be responsible for the troop's finances and the submission of the troop's annual Finance Report.

Details on terms, vacancies and election/re-election/removal of Governance volunteers are detailed in [Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore, Bylaws \(4/22/2017\)](#).

## **VOLUNTEER RESIGNATION**

A volunteer may resign from her/his volunteer position at any time following these steps:

1. Prior to giving notice, we encourage her/him to discuss the reason(s) with their GSMISTS Community Membership Manager.
2. At least two weeks prior to leaving, the volunteer should submit a written resignation outlining the specific position(s) from which she/he is resigning and the reason(s) for leaving.

3. When applicable, we ask that the volunteer assist in identifying a replacement and communicate her/his decision with members of the service unit team.

The volunteer may be required to balance Girl Scout funds/accounts and return property and records. The volunteer and their GSMISTS Community Membership Manager will be responsible for completing all necessary steps to ensure a smooth transition.

### **VOLUNTEER REDIRECT/RELEASE**

Either GSMISTS or the volunteer may initiate a redirect or release from a volunteer position prior to the end of the term of appointment for any reason. Situations may arise in which GSMISTS may initiate a release of a volunteer from a position prior to the end of the term of appointment. Any action to release a volunteer will receive careful and detailed consideration.

Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore may release a volunteer because of, but not limited to:

- Restructuring of positions or elimination of the volunteer position in which the individual serves;
- The volunteer's inability or failure to complete the requirements of the position;
- Conduct not consistent with the principles of the Girl Scout Movement;
- Not demonstrating the core values of the Girl Scout mission. This may include but is not limited to: speaking poorly of girls, parents, volunteers, or GSMISTS staff; posting negative comments on Facebook or other social media websites, etc.;
- Failure to support GSMISTS policies, activities, and/or goals;
- Refusal to comply with GSMISTS or Girl Scouts of the USA policies and procedures. Examples include but are not limited to:
  - o Unauthorized possession of dangerous weapons on Girl Scout property or while conducting volunteer activities, as stated in the policy prohibiting weapons.
  - o Willful violation of security or safety rules; negligence or any careless action, which endangers the life or safety of a girl or another adult.
  - o Failure to ask permission for additional money-earning events or submit annual financial reports
  - o Failure to submit an [Activity and Trip Application Form](#) and/or follow [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#).
- Acts of discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, ethnicity, religion, lineage or citizenship, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, familial status, age, socioeconomic background, source of income, disability, genetic information, predisposing genetic characteristics, carrier status, domestic violence victim status, or any other characteristic protected by law;
- Membership in an organization whose goals are not compatible with those of GSUSA or GSMISTS;
- Abuse, neglect, mishandling, or mistreatment of girls or adults;
- Conviction of a felony or engaging in criminal conduct, acts of violence, or making threats of violence towards anyone;
- Being intoxicated or under the influence of controlled substance drugs while volunteering; use, possession or sale of controlled substance drugs in any quantity while on Girl Scout premises and/or while conducting volunteer activities except medications prescribed by a physician which do not impair volunteer performance;
- Breach of confidentiality of personal or health information;

- Refusal to participate in conflict resolution procedures with GSMISTS staff and other volunteers or parents;
- Misappropriation of funds or debt incurred to GSMISTS or service unit

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

Volunteers who are released or redirected from their volunteer position are no longer approved volunteers with GSMISTS. They are still considered members of GSUSA and GSMISTS unless it is determined that they are not able to meet the membership requirements related to accepting the principles and beliefs of the Girl Scout Movement or by supporting the mission and values of the organization.

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

### **REINSTATEMENT OF RELEASED VOLUNTEERS**

Girl Scout volunteers who have been released may be considered for reinstatement to their volunteer position. A former/prospective volunteer who wishes to be reinstated as a volunteer with GSMISTS may submit a request in writing after a period of 24 months from the date of GSMISTS decision to restrict or remove the individual from her or his position. Fulfillment of the waiting period and submission of request does not guarantee an applicant will be reinstated as a volunteer.

Volunteers who were removed due to the results of their criminal background check must wait seven years from the time of the infraction to request reinstatement. Fulfillment of the waiting period does not guarantee that an applicant will be appointed as a volunteer.

It is the responsibility of the former/prospective volunteer to complete all the required steps to apply for reinstatement as a volunteer.

When a volunteer is reinstated, GSMISTS reserves the right to coach the volunteer for a minimum of 12 months to ensure compliance with the Girl Scout Promise and Law and their volunteer position description. Coaching may include but is not limited to check-ins with GSMISTS staff, training updates/refreshers, troop/event drop-ins, etc. Should a reoccurrence arise where the reinstated volunteer is having the same issues/behaviors that lead to their original release GSMISTS reserves the right to immediately release them from any and all volunteer positions with the organization.

GSMISTS reserves the right to limit or deny reinstated volunteer involvement as deemed appropriate.

## **MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA REPRESENTATION**

To protect and uphold the integrity, mission, and brand of Girl Scouts and to ensure consistent and appropriate public representation, all GSMISTS employees, volunteers, girl members representing GSMISTS in an official capacity, and any individual authorized to speak publicly or post content on behalf of GSMISTS must uphold the following:

- **Brand Usage Guidelines**
  - o Always use the full name “Girl Scouts” or “Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore (GSMISTS)” when referring to the organization.
  - o Do NOT use the term “Scouts” in place of “Girl Scouts.” This applies to written, spoken, and digital communication.
  - o Ensure all representations align with the Girl Scout Promise, Law, and brand.
  
- **Media Inquiries**
  - o All media inquiries (TV, radio, print, digital) must be directed to the GSMISTS Director of Marketing & Communications.
  - o No member/staff should speak to the media on behalf of GSMISTS without prior approval from GSMISTS Director of Marketing & Communications.
  - o Approved representatives must be briefed and equipped with accurate and up-to-date messaging
  
- **Social Media Conduct**
  - When posting on behalf of GSMISTS or identifying as a GSMISTS representative:**
    - o Use appropriate tone and language that reflects the Girl Scout Promise, Law, and values.
    - o DO NOT use “Scouts” as a standalone reference to the organization.
    - o Clearly distinguish respectful personal opinions from official Girl Scout messaging when using personal accounts.
    - o Do not disclose confidential information, speak on internal matters, or engage in controversial or political discussions in the name of GSMISTS.

Failure to comply with any of the above may result in revocation of volunteer status.

For questions or requests to speak publicly on behalf of GSMISTS, contact: GSMISTS Director of Marketing and Communications at [communications@gsmists.org](mailto:communications@gsmists.org).

## **OTHER YOUTH SERVING ORGANIZATIONS**

To ensure the integrity of our brand and safety of our members, all volunteers are charged with ensuring that girl members participate in activities that are safe, girl-led and conducted under the supervision of registered and trained adult Girl Scout volunteers.

Girl Scouts will continue doing what is best for girls and Girl Scouts – that means strong girl-led, all girl, and girl-focused program. All Girl Scout members should:

1. Use the full name of Girl Scouts whenever possible. Do not refer to Girl Scouts as “Scouts” or “Scouting.”
2. Wear uniforms proudly and publicly whenever you are representing Girl Scouts. Do not mix uniform pieces with those of other youth-serving organizations.

3. Use Girl Scouts' name, logos, and likenesses according to guidelines provided by Girl Scouts of the USA. If you wish to use the Girl Scout logo, please contact GSMISTS's marketing department at [communications@gsmists.org](mailto:communications@gsmists.org) for assistance and approval.
4. When participating in community events such as parades, flag ceremonies, or festivals, request a distinct Girl Scout booth or marching space if possible.
5. If girls are members of multiple youth-serving organizations, ensure that funds earned by Girl Scouts are spent on Girl Scout expenses and Girl Scout troop experiences only.
6. Sharing of membership information including, but not limited to, name, phone number, email addresses, program level, and membership status is strictly prohibited.

### **FLYERS/INFORMATION IN MAILBOXES**

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

### **APPROPRIATE GRADE-LEVEL TROOPS/GROUPS**

Girls participate in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience in troops or independently, in these program grade-levels.

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

Service Unit assignment is based on the school your child attends.

Bridging girls to the next grade-level early is not recommended due to the progressive nature of the Girl Scout program. If you bridge a girl from one grade-level to another early she may not be physically, mentally, and emotionally ready (i.e. bridging a girl just finishing the 2nd grade to Girl Scout Juniors instead of allowing her a 2nd year Girl Scout Brownie experience). There may be some experiences she may not be able to participate in because of her age/grade level.

Extenuating circumstances may lead to the need for a multi-grade level troop.

### **TROOP CATALOG**

The Troop Catalog is an online listing of troops in GSMISTS. The Troop Catalog helps us ensure that every girl who wants to be a Girl Scout has the opportunity to participate in a troop experience. All troops with less than 12 girls will be displayed in GSMISTS Troop Catalog as open to accepting new girls with the exception of new troops. New troops can be closed in the Troop Catalog after reaching 8 girls for the first 6 months following forming the new troop.

Troops may request to "opt out" of having their troop displayed in the Troop Catalog by completing the Troop Catalog Appeal Form. Completing the Troop Catalog Appeal Form does not guarantee the request will be approved. The appeal is reviewed and the outcome determined within three business days of GSMISTS receiving the appeal. After the decision is made a GSMISTS staff member will e-mail the Troop Leader the outcome of the appeal.

Girls can join Girl Scouts at any time during the year. Troops who have activities, trips, ceremonies, etc. planned when a new Girl Scout joins the troop should make accommodations to include the new Girl Scout, if possible, but it is not required to rearrange plans, make new reservations, pay for new Girl Scout to attend, etc.

## **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE GUIDELINES**

Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore (GSMISTS) would like all girls to have the opportunity to engage in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, regardless of financial status and is based on need without regard to race, creed, color, religion, national origin, ability, or any other characteristic protected by Federal or state law.

### **What does Financial Assistance cover?**

- GSMISTS provides financial assistance to girl members for all or part of their membership. Financial assistance is also available for basic uniform pieces, qualification is based on the National School Lunch Program guidelines.
- Financial assistance for adult members will be considered for Troop Leaders and Assistant Leaders for membership based on the National School Lunch Program guidelines.
- Financial assistance for girls and adults is subject to the availability of funds within GSMISTS operating budget.
- Second year troops who have had the opportunity to participate in the Fall “Treats & Reads” Program and the Cookie Program should use troop funds to renew girl memberships.

Receipt of financial assistance indicates commitment to participate in the Fall “Treats & Reads” Program and the Cookie Program.

### **How do I apply for Financial Assistance?**

Families can request financial assistance on the Payment screen for their girl during the online membership registration process. Adults need to contact GSMISTS at [customercare@gsmists.org](mailto:customercare@gsmists.org) to request financial assistance.

Your request is noted as **PENDING, as shown in the image below.**

Requesting financial assistance does not guarantee approval.



MEMBERSHIP TROOPS FAMILY PROFILE ACTIVITIES MY ACTIVITIES CHANGE PASSWORD LOG OUT MyGS

#### **Thank You!**

Your council will be in contact with you shortly regarding your request for financial assistance.

If you have any questions, please contact [customercare@gsmists.org](mailto:customercare@gsmists.org). See you soon!

**Paid by: Pending Financial Aid Approval**

### **Who sends me the Financial Assistance form to fill out, GSUSA or GSMISTS?**

- GSMISTS will send you an e-mail with a link to the online application for financial aid.
- The e-mail is sent to the e-mail address used during the online membership registration process. The Subject Line of the e-mail will be “Financial Assistance Request.”
- Parent/caregiver must complete the online form and submit it to GSMISTS via the online form.
- GSMISTS will review the application and notify applicant of eligibility.

### **If I was declined for financial assistance, can I appeal a decision made by GSMISTS?**

- Yes, GSMISTS decision can be appealed by completing the online Financial Assistance Appeals Form. The link to this form is included in the denial e-mail.
- Please note, completing the Financial Assistance Appeals Form does not guarantee that financial assistance will be approved.
- If the appeal is approved, GSMISTS will grant the original financial assistance amount requested for your membership or uniform.
- To ensure we best serve our membership, when awarding financial assistance, we take into account the total number of requests and our available funds.

### **BANK ACCOUNTS**

All troops and service units are required to open a separate business checking account through which all funds must flow. Each account must have two registered, approved signers: **the Troop Leader and the Primary Assistant Troop Leader**. These individuals are responsible for managing the funds. The use of GSMISTS EIN, along with the account setup and designated signers, must be authorized in writing by GSMISTS.

Troops are encouraged to open their accounts at a branch of Huntington Bank. We realize this bank may not be an option in your area and it is allowable to use another bank or credit union.

The bank account must only be used to support the Girl Scout program; money earned by girls can only be used to fund their Girl Scout experience. Funds of more than one troop may not be co-mingled in one bank account with funds from other troops; each troop must have its own bank account. Co-mingling of funds will be regarded as misappropriation.

Troops and service units must follow GSMISTS procedures when opening accounts, closing accounts, or changing bank account signers at a financial institution. GSMISTS has the authority to change bank account signers, request bank statements, or close accounts whenever it deems necessary.

The [Bank Account Information and ACH Authorization](#) form must be completed by all GSMISTS troops and service units that have been given permission to open a bank account in the GSMISTS name. This form must be completed for new bank accounts as soon as it is opened or if there are any changes in authorized signers. The information on the completed form will be available to your Service Unit Treasurer and GSMISTS staff.

Troops and service units may obtain no more than 2 debit/check cards. The debit/check card must not be used for personal purchases. The cardholder(s) are responsible for obtaining purchase receipts, securing the card(s), and are legally responsible for the transactions posted to the card. Online banking is permitted.

All Girl Scout funds must be deposited into the troop/service unit bank account and all itemized receipts of purchases, bank receipts/deposits and monthly bank statements must be kept on file for a period of two years.

GSMISTS reserves the right to review troop and service unit accounts. If a troop or service unit fails to submit its annual finance report, it is subject to financial review and/or closure of the account by GSMISTS. Other situations that may result in a financial review include but are not limited to:

- Complaints from parents/caregivers
- Suspected misuse
- Mismanagement or theft of funds

Financial reviews may be initiated at the full discretion of GSMISTS.

### **FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

Volunteers who oversee Girl Scout funds whether for troops, service units, day camps, or any other reason, are accountable to GSMISTS and girls in all financial matters.

The troop leader is responsible for good management of funds including timely deposits of funds, up-to-date recordkeeping, monthly review of bank statements, responsible management of funds, and submission of timely reports to affected girls, their parents, and GSMISTS. Receipts showing how the money was spent must document all cash withdrawals. If cash is collected, receipts must be provided that document the reason for the payment. Although troop finances can be managed by any approved, registered adult listed to the troop, the troop leader will ultimately be responsible for the troop's finances and the submission of the Finance Report. Failure to exercise proper management over finances will result in a funds restriction or release from volunteer position.

All troops, service units, and day camps are required to submit an annual finance report to GSMISTS. Parents/caregivers can view completed troop finance report(s) on the Volunteer Toolkit, therefore it is important to comply with this procedure as financial transparency at all levels of Girl Scouting encourages trust and confidence. Additionally, any registered Girl Scout and their parents/caregivers will be given access to view financial records upon request. The troop leader has access to the Finance Tab on the Volunteer Toolkit and must work with the troop treasurer (if there is one in place) to submit the finance report annually by the June 1 deadline.

Volunteers with financial responsibility to troops/groups or to GSMISTS will not be reappointed to a position if required financial responsibilities have not been met.

### **MONEY-EARNING AND FUNDRAISING GUIDELINES**

Helping girls earn and manage money is an integral part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. When girls participate in money-earning activities they learn important skills such as goal setting, decision making, money management, people skills, and business ethics.

Your Girl Scout group (troop, service unit, etc.) is responsible for planning and financing its own activities. This puts girls in charge (with support from troop leaders and GSMISTS registered

volunteers), giving them the opportunity to cooperatively set goals, manage a budget, spend responsibly, and maintain records, as well as develop social, marketing, and entrepreneurial skills.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall “Treats & Reads” Program are the two best opportunities for girls to earn troop funds. Troops must participate in both programs to participate in additional money-earning or fundraising. Consideration will be given to troops that formed after these opportunities have passed. Troops who participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall “Treats & Reads” Program usually do not need to participate in additional money-earning or fundraising unless they are planning trips or other travel.

### **Helping Girls Reach Their Financial Goals**

It is great for girls to have opportunities such as the Girl Scout Cookie Program to earn funds as part of their Girl Scout Leadership Experience. Part of the role of troop leaders and other GSMISTS registered volunteers is to help the girls balance money-earning with opportunities to enjoy other activities that have less emphasis on earning and spending money. It is important the girls have a clear plan and purpose for their proceeds from the Girl Scout Cookie Program, Fall “Treats & Reads” Program, and other money-earning activities. An important aspect of the Entrepreneurship Pillar is facilitating girl-led financial planning, which include the following steps:

- 1. Set goals.** What do girls want to do during the year that requires money? In addition to earning money, what skills do they hope to build? What leadership opportunities present themselves?
- 2. Create a budget.** Use a budget worksheet that includes both expenses (the cost of Annual Girl Membership Fees, supplies, admission to events, travel, and so on) and available income (the troop’s account balance, projected cookie and fall “Treats & Reads” proceeds, and so on).
- 3. Determine how much additional money the group needs to earn.** Subtract expenses from available income to determine how much additional money your troop needs to earn.
- 4. Make a plan.** The troop can brainstorm and make decisions about its financial plans. Will the Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall Product Program - if approached proactively and energetically - earn enough money to meet the troop’s goals? If not, what additional money-earning might offset the difference in anticipated expense and anticipated income? Will more than one money-earning activity be necessary to achieve the group’s financial goals? In this planning stage, engage the girls through the Girl Scout processes (girl-led, learning by doing, and cooperative learning) and consider the value of any potential activity. Have them weigh feasibility, implementation, and safety factors.
- 5. Write it out.** Once the group has decided on its financial plan, put the plan in writing. The group should also have a written agreement that discusses girl responsibilities, how money-earning funds will be distributed, etc. See the Money-Earning and Fundraising Group Agreement section below.

### **Money-Earning**

Money-earning activities are age-appropriate, voluntary activities involving goods or services executed by Girl Scouts to supplement monies raised through the Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall “Treats & Reads” Program. Other money-earning activities are arranged by troops and service units and can include raking leaves, shoveling snow, walking pets, service-a-thons, etc.

The funds earned through money-earning are to be used for Girl Scout mission-based activities and must be retained by the troop or service unit, not by individuals. These funds must be accounted for through the required annual financial reporting

### **Money-Earning Progression by Grade Level**

As with all Girl Scout activities, girls progress in their entrepreneurial skills as they get older. More information and examples of the abilities of girls at each grade level can be found in [Volunteer Essentials](#).

### **Money-Earning Timeframes**

Girls may not participate in other money-earning activities during the Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall “Treats & Reads” Program seasons. Check the GSMISTS Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall “Treats & Reads” Program calendars for exact dates.

- Fall “Treats & Reads” Program typically takes place mid-September-October.
- Girl Scout Cookie Program typically takes place January-March.

The only money-earning activity that may take place during either of these timeframes are returnable bottle/can drives.

### **Pre-Approved Money-Earning Activities**

Troops may participate in the following pre-approved money-earning activities without additional permission:

- Host a Community Event: Talent show, Spaghetti Dinner, Pancake Breakfast, Back Sale, Yard/Garage Sale, Craft Sale, Car Wash
- Provide a Service: Gift Wrapping, Yard/Garden Maintenance, Pet Care, Babysitting, Window Washing, Snow Removal, Tutoring, Face Painting, Concession Stand Staff
- Host a Workshop: Badge Workshop, Cooking Class, Demonstration
- Organize a Collection Event: Pop Can Drive, Cell Phone Recycling, Bulk Metal Recycling, Ink Cartridge Recycling
- Partner With A Restaurant: Girl Scouts can be a “celebrity server” where they may help clear tables, and the restaurant donates a portion of monies to the troop.

### **Money-Earning Parameters**

- If your troop would like to engage in an activity not on the Pre-Approved Money-Earning Activities list above, the [Money-Earning and Fundraising Pre-Approval Application](#) form must be completed and submitted to GSMISTS Director of Fund Development at least four weeks before beginning (or publicizing) a money-earning activity.
- Troops must have participated in BOTH the Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall “Treats & Reads” Program in order to engage in additional money-earning. It is encouraged, not required, for 100% of troop members to have participated.
- Troops must follow GSMISTS Volunteer Policies & Procedures, [Volunteer Essentials](#), and [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) to ensure girl safety, including appropriate girl-to-adult ratios of approved Girl Scout volunteers.
- If a Girl Scout has not participated in the Girl Scout Cookie Program and/or Fall “Treats & Reads” Program, she shall not be excluded from any activities due to lack of participation.
- If troop dues are collected, Girl Scouts shall not be excluded from any activities regardless of their ability to pay troop dues.

- The money-earning should have a purpose that helps develop skills girls are learning in Girl Scouts.
- Girls are involved in the development of the budget for the amount of money that is needed.
- Girls must be able to explain the reason they are earning money.
- Money-earning should not exceed the amount the troop needs for their proposed activity(ies).
- The activity should be age appropriate.
- Participation is voluntary.
- Parents/guardians must give written permission to participate.
- Funds from money-earning must be spent during the membership year they are earned. If funds are raised for an activity in a future year, it must be pre-approved by GSMISTS.
- Local ordinances and health and safety laws related to involvement of children in money-earning must be observed.
- Arrangements must be made for safeguarding money during money-earning.

### **Money-Earning May Not**

- Have girls asking for cash donations.
- Involve games of chance such as raffles, drawings, or silent auctions. The Internal Revenue Service does not allow girls to participate in these activities.
- Endorse “commercial products” (e.g., Thirty One, Tupperware, Pampered Chef, etc.). “Commercial products” is any product sold at a retail location or that benefits a for-profit organization. Since 1939, girls and volunteers have not been allowed to endorse, provide a testimonial for, or sell such products. Girl Scouts does not allow product demonstration parties where the use of the Girl Scout trademark increases revenue for another business. Any business using the Girl Scout trademark must seek authorization from GSUSA.
- Girl Scouts are not allowed to solicit money on behalf of another organization (such as Relay for Life, March of Dimes, etc.) when identifying themselves as Girl Scouts by wearing a uniform, a sash or vest, official pins, and so on. This includes participating in a walkathon or telethon while in uniform. However, you and your troop can support another organization through Take Action projects. Girl Scouts as individuals are able to participate in whatever events they choose as long as they are not wearing anything that officially identifies them as “Girl Scouts.”

### **Non-Girl-Scout Related Opportunities**

- Girls with regular jobs may choose to donate their earnings to their troop or Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award projects. They should not wear their Girl Scout uniform or act as a Girl Scout representative when they are working their regular job. Once the money is given to the troop, it becomes troop funds and belongs to the troop not the girl who donated it.

### **Money-Earning and Fundraising Group Agreement**

It is important to understand that all troop money belongs equally to girls registered in the troop. Periodically, there are Girl Scout activities such as longer trips, attending the National Girl Scout Convention, etc. which require numerous money-earning and/or fundraising activities, which may occur over the course of multiple years. We strongly encourage each troop to use the Money- Earning and Fundraising Activity Group Agreement form at the start of a money-earning and/or fundraising activity. It will help troops manage fund disbursement as it can be

expected that all girls may not participate at the same level. In cases like this, it is important to plan in advance for the equitable distribution of funds using Fund Banding as required by the Internal Revenue Service.

Funds Banding refers to ranges or bands that determine equitable disbursement of funds earned during money-earning and fundraising activities. Any funds deposited into a Girl Scout account are subject to the banding requirements of the IRS. For more information, see the Internal Revenue Service Compliance and Troop Accounts information section of this document. Girls, with the guidance of their troop leaders and GSMISTS registered volunteers, should pre-determine banding ranges, prior to the start of any money-earning or fundraising activities, based on appropriate effort, amount of revenue earned, or activity-related banding ideas. Fund Bands cannot be calculated dollar for dollar, hour for hour, or dollar for hour.

Examples of Fund Banding:

- Range of hours of participation = \$X (10-15 hours of participation = \$75 benefit to the girl)
- Range of revenue earned = \$X (\$100-\$150 earned = \$125 benefit to the girl)

## **Fundraising**

Fundraising involves adults asking businesses, organizations, or individuals for money or in-kind contributions to support troop activities. Girls are not allowed to fundraise unless they are working on their Girl Scout Gold Award. Sponsors, such as local businesses and organizations, can help ensure that all girls in the community have an opportunity to participate in Girl Scouting. Periodically, troops and service units may plan activities that require larger than usual budgets (e.g., Destinations such as a trip to Juliette Gordon Low's home). In addition, community organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations, and individuals may become sponsors by providing group meeting places, providing activity materials, loaning equipment, or donating money. They may even volunteer their time and talent. Donations of goods and services are called "in-kind" contributions.

Due to strict IRS reporting guidelines and standards, volunteers **may not** apply for grant funding of any kind. Generally, a grant requires a formal application to be submitted. If you are requested to complete more than a simple donation request form or to submit an IRS Tax Designation Letter, please contact GSMISTS Fund Development Department at [customercare@gsmists.org](mailto:customercare@gsmists.org).

Crowdfunding sites such as Kickstarter, Go Fund Me, etc., including those provided by social media platforms such as Facebook, are **not allowed**.

## **Before Contacting a Potential Sponsor**

Before working with a potential sponsor, please contact GSMISTS Director of Fund Development. If you are asking only one or two potential sponsors, they will ask you to complete and submit a Donation Agreement form (for money or in-kind) so it can be reviewed before you make your ask. If you are planning to make multiple donation requests or will be asking for donations over \$500, you will be asked to complete the [Money-Earning and Fundraising Pre-Approval Application](#).

GSMISTS may already be working with the business or organization on a council-wide donation and it is important that we work together. We can also give you guidance on the availability of some sponsors and other tips that could strengthen your ask. GSMISTS has relationships with many organizations and may also know of reasons not to connect with certain organizations.

When collaborating with other organizations, keep these guidelines in mind:

- Avoid Fundraising for Other Organizations  
Girl Scouts are not allowed to solicit money on behalf of another organization when identifying themselves as Girl Scouts by wearing a uniform, a sash or vest, official pins, etc. This includes participating in a walkathon or telethon while in uniform. However, you and your group can support another organization through Take Action projects. Girl Scouts as individuals are able to participate in whatever events they choose as long as they're not wearing anything that officially identifies them as "Girl Scouts."
- Steer Clear of Political Fundraisers  
When in an official Girl Scout capacity or in any way identifying yourselves as Girl Scouts, your group may not participate, directly or indirectly, in any political campaign or work on behalf of or in opposition to a candidate for public office. Letter-writing campaigns are not allowed, nor is participating in a political rally, circulating a petition, or carrying a political banner.
- Be Respectful When Collaborating with Religious Organizations  
Girl Scout groups must respect the opinions and practices of religious partners, but no girl should be required to take part in any religious observance or practice of the sponsoring group.
- Avoid Selling or Endorsing Commercial Products  
"Commercial products" is any product sold at a retail location or that benefits a for-profit organization. Since 1939, girls and volunteers have not been allowed to endorse, provide a testimonial for, or sell such products.

### **Financial Contributions**

Businesses and organizations may donate up to \$500 annually to GSMISTS to benefit individual troops or service units. Donations from up to four (4) businesses and organizations may be secured per year. In order for these contributions to reach your troop, you must complete the [Donation Agreement - Money](#) form and return it to GSMISTS Director of Fund Development. GSMISTS will ensure the sponsor receives a thank you letter meeting IRS requirements. The girls may also show their appreciation by sending thank you cards, inviting the sponsor to a meeting or ceremony, or working together on a Take Action project.

All donation checks must be made payable to: Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore (GSMISTS).

Financial contributions must be spent in the fiscal year in which they were received, unless pre-approved by GSMISTS.

In rare cases, the GSMISTS Chief Executive Officer may pre-approve contributions of more than \$500 up to a total of \$2,000 per year. Sums over \$500 are typically pre-approved only for extended troop travel. For pre-approval, please complete the [Money-Earning and Fundraising Pre-Approval Application](#) and submit it to GSMISTS Director of Fund Development.

## **In-Kind Contributions**

In-kind donations are goods or services, other than cash, that are to be used by troops for Girl Scout mission-based activities. Examples of in-kind gifts include:

- space for a meeting or event
- program supplies
- food
- camping equipment

In order to properly document an in-kind contribution, the [Donation Agreement – In-Kind](#) form should be submitted to GSMISTS Director of Fund Development. GSMISTS will ensure the sponsor receives a thank you letter meeting IRS requirements. The contribution can also be recognized locally by having the girls send thank-you cards, inviting the sponsor to a meeting or ceremony, or working together on a Take Action project.

## **Girl Scout Gold Award Projects**

Girls working on their Girl Scout Gold Award project may need additional funds to complete their projects. According to GSUSA's [Blue Book of Basic Documents](#) policy: Solicitation of Contributions, girl members may not engage in any direct solicitation for money except for Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors who may solicit donations of cash or in-kind goods for Girl Scout Gold Award projects, provided they have secured prior written permission from GSMISTS Director of Fund Development. In addition, girls must abide by all GSMISTS policies and procedures with regard to Gold Award fundraising.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS DUE TO TROOP CHANGES**

### **Graduating Girl Scout Ambassador Troops**

When all girls of a troop graduate, care must be taken with the final expenditure of troop funds. All troop money is the property of the troop, not the individual girls, and the troop should decide how to spend the money prior to dissolving the troop and closing the bank account. All decisions concerning the disposition of troop funds should be made by the troop not by the leaders to “surprise the girls”. Options to consider depending on the remaining amount of troop funds:

- Purchase discounted Lifetime Girl Scout memberships for each graduating girl.
- Leave a legacy to Girl Scouts by donating to a fund or program in honor of the troop.
- Take advantage of the last year of girl membership to participate in GSMISTS planned activities and events.

### **New Troop Leadership**

If new troop leadership has been appointed, turn all supplies, financial records, and the bank account over to the new troop leader. The signatures on the bank account must be changed with the bank and with GSMISTS. Complete the [Bank Account Information and ACH Authorization Form](#) to change the signature information with GSMISTS. There is no need to close the account and open a new one.

### **Troop Leadership Vacancy**

If new leadership has not been determined, turn all troop supplies, financial records, and the bank account over to your GSMISTS Community Membership Manager.

## **Troop Merges or Splits**

If a troop merges with another troop the funds and supplies will be combined for use by all the girls in the newly formed troop. If a troop splits, equal portions of the troop funds and supplies will follow girls to their new troop. This will be done with guidance and direction from your GSMISTS Community Membership Manager.

## **Troop Disbands**

If a troop disbands, girls are encouraged to use existing monies for activities before the troop disbands. If there are remaining funds, girls can decide to donate to another GSMISTS troop, GSMISTS service unit, or to the Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore Financial Assistance fund.

GSMISTS Community Membership Manager will assist with allocating funds for girls transferring to new troops. The bank account should be closed and all remaining funds, if any, must be turned into a GSMISTS Service Center. Money may never be given in the form of cash to individual girls or adults. Disbanded troops are required to submit a [Disbanding/Merging Troop Notification Form](#) and a final finance report through the VTK Finance tab, including required bank statements. Remaining funds need to be turned over to your GSMISTS Community Membership Manager.

If troop money was turned in to GSMISTS at the time of disbandment and the troop or individual girl rejoins within 18 months, they may work with their GSMISTS Community Membership Manager to get money returned to reopen a bank account. Money is only available within 18 months from date of disbandment.

## **INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE (IRS) COMPLIANCE AND TROOP ACCOUNTS**

GSMIST has no ability to control, change, or influence IRS requirements. Non-compliance with IRS requirements is a risk management issue that may affect the tax-exempt status of this council and the tax-exempt status of other Girl Scout councils nationwide.

- Once money is received into the troop treasury (bank account), it no longer belongs to individual girls.
- Cash-based accounts may not be kept for or distributed to individual girls. For additional information on the distribution of funds to individual girls, see the information on Fund Banding included in the Money-Earning and Fundraising Activity Group Agreement.
- All benefits provided should relate back to supporting the Girl Scout mission; decisions should be based on our tax-supported philosophy regarding what is mission-related. For example, camp, travel, and Girl Scout events are mission related. Scholarships to an outside organization would not be mission related.
- A business or individual may not receive a tax deduction for money given directly to troops or an individual Girl Scout, as they are not considered a charitable nonprofit. The Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore Tax ID number may not be used by these businesses or individuals.
- Donations may be made to GSMISTS and include a restriction for troop use when the donation is made. GSMISTS will cut a check for the designated troop and mail it to the troop treasurer. (Troops may receive up to \$500/donor. Four \$500 donations may be accepted per year. All funds must be spent in the fiscal year they are received).
- Troop monies cannot follow a girl if she leaves the GSMISTS council.

- Money follows an individual girl within the GSMISTS Council. The amount of money is not calculated dollar for dollar. The IRS prohibits funds from following an individual girl dollar for dollar.

Here are some common scenarios:

- If a troop disbands, girls are encouraged to use existing monies for activities before the troop disbands. If there are remaining funds, girls can decide to donate to another GSMISTS troop or to the Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore Financial Assistance fund.
- If a troop merges with another troop the funds will be combined for use by all the girls in the newly formed troop. If a troop splits, equal portions of the troop funds will follow girls to their new troop. For example, if there are 10 girls involved, each girl gets 1/10 of the troop funds.
- If a girl(s) leaves a troop due to family changes or unforeseen circumstances (e.g., moving homes, changing schools, etc.):
  - o And joins another troop, equal portions of the troop funds follow the girl(s) to their new troop(s). For example, if there are 10 girls involved, each girl gets 1/10 of the troop funds.
  - o And becomes an Individual Registered Member (Juliette), equal portions of the troop funds follow the girl(s). The Individual Registered Members funds are deposited in the GSMISTS Individual Registered Member account.
- Gift or donations, including those from family members, are not considered proceeds from money-earning or fundraising. Please keep in mind that a gift or donation deposited into a troop bank account associated with the Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore is subject to the IRS requirements and Fund Banding requirements established by the troop's [Money-Earning and Fundraising Activity Group Agreement](#).

Troop to troop movements are not allowed during the Cookie Program. All troop movements must be completed by January 1. No additional troop movements will occur until April 1 of that same year due to the IRS guidelines provided by GSUSA.

### **THIRD PARTY PAYMENT PROCESSING SOFTWARE APPLICATIONS**

GSMISTS does not allow troops or service units to set up and use PayPal, Venmo, Cash App, or other payment processing software that uses an individual's personal information including social security number to register the software. This is per our national organization's (GSUSA) legal advice. These accounts cannot be legally connected to council and carry a greater financial risk and potential income tax liabilities for the individual that opens the account. Huntington Bank offers troop bank accounts the option to send and receive money through Zelle. This bank-to-bank transfer can be initiated by or received into the troop bank account allowing for appropriate audit trails and avoiding the connection to a volunteer's SSN.

### **ADULT SUPERVISION**

Girl Scouts has a strict standard that whenever Girl Scouts meet, **whether in person or virtually, there are to be at least two unrelated, registered, and Girl Scout-approved adults who have been background checked, and one of whom is female, supervising Girl Scout members.** A registered and approved adult volunteer is one who has passed a background check and has been through GSMISTS volunteer onboarding and training process. The two adult volunteers must not be related to each other (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.

**This requirement applies to every Girl Scout gathering** including troop meetings (in person and virtual), day trips, camp, sleep-away travel, special events, activities, and projects. Non-member children who are present should be considered in the ratios.

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.**

There are different specific adult-to-youth 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 space require more adult supervision.

### Adult Volunteer-to-Youth Ratios

<b>Girl Scout Volunteer-to-Youth Ratios</b>	<b>Group Meetings</b>		<b>Events, Travel, and Camping</b>	
	<b>Two unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for up to this number of youth:</b>	<b>One additional volunteer to each additional:</b>	<b>Two unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for up to this number of youths:</b>	<b>One additional volunteer to each additional:</b>
<b>Girl Scout Daises (Grades K-1)</b>	12	1-6	6	1-4
<b>Girl Scout Brownies (Grades 2-3)</b>	20	1-8	12	1-6
<b>Girl Scout Juniors (Grades 4-5)</b>	25	1-10	16	1-8
<b>Girl Scout Cadettes (Grades 6-8)</b>	25	1-12	20	1-10
<b>Girl Scout Seniors (Grades 9-10)</b>	30	1-15	24	1-12
<b>Girl Scout Ambassadors (Grades 11-12)</b>	30	1-15	24	1-12

Some high-adventure activities may require more adult-to-youth supervision than stated above. For those activities, the individual activity's safety activity checkpoints will provide the specific adult-to-youth supervision ratios. Remember, some activities are less safe for younger members, particularly Daisies and Brownies. Younger Girl Scout members may not be permitted to participate based on their age/grade level, as appropriate, and this will be specified on the individual activity's safety activity checkpoints. In cases where younger girl participation is an option, but only under certain conditions, this is indicated on the first page of the individual activity's safety activity checkpoints.

*Note: For mixed-grade level troops (Multi-Level Troops), use the adult-to-youth ratio for the lowest grade level in the troop. For example, if the troop consists of Daisies and Brownies, the Daisy adult-to-youth ratio should be followed.*

### **CHRONIC BEHAVIOR ISSUES**

While troop leaders are expected to manage behaviors of Girl Scouts in their troop, patterns of challenging and/or disruptive behavior that negatively impacts the troop experience and does not align with the Girl Scout Law will require parent involvement and in some cases council involvement.

Troop leaders follow the steps below as they manage Girl Scout(s) in their troop who present significant and chronic behavioral challenges that do not meet expectations based on the Girl Scout Law.

1. Troop has Girl Scout who is chronically not meeting the behavioral expectations based on the Girl Scout Law. They are unable to engage with the troop in a way that respects themselves and others.
2. Troop leader notices patterns of unwillingness/inability to follow behavioral expectations by Girl Scout.
3. Troop leader documents (on an Accident/Incident Report) patterns, including dates, times, and locations and communicates with Girl Scout's parent to seek support for working to improve the situation.
4. If the chronic behavioral challenges continue, the troop leader submits completed Accident/Incident Report(s) to GSMISTS Director of Membership for review.
5. GSMISTS Director of Membership decides if a parent/guardian of the Girl Scout exhibiting the pattern of disruption will be required to participate in troop meetings/activities to ensure the wellbeing of all involved.
6. GSMISTS Director of Membership communicates decision to troop leader and parent/guardian.

### **ACTIVITIES/ TROOP TRIPS**

An approved, supervised Girl Scout activity/troop trip is carried out by Girl Scouts who are registered members of the Girl Scout Movement under the overall supervision of volunteers, in keeping with GSMISTS Volunteer Policies & Procedures, [Volunteer Essentials](#), and [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#).

To be considered a Girl Scout activity/trip, the troop/group leader must:

- Ensure all Girl Scouts participating are registered members. Ensure all adults who are assuming a supervising role during the trip/activity are both a registered adult member of GSUSA and a volunteer of GSMISTS. All adults accompanying troop/group meetings or activities on a regular basis (more than 1 time); or attending any overnight activity; or who at any time assume care, custody, or control of girl members and/or Girl Scout money must be both a registered adult member of GSUSA and a volunteer of GSMISTS. This includes trip chaperones and drivers.
- Provide parents/caregivers with written details (date, time, locations, and brief description) of the trip/activity prior to its occurrence.
- Ensure trip/activity meets all requirements in [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#). A completed [Activity and Trip Application Form](#) must be turned into GSMISTS and approved by GSMISTS prior to certain activities and trips occurring. See GSMISTS [Activity and Trip Planning Guide](#) for additional information.
- Receive from parents/caregivers a signed [Annual Permission and Health History Form](#) or [Girl Permission Form](#).

The Annual Permission and Health History Form allows for troop trips/activities that are:

1. Located within GSMISTS council jurisdiction
2. Not exceeding 8 hours (including travel time)
3. Not considered high risk activities as outlined in [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) and GSMISTS Activity and Trip Planning Guide (any activity that requires GSMISTS approval).

Trips/activities outside of these parameters require a separate [Girl Permission Form](#). Activity Consent, Hold Harmless and Release Agreements may be required, depending on the activity.

A completed [Activity and Trip Application Form](#) must be turned into GSMISTS and approved by GSMISTS for all overnight activities. Extended trips (3 or more nights) and international trips require advanced trip training. As a courtesy, GSMISTS recommends sharing trip information with your service unit director.

If a Girl Scout is allowed to share a bed during a trip, a [Sleeping Arrangements Form](#) for Travel/Trips must be completed by the parent and submitted to the troop leader.

Activity and trip paperwork should be retained throughout the membership year and either destroyed (preferably by a cross-cut shredder) or returned to the parent of the Girl Scout when the troop meets for the last time of the membership year. If you have electronic files these should also be deleted.

**GENERAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AND INFECTIOUS DISEASE SAFETY IN GIRL SCOUTS**  
Health and safety in Girl Scouts is always our highest priority.

Recognize that communicable diseases, including COVID-19, have always presented risks for Girl Scout members to handle. Following Centers for Disease Control standards along with guidance from local jurisdictions is expected. Be prepared to monitor evolving health matters.

Girl Scouts or volunteers should not participate in troop meetings or other Girl Scout activities when they appear to be ill, have an undiagnosed medical issue, have lice/nits, or have bed bugs

on their clothing, bedding, at home, etc.

If a Girl Scout appears to be ill when she arrives at an activity or becomes ill during the activity, their parent/guardian will be asked to pick-up them up early from the activity at their own expense, and it is at the leader's discretion whether to refund any fees paid for the activity.

## **FIRST AID/CPR TRAINING**

It is best practice to have at least one adult volunteer who is trained in first aid/CPR accompany the troop any time they leave their regular meeting place. For many activities, GSMISTS requires that at least one adult volunteer be first aid/CPR certified. More information on which activities require an adult volunteer be first aid/CRP certified can be found in [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#).

Volunteers can take advantage of first aid/CPR training offered by chapters of the American Red Cross, National Safety Council, EMP America, American Heart Association or other sponsoring organizations approved by GSMISTS. First aid/CPR training opportunities are offered by GSMISTS.

First aid/CPR training that is available entirely online does not satisfy GSMISTS requirements. Such courses do not offer enough opportunities to practice and receive feedback on your technique. If taking a course not offered by one of the organizations listed in the previous paragraph, or any course that has online components, get approval from GSMISTS First Year Troop Support & Volunteer Coordinator prior to enrolling in the course.

## **EMERGENCIES**

If an emergency occurs during a Girl Scout troop meeting, activity, etc., Girl Scout volunteers must follow the GSMISTS Emergency Procedures. These procedures ensure safety is the number one concern in any emergency and volunteers are guided to seek help, and report the incident, efficiently and effectively.

### GSMISTS Emergency Procedures

1. Provide all possible care for the injured person.
2. Call for help: 9-1-1 (Police, Fire, EMS)
3. Move non-injured people away from the scene.
4. In the event of a motor vehicle accident, serious accident, or fatality – always notify the police. Unless victim is in immediate danger, do not allow the disturbance of the victim or surroundings until first responders arrive.
5. Call emergency contact(s) of injured
6. Speak only to police or other first responders
7. Report emergency to GSMISTS
  - Business Hours Emergency Phone: 844-476-4787
  - After Hours Emergency Phone: 616-204-1456

GSMISTS will provide you additional support on how to handle the emergency.

8. Complete a GSMISTS [Accident/Incident Report Form](#) and e-mail the completed form to [customercare@gsmists.org](mailto:customercare@gsmists.org).
9. Volunteers should not make statements of any kind to the media. Refer requests to GSMISTS Manager of Marketing & Communications or Chief Executive Officer. Volunteers must also refrain from posting and/or sharing pictures or comments on social media related to the emergency.

10. Do not discuss the incident with media/witnesses, release names, place blame, or accept liability.
11. If an automobile accident, share insurance information with the other party, do not sign any accident report, except for the police report.
12. Keep a record of the order of events, treatments, calls, etc.

**ACTIVITY ACCIDENT INSURANCE**

Girl Scouts provides Activity Accident Insurance underwritten by Mutual of Omaha to support Girl Scouts participating in Girl Scout approved and supervised activities and events.

Activity Accident insurance is automatic upon membership registration and applies to all adult and youth members who may become injured during a Girl Scout approved and supervised activity.

This coverage works like supplemental medical/health coverage and is intended to help with out-of-pocket medical expenses that may not be covered by personal insurance.

Activity Accident insurance extends to non-members who are invited to participate in a Girl Scout approved and supervised activity, whether an adult volunteer for the day, or a friend of a Girl Scout who is joining along to try out scouting.

Activity Accident coverage applies to day events, overnight trips (including camp), and international travel. A summary of these coverage types for each category can be found here:

	<b>CLASS 1 ACTIVITY ACCIDENT</b>	<b>CLASS 2 ADDED SICKNESS</b>	<b>CLASS 3 INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL AND INBOUND</b>
<b>Eligibility</b>	All members and *nonmember participants of Girl Scout sponsored and supervised daylong events and activities. (100% participation)  *Nonmember participants are those personally invited by a registered member (adult or youth) to participate in a Girl Scout activity as a guest or visitor.	All members and *nonmember participants of Girl Scout sponsored and supervised overnight events, lasting one night or greater. (100% participation)  *Nonmember participants are those personally invited by a registered member (adult or youth) to participate in a Girl Scout activity as a guest or visitor.	All members and *nonmember participants of Girl Scout sponsored and supervised international travel or inbound international travel. (100% participation)  *Nonmember participants are those personally invited by a registered member (adult or youth) to participate in a Girl Scout activity as a guest or visitor.
<b>Coverage (Any Approved and Supervised Girl Scout Activity)</b>	Day Events	Overnight Events	International Travel
<b>Premium Rates</b>	No cost to Girl Scout councils or troops.	No cost to Girl Scout councils or troops.	No cost to Girl Scout councils or troops.

*Effective October 1, 2025*

## **MEETING PLACES/CAMPS/SITES**

A meeting place needs to provide a safe, clean, and secure environment that allows for the participation of all girls and adults. You might consider using meeting rooms at schools, libraries, houses of worship, community buildings, childcare facilities, and local businesses. For teens, you can also rotate meetings at coffee shops, bookstores, and other places girls enjoy spending time.

See [Volunteer Essentials](#) for a few points to keep in mind as you consider meeting locations.

Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore will allow using your own home as a meeting location for regularly scheduled troop meetings. This should be a last resort if the troop cannot find another public place to meet. Due to the high amount of liability on the volunteer holding the meeting, there are strict guidelines that MUST BE met. The volunteer must review [Guidelines for Girl Scout Meetings/Activities in the Home](#) and submit the Permission to Meet in the Home Application and Approval Form.

Troops may also have an occasional meeting or campout at a private home. Strict guidelines MUST BE met and application submitted to GSMISTS for approval. The volunteer must review [Guidelines for Girl Scout Meetings/Activities in the Home](#) and submit the Permission to Meet in the Home Application and Approval Form.

**Please know that during all Girl Scout activities including ones at your home two, unrelated, registered and background checked approved volunteers must be present at all times.**

Volunteers are allowed to sign User Agreements for meeting locations. All Hold Harmless agreements/contracts for meeting locations must be completed and signed by GSMISTS Chief Executive Officer or their designee.