



Volunteer Policies and Procedures

Introduction

The Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas (GSGST) Volunteer Policies and Procedures serve as the primary guiding document for volunteers and staff. These policies ensure that the Girl Scout program is delivered consistently, safely, and in alignment with the Girl Scout mission across the council.

All volunteers are expected to familiarize themselves with and follow both GSUSA and GSGST policies and procedures, which govern and support their roles. The policies and procedures outlined in this document apply to all volunteers, regardless of position, and supersede all previous versions.

Policy is a binding course of action that defines what must be done. Policies remain in effect until formally revised or repealed.

Procedure outlines the method used to carry out established policies. GSGST procedures are developed by the leadership team and remain in effect until formally revised or repealed.

Under its charter, Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas and all members are required to adhere to GSUSA policies as outlined in the Blue Book of Basic Documents, as well as the standards set in Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints.

Part 1: Girl Scout Members and Volunteers

I. Adult Volunteers & Youth Members

Policy:

The Girl Scout experience is made possible through the dedication of volunteers. Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas (GSGST) values the time, talent, and commitment of adults who support the mission of building girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place.

Adults who assume responsibility for girls who are not their own must be registered Girl Scout members and successfully complete a criminal background check. Adults attending events solely as participants with their own child (e.g., parent/guardian events) are not required to register as volunteers.

GSGST is committed to fostering an environment in which relationships among volunteers, staff, parents, and girls are characterized by dignity, respect, courtesy, and equitable treatment.

All Girl Scout troops must be led by at least two unrelated, registered adult volunteers. Each troop must have at least one female adult leader, age 18 or older, who meets all registration, background check, and training requirements.

Male volunteers are welcomed and encouraged to participate in the Girl Scout program and must meet the same requirements as all volunteers. Male volunteers may serve in leadership roles; however:

- They may not be alone with girls
- At least one unrelated female adult must be present at all times during activities involving girls
- For overnight activities, a minimum of two unrelated female adults must be present

Girl Scout volunteers do not have the authority to remove or restrict another individual's membership or participation. Any concerns regarding participation must be addressed through established GSGST policies and procedures.

Procedures:

Definition of Volunteer:

A volunteer is any adult (18 years of age or older) who, without compensation or expectation of compensation, performs a task on behalf of Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas (GSGST).

Individuals must be approved and appointed by the council prior to performing volunteer duties.

Unless otherwise specified in writing by GSGST, volunteers are not considered employees of the council.

Membership Registration:

All individuals participating in Girl Scout activities must be registered members of Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA).

Girls must be registered prior to participating in Girl Scout activities, unless attending a council-approved "Try Girl Scouts" or recruitment activity, where non-member participation is permitted in accordance with council guidelines and insurance coverage.

Adults must be registered members of GSUSA, unless serving in a temporary or limited advisory capacity, as defined by council guidelines.

Criminal Background Check:

A criminal background check is a required component of the GSGST volunteer screening and placement process. Its purpose is to ensure that all volunteers are appropriately screened and placed in roles that support the safety and well-being of girls.

All volunteers must successfully complete a criminal background check prior to serving in any role that meets the criteria below.

GSGST reserves the right to re-run background checks on current volunteers at any time.

The council reserves the right to approve, restrict, or deny volunteer participation based on background check results. Determinations are made at the sole discretion of the council, with consideration given to factors including, but not limited to:

- The nature and severity of the offense
- The length of time since the offense
- The relevance of the offense to volunteer responsibilities
- The safety and best interests of girl members

Certain offenses may result in automatic disqualification, while others may result in restricted participation, as determined by the council.

Background Check Requirements

Adults must be registered with GSUSA and successfully complete a background check if they are participating in any of the following ways:

- Serving as a troop leader, co-leader, or volunteer working with girls in an ongoing capacity
- Supervising or taking responsibility for girls who are not their own, including transportation
- Handling Girl Scout funds, including product program proceeds
- Participating in overnight activities where girls are present without their parent/guardian
- Serving in roles required to meet adult-to-girl supervision ratios
- Serving as a Troop Camp-Trained Adult or First Aider
- Serving on a service unit, committee, or council administrative team, including any role with access to confidential information, financial records, or member data

Individuals may not begin volunteer responsibilities until the background check has been completed and approved.

Criminal Background Check Procedure

Application Process:

All prospective volunteers must complete a criminal background check (CBC) as part of the volunteer approval process.

After registering for an adult Girl Scout membership, the volunteer will receive an email directly from the council's background check vendor with instructions to complete the process online. A fee may apply, as determined by council guidelines.

Volunteers may not begin service until the background check has been completed and approved.

Accuracy of Information:

Volunteers are responsible for providing accurate and complete information when completing the background check. Providing false or misleading information, including Social Security number or date of birth, may result in denial or removal from volunteer participation, regardless of the background check outcome.

Disputing Background Check Results:

Individuals who wish to obtain or dispute information contained in their background check report must contact the reporting agency directly at:

theadvocates@sterlingvolunteers.com

Use of Background Check Information:

GSGST relies on the information provided by the background check vendor when making volunteer placement decisions. The council will act on the results provided unless and until updated or corrected information is submitted through the reporting agency.

Disqualification from Volunteer Participation:

The following criteria apply when the council becomes aware that a prospective or current volunteer has been convicted of a criminal offense under the laws of the State of Texas, another state, or the United States.

Automatic Disqualification

The following offenses will result in **automatic disqualification** from volunteer participation:

- Registered sex offender
- Crimes against children
- Felony offenses against a person or family member
- Public indecency offenses
- Crimes involving the use of weapons
- Arson
- Any violent crime
- Any felony drug-related offense
- Any felony conviction within the five (5) years preceding the background check
- DWI, DUI, or possession of marijuana under two (2) ounces:

- If it is a first offense within the past five (5) years, or
- Any second or subsequent offense, regardless of date

Individuals residing on the same premises as a registered sex offender may only participate as a parent/guardian and are not eligible to serve as volunteers.

Discretionary Disqualification

The following may result in denial or restriction of volunteer participation, at the discretion of the council:

- A first-time DWI, DUI, or possession of marijuana under two (2) ounces offense that occurred more than five (5) years prior to the background check
- Other criminal offenses, excluding minor traffic violations classified as Class C misdemeanors.

Final determinations will be made by the council based on the nature of the offense, time elapsed, and relevance to volunteer responsibilities, with priority given to the safety and well-being of girls.

Case-by-Case Review:

For all other criminal offenses, including felony convictions older than five (5) years, that do not fall under automatic disqualification, Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas (GSGST) will review the applicant's eligibility on a case-by-case basis.

The decision to allow or restrict volunteer participation is at the sole discretion of GSGST. Factors considered may include, but are not limited to:

- The nature and severity of the offense
- The position for which the individual is seeking to volunteer
- The length of time since the offense occurred
- The circumstances surrounding the offense
- Evidence of rehabilitation
- The likelihood of reoffense
- The number and pattern of offenses

Additional Considerations

Offenses or situations not specifically outlined in this policy will be reviewed on a case-by-case

basis, in accordance with council guidelines.

Volunteers and applicants are required to disclose any pending criminal charges. If a volunteer has pending charges for any offense other than minor traffic violations, their volunteer participation may be temporarily suspended pending the outcome of the case.

Final determinations regarding eligibility will be made in alignment with GSGST policy and in the best interest of girl safety and program integrity.

Volunteer Limitations:

GSGST may place limitations or restrictions on a volunteer's roles or responsibilities as deemed appropriate.

Volunteers must comply with any assigned restrictions as a condition of their continued participation. Failure to adhere to these limitations may result in further restriction or removal from volunteer roles.

Confidentiality

GSGST will maintain the confidentiality of all criminal background check information, including results and any related eligibility determinations.

For current volunteers, information regarding disqualification or restrictions will be shared only with appropriate staff and designated supervisory volunteers, as necessary to ensure compliance.

If additional review is required, it will be conducted by the GSGST Leadership Team.

GSGST reserves the right to review and reconsider cases on a case-by-case basis, including in response to an appeal.

New Volunteer Procedure

Procedures:

Individuals interested in volunteering with GSGST must complete the following steps:

- Register as an adult Girl Scout member and pay the required membership fee
- Successfully complete a criminal background check (CBC)
- Complete all required training for the selected volunteer role

Volunteers may not begin service until all required steps have been completed and approved.

Individuals may also submit a Volunteer Interest Form through the GSGST website to receive assistance with placement.

Volunteer Roles:

Volunteer placement and retention decisions are made on an individual basis, in alignment with the needs of the council and the best interests of girls.

GSGST does not discriminate against any qualified adult volunteer on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, citizenship, age, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, or any other characteristic protected by applicable law.

Requirements for each volunteer role, including membership, background screening, training, and time commitment, are determined based on the needs and responsibilities of the position.

Representing Girl Scouts:

When representing Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas, all members and volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful, appropriate, and responsible manner that reflects the values of the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

Failure to meet these expectations may result in restriction or loss of participation or membership privileges, as determined by the council.

Termination of Volunteer Appointment:

Situations may arise that require GSGST to release or terminate a volunteer from one or all roles prior to the end of their assignment. All such decisions will be made with careful consideration and in alignment with council policies and the best interests of girls.

A volunteer's appointment may be terminated for reasons including, but not limited to:

- Failure to comply with GSUSA or GSGST policies and procedures
- Conduct inconsistent with the Girl Scout Promise and Law
- Noncompliance with financial guidelines or responsibilities
- Inability to fulfill the duties of the role as outlined in the Volunteer Role Description
- Failure to meet expectations following guidance or corrective action
- Any form of abuse toward a child, including physical, emotional, sexual, or neglect
- Any form of abusive or inappropriate behavior toward other volunteers, staff, or members, including physical, emotional, or verbal conduct
- Disqualifying criminal history, including registered sex offender status or crimes against a child

*Registered sex offenders are not eligible for membership in Girl Scouts of the USA and may not participate in any capacity with Girl Scout programs. Volunteers shall not knowingly hold activities at which a registered sex offender is present.

Volunteer & Parent/Guardian Expectations

Volunteers are expected to maintain appropriate boundaries with parents/guardians.

Parents/guardians must also interact respectfully with volunteers and may not interfere with troop operations or leadership decisions.

Resignation:

Volunteers may choose to resign or request a change in role at any time. Volunteers are encouraged to provide advance notice, preferably at least two (2) weeks, to support a smooth transition.

Resignations should be submitted in writing to the appropriate GSGST Volunteer Support staff member.

If a volunteer does not provide notice and GSGST has made at least three documented attempts to contact the individual without response, the volunteer may be considered to have voluntarily resigned.

Volunteers who fail to actively fulfill their role responsibilities or respond to communication may be removed or reassigned.

Volunteer Role Reappointment:

Volunteers in roles requiring reappointment will be guided through the process by the appropriate GSGST staff liaison.

Reappointment decisions are based on:

- Past performance
- Adherence to GSGST and GSUSA policies and standards
- Support of the Girl Scout mission, values, and council goals
- Demonstrated ability to maintain positive and respectful relationships with girls, parents/guardians, volunteers, and staff

Reappointment also requires mutual agreement on role expectations, responsibilities, and time commitments.

Dress Code:

Volunteers serve as role models for girls and are expected to dress in a manner that is appropriate, modest, and suitable for their role and the activity.

GSGST reserves the right to address attire that is not aligned with these expectations.

Public Displays of Affection:

Volunteers are expected to maintain appropriate boundaries and professional behavior while participating in Girl Scout activities or representing the organization.

Public displays of affection that are inappropriate for a youth-focused environment (e.g., kissing, fondling) are not permitted.

Concerns or violations may result in review and appropriate action in accordance with GSGST policies.

II. Volunteer Terms**Policy:**

Girl Scouts is not only the premiere leadership development organization for girls but also a vehicle through which adult volunteers are encouraged to enhance and develop their leadership skills. Volunteers shall be appointed for a period of one year. A volunteer may, however, be released at any time due to failure to fulfill the requirements of the position, support overall GSGST goals, or comply with policies and procedures.

Volunteers serving on Girl Scout Service Unit Teams, Council Committees, and Day/Overnight Camp Teams are encouraged to adopt a succession plan. This affords each volunteer time to learn the responsibilities of the role, to refine those skills, to carry out the role responsibilities, and to begin mentoring others. Rotating terms allow for mentoring and sharing of knowledge and gives volunteers the opportunity to broaden knowledge and skills into new areas.

III. Volunteer Learning**Policy:**

To ensure the delivery of high-quality Girl Scout programming, all volunteers are expected to participate in required training and ongoing learning opportunities. The strength of the Girl Scout movement depends on well-prepared and supported volunteer leadership.

All volunteers must complete basic training for their role. Depending on the position, additional training may be required within a specified timeframe.

These learning opportunities are designed to ensure that volunteers have the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to effectively support girls and deliver the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

Failure to complete required training may result in restriction of volunteer responsibilities.

Volunteers must maintain current training and certifications as required. Expired training may result in restricted participation.

Procedures:

Girl Scout Troop Leaders (including co-leaders, assistant leaders, and troop leadership team members):

All new troop leaders are required to complete required onboarding and training as determined by GSGST. This includes, but is not limited to:

- New Leader Training (virtual or in-person)
- Required Youth Protection training
- Required GSUSA learning courses available through gsLearn

Troop leaders are also expected to review key resources annually, including:

- Volunteer Essentials
- Safety Activity Checkpoints
- GSGST Volunteer Policies and Procedures

Additional training resources and support materials are available on the GSGST website at www.gsgst.org

Troop Product Managers:

Troop Product Managers must complete all required training and onboarding for their role, as outlined by GSGST.

This includes submitting a Troop Product Manager Position Agreement and completing all applicable training and requirements detailed in the Product Manager Guide.

First Aid:

At least one adult with current First Aid/CPR certification must be present at all Girl Scout activities.

The designated First Aider must be a registered Girl Scout volunteer with an approved background check on file.

Additional or activity-specific First Aid requirements may apply and are outlined in Safety Activity Checkpoints, which must be followed for all activities.

Troop Camp Certified Volunteers:

Troop Camp Certified Volunteers are individuals who have successfully completed GSGST Troop Camp Training, as required for participation in troop camping activities.

Additional Role-Specific Training:

Certain volunteer roles require additional training, certifications, or council-specific orientation. Volunteers serving in these roles must complete all required training within the timeframe established by GSGST.

IV. Conflict Escalation and Resolution

Policy:

Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas encourages volunteers and staff to address and resolve conflicts in a timely, respectful, and constructive manner.

All parties are expected to make a good faith effort to resolve concerns directly with one another before escalating the issue. Direct communication, such as a phone call or in-person conversation, is strongly encouraged.

If a resolution cannot be reached, concerns should be escalated to the appropriate council staff member for review and support. The council may facilitate resolution and determine next steps as needed.

All individuals involved are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the Girl Scout Promise and Law throughout the resolution process.

Procedures:

Conflict Resolution:

All individuals share responsibility for addressing and resolving conflicts in a respectful and constructive manner. GSGST supports a collaborative approach to conflict resolution.

The preferred method for resolving concerns is through direct communication between the individuals involved, such as a phone call or in-person conversation. Individuals are encouraged to make a good faith effort to resolve concerns informally before initiating a formal process. Email and other written communication methods are generally not recommended for resolving conflicts, as they may lead to miscommunication or escalation.

Volunteers do not have the authority to remove or restrict another individual's membership or

participation in Girl Scouts. Any concerns involving a girl's or adult's participation must be escalated to GSGST staff for review and guidance.

GSGST reserves the right to take immediate and appropriate action when necessary to ensure the safety, well-being, and integrity of the Girl Scout program, regardless of whether the conflict resolution process has been initiated.

Conflict Resolution Procedure:

When a conflict arises, individuals are expected to make a good faith effort to resolve the concern directly with the other party through respectful, direct communication (e.g., phone call or in-person conversation).

If the issue cannot be resolved, the concern should be discussed with the appropriate volunteer leadership, such as the Girl Scout Service Unit Manager, Committee Chair, or Volunteer Coordinator.

Concerns should only be escalated to the council after these steps have been attempted. If a resolution is still not reached, any involved party may submit a concern to info@gsgst.org for review.

GSGST will review the concern and may:

- Provide guidance or mediation
- Request additional information
- Facilitate a meeting with involved parties, if appropriate

If necessary, unresolved matters may be escalated to the GSGST Leadership Team for further review and determination.

GSGST reserves the right to redirect concerns back to the appropriate level if the conflict resolution steps have not been followed.

In cases involving financial concerns, the council may request relevant documentation, including bank statements, receipts, and financial reports, and may conduct an audit as needed.

Communication Expectations:

Volunteers are expected to follow the established communication structure when seeking support or resolving concerns.

- Troop-level → Troop Leadership
- Service Unit → SU Team
- Council-level → GSGST Staff

Failure to follow communication channels may result in delayed response or redirection.

V. Inclusivity

Policy:

The GSGST Board of Directors reaffirms its support of GSUSA policies and the development of an affirmative action plan for volunteers and staff within GSGST's jurisdiction. To ensure full equality of opportunity in all operations and activities of the organization, Non-Discrimination Policies and Procedures shall be used in the recruitment, selection, training, placement and recognition of volunteers. Special emphasis shall be placed upon securing representation of underrepresented population groups. All Girl Scout councils shall be responsible for seeing that membership is reflective of the pluralistic nature of their populations, and that membership is extended to all girls in all population segments and geographic areas in their jurisdictions.

Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas values diversity and inclusivity and does not discriminate or recruit on the basis of race, color, religion, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship, age, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, physical or developmental ability, nor any other category protected by applicable state, federal, or local law. Through our programming, the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, girls develop skills to advance diversity and promote tolerance in the twenty-first century. We are committed to understanding similarities and differences, building relationships and promoting a dialogue of acceptance and respect. Each individual involved must uphold the tenant that Girl Scouting is for all girls.

Procedures:

GSGST Troop Volunteers are expected to carry out the duties of the volunteer role while abiding by the Girl Scout Promise and Law. They are expected to embrace and promote pluralism to the best of their ability so that all girls and families feel welcome. Volunteers are held accountable for following volunteer policies as stated in GSUSA Blue Book of Basic Documents, GSUSA Volunteer Essentials, GSUSA Safety Activity Checkpoints and GSGST Volunteer Policies and Procedures.

VI. Situations Regarding Child Custody Parental Arrangements

Policy:

GSGST staff and volunteers are not responsible for interpreting or enforcing parental custodial agreements. Further, GSGST staff and volunteers are prohibited from taking on the role of a mediator in these situations. The council's primary concern is for the girl and her positive Girl Scout experience.

Procedures:

The caregiver who first registers the girl determines the primary caregiver and can add an additional caregiver during first registration. After that time, if the primary wants to add additional caregivers, they can use the Add an Additional Caregiver functionality in MyAccount to add those adults.

In the case of child custody changes, a written request with appropriate documents must be emailed to info@gsgst.org to make any further changes.

Part 2: Risk Management and Safety

VII. Risk Management

Policy:

The council recognizes that, through its varied activities, there is substantial exposure to various risks associated with its operations. In order to provide a safe organizational environment for youth, volunteers, and employees, the council will take reasonable and prudent steps to limit potential organizational liabilities through a program of risk management that includes, but may not be limited to, maintenance of a comprehensive liability insurance program, compliance with all regulatory requirements, and organizational standards, continuing education of employees and volunteer personnel, and regularly scheduled review and assessment of the program's effectiveness.

Specific guidelines regarding the suggested adult-to-girl ratios can be found in the Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints. However, in certain situations, the number of adults may be increased to accommodate the special needs of girls.

Procedures:

Insurance Coverage

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 automatically included with Girl Scout membership registration and applies to all registered youth and adult members who may become injured while participating in an approved and supervised Girl Scout activity.

This coverage functions as supplemental medical insurance and is intended to assist with out-of-pocket medical expenses that may not be covered by personal insurance.

Activity Accident insurance may also extend to non-members invited to participate in a Girl Scout–approved and supervised activity, such as a friend attending a meeting or an adult volunteering for the day.

Coverage applies to day events, overnight trips (including camp), and international travel, when activities are conducted in accordance with Girl Scout policies.

A summary of coverage types and limits for each category can be found at <https://www.mutualofomaha.com/girl-scouts>.

Volunteer Requirements:

All adults serving in an ongoing volunteer role must be registered Girl Scout members with an

approved criminal background check on file, in accordance with council volunteer screening policies.

Child Safety:

- All state, county, and city regulations must be adhered to, in particular with regards to food handling and child safety.
- Children will be supervised by an adult while cleaning supplies are in use.
- Girls must be accompanied at all times by the correct number of adult Girl Scout approved volunteers, per the volunteer essentials, when in the presence of program providers or activity certified individuals who are not Girl Scout members.

Emergency Procedures:

In the event of an emergency, the volunteers must:

- Provide appropriate care for the ill/injured individuals.
- Call 911/emergency medical care.
- Notify the child's parent or guardian.
- One adult must stay at the scene. Do not disturb victim or surroundings until assistance arrives.
- Make NO statement of ANY KIND to the media. DO NOT give out any names or information. Ask the media to contact GSGST headquarters at 800-477-2688.
- Secure and maintain all original permission forms and medical records to turn in as described in this section.
- Report the emergency. Call GSGST Council headquarters at 800-477-2688 during normal business hours. If the emergency occurs after hours, call the GSGST after-hours emergency number at 956-459-6142. The after-hour emergency hotline is to be used for emergencies ONLY, such as a fatality, serious illness or accident, lost child, natural disaster, fire, or chemical spills.

Incident Reports:

In the event of an incident, an [Incident Report](#) must be filled out within 48 hours. All medical incident reports will be maintained by GSGST in compliance with federal regulations.

First Aid/CPR:

For many activities, at least one adult volunteer must be currently certified in First Aid and CPR and present for the duration of the activity. Approved certification providers can be found in the Safety Activity Checkpoints.

Safety Activity Checkpoints:

Safety Activity Checkpoints provide detailed guidance on safety preparations, requirements, and recommended procedures to help ensure the safety of girls participating in Girl Scout activities. Volunteers must review and follow the applicable Safety Activity Checkpoints when planning and conducting activities. The Safety Activity Checkpoints can be found on the GSGST website at

Privacy for Volunteers:

Volunteers are responsible for protecting the privacy and confidentiality of Girl Scout members, families, volunteers, and staff.

- Paper forms that contain sensitive personal information such as Social Security numbers and bank account information must be submitted to GSGST within seven (7) days of receipt. Volunteers should not retain copies of these forms or store them electronically.
- Health History forms are valid for 12 months from the date they are completed. These forms should only be maintained for the duration of their applicable use. Parents or guardians may review and update the form annually to extend its use.
- Health History forms collected for a specific event or trip should not be retained after the conclusion of the activity. At that time, forms should either be returned to the participant or their parent/guardian or securely destroyed (shredded).
- Volunteers must treat all Girl Scout information with respect and maintain its confidentiality. This includes information related to the organization, its members, volunteers, or staff in any format, including verbal, paper, or electronic communication.

Credit Card Safety:

Protecting credit card information is essential. GSGST does not retain or store credit card numbers on its computers or servers.

Volunteers and parents should take appropriate precautions to protect payment information and prevent unauthorized access to accounts or systems. When using shared or public computers, users should ensure they log out of accounts and close browser sessions after completing transactions.

Social Media and Website Safety:

GSGST recognizes the value of service unit and troop media pages and websites as tools to engage current members and connect with prospective families. When using social media or websites in connection with Girl Scouts, members must follow these guidelines:

- **Photo and Media Consent:** Photos, videos, and audio recordings of girls may only be shared if a parent or guardian has provided consent through the Girl Scout membership photo release or another written permission.
- **Protect Personal Information:** Do not share information that could compromise the safety or privacy of girls or adults. Personal information should be considered private and should not be posted publicly. This includes last names, email addresses, home addresses, phone

numbers, school names, or other identifying information.

- **Location Safety:** Avoid posting real-time locations or meeting places for troop activities or events. Event locations should only be shared with registered participants through private communication.
- **Respectful Communication:** Never post disparaging content, inappropriate language, name-calling, or personal attacks. Concerns or conflicts should be addressed offline following Girl Scout conflict resolution practices.
- **Tagging and Identification:** Do not tag individual girls in photos. Parents or guardians may only be tagged with their permission.
- **Appropriate Representation:** Troop and service unit social media pages should reflect the Girl Scout Promise and Law and represent Girl Scouts in a positive and respectful manner.

Ownership of Accounts

All troop/service unit social media accounts, email accounts, and communication platforms are the property of GSGST and must be transferred upon request.

VIII. Health Issues

Policy:

Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas recognizes that health concerns may arise during Girl Scout activities and encourages programs that support the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of its members.

To help ensure the safety of all participants, at least one adult volunteer with current First Aid/CPR/AED certification must be present at all Girl Scout activities. Certification must be obtained through an approved provider and include training on recognizing and responding to allergic reactions, including the use of epinephrine when applicable.

Procedures:

Incident Reports:

All accidents, injuries, or incidents that occur during a Girl Scout activity must be documented using the appropriate incident report form and submitted to the council as soon as possible. Incident reports will be maintained by council headquarters in accordance with applicable privacy and record-retention guidelines.

Medication:

Medication must be in its original container, clearly labeled with the participant's name, and must not be expired. Prescription medication must be prescribed for the person who is to receive it.

A volunteer must have written permission from a parent or guardian before administering medication to a Girl Scout or any individual under the age of 18 participating in a Girl Scout event or activity.

Participants who require emergency medications (such as inhalers or epinephrine auto-injectors) should have those medications readily available during all Girl Scout activities.

Confidentiality:

All health-related information, including health history forms, must be handled and maintained in a confidential manner in accordance with applicable state and federal privacy laws. Health forms may be maintained by the troop leader, designated troop first aider, or council staff when participating in council-sponsored events.

Allergies:

Any allergies or medical conditions that may require accommodations must be disclosed in writing in advance to the appropriate volunteer or staff member prior to participation in a Girl Scout activity or event.

IX. Child Protection

Policy:

GSGST is committed to providing an environment that is safe, supportive, and free from abuse and neglect for all girl members. All volunteers and participants are expected to uphold standards that safeguard the health, safety, and well-being of girls, as defined by the *Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)*.

The following behaviors are strictly prohibited:

- **Physical Punishment:** Use of physical force to discipline a child, including restraining, spanking, or any other form of physical punishment
- **Physical Abuse:** Any action that causes harm or injury, including hitting, kicking, hazing, or other aggressive behavior
- **Sexual Misconduct:** Any inappropriate sexual contact, conduct, or communication, including verbal, written, or visual content
- **Physical Neglect:** Failure to provide appropriate supervision, ensure safety during activities, or address medical needs
- **Emotional Abuse:** Verbal attacks, threats, intimidation, humiliation, hostility, hazing, or inappropriate language directed at a child

GSGST reserves the right to deny, restrict, suspend, or terminate volunteer participation for any individual who engages in, is found responsible for, or has been convicted of child abuse or neglect, and may take immediate action when necessary to protect the safety of girls, volunteers, or staff.

Procedures:

In accordance with Texas Family Code, Chapter 261, any person who has cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect must immediately make a report.

Volunteers are required to:

- Report suspected abuse or neglect immediately to the appropriate authorities, as required by Texas law
- Notify GSGST staff as soon as possible after a report has been made

Definitions of abuse and neglect can be found in Texas Family Code §261.001. Additional information is available at:

<http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/SOTWDocs/FA/htm/FA.261.htm>

Reporting:

In the State of Texas, any person who suspects child abuse or neglect is required to make a report within 48 hours.

How to Report:

- Submit a report online at www.txabusehotline.org
 - Note: Online reports may take up to 24 hours to be processed
- Call the Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400 if:
 - The situation is urgent
 - You prefer to remain anonymous
 - You do not have enough information to complete an online report
 - You do not want email confirmation of your report
- Call 911 or local law enforcement immediately if the situation is an emergency

If you are unsure whether a situation should be reported, you should make a report.

GSGST staff may provide guidance, but the report must be made by the individual with direct knowledge of the concern.

Providing Information:

Reports of suspected abuse or neglect may be made anonymously; however, volunteers must notify Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas (GSGST) after a report has been made if the situation involves

a Girl Scout member, volunteer, or activity.

Notification to GSGST should be made within 24 hours of submitting a report.

Volunteers should document the report, including:

- Date and time the report was made
- Name of the agency contacted
- Name of the intake worker (if provided)

Volunteers must provide a written or verbal notification to the Chief Operating Officer or designated GSGST staff member.

Confidentiality:

Information related to suspected abuse or neglect must be kept strictly confidential and shared only with:

- The appropriate Child Protective Services (CPS) agency or law enforcement
- The Chief Operating Officer or designated GSGST staff member

Information should not be shared with any other individuals unless required by law or directed by law enforcement or GSGST.

X. Harassment

Policy:

GSGST is committed to fostering an environment where all interactions are characterized by dignity, respect, courtesy, and equitable treatment.

Harassment of any kind is not tolerated. This includes unlawful, unwelcome, verbal, physical, or emotional conduct, including sexual harassment.

Harassment includes, but is not limited to, yelling, intimidation, threats, hostile or disrespectful communication, or any behavior that creates a negative or unsafe environment for volunteers, staff, parents/guardians, or girl members.

GSGST reserves the right to deny membership, restrict participation, or terminate a volunteer's role if harassment occurs while participating in or representing Girl Scouts.

Procedures:

Any volunteer who believes they have been subjected to harassment of any kind by another volunteer, staff member, or representative of the organization should promptly report the concern to GSGST by emailing info@gsgst.org.

All reports will be reviewed and addressed in a timely manner in accordance with GSGST Conflict Escalation and Resolution policies and procedures.

Staff have the authority to end conversations or interactions that become inappropriate, disrespectful, or unproductive.

GSGST maintains a zero-tolerance approach to abusive behavior toward staff, volunteers, or members. Repeated disregard for communication expectations may result in restricted communication methods or reassignment of support.

XI. Firearms and Fireworks

Policy:

Firearms and other weapons are prohibited at all Girl Scout activities and on all Girl Scout–owned or leased property, except when used as part of a council-approved program activity and handled by authorized individuals.

Authorized individuals may include:

- Sworn law enforcement officers
- Council-authorized property staff
- Certified instructors
- Licensed wildlife control personnel
- Trained adults facilitating an approved Girl Scout target sport activity

Firearms and ammunition may only be present during council-approved target sport activities and must be handled in accordance with Safety Activity Checkpoints and all applicable laws and council guidelines.

The current version of Safety Activity Checkpoints must be reviewed and followed prior to conducting any target sport activity.

Fireworks are not permitted on council properties or at Girl Scout activities.

Part 3: The Girl Scout Program

XII. Program

Policy:

Girl Scouts is an informal educational program designed to help girls apply the fundamental principles of the Girl Scout Movement, as outlined in the Girl Scout Promise and Law, with a focus on leadership development in an all-girl environment.

The program is delivered through trained volunteer leadership and offers a wide range of progressive, girl-led activities based on the interests and needs of today's girls. Through these experiences, Girl Scouts aims to build courage, confidence, and character, empowering girls to discover their full potential, connect with others, and take action to make a positive impact in their communities.

All activities must follow the guidelines outlined in Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints. Activity Approval Forms must be submitted and approved, when required by council procedures.

Procedures:

Council Activity Approval:

Activities or trips that take place outside of a troop's normal meeting day, time, or location must be submitted for council approval using the Trip and Overnight Activity Form.

Forms can be found on the GSGST website at www.gsgst.org under the Forms section and must be submitted to info@gsgst.org in accordance with council timelines.

GSGST reserves the right to cancel, modify, or restrict any activity that does not meet safety or policy requirements.

Overnight Sleeping Arrangements:

All overnight activities must follow the requirements outlined in Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints.

- No adult may share a bed with a girl
- Male volunteers must have separate sleeping accommodations from girls, such as a separate room, tent, or designated sleeping area
- In co-ed volunteer teams (e.g., spouses), adults must have separate sleeping arrangements

from girls and other participants

- Required adult-to-girl supervision ratios must be maintained at all times

Transporting Girl Scouts:

Transportation of girls to and from Girl Scout meetings or activities is the responsibility of each parent or guardian.

When transportation is arranged as part of a Girl Scout activity, volunteers must follow all applicable guidelines outlined in Safety Activity Checkpoints.

All drivers must comply with Texas state laws, including:

- All drivers and passengers must wear seat belts
- Children under eight (8) years old, unless taller than 4 feet 9 inches, must be secured in an appropriate child safety seat
- Children who have outgrown a booster seat must be properly secured with a seat belt

For additional information on Texas child passenger and seat belt laws, visit dps.texas.gov.

XIII. Girl Scout Troop Formation

Policy:

To support a cooperative and engaging learning environment, Girl Scout troops should consist of at least five (5) girl members.

While larger troop sizes are encouraged to promote collaboration and shared experiences, troop size may vary based on community needs and circumstances.

Exceptions to standard troop size considerations may include:

- Troops that are actively seeking additional members
- Troops in sparsely populated or rural areas where additional members are not readily available
- Troops serving girls who require additional individual support or accommodations
- Troops comprised of older girls (high school level) where smaller group sizes may be more appropriate.

Procedures:

Registration:

Girl Scout troops may be formed and registered at any time during the membership year, in accordance with council guidelines and membership requirements.

Renewal:

Renewing Girl Scout troops must register all girl and adult members, including troop leaders, through the approved online registration system.

Renewal should be completed during the spring registration period or no later than October 1 each year to ensure continuous membership and insurance coverage.

Additional Members:

Additional girls and adults may be added to a Girl Scout troop at any time during the membership year, provided they are registered through the approved system and meet all membership and volunteer requirements.

Troop Size and Composition:

- Troops should be structured to provide a balanced group experience, allowing for girl-led decision-making while also supporting the growth and development of each individual girl.
- Troops may include girls from one or multiple grade levels and from different schools or communities. Whenever possible, troops should reflect the diversity of the community, including economic, racial, cultural, and religious backgrounds.
- For guidance on recommended troop sizes by program grade level and appropriate adult supervision ratios, volunteers should refer to Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints.

XIV. Outdoor Program

Policy:

Outdoor programming is a core component of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, providing girls with opportunities to build skills, confidence, and independence in a fun and engaging environment.

To ensure the safety of all participants, volunteers must adhere to the following requirements when participating in outdoor activities, including camping:

- Follow all Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints, including required adult-to-girl ratios, safety guidelines, and activity-specific requirements.
- Meet all training, certification, and First Aid/CPR requirements as outlined in Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- Ensure all activities are age-appropriate and properly supervised.

Procedures:

Camp-Trained Adult Volunteers:

Each Girl Scout troop participating in outdoor activities must have at least one registered, camp-trained adult volunteer who has completed the appropriate level of training, as outlined in Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints.

In addition, there must be at least one registered adult with current First Aid/CPR/AED certification present for the duration of the activity. It is strongly encouraged that these roles are held by two different individuals.

All camp-trained and First Aid/CPR/AED-certified adults must be registered Girl Scout members with an approved background check on file.

A female adult must be present when girls are participating in Girl Scout activities, in accordance with Girl Scout supervision requirements.

Adult to Girl Ratio:

Volunteers must follow the adult-to-girl ratios outlined in Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints.

Adults who are camp-trained and/or First Aid/CPR/AED certified may be counted toward the required number of supervising adults.

All adults included in ratio must be registered Girl Scout members with an approved background check on file.

Domestic Animals or Pets at Camp:

Domestic animals or pets are not permitted at Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas camp properties at any time, with the exception of service animals as defined by applicable law.

Pets belonging to on-site, permanent staff must be properly contained and supervised while campers are present on the property.

Men at Camp:

Male volunteers may participate in camping activities; however, they may not be the sole supervising adult for a troop and must follow all sleeping arrangement and supervision requirements outlined in Safety Activity Checkpoints.

Male volunteers must have separate sleeping arrangements from girls and must not share sleeping spaces with girl participants.

At least one female adult must be present when girls are participating in overnight activities.

Volunteers should refer to Safety Activity Checkpoints (Camping) for detailed guidance on sleeping arrangements and male participation.

Personal Property:

Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas is not responsible for loss, theft, damage, or destruction of personal property, including but not limited to damage caused by vandalism, weather, or other unforeseen events.

This applies to all personal items and vehicles brought onto camp property for programs, events, trainings, troop camping, special events, and resident camp.

Participants are responsible for securing and safeguarding their personal belongings at all times.

Burn Bans:

Burn bans may be implemented by the Texas A&M Forest Service or local authorities to protect life and property. When a burn ban is in effect, all outdoor fires are prohibited on Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas properties.

During burn bans, alternative cooking methods such as solar cooking or indoor cooking may be used, in accordance with Safety Activity Checkpoints.

Information regarding current burn bans will be communicated by the council and/or posted online.

Camp Closings:

In the event of inclement weather, emergency repairs, or other unforeseen circumstances, Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas (GSGST) will determine whether camp facilities will remain open or be closed.

If a camp closure is necessary, designated event coordinators will be notified via phone and/or email. Additional communication may be provided as needed to participants and volunteers.

XV. Public Relations

Policy:

The public image of Girl Scouts is shaped by the actions and communications of all members of the organization. Maintaining positive, accurate, and consistent messaging is the responsibility of the GSGST Marketing and Communications Department.

All external communications representing Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas (GSGST), including media inquiries, public statements, and promotional efforts, must be coordinated through the Marketing and Communications Department to ensure consistency and alignment with council messaging.

The Marketing and Communications Department is responsible for managing broadcast media, television, radio, and digital communications, and will collaborate with service units and volunteers on approved outreach efforts, including print and community-based promotions within the GSGST jurisdiction.

In the event of a serious accident, health emergency, or death, all volunteers and staff must follow established council procedures and immediately notify the appropriate council staff. Volunteers and staff should not communicate with the media or make public statements regarding the incident.

Procedures:

Girl Scout Service Unit Public Relations:

When a newsworthy event or activity occurs within a Girl Scout service unit, volunteers must notify GSGST and coordinate with the Marketing and Communications Department.

The Marketing and Communications Department will review the opportunity, develop appropriate messaging, and coordinate outreach to relevant media outlets, including print, digital, and other communication channels, as appropriate.

National Public Relations:

National media inquiries and outreach are managed exclusively by GSUSA's Public Relations staff. Volunteers and council members must not contact national media on behalf of Girl Scouts.

If a volunteer believes an event or activity may have national significance or appeal, they should notify the GSGST Marketing and Communications Department.

The Marketing and Communications Department will review the opportunity and, if appropriate, coordinate with GSUSA Public Relations staff for further action.

Emergency Situations:

In the event of an emergency, all volunteers and members must follow established GSGST Emergency Procedures.

Volunteers and members must not make any statements to the media or share information related to the incident. This includes not releasing names, details, or any identifying information.

All media inquiries must be directed to Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas at 800-477-2688.

Product Program Public Relations:

To ensure that all Girl Scouts have an equal opportunity to participate and succeed in product programs, all media and promotional efforts related to the Girl Scout Product Program must be coordinated through the GSGST Marketing and Communications Department.

This includes, but is not limited to, newspaper, magazine, television, radio, digital media, and outdoor advertising.

Individual troops, service units, or members may not contact media outlets or publish advertisements, public service announcements, or other promotional materials that include Girl Scout branding or contact information without prior written approval from GSGST.

Failure to comply with this policy may result in restriction or loss of participation privileges in GSGST Product Programs.

Flyers/Information in Mailboxes:

Placing materials in mailboxes without proper postage is prohibited by federal law. Girl Scouts and volunteers must not place any items into mailboxes unless they are sent through the United States Postal Service (USPS) with appropriate postage.

This includes, but is not limited to, flyers, product program materials, and letters.

Representing Girl Scouts:

When representing Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas, all members and volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful, appropriate, and responsible manner that reflects the values of the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

Failure to uphold these standards may result in restriction or loss of participation or membership privileges, as determined by the council.

XVI. Technology

Policy:

All use of technology in Girl Scouting must align with Safety Activity Checkpoints and Volunteer Essentials, and all applicable guidelines must be followed.

Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas supports the responsible use of technology and is committed to protecting the safety, security, and privacy of all registered members.

Electronic communication tools, including email and group messaging platforms used in connection with Girl Scouts, must be used for official Girl Scout purposes only. These communication channels may not be used to distribute:

- Solicitations or personal business promotions
- Inappropriate content, including jokes or material that is offensive or not aligned with Girl Scout values
- Political messaging or endorsements

All digital communication should reflect the Girl Scout Promise and Law and maintain a respectful and appropriate tone.

Procedures:

Electronic communication (including email, text messaging, and approved group communication platforms) may be used to share information, coordinate activities, and communicate with families regarding Girl Scout programming.

Communication should be conducted in a timely and organized manner and follow all applicable safety and privacy guidelines outlined in Safety Activity Checkpoints and Volunteer Essentials.

Communication with Girls

Adults may not engage in private one-on-one communication with girls outside of their own child. All communication should include another adult or the girl's parent/guardian.

Confidentiality:

Volunteers and members must take appropriate steps to protect confidential and personal information in their possession, whether in paper or electronic form.

Electronic communication (including email, text messaging, and other digital platforms) is not always secure. Confidential, sensitive, or personally identifiable information should not be shared through unsecured channels.

Information received through Girl Scout communications should not be forwarded, shared, or distributed to others without appropriate permission, particularly when it contains personal or sensitive content.

All individuals are expected to handle information in a manner that protects the privacy, safety, and reputation of Girl Scout members, volunteers, and staff.

Conflict Resolution:

Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas encourages volunteers and staff to address and resolve conflicts in a timely, respectful, and constructive manner.

Adults are expected to make a good faith effort to resolve concerns directly with one another in a professional and respectful manner before seeking council assistance.

Direct communication, such as a phone call or in-person meeting, is the preferred method for resolving concerns, as it supports clearer understanding and more positive outcomes.

Email and other written communication methods are not recommended for resolving conflicts, as they may lead to miscommunication or escalation.

If a resolution cannot be reached, concerns should be escalated to the appropriate council staff member for support and guidance.

Part 4: Girl Scout Finances and Money-Earning

XVII. Girl Scout Finances

Policy:

All financial practices must align with Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints, and all applicable guidelines must be followed.

All volunteers responsible for handling Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas funds, including troop and service unit finances and money-earning activities, must be registered Girl Scout members with an approved background check on file and in good standing.

All funds collected, earned, or held in the name of Girl Scouting are intended to support the Girl Scout mission and must be used for that purpose. These funds are the property of Girl Scouting and are not the property of any individual. Funds may not be distributed directly to individuals.

Girl Scout troop and service unit funds must not be commingled with personal or business accounts. To safeguard funds, all troops and service units are required to establish and maintain a council-approved bank account.

Girl Scout bank accounts are subject to review or audit by GSGST at any time. Accounts must be reconciled monthly and maintain a positive balance.

Funds earned through participation in Girl Scouts remain with the troop or council to support Girl Scout activities. Girls who discontinue participation are not entitled to receive any portion of troop funds.

Procedures:

Bank Fees:

Troops are encouraged to select financial institutions that offer low or no monthly service fees for Girl Scout troop bank accounts in order to maximize funds available for girl programming.

To Open or Make Any Change on a Bank Account:

To open a new Girl Scout troop or service unit bank account, or to make any changes to an existing account, authorized signers must complete the SU/Troop Bank Account Request Form.

The completed form must be submitted to info@gsgst.org for review and approval prior to opening or modifying the account.

Donated Funds:

All donations designated for a troop or service unit, regardless of amount, must meet the following requirements:

- Donations must be made payable to Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas (GSGST)
- Donations must be submitted directly to the Finance Department for processing
- An official tax receipt will be issued to the donor by GSGST, as applicable

Once processed, 100% of the donated funds will be allocated to the designated troop or service unit, in accordance with council procedures.

XVIII. Girl Scout Troop Money-Earning Activities

Policy:

Girl Scout troop money-earning activities are valuable program activities and should be suitable to the age and ability of the girls. These Girl Scout troop money-earning activities are consistent with the goals and principles of the Girl Scout program.

The cookie program and fall product program are approved money-earning activities.

Additional money-earning projects must be approved by the council before the money-earning project is undertaken. In most cases, the cookie program should be sufficient to support the Girl Scout troop activities unless the Girl Scout troop is planning a trip or event that will take more than one year to plan. Girl Scout troop participation in the most recent cookie program and fall product program is required for approval of additional money-earning projects. The determination of how proceeds from Girl Scout troop money-earning activities are used must be a girl decision.

Permission must be obtained in writing from a girl's parent/guardian before she may participate in Girl Scout troop money-earning projects or council product sales.

Money-earning projects will not take place from two weeks before the fall product program and cookie program to one week after the last ACH is due. Girl Scout troops must also follow United Way guidelines in scheduling dates for money-earning projects.

Procedures:

Money-earning activities must be managed in compliance with all federal, state and local laws and regulations. All money-earning activities must be with organizations that are aligned with the mission of Girl Scouting. It is the responsibility of the adult volunteers organizing and executing money-earning activities to ensure the troop is in compliance.

Cookie Program & Fall Product Program:

The primary money-earning activity for Girl Scout troops is the GSGST Cookie Program and Fall Product Program. Participation in the GSGST Cookie Program, Fall Product Program, and the submission of a troop financial report within the most recent 12 months may be reviewed when approval is requested for an additional Girl Scout troop money-earning project. Girl members can never ask for donations, including having a tip jar present at a Girl Scout cookie booth. Troops are permitted, however, to collect funds for the specific purpose of purchasing Girl Scout cookies for a Gift of Caring project, including but not limited to Troop to Troop. If a customer gives an unsolicited donation, the troop is allowed to keep the donation.

XIX. Girl Scout Troop Budgeting and Reporting:

Policy:

Girl Scout troop funds are intended to benefit the girls and support the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. All troop funds must be used in a manner that directly supports troop activities and girl-led programming.

Troops are expected to maintain transparent and accurate financial records and be prepared to share financial information with troop families upon request. Troop leaders should be able to clearly communicate how funds are earned and spent at any time.

In addition, all troops are required to complete and submit a Troop Finance Report annually in

June, in accordance with council guidelines.

Misuse of Girl Scout funds may result in immediate removal from volunteer roles and potential legal action.

Procedures:

Troop Budgeting:

Troop funds should be managed in a way that prioritizes the direct benefit of girls and supports girl-led planning. The following is a recommended guideline for how troop funds may be allocated:

- Approximately 65% for the direct benefit of girls currently active in the troop
- Up to 25% reserved for long-term, girl-planned activities
- Up to 10% for recognition of volunteer contributions

These percentages are intended as guidance and may be adjusted based on the needs and goals of the troop.

Direct Benefit for Girls may include, but is not limited to:

- Membership renewal fees for girl members
- Troop activities open to all members
- Girl Scout badges, patches, and awards
- Uniform components and program materials

Long-Term Girl-Planned Activities must be based on girl input and decision-making and may include:

- Future travel experiences that are age-appropriate and planned within a reasonable timeframe (generally three to four years)
- Opportunities that ensure all troop members can participate in experiences such as summer camp

Volunteer Recognition may include, but is not limited to:

- Membership renewal fees for adult volunteers
- Girl Scout-related items such as patches or uniform components
- Modest appreciation gifts (e.g., flowers or small tokens of thanks)
- Training or certification costs that directly support the troop and enhance the volunteer's

ability to deliver the Girl Scout program

Troop Financial Reporting to Troop Parents and Adults:

- All Girl Scout troops are required to complete and submit an annual Troop Finance Report and share relevant financial information with troop families.
- Parents/guardians of girls in the troop have the right to review troop income and expense records upon request. Troops are expected to maintain accurate and up-to-date financial records and be prepared to provide this information in a timely manner.
- Maintaining clear and current financial records helps ensure transparency and reduces misunderstandings regarding the use of troop funds.
- Failure to submit a Troop Finance Report within a twelve (12) month period may result in delayed or withheld disbursement of funds from GSGST to the troop until the report is received.

Disbanding Girl Scout Troops:

Troop funds are the property of Girl Scouts and are intended for the benefit of girls as a group. Troop funds are not the property of any individual girl or adult.

When a troop disbands, any remaining funds must be used in a manner that continues to benefit girls and supports the Girl Scout mission, as determined in coordination with the council.

Prior to disbanding, girls should be given the opportunity to participate in decisions about how remaining funds are used, which may include:

- Donating funds to another troop or service unit
- Supporting council-approved programs or activities
- Funding Take Action projects or community service efforts

If girls from the disbanded troop continue in Girl Scouts and are placed into other troops, remaining funds may be allocated proportionally to those girls, in accordance with council guidelines.

Any remaining funds not otherwise allocated will revert to the council.

Transfer between Troops vs. Removed from Troop:

If a Girl Scout chooses to transfer to another troop, troop funds will not follow the girl to the new troop, regardless of her level of participation or contribution. The girl will be subject to the policies and expectations of the new troop.

If a girl is removed from a troop, documentation explaining the reason for removal must be

submitted to the council. In these cases, troop funds may be reviewed and redistributed at the council's discretion. If applicable, funds may be allocated proportionally and transferred directly to the new troop on behalf of the girl.

Girl transfers are not permitted during the GSGST Cookie Program after the initial order has been placed and before all rewards have been distributed.

If a transfer occurs prior to the distribution of rewards, the original troop is responsible for ensuring the girl receives all earned rewards once they are available.

XX. Individually-Registered Girl Money-Earning

What is an Individually Registered Girl Scout (IRG)?

Individually Registered Girl Scouts (IRGs), often referred to as Juliettes, are registered Girl Scout members in grades K–12 who are not affiliated with a troop. Instead of participating in regular troop meetings, IRGs engage in Girl Scout programming independently with the support and guidance of a parent or other responsible adult.

IRGs participate in Girl Scouts in a way that fits their schedule and interests. They may work toward badges, awards, and leadership opportunities on their own, and they are encouraged to participate in community and council-sponsored events and activities.

How does an IRG participate in Product Program?

Individually Registered Girl Scouts (IRGs) may participate in both the Fall Product Program and the Cookie Program through all available participation methods, including in-person and online sales, in accordance with all council guidelines and deadlines.

Additional requirements or restrictions may apply based on participation history, financial responsibility, or council discretion. This may include, but is not limited to, pay-upfront requirements or modified product access.

How do Product Program proceeds work with an IRG?

In accordance with IRS guidelines, Girl Scouts may not receive personal financial gain from participation in Girl Scout activities.

In a traditional troop setting, a portion of product program proceeds is retained by the troop and deposited into a troop bank account to support troop activities.

For Individually Registered Girl Scouts (IRGs), proceeds are not issued as direct funds. Instead, girls earn Program Credits based on a sliding scale tied to total product sales. These Program Credits may be used for approved Girl Scout-related expenses, as defined by council guidelines.

What are Program Credits?

In compliance with GSUSA policies, girls participating outside of the traditional troop structure do not receive direct proceeds from product program participation. Instead, they earn **Program Credits**.

Program Credits may be used only for **approved Girl Scout-related expenses**, which are limited to:

- Girl Scout membership registration fees
- GSGST travel opportunities
- Expenses related to earning the **Girl Scout Silver and Gold Awards**.

Program Credits may not be redeemed for cash or used for any other purpose outside of these approved categories.

Where are Program Credits Maintained?

Program Credits earned by Individually Registered Girl Scouts (IRGs) are held, managed, and tracked at the council level in accordance with council financial procedures.

How does an IRG request Program Credits?

Individually Registered Girl Scouts (IRGs) may request the use of their earned Program Credits by submitting a **Juliette Program Credit Reimbursement Form**, available on the GSGST website at www.gsgst.org under the Forms section.

Requests should be submitted in accordance with council procedures and timelines and must align with approved uses of Program Credits.

XXI. Collection of Outstanding Funds

Policy:

To protect the integrity of council-approved Girl Scout money-earning activities, all reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that outstanding balances are collected in a timely manner.

Girl Scout troops are not responsible for assuming or covering debt incurred by an individual member or their family.

Any individual with an outstanding balance owed to Girl Scouts of Greater South Texas that remains unpaid beyond ninety (90) days will be ineligible to participate in Girl Scout activities or serve in any volunteer capacity until the balance is paid in full or an approved payment arrangement has been established.

Girls whose parent(s)/guardian(s) have delinquent or outstanding balances will be ineligible to participate in any Girl Scout activities until the balance is resolved or a payment plan has been approved by the council.

Procedures:

Program Participation:

Girls may not participate in any Girl Scout activities, including troop, service unit, or council-sponsored events, if their parent(s)/guardian(s) have delinquent or outstanding balances with the council.

Participation may resume once the outstanding balance is paid in full or an approved payment arrangement has been established.

Girl Scout Troops:

Outstanding troop balances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine responsibility, which may be assigned to an individual member, volunteer, or the troop.

Troops with outstanding balances may have participation restrictions until the balance is resolved or an approved payment arrangement has been established. Restrictions may include, but are not limited to:

- Participation in money-earning activities (determined on a case-by-case basis)
- Participation in Girl Scout activities and events

Course of Action:

The council will make reasonable efforts to collect outstanding balances, including communication with the responsible party and the opportunity to establish a payment arrangement.

If the balance remains unresolved, the council may pursue additional collection actions, which may include the use of collection agencies or legal remedies, as deemed appropriate.

Resigned or Terminated Volunteers:

If a volunteer resigns or is terminated from their position, any outstanding balances owed to the

council will remain due and payable until paid in full or resolved through an approved payment arrangement.

Part 5: GSGST Policies and Procedures

XXII. GSGST Policy and Procedures Revisions

Policy:

GSGST policies and procedures are developed and maintained by council staff and reviewed by the GSGST Leadership Team. GSGST reserves the right to update policies and procedures at any time to ensure alignment with Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) requirements, applicable laws, and council operational needs.

Procedures:

The GSGST Volunteer Policies and Procedures document will be reviewed and updated at least every three (3) years, or more frequently as needed. The most current version will be published on the GSGST website.

Council staff are responsible for:

- Reviewing and updating designated sections of the policies
- Collaborating across departments when updates impact multiple functional areas
- Communicating updates and changes to volunteers and service team members

Service team members and staff are responsible for ensuring that volunteers are informed of and understand policy updates.

Part 1: Girl Scout Members and Volunteers

Retention, Customer Care, Volunteer and Organizational Learning

Part 2: Risk Management and Safety

Programs, Customer Care

Part 3: The Girl Scout Program

Programs, Recruitment, Retention, Marketing and Communications

Part 4: Girl Scout Finances and Money-Earning

Finance, Retention, Fund Development and Product Sales

Part 5: GSGST Volunteer Policies and Procedures

Retention