

Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas Volunteer Policies

The operational volunteer policies contained herein were adopted by the board of directors of the Girl Scouts - Tip of Texas Council on October 6, 1998, revised November 16, 1999, September 26, 2000, November 28, 2000, January 23, 2001, November 19, 2002, February 9, 2003 and supersede previous policies. They are reviewed biennially, in part or as a whole, to ensure that they continue to reflect current thinking in the field of volunteer relations and are consistent with Girl Scout of the USA requirements.

**"The strength of the Girl Scout Movement rests in the
voluntary leadership of its adult members"**

Preamble to the Constitution of Girl Scouts of the United States of America

Affirmative Action for Volunteers

There shall be no discrimination against an otherwise qualified adult volunteer by reason of disability or on the basis of age. Furthermore, there shall be no discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, sex, creed, national origin, or socioeconomic status. In addition, to ensure full equality of opportunity in all operations and activities of the organization, affirmative action policies and procedures shall be utilized in the recruitment, selection, training, placement, and recognition of volunteers. Special emphasis shall be placed upon securing representation of underutilized racial minorities.

Membership Registration

All girls and adults participating in the Girl Scout Movement shall be registered as members with Girl Scouts of the USA and individually pay the annual membership dues, except those adults who are lifetime members or who are working in a temporary advisory or consultative capacity.

Recruitment

Each volunteer position will have a written position description that defines specific responsibilities and schedules, clarifies expectations, and, in conjunction with performance goals, forms the basis for assessment of volunteer performance, reappointment, rotation to another position, and termination.

Selection

Policy Every adult volunteer is selected on the basis of qualifications for membership, ability to perform the volunteer position, and the willingness and availability to participate in training for the position.

Procedure Each candidate for an operational volunteer position is requested to complete an application, listing two references, and a volunteer agreement form.

Background Checks

Effective January 1, 2001, in order to ensure the safety and well-being of the girl members of the Girl Scouts- Tip of Texas Council (the Council), the Council reserves the right to disqualify or restrict the duties of any person who has been convicted of certain crimes.

All prospective volunteers, must complete and sign a form authorizing the Council to conduct a criminal background search. Without a completed and signed authorization form, a person cannot serve in or be appointed to a volunteer position with the Council.

A criminal background check is one component of the Council's volunteer placement procedure, the goal of which is to screen prospective volunteers and place capable and qualified adults in all operational positions.

The criminal offenses that will disqualify a person from volunteer participation in the Council, as well as the process used to determine disqualification of a person from volunteer participation, are set forth in greater detail below. As a general matter, the decision whether to exclude altogether, or to limit a prospective volunteers participation in the Council is exclusively within the discretion of the Council. Factors to be considered by the Council in making such determinations include, but are not limited to, the nature and severity of the criminal conduct, and safeguard the safety and best interests of its girl members.

Criminal Background Check Procedure

1. Application and Authorization Form. Each prospective volunteer must complete and sign the attached authorization form. The form authorizes the Council to search the records of the Texas Department of Public Safety in order to ascertain the applicant's criminal history record.

2. Accuracy of Application and Authorization Form. Providing false information on the application or authorization form, including Social Security number or date of birth, is grounds for automatic exclusion from participation in the Council, regardless of the result of the criminal background search.

3. Challenging the Accuracy of the Criminal Background Record. Any applicant who disputes or desires to contest the information provided by the Texas Department of Public Safety must file a written notice with the Council within 10 days of being notified that her or his application for a volunteer participation has been denied. It is the applicant's responsibility to challenge the report received from the Department of Public Safety and to arrange for any corrections, if necessary.

The Council has no control over the information maintained by the Department of Public Safety. The Council cannot be liable to any person or entity for the information provided by the Department of Public Safety to the Council, or for any actions taken by the Council in reliance on such information. The Council is entitled to and shall rely upon information contained in the Criminal History Report until such time as a corrected criminal history transcript is provided.

Disqualification From Volunteer Participation

The following rules shall apply if the Council learns that a prospective volunteer has been convicted of one of the crimes under the laws of the State of Texas, another state, or the United States.

1. Automatic disqualification, including, but not limited to:

- * Crimes against children
- * Crimes defined as public indecency
- * Felony offenses against persons

- * Crimes involving the use of weapons
- * Arson
- * Any violent crime or felony drug related offense, other than the exception stated in #2 below
- * DWI, DUI. Or possession of marijuana under two ounces: First offense where is has been less than five (5) years since the date of disposition and any second offense or more.

2. **Discretionary Disqualification:** The decision whether to allow a volunteer's participation shall be within the absolute and exclusive discretion of the Council in the following instances: DWI, DUI or possession of marijuana under two ounces, **only** if it has been a first offense and it has been more than five years since the date of disposition, all other criminal offenses (other than traffic violations classified as Class C misdemeanors)

Confidentiality

The Council will maintain the confidentiality of all criminal background search information, including information regarding disqualification decisions.

Approved by Girl Scouts - Tip of Texas Council Board of Directors

November 28, 2000

Revised November 19, 2002

Membership

All volunteers participating in the Girl Scout Movement shall meet GSUSA membership standards, be registered through the council as members of the Girl Scout Movement, and shall agree to abide by the policies and principles of GSUSA and the Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas.

Placement

Every attempt will be made to place volunteers in positions that meet both their needs and the needs of the council. In instances where this is not possible, the needs of the council will take precedence over the needs of the individual. Individuals not placed in a position for which they applied may be recommended for other positions and they may request reassignment.

Appointment

Operational volunteers shall be appointed for a term not to exceed one year.

Training

Within 4 weeks of appointment to a position, all operational volunteers will complete or be exempt from training designated as mandatory for that position.

Benefits

Benefits to volunteers include training and other learning opportunities, support in the position, council publications, tools for recording volunteer experience, references upon request, liability insurance, and supplementary accident insurance, as part of national and/or council membership.

Performance Appraisal

Policy Each operational volunteer shall be provided with the opportunity for regular review and evaluation.

Procedure The process of evaluation is a constructive tool used to assess the strengths and areas for improvement. Evaluation is an educational process and, as a result, performance confidence will improve as the individual grows within the organization.

The evaluation should be conducted with the operational volunteer and the person (volunteer or employed staff) responsible for her/his supervision. During the evaluation, goals to be accomplished are developed and agreed upon.

A determination should be made by the supervisor as to whether the operational volunteer should be retained in her/his position, referred to a different position or released.

Reappointment

One month prior to completion of her or his one year term, each operational volunteer shall receive confirmation of reappointment to her or his position. Reappointment takes place only after completion of a satisfactory performance review and mutual acceptance of position accountabilities, expectations, and a time commitment.

Uniforms

A uniform is not required for participation in Girl Scouting. Purchase of a uniform is at the volunteer's expense and is encouraged. Operational volunteers are encouraged to wear the Girl Scout pin when they are not in uniform.

Grievance

Policy A grievance is a complaint, related to a volunteer's position but not related to policies and/or procedures. Concerns regarding policy and/or procedures should be addressed through the proper policy influencing channels and/or the executive director.

Procedure The grievance procedure is a systematic process to ensure the objective hearing and orderly handling of volunteer grievances. The grievance procedure may be used by all operational volunteers. Every volunteer may expect a fair resolution of her or his grievance without fear of jeopardizing her or his volunteer status. The council also

maintains an open door policy regarding volunteer concerns.

Many possible grievances can be anticipated and prevented by a volunteer manager who understands the council's volunteer management system and who is sensitive to human relations. Likewise, many grievances can be avoided when volunteers are informed at their time of placement of the council's structure, and their place in it, who carries decision making responsibilities, and how decisions are made.

Most complaints and concerns can be resolved when they are brought to the attention of the volunteer's immediate supervisor. It is hoped most, if not all, grievance situations will be resolved through informal conferences and communications, the goals of which are to eliminate the cause for the grievance.

When a volunteer and her or his immediate supervisor are unable to resolve a complaint through informal efforts, the volunteer may initiate the grievance procedure. The initiation of the grievance procedure, however, will not restrict the council from taking appropriate action with respect to the volunteer.

Step I. The volunteer requests a conference with her or his supervisor to take place within 10 working days. The volunteer cites the situation that has caused the grievance.

If the supervisor is not a council staff member, the appropriate staff member is to be informed of the complaint and the date of the conference meeting.

Step II. If the volunteer is not satisfied with the disposition of the grievance, the council staff member or, if appropriate, the council staff member's supervisor will meet with the volunteer within 10 working days following her or his initial conference.

Step III. In the event that the grievance is not resolved in Step II, the volunteer with the grievance prepares a written report on the situation and a suggestion for a possible solution. Staff will also prepare a written report on the situation and suggested solution. The reports are forwarded to the executive director who organizes a meeting of the Grievance Advisory Committee. The grievance committee will be made of two service unit managers, two troop leaders, and two volunteers, not associated with the council. The service unit managers and troop leaders will be appointed by the council president, the community volunteers will be appointed by the executive director. Appointments to the grievance committee will be made after a grievance complaint is filed. Committee members will remain anonymous and will be appointed from communities outside of the complaint area.

Step IV. This advisory committee decides what additional action to take, using one or more of the following options:

- X Review grievance
- X Accept the reports and recommendations
- X Meet with the parties involved in the grievance
- X The decision of the committee is final

All parties to the grievance must agree, in advance, that the decision of the Grievance Advisory Committee is binding and to abide by the decision of the advisory committee.

Concerns regarding policy should be addressed through the proper policy influencing channels.

Recognition

The council's formal recognition system will be consistent with the GSUSA publication *Adult Recognition in Girl Scouting*.

Termination

Any volunteer may terminate her or his services upon written notification to the supervisor. The Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas may terminate the services of a volunteer because of, among other things, restructuring of volunteer positions, the elimination of the volunteer position in which a person serves, the inability or failure to complete the requirements of the position, the refusal to comply with council or GSUSA policies, refusal to support the mission and values of the organization and the council goals, or membership in an organization whose goals are not compatible with those of GSUSA. An adult volunteer who is terminated from her or his Girl Scout position may continue her or his adult membership with GSUSA unless it is determined that she or he is not able to meet the membership requirement related to accepting the principles and beliefs of the Movement or to support the mission and values of the organization. When this is the case, her or his Girl Scout membership will not be renewed.

Harassment

The council is committed to an environment and climate in which relationships are characterized by dignity, respect, courtesy, and equitable treatment. It is the policy of the organization to provide all volunteers with an environment free from all forms of unlawful or unwelcome harassment, including implied or expressed forms of sexual harassment.

The council expressly prohibits any form of harassment on the basis or race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, or disability.

Any volunteer who feels that she or he has been subjected to harassment of any type,

whether by another volunteer, council staff member, or any agent of the organization, should promptly report the incident to a supervisor or to the executive director. The supervisor, upon receiving such a complaint, must report the matter to the executive director. The executive director will take appropriate measures to resolve or correct the situation in an expeditious manner.

Sexual Harassment

The council policy guarantees volunteers an environment free of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination. Sexual harassment has been defined as "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature."

It is against the organization's policies for any volunteer, male or female, to sexually harass another volunteer, employee, or Girl Scout member of the same or opposite sex. The council reserves the right to refuse membership endorsement or reappointment, and to dismiss or suspend from affiliation with the council any volunteer who, in conducting Girl Scout program, advocates, solicits, or promotes a personal lifestyle or sexual orientation so as to create a substantial risk that such conduct will be detrimental to the proper role model for girl members.

Child Abuse

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

Child abuse and neglect are unlawful acts and it is against the council's policy for any volunteer, male or female, to physically, sexually, or mentally abuse or neglect any girl member.

The council reserves the right to refuse membership endorsement or reappointment, and to dismiss or to exclude from affiliation with the council, any volunteer implementing Girl Scout program who is found guilty of child abuse and neglect or who has been convicted of child abuse and neglect.

Safety

Policy All guidelines and program standards outlined in *Safety-Wise* will be followed.

Procedure Leaders will be given a copy of *Safety-Wise* during the new leader orientation meeting. New leader orientation will be conducted by the Service Unit Manager or staff member prior to the leader conducting troop meetings.

Emergencies - Procedures for serious accidents or fatalities:

1. Do Not Panic
2. Provide all possible care for the injured
3. Secure doctor, ambulance, police, or clergy
4. **Always** notify the police
5. See that no disturbance of the victim's surroundings is permitted until the police assume authority
6. Make no statements to the press
7. Refer all inquiries to the following:
Council Office, 1-800-477-2688 or 956-425-2388
Emergency Pager, 956-268-0324

Trips & Tours

Policy An application for a trip or tour must be approved before the event according to trip guidelines in *Safety-Wise*. In order for the Girl Scout Accident Insurance to be in effect, approval must be granted before the start of the trip.

If traveling in private cars, the driver(s) must provide evidence of a current and valid drivers license and insurance coverage. Copies of drivers license and insurance must accompany the application.

Approved by the Board of Directors September 26, 2000.

Procedure *Applications for Troop Activities* and supporting documentation must be received, at the Council office, one week prior to the event. *Applications for Trips & Tours* and supporting documentation must be received, at the Council office, two weeks prior to the event.

Approved by the Board of Directors, January 23, 2001.

After receipt of the application, leader will be notified of action taken and will receive a trip report form which must be returned to the Council within 5 days following the trip or tour. Application forms are available from the Council office.

Finances

Policy All policy and procedures set forth in *Blue Book* and *Leader Digest* will be followed.

Accountability is required for all money that is raised or collected in the name of Girl Scouting. **Troop money management is the responsibility of the leader.** Learning how to manage money is one of the most valuable life skills girls can gain in Girl Scouting and the leader may share troop money management with her girls depending on their age. **The leader should not use her own money to supplement troop funds.**

Procedure **Service Unit Checking Accounts and Fund Raising**

Service Unit may establish a bank account provided:

1. The name of the account will be Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas _____ Service Unit #
2. Each check will require two signatures. The service unit manager, treasurer, and service unit treasurer will all sign the signature card. A W-9 will be required to open an account.
3. Service Unit checking account records will be made available for audit by the Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas. Proper documentation, including receipts for expenses, will be maintained and submitted for review.
4. Each service unit will submit a service unit finance report in March and at the close of the membership year, September, or whenever there is a change in service unit leadership.
5. No service unit will conduct fund raising events.
6. Service Unit Treasurers will follow proper bank procedure. Please contact your bank directly prior to making any account changes.

Troop Bank Accounts

All money collected, earned and deposited in the name of Girl Scouts is used to meet the purpose of Girl Scouting. Such money becomes the property of Girl Scouting and is not the property of individuals. Troop funds are not to be credited or given to individuals. Troop funds are not to be co-mingled with individual's personal/ business account.

Bank Accounts: To safeguard troops funds, a bank account **must** be established for each troop.

Bank Account Procedures

1. Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas must be included in the name of each troop and/or service unit bank accounts.
2. One authorized signature is required for each check.
3. Two signatures will be required on signature card for each account.
4. Appropriate Signatures: Leader, Co-leader (Asst. Leader), Troop Treasurer or Service Unit Manager.
5. "Troop Bank Account" form to open an account must be filled out by troop or service unit and returned to the council office.
6. Council will generate letter to the financial institution on behalf of the troop or service unit to open accounts.

7. Troop leaders/Service unit managers will be given the opportunity to use the banking institution of choice provided the bank agrees to council guidelines and fees are reasonable.
8. Receipts: As a protection for all parties involved, receipts should be kept for all troop/service unit expenditures.
9. Girl Scouts - Tip of Texas Council maintains the right to audit any Troop or Service Unit bank accounts.
10. Annual Financial Reports must be submitted by January 31, and May 31, of each year or whenever there is a change in leadership. Failure to submit Financial Reports on time could result in a checking account audit.

Troop Dues

Troops should be financed primarily by dues from their members and by money earned through participation in council product sales. Most troops collect dues weekly from each member to cover expenses. The exception is the Daisy Girl Scouts who are funded solely by parental support.

The amount of dues is established at the beginning of the year by the girls in consultation with their leaders, and should be acceptable to the parents. Typically these funds are used for troop supplies, projects, activities, recognition's and other items as decided upon by the troop.

The **Troop Finance Report** form must be filled out at the end of January and May of each program year and returned to the council office. This form is provided for you.

When a Troop Disbands

If a troop disbands and all girls are placed in other troops, the troop funds left in the treasury should be divided equally and the money given to the new troop the girls have joined. If the troop is totally disbanded all funds should be turned over to the council to hold until a new troop is formed. The funds will be placed in the **Troop Funds Held in Trust** account. If reorganization cannot be effected within one year, the council will use the assets in the interests of Girl Scouting. Before disbanding, the girls in the troop may vote to designate how the money will be used as a gift from the troop. Examples of such gifts are: campership fund, Juliette Low World Friendship fund, troop funds for another troop in the service unit, girl assistance, or council support.

Failed Troop Accounts

1. If a troop fails to re-register, the money remaining in the troop account will be turned over to the Council and held for one year.
2. If the troop re-organizes within one year, the money is returned to the troop.

3. If the troop does not re-organize, the money will be put in the Girl Assistance Fund and will be administered by the Council for the assistance of girls and/or troops who are in need of financial aid.

Troop Fund Raising

Supplementary troop fund raisers should be undertaken only when girls identify and justify the need for such funds. Juniors, Cadettes, and Senior may conduct one approved fund raiser a year in addition to the council product sales. Approval from the Service Unit Manager and the Area Field Executive must be obtained. Troop fund raisers will not be approved during council product sales or United Way Campaigns. Submit the Troop Activity Application to the council office for approval.

All money collected or raised in the name of Girl Scouting must be used for Girl Scouting purposes and cannot be divided among troop members for personal use.

