



# **Volunteer Policies and Procedures**

**Effective August 2021**

## Introduction

The Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas (GSNETX) Volunteer Policies and Procedures serves as the main governing document to guide volunteers and staff, ensuring that the Girl Scout program is delivered in a safe, consistent manner for girls across our council. Volunteers should familiarize themselves with these GSNETX policies and procedures that guide and protect their status as Girl Scout volunteers. The policies and procedures listed below pertain to all volunteers regardless of position or role and supersede all previous versions. Changes made from the previous version are explained in the Summary of Revisions section at the end of this document.

A **policy** is an established, binding course of action to be followed. A policy states what must be done and is binding on those whom it affects. Policies are established by the Board of Directors and remain in force until specifically repealed or revised.

A **procedure** is a step or method used to carry out established policies. GSNETX procedures are established by the senior leadership team of GSNETX and remain in force until specifically repealed or revised.

By the terms of its charter, Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas and all its members are required to adhere to the policies of Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. (GSUSA) as stated in the Blue Book of Basic Documents and are guided by the standards of Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. as stated in Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints.

For any questions regarding these policies and procedures, email [connect@gsnetx.org](mailto:connect@gsnetx.org) or call GSNETX Customer Care at 972-349-2403.

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# Part 1: Girl Scout Members and Volunteers

## I. Adult Volunteers & Youth Members

### Policy:

The Girl Scout experience is made possible by the generous support of Girl Scout volunteers. Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas (GSNETX) appreciates the adults willing to give their time, talent, and resources to help fulfill the Girl Scout mission of building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

Adults who are taking responsibility for children not in their family must register and complete a volunteer application process and background check to become a Girl Scout volunteer. Adults participating in an event as a parent/ caregiver when they are only responsible for their own child are not required to complete this process. These adults, however, may register as an adult member if they wish to be covered by Girl Scout activity insurance for programs and activities.

GSNETX is committed to an environment in which relationships between volunteers, staff, parents / caregivers and Girl Scouts are characterized by dignity, courtesy, respect and equitable treatment.

A positive role model is essential for meeting the Girl Scout program goals and purposes. The attitudes, appearance, and actions of volunteers have a direct impact on the lives of girls. The leadership of every Girl Scout troop/group must include two unrelated adults within the team. Each Girl Scout troop/group must have at least one Girl Scout troop leader who is a woman, is at least 18 years of age, is a registered Girl Scout adult, has an appropriate volunteer security status, and agrees to meet the training requirements for the position.

We welcome and encourage volunteers who are men to participate in our program. All policies and procedures concerning men are designed to protect both volunteers and our youth members. Men may be part of the leadership team for a Girl Scout troop/group, including being designated as the troop leader for the Girl Scout troop/group. Girl Scout troop leaders who are men are expected to fulfill the same requirements as Girl Scout troop leaders who are women. Men may not participate alone with youth members. At troop meetings, one unrelated volunteer who is a woman must be present. In addition, men will not take youth members on overnights, camping trips, extended trips, or events without at least two volunteers who are women.

Girl Scout volunteers do not have the authority to end another member's Girl Scout membership or participation in Girl Scouts. Membership and participation status can be changed only by following the processes outlined in the GSNETX Volunteer 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 the council. A volunteer should be appointed before performing the task. Unless specifically stated in writing by the council, volunteers shall not be considered employees of the council.

### **Membership Registration:**

All adults and youth participating in the Girl Scout Movement must register as members with Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA), except those adults who are working in a temporary advisory capacity.

### **Conditions Requiring Adult Membership Registration and Background Check:**

Any adults participating in Girl Scouts in the following ways must register with GSUSA and successfully complete a background check:

- Taking responsibility for the safety of children not in their family, including driving
- Handling Girl Scout monies, including those funds involved in the GSNETX Cookie Program
- Participating in overnights when youth members attend without adults from their family
- Serving as a Safety-Wise adult to meet adult-to-youth supervision ratios, as further defined in the Risk Management policy
- Serving as Troop Camp Trained Adult or First Aider
- Serving on a Girl Scout administrative team for a service unit or camp

### **New Volunteer Procedure:**

Potential new volunteers will:

1. Search for and select an available volunteer role.
2. Become an adult member of Girl Scouts of the USA.
3. Complete a background check if necessary for the selected role.
4. Follow all guidelines set forth by the description of the volunteer role they accept.

### **Volunteer Roles:**

The decision to accept and retain volunteers is made on an individual basis. GSNETX does not discriminate against an otherwise qualified adult volunteer 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.

The membership, background screening, training, and time commitment are determined based on the

needs of each volunteer role. More details are available from the GSNETX liaison who is managing the position.

**Volunteer Eligibility, Acceptance, and Agreement:**

Volunteer application and role registration is most often completed online. Before applying for the position, it is the responsibility of the prospective volunteer to review the description of the role for which she or he is applying.

All volunteers are responsible for following all guidelines, policies, and procedures set forth by Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas. Volunteers should complete a GSNETX Volunteer Agreement every two years. This agreement ensures that volunteers have acknowledged their acceptance of any GSNETX volunteer terms and conditions, including an intellectual property agreement.

Volunteers may not be accepted or retained if an outstanding debt to GSNETX is unresolved. See XXVII. Collection of Outstanding Funds for more information.

**Representing Girl Scouts:**

When any Girl Scout member is representing Girl Scouts in any way, they must behave in an appropriate, mature manner that fairly represents the Girl Scout movement. If a Girl Scout acts in violation of this procedure, they may lose their membership privileges.

**Suspension or Termination of Volunteer Appointment or Membership:**

Situations may occur that would require GSNETX to release or terminate a volunteer from one or all positions before the end of the assignment term. Additionally, situations may also result in the need to suspend or end an adult volunteer or youth member's membership before the end of the membership year. Any action to release a volunteer or member will receive careful and detailed consideration. A member may have their appointment or membership suspended or terminated because of, but not limited to:

**Refusal to comply with GSNETX or GSUSA policies**

**Conduct inconsistent with the principles of the Girl Scout Movement as indicated by the Girl Scout Promise and Law**

**Inability to perform or fulfill the duties of the position as outlined in their volunteer position description**

**Unsatisfactory completion of objectives and corrective action regarding their role**

**Refusal or failure to adhere to financial guidelines of GSNETX**

- Pending criminal charges or investigation into criminal charges, that, should the member be found guilty, would prevent them from participation due to a resulting ineligible background check or the nature of the crimes

**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 Resignation**

Volunteers may choose to resign or request change of positions at any time. Volunteers are encouraged to give as much notice as possible when resigning, preferably a minimum of two weeks. Volunteers should submit resignations to the GSNETX liaison who supports them in writing. If notice of resignation has not been submitted and a GSNETX representative has attempted to reach out to a volunteer on at least three documented occasions without success, the volunteer may be considered to have resigned.

### **Volunteer Role Reappointment:**

Volunteers with roles that require action steps before reappointment will be guided through this process by the staff liaison who supports their position. All other volunteers should renew their roles during membership renewal every year. Volunteers may also identify additional volunteer roles at this time or by using the Volunteer Status & Troop Changes form located on the Forms section of the GSNETX website or at [gsnetx.org/troopchanges](http://gsnetx.org/troopchanges).

### **Adult Uniforms:**

Adult uniforms are not required for participation in Girl Scout activities. If adult members choose to wear a uniform, the unifying look is navy blue business attire with an official Girl Scout scarf or tie and membership pin.

### **Dress Code:**

Volunteer and youth member attire must reflect both modesty and appropriateness for their position and/or situation. GSNETX reserves the right to discuss inappropriate attire choices with individuals.

### **Public Displays of Affection:**

Girl Scout members must refrain from public displays of affection or inappropriate intimacy, including kissing, with other adults, spouses, or partners while working with Girl Scouts or representing the Girl Scout organization. Any infraction will be subject to prompt review under council disciplinary guidelines.

## **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 not to exceed one year. A volunteer may, however, be released at any time due to failure to fulfill the requirements of the position, support overall GSNETX goals, or comply with policies and procedures.

Volunteers serving on Girl Scout service unit teams, council-level committees, and day/twilight 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:**

A great strength of the Girl Scout movement rests in the voluntary leadership of trained adult members. All volunteers will receive basic training for their role. Depending upon their role, they may also be required to complete additional training within a specified time frame. Volunteers should continue to engage with learning in order to gain more knowledge and practice skills so that they can grow and be successful in their endeavors.

#### **Procedures:**

##### **Volunteer Training and Equipping:**

All volunteers are required review GSNETX governing documents on an annual basis. Updates to these documents are published during August of each year. This includes:

- GSNETX Volunteer Policies and Procedures ([gsnetx.org/volunteerpolicies](https://gsnetx.org/volunteerpolicies))
- GSNETX Safety Activity Checkpoints ([gsnetx.org/safetycheckpoints](https://gsnetx.org/safetycheckpoints))
- Volunteer Essentials ([gsnetx.org/volunteeressentials](https://gsnetx.org/volunteeressentials))

All volunteers are required to complete TR402: Protecting Our Girls every two years.

Unless otherwise specified, all other GSNETX volunteer training is generally considered to be valid for 3 years after completion. Additional training details for specific roles are outlined in the procedures listed below. If volunteers continue to volunteer in the same role after this date, they should retake volunteer training to stay updated on the latest practices and guidance for their volunteer role.

#### **Girl Scout Troop Leaders:**

(including co-leaders, assistant leaders, and troop leadership team members)

All new troop leaders should:

**Participate in required new leader training within 90 days of accepting their volunteer role.**

**As able to, become a member of the GSNETX New Leader Academy Facebook group for information ongoing coaching during the beginning of their Girl Scout leader experience.**

**Review the resources to support new volunteers available at [gsnetx.org/newleader](https://gsnetx.org/newleader).**

A variety of troop leader learning and enrichment opportunities are offered through gsLearn, in-person, and social media. More information can be found at [gsnetx.org/training](https://gsnetx.org/training).



**Troop Cookie Managers:**

Troop Cookie Managers are required to submit the Troop Cookie Manager Position Agreement and fulfill all additional requirements as outlined in the Troop Cookie Manager Guide.

**First Aiders:**

A First Aider is an adult volunteer who has taken First Aid/CPR/AED training that includes specific instructions for child CPR/AED from an approved GSNETX provider. Depending on the activity, a more specific definition of First Aider in any given situation may be found in Safety Activity Checkpoints.

**Troop Camp Trained Volunteers:**

Troop Camp Trained Volunteers are those who have completed and have a current certification for various levels of GSNETX outdoor leadership training as outlined below.

**Troop Activities and Required Volunteer Expectations and Forms Needed:**

As leaving the troop meeting place means assuming responsibility for the transportation and safety of other people's children, different activities require preparation and/or additional certifications depending on the type of activity.

**Field trips, sleepovers, outdoor activities** require an appropriate number of Safety-Wise adults and one First Aider as defined in Safety Activity Checkpoints.

- Field trips which involving leaving the regular meeting
- Indoor sleepovers (such as a slumber party, lock in, or overnight at the local zoo)
- Single-night backyard campout in a tent, a fenced backyard, less than 25 yards from a residence, and not using grills or fire of any kind is considered to be a sleepover.
- A one-day outing in an outdoor environment, not sleeping over, and not making a campfire or doing outdoor cooking.

Forms required: Permission Slips, Health History Forms, and proof of Girl Scout membership registration for all participants. An approved GSNETX Activity Approval form may be required.

**Outdoor Environment and Activities** require an appropriate number of Safety-Wise adults including at least one adult who has completed the **TR301: GSNETX Camping** and one First Aider as defined in Safety Activity Checkpoints.

An outdoor environment is characterized by the presence of natural features such as wooded areas, hiking trails, bodies of water, as well as insects and creatures not normally found in everyday situations. Outdoor activities could include, but are not limited to, activities such as fire building, outdoor cooking, and hiking.

- One day outings in an outdoor environment, not sleeping over, but planning to participate in outdoor activities such as making a campfire or outdoor cooking is considered to be camping
- Camping on council-owned sites with established sleeping and restroom facilities

- Camping on non-council sites that have established restroom facilities also requires at least one adult who has completed **TR302: GSNETX On the Road Camping training**

Forms required: Permission Slips, Health History Forms, and proof of Girl Scout membership registration for all participants. For camping at a non-GSNETX facility, an approved GSNETX Activity Approval form is required.

**Additional information:**

- **The \*TR302: GSNETX On the Road Camping training prerequisite is TR301: GSNETX Camping training.**
- Due to the location of the designated sleeping facilities for men at GSNETX camps, registered volunteers who are men cannot be counted as Safety-Wise ratio adults or serve as the primary Troop Camp Trained Adult or First Aider. Volunteers who are men, however, may act as additional First Aiders and camp trained adults.

**Camp Training Recertification:**

Troop Camping Certified Volunteers must recertify once every three years to remain current. Recertification can be achieved by completing the online recertification exam for the current level before the three-year window expires, or by taking the next progressive level of outdoor program training to extend the certification for the next three years. If the camp training certification window has expired, the volunteer will be required to take the course again.

**Girl Scout Service Unit Team Members:**

Service unit team members are required to take **TR601: Service Unit Team Overview** every three years. In addition, many service unit team roles have role-specific training that must also be completed. Details of role-specific training are defined in each appropriate role description.

**Day/Twilight Camp Volunteers:**

Day/Twilight camp administrative team members are required to attend training annually for their administrative role. Details of role-specific training are defined in each appropriate role description. In addition, all day/twilight camp volunteers must complete **TR402: Protecting Our Girls** every two years.

**Council-Level Trainers / Learning Facilitators**

GSNETX Volunteer Learning offers a variety of means and methods to educate and support learning in our council, which include in person training, distance learning, and micro learning via social learning platforms. Volunteers with an interest in facilitation, e-learning or curricula design skills, writing, graphic design, or video editing skills who wish to contribute should contact the Volunteer Learning department at [learning@gsnetx.org](mailto:learning@gsnetx.org) for specifics on team onboarding and projects available. Members of the GSNETX Volunteer Learning Team are eligible to be considered for council-level honors and recognition for exceptional contributions.

**Short-term Volunteers:**

Volunteers who participate in a one-time or short-term opportunity will receive an orientation specific to their volunteer activity. These volunteers may not count toward the number of Safety Wise Adults, nor may they be responsible for youth safety. Examples of this may include program providers and corporate volunteers.

**Other Volunteer Roles:**

For roles not listed above, the volunteer should complete appropriate training as defined by a GSNETX liaison or within the volunteer position description.

## **IV. Conflict Escalation and Resolution**

### **Policy:**

GSNETX encourages volunteers and staff to take positive actions to resolve conflicts promptly and efficiently. Despite the best intentions by all Girl Scout stakeholders, including youth members, parents/caregivers, and volunteers, it may be necessary at times to address conflicts. All involved parties should attempt to bring any disputes to resolution informally before escalating the conflict.

### **Procedures:**

#### **Conflict Resolution:**

Recognizing that each individual has both a personal interest in and a share of the responsibility for resolving conflicts in which they are involved, GSNETX favors a collaborative conflict resolution process.

Girl Scout volunteers do not have the authority to end another member's Girl Scout membership or participation in Girl Scouts or a specific Girl Scout troop, for either adult or youth members. GSNETX staff must be consulted when issues arise that involve an adult or youth's successful participation in a troop, or that involve an adult in a volunteer role.

#### **Conflict Escalation Procedure:**

1. The most effective way of resolving complaints and concerns is usually by calm, open discussion between the individuals involved by telephone or in person. All individuals are encouraged to try to resolve the matter informally among themselves before involving others not directly involved in the situation. Email, text, and social media exchanges are generally not conducive to a prompt and efficient resolution of conflict and, therefore, should be avoided as a means of addressing issues.
2. If the individuals involved cannot resolve the conflict on their own, the situation should be brought to the attention of the appropriate volunteer or staff member who supports the individuals involved, such as the service unit manager, committee chair, or the appropriate membership staff team member so they can attempt to help resolve the situation.
3. If the conflict remains unresolved, any of the involved parties may request to escalate the situation to the GSNETX Volunteer Relations Team. GSNETX will promptly investigate and evaluate the conflict to determine next steps and further action.

In the event the conflict concerns finances, all records including bank statements, receipts, the most

recent Annual Troop/SU Financial Report and any other financial records may be requested, and a review of these materials may be conducted.

4. If a situation is still unable to reach a conclusion, unresolved conflict may be taken to the next level of staff supervision as necessary and appropriate.

## **V. Inclusivity**

### **Policy:**

The GSNETX Board of Directors reaffirms its support of GSUSA policies and the development of an affirmative action plan for volunteers and staff within GSNETX'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 Northeast 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:**

GSNETX volunteers are expected to carry out the duties of their role while abiding by the Girl Scout Promise and Law. We require that all Girl Scout leaders and volunteers abide by our inclusivity policy and thus are prohibited from excluding or discriminating against other potential, current, or former members. 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 GSNETX Volunteer Policies and Procedures.

## **VI. Situations Regarding Child Custody Parental Arrangements**

### **Policy:**

GSNETX staff and volunteers are not responsible for interpreting or enforcing parental custodial agreements. Further, GSNETX staff and volunteers are prohibited from taking on the role of a mediator in these situations.

The council's primary concern is for the youth member and her positive Girl Scout experience.

**Procedures:**

The GSUSA membership data system provides the ability for one person (parent/caregiver) to primarily manage the membership data for girl members online. When a youth member is first registered, that relationship is established by the person completing the registration (online or paper.)

The family manager/guardian is ultimately responsible for decisions regarding a youth member's participation in Girl Scouts, including troop membership, activities, and the cookie program.

For the family manager/guardian be changed, GSNETX requires the current family manager/guardian to submit a written request.

## **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.

A "Safety-Wise adult" is an adult designated as having the responsibility for ensuring the safety and wellness of girls, individually or collectively, while they participate in Girl Scout activities. Safety-Wise adults must also be registered adult members and have completed a background check. Specific guidelines regarding the suggested adult-to-youth ratios can be found in Volunteer Essentials. However, in certain situations, the number of Safety-Wise adults may be increased to accommodate the special needs of youth members.

**Procedures:**

**Non-Members:**

Non-member insurance should be purchased for all events at which non-members are participating. The Non-Member Accident Insurance form can be located on the GSNETX website under the Forms section at [www.gsnetx.org/forms](http://www.gsnetx.org/forms).

**Certifications:**

Volunteers providing certified expertise must maintain current certification to meet Safety Activity Checkpoints requirements.

### **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 Safety-Wise adults when in the presence of program providers or activity certified individuals who are not Girl Scout members.

### **GSNETX Emergency Procedures:**

In the event of an emergency:

1. Assess the scene and provide appropriate care for the ill/injured individuals.
2. Call 911/emergency medical care.
3. If a child is injured, notify the parent/caregiver.
4. One adult must stay at the scene. Do not disturb person(s) or surroundings until emergency assistance arrives.
5. Speak only to the police or proper authorities. Follow all emergency responder instructions and guidance.
6. Do not contact the media and do not make statements of any kind to them. Refer all media inquiries to the GSNETX Director of Marketing and Communications at 972-349-2448.
7. Report non-emergency incidents (such as minor injury or accident, damaged property, etc.) to [troopsupport@gsnetx.org](mailto:troopsupport@gsnetx.org). For emergencies during regular business hours, contact the Vice President of Membership Strategy and Volunteer Learning at 972-349-2457. For after-hours emergencies, call 214-353-4071. Use the after-hours emergency phone line for emergencies ONLY such as: fatality, serious illness or accident, lost child, natural disaster, fire, chemical spills, etc.
8. Secure all permission forms and medical records to submit to GSNETX along with the Accident / Injury / Illness Reporting form found at [gsnetx.org/safety](https://gsnetx.org/safety) within 48 hours of the incident.

### **Incident Reports:**

In the event of an incident, an Accident/ Injury/ Unusual Incident Report must be filled out and submitted to GSNETX within 48 hours. All medical incident reports will be maintained by GSNETX in compliance with federal regulations. The form can be located on the GSNETX website at [gsnetx.org/safety](https://gsnetx.org/safety).

**First Aid/CPR/AED:**

Approved providers of First Aid/CPR/AED training are the American Red Cross, National Safety Council, Medic First Aid (formerly known as EMP America), American Heart Association, Emergency Care & Safety Institute, EMS Safety Services, and American Safety & Health Institute. First Aid/CPR/AED training that is available entirely online does not satisfy Girl Scout requirements because such courses do not offer enough opportunities to practice and receive feedback on techniques.

**Safety Activity Checkpoints:**

Each Safety Activity Checkpoint offers detail information concerning safety preparation and requirements to ensure safety for the girls participating in that activity. For more information see [gsnetx.org/safetycheckpoints](http://gsnetx.org/safetycheckpoints).

**Privacy for Volunteers:**

- Paper forms with confidential information such as Social Security numbers and drivers' license numbers should be turned into a GSNETX office or staff member within seven days of receipt of completed forms.
- Health History forms gathered by a troop leader are outdated 12 months past the date when they were originally filled out. Health History forms should not be maintained past the date of their applicable use. At that time, parents/guardians may review and update them to extend their use. Health History forms gathered for the purpose of a specific event should not be kept past the final date of the event. In this case, forms should be returned to the participants or their parents/caregivers or shredded.
- Volunteers should treat all privileged Girl Scout information with respect and maintain its confidentiality. This includes all information related the organization, its members, its volunteers, and its staff, in any format including voice, paper, and electronic.

**Credit Card Safety:**

- Protecting the safety of credit card information is also important. GSNETX uses Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) technology to protect the security of credit card information as it is transmitted. SSL is the industry standard in Internet encryption technology, and it is a highly sophisticated method of scrambling data as it travels from a GSNETX or another computer to the merchant credit card processor. GSNETX does not retain or store credit card numbers on its computers or servers.
- Volunteers and parents/caregivers can make sure they are accessing the council's secure server before they submit personal financial information by looking at the lower left-hand corner of their browser. If they see an unbroken key or a closed lock (depending upon the browser), then SSL is active. To double-check for security, they should look at the URL or address line of the browser. If they have accessed a secure server, the first characters of the address in that line should change from "http" to "https."
- It is important for volunteers and parents/caregivers to protect against unauthorized access to passwords and computers. They should be sure to sign off when they finish using a shared computer.

**Social Media and Website Safety:**

GSNETX acknowledges the need for service unit and troop media pages/groups to engage with prospective and existing members. Members should follow these guidelines:

- Any information that could jeopardize the safety and security of youth and adults should not be disclosed on a website or social media platform. An individual's contact information should be considered private, including last name, email address, physical address, phone number, or school.
- Photos of youth or adults should not be shared without permission. Never tag an individual youth member and only tag their parent/caregiver if you have their consent.
- Never post any disparaging material that contains inappropriate language, name-calling, personal attacks and/or personal issues that are more appropriately addressed offline.

**Note to Parents/Caregivers on Our Privacy Policy:**

- GSNETX is committed to providing a safe, secure, and fun online experience for children who visit the council's site. GSNETX is dedicated to safeguarding any personal information collected online and to helping parents/caregivers and children have positive experiences on the Internet. Consistent with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998, GSNETX will never knowingly request personally identifiable information from anyone under the age of 13 without prior verifiable parent/caregiver consent.
- Parents/caregivers may revoke their consent and ask that information about their children be deleted from the site by contacting GSNETX offices by phone at 972-349-2400 or by email at [customer-care@gsnetx.org](mailto:customer-care@gsnetx.org). To do this or to review personal information collected from a child, GSNETX must verify the identity of the requesting parent/caregiver. When a parent/caregiver revokes consent, GSNETX will stop collecting, using, or disclosing information from that child. To respect the privacy of families, information collected and used for the sole purpose of obtaining verifiable parent/caregiver consent or providing notice is not maintained in retrievable form by the site if consent is not obtained after a reasonable time.
- Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas believes it is good policy not to collect more personally identifiable information from children under 13 than is necessary for them to participate in the council's online activities. In addition, all sites that are targeted to children under 13 are prohibited by law from collecting more information than they need.
- For additional information on privacy, see <https://www.girlscouts.org/en/footer/help/privacy-policy.html>.



**Forms Retention:**

All forms, not listed under the Privacy section, that show personal contact information or troop financial information, such as copies of registration forms, financial reports, event reports, and membership rosters, should be kept for one membership year past the membership year for which they apply. After that time, the forms should be shredded.

**VIII. Health Issues****Policy:**

Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas recognizes that health issues may arise and encourages programs that enhance the physical, emotional and mental well-being of our membership.

In support of this goal, the presence of an adult with a current First Aid/CPR/AED certification is necessary when required by Safety Activity Checkpoints. This training must include information on allergies and the proper response to allergic reactions.

**Procedures:****In-Person Activity Participation:**

To provide the best possible protection and experience to all members, members should refrain from participating in any in-person activities if they feel sick or ill. Members should only return to in-person activities once they feel well enough to participate, including remaining fever-free (100°F or less) without the use of fever-reducing medication for at least 24 hours.

**Incident Reports:**

All incident reports will be maintained by council headquarters in compliance with HIPPA regulations.

**Medication:**

Medication must be in the original container, prescribed for the person who is to receive the medication, and cannot be expired. A volunteer must have written permission from the parent/caregiver to dispense the medication to a Girl Scout youth member or individual under the age of 18 who is participating at a Girl Scout event or activity.

**Confidentiality:**

All health-related information will be maintained in a confidential manner in accordance with state and federal laws.

**Allergies:**

Allergies requiring any accommodations must be disclosed in advance in writing to the appropriate volunteer or staff member.

**IX. Child Protection**

## **Policy:**

The council provides an environment that is free of child abuse and that safeguards the health and well-being of all youth members of GSUSA, as defined by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act. The following is therefore prohibited by all adults and youth in the program:

- *Physical Punishment:* Restraining, spanking, or using any other physical engagement to punish a child.
- *Physical Abuse:* Any action that causes harm or injury to a child, such as hitting, hazing, kicking, and other inappropriate behavior, will not be tolerated.
- *Sexual Misconduct:* This includes any inappropriate sexual physical contact, lewdness or communication in words, print or images.
- *Physical Neglect:* This includes failure to give supervision, failure to provide for safety during activities or time of danger, or failure to meet medical needs.
- *Emotional Abuse:* This includes verbal attacks, anger outbursts, hostility, humiliation, hazing or socially inappropriate language such as cursing.

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

## **Procedures:**

### **Reporting:**

In the state of Texas, reports of abuse or neglect must be made within 48 hours of learning of the abuse, either at [www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org) or by calling the Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400. If you have reason to suspect abuse, but are not sure, report it. If you have any doubts about whether it is abuse, call the hotline. They can advise you on whether the signs you observed are abuse.

Reports should include:

- The name and address of the child and their parents/caregiver or person(s) having custody of such child, if known.
- The child's age and the nature and extent of the child's injuries, abuse or neglect, including any evidence of previous injuries, abuse or neglect.
- Other information that might help in establishing the cause of the injury, abuse or neglect.
- Record the name of the intake worker who takes the report and note the date that the report is made.

The Texas Family Code, Chapter 261, Subchapter B "Report of Abuse or Neglect", Section 261.101 states: "Persons Required to Report; Time to Report": "(a) A person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person shall immediately make a report as provided by this subchapter." Definitions of abuse and neglect may be found in [Texas Family Code 261.001](#).

**Providing Information:**

Although reports may be made anonymously, immediately notify a Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas senior leadership team member of any reports of suspected abuse or neglect involving either adults or youth in Girl Scouting. This includes any reports made to your local Child Protection Services Agency or the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

Provide written or verbal notification to Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas at 972-349-2400 or 1-800-442-2260 within 24 hours after making a report. Membership and/or volunteer roles of any Girl Scout member under investigation will be suspended until the matter is resolved, at which time a decision about further participation will be made.

**Confidentiality:**

Do not share this information with anyone other than the local Child Protection Services Agency and the GSNETX senior leadership team member unless instructed by law enforcement. GSNETX senior leadership staff will be responsible for notifying additional parties as necessary.

**X. Harassment****Policy:**

GSNETX 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 reserves the right to refuse membership or reappointment, and to dismiss or suspend from affiliation with the council any volunteer who, while conducting Girl Scout program, harasses another volunteer, employee, or Girl Scout member.

**Procedures:**

Any volunteer who feels that they have 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 their appropriate Girl Scout service unit team member or appropriate staff member. The individual contacted will take measures to follow up on all incidents in an expeditious manner following the GSNETX Conflict Escalation and Resolution policy and procedures.

**XI. Firearms and Fireworks****Policy:**

Possession of firearms and ammunition shall not be permitted at Girl Scout activities or on Girl Scout properties, with these exceptions:

- for a council-approved program activity for youth, conducted by an adult who is a certified NRA range safety officer and an adult who is an USA Shooting Sports instructor or certified in the specific discipline they are teaching. This may be the same individual.
- by council staff for use in wildlife control at camps
- by law enforcement officials legally required to carry weapons

Firearms can be used for program activities only with council approval through the GSNETX Activity Approval form and only as described in the most current version of Safety-Activity Checkpoints ([www.gsnetx.org/safetycheckpoints](http://www.gsnetx.org/safetycheckpoints).)

Fireworks are not allowed on council properties and cannot be used for program activities.

## **Part 3: The Girl Scout Program**

### **XII. Program**

#### **Policy:**

Girl Scouts is an informal educational program designed to help girls put into practice the fundamental principles of the Girl Scout movement as set forth in the Girl Scout Promise and Law, with a particular emphasis on leadership development in an all-girl environment. It is carried out with volunteer adult leadership and provides a wide-range of progressive activities developed around the interests and needs of today's girl. Programs are designed to foster courage, confidence, and character, with an ultimate goal of helping girls discover their full potential, connect with others, and take action to improve their lives and their communities.

Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints must be consulted and guidelines followed. Activity Approval forms must be submitted and approved, when appropriate.

#### **Procedures:**

##### **Council Activity Approval:**

Depending on the nature, length and extent of the activity or trip, completion and authorization of an activity approval form may be required to ensure all proper steps are being followed. The GSNETX Activity Approval form outlines its use and additional detailed information is in the GSNETX Safety Activity Checkpoints.

##### **Site Agreement, Contracts, and Charters:**

All contracts, including facility-use contracts and transportation charters, must be signed by a council officer. Any volunteer who enters into a contract will assume personal liability and responsibility.

All contracts and certificate of liability insurance requests must be submitted for signature through the GSNETX Activity Approval form.

Bus charters require that the bus agency have a minimum of \$5 million in insurance coverage.

**Overnight Sleeping Arrangements:**

Most cabin and tent units at Girl Scout camp facilities have a Girl Scout leader cabin or tent designated for adults. Youth members sleep in the remaining cabins/tents in that unit. Lodges at Girl Scout camps have a group sleeping area for youth members and a separate Girl Scout leader room for adults, all within the same building.

No adult may sleep alone in a room, or in the same bed, with a youth member that is not their own child. It is recommended but not mandatory that adults sleep in those areas designated for adults, and youth members sleep in those areas designated for youth. Some situations that may occur that would prevent this arrangement include:

- **the facility does not allow separate sleeping areas**
- **the adult volunteers in charge decide the youth members are not ready**
- **the adult volunteers in charge decide the environment is otherwise not conducive**

Should a situation occur in which adults who are women share the sleeping area with youth members, there must always be a minimum of two unrelated adults who are women present. Adult-to-youth supervision ratios as defined in *Volunteer Essentials* must be maintained.

Men must have separate sleeping accommodations located apart from youth members and women at all times; a separate room, tent, or sleeping area must be provided. In the case of a married couple team or a parent/caregiver and child, separate sleeping arrangements away from the other girls and other volunteers is recommended.

**Private Transportation:**

Individuals operating motor vehicles transporting youth members must be registered adults, at least 18 years of age, and be properly licensed and insured for the vehicle. The number of passengers must not exceed the intended number of passengers for the vehicle. Each person must have and use a specific seatbelt. All vehicles transporting youth members and/or Girl Scout equipment must be properly registered, adequately insured and operated according to state statutes. A minimum of two adults is recommended for each vehicle. Each vehicle shall carry passenger Health Histories and Permission Slips.

**Rentals:**

- Only reputable vehicle rental agencies with good maintenance and service records may be used.
- Most rental agencies rent to the driver(s), not the Girl Scout troop, even if the Girl Scout troop is paying for the vehicle.
- The driver's insurance is the primary insurance; the rented vehicle replaces the driver's personal vehicle. Drivers should contact their own insurance agent to make sure their personal insurance covers the rental vehicle and meets or exceeds the insurance requirements for the states or countries in which the vehicle will travel.
- We recommend that the driver purchase the "damage/collision waiver" insurance, which covers only the replacement value of the rented vehicle, when renting the vehicle.
- Drivers need to be experienced in driving the type of vehicle being rented.

- The use of a 15-passenger van to transport Girl Scouts is prohibited. The lease of a 12-passenger van is NOT RECOMMENDED. However, if a 12-passenger van is used, the occupant load must be a maximum of eight passengers, with the rear seat(s) unoccupied, AND the driver should have driver training/experience related to 12-passenger vans. If there is another mode of transportation available, it should be used instead of a 12-passenger van.
- Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas non-owned automobile coverage is a secondary coverage after the driver's personal insurance. To meet the council insurance requirements, the council must be notified of the vehicle rental at least one week before the rental through submission and approval of the [GSNETX Activity Approval form](#).
- Always consult [Volunteer Essentials](#) and [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) when traveling beyond your meeting place.

#### **Drivers:**

All volunteers coordinating activities when adults are transporting youth not under their guardianship must verify that each adult driving a registered Girl Scout member, has a current background check, and a valid driver's license. The vehicle must also meet the legal insurance, licensing, and registration requirements. Drivers should not drive more than 12 hours in any one 24-hour period. Cell phones should not be used while driving youth to and from Girl Scout events.

### **XIII. Girl Scout Troop Formation**

#### **Policy:**

In order to allow for a cooperative learning environment, it is recommended that each Girl Scout troop has at least 12 youth members. A troop should have a minimum of five youth members.

Some exceptions to this may include:

- Girl Scout troops that are actively seeking additional members
- **Girl Scout troops that are from sparsely populated rural areas where no other youth members are available within a reasonable distance**
- **Youth members who require more individual time and attention from Girl Scout troop leaders and/or may have special needs**
- **Troops comprised of members in high school**

#### **Procedures:**

#### **Registration:**

Girl Scout troops may be formed and registered at any time during the membership year. For newly formed troops registering using paper forms, forms should be submitted to the service unit team or appropriate GSNETX staff member before the second meeting as a Girl Scout troop. For the purposes of activities or events, registration is effective when the completed membership forms are received by an employee or at a GSNETX Service Center.

**Renewal:**

Renewing Girl Scout troops should register the youth and adult members using the online registration system or paper registration forms. This should take place during spring registration or by October 1 of each year. Renewing by October 1 of each year is necessary to ensure continued insurance coverage.

**Additional Members:**

Additional youth or adult members may be added to a Girl Scout troop at any time during the year.

**Troop Size and Composition:**

- Youth members should be able to participate in a troop that is large enough to provide experience in self-government and small enough to allow for development of the individual member.
- Troops can include members from one or more than one school grade and from more than one school. Ideally, troops should reflect the economic, racial, cultural, and religious diversity of the community.
- For information on the troop size recommendations by program grade level and suitable supervision of troops by size, see Volunteer Essentials.

## **XIV. Outdoor Program**

**Policy:**

Outdoor programming is an integral and fun part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. Because it is important to protect the safety of the youth members in the program, volunteers must follow these policies when camping:

- Each Girl Scout troop must follow the *Volunteer Essentials* requirements for the ratio of adult to youth members, and follow all guidelines that are appropriate to their activities.
- Volunteers must follow all camp training, certification, and First Aid requirements as described in the Volunteer Learning and Program sections of this document.

**Procedures:**

Registration for GSNETX camps and requests for approval for camping at non-GSNETX sites should identify the type of camping format.

**Camping Formats:**

Camping is defined as being carried out in three different formats:

1. Individual Format: Youth member(s) camping at GSNETX facility with a parent/caregiver who is a woman.
2. Troop Format: Troops/groups of youth members camping at any approved outdoor facility with the appropriate number of registered and trained adult volunteers with the appropriate volunteer

security status. This format can include more than one Girl Scout troop such as during a service unit campout.

3. Non-Troop Format:

- a. Camping event during which youth members are supervised by their own parent/caregiver .
- b. Camping event during which youth members are supervised by a parent/ caregiver and include members of their immediate family, such as a family camp.
- c. Camping event during which troops/groups of youth members are supervised by the appropriate number of registered and trained adult volunteers with the appropriate volunteer security status. This format can include more than one Girl Scout troop such as during a service unit campout.

Note: Service Units may choose to organize their camping events using formats 2 or 3 as described in this section.

**Camp Trained Adults:**

1. Individual Format: Youth members must be accompanied by a registered parent/caregiver who is a woman with an appropriate volunteer security status, and with the appropriate level of camp training. Because members are supervised by their parent/caregiver, the adult is not required to be First Aid/CPR/AED certified.
2. Troop Format: Each Girl Scout troop must have at least one registered Troop Camp Trained Adult who has completed the appropriate level of camp training and one registered First Aid/CPR/AED Trained Adult. It is strongly encouraged that this is not the same individual. Each Camp and First Aid/CPR/AED certified adult must have the appropriate volunteer security status.
3. Non-Troop Format: The number of camp-trained adults must be one for each group of up to 10 Daisies or Brownies and one for each group of up to 35 Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors or Ambassadors. For all program grade levels, youth members must be camping within an area of approximately 150 square yards. These events must have a Health Supervisor who is a registered Girl Scout adult who is a woman with level I First Aid/CPR/AED certification from an approved provider unless the number of girls is more than 200. If the event includes more than 200 youth members, the Health Supervisor must have a certification that is level II. Both the individuals certified for Camping and First Aid/CPR/AED cannot additionally fill any other event staff positions including but not limited to Event Coordinator, Camp Certification, Health Supervisor or Lifeguard. Each Camp and First Aid/CPR/AED certified adult must have the appropriate volunteer security status.

Some camp activities may require that volunteers designated as camp staff complete specific American Camp Association (ACA) screening requirements. It is recommended by the ACA that staff members are at least 16 years of age and at least two years older than the minors with whom they are working.



**Safety-Wise Adult to Youth Ratio:**

Refer to the guidelines in Volunteer Essentials – Chapter 4 Safety-Wise, Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need. Troop Camp Trained and First Aid/CPR/AED trained adults who are women can be counted as part of the required number of adults. Each adult counted as a Safety-Wise ratio adult must be registered and have the appropriate volunteer security status.

**Domestic Animals or Pets at Camp:**

Domestic animals or pets, other than service animals, cannot be brought to any Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas camp at any time. Pets belonging to on-site, permanent staff will be contained while campers are on the property.

**Men at Camp:**

Any man camping with Girl Scout troops should be an active member of the adult team accompanying the Girl Scout troop/group camping. If a volunteer who is a man is one of the adults camping with a Girl Scout troop/group, these steps must be followed:

1. Limited housing spaces for men are available at GSNETX properties. These spaces can be reserved in the camp reservation system when the campout reservation is made, pending availability. For non-council camp facilities, a separate sleeping area apart from youth members must be designated for men
2. A minimum of two unrelated Safety-Wise adults who are women must always participate in overnight activities involving volunteers who are men.

During established nighttime sleeping hours, volunteers who are men should not enter the sleeping area designated for youth members or volunteers who are women and are generally expected to be in the separate sleeping area for men.

Due to the location of the designated sleeping facilities for men at GSNETX camps, registered volunteers who are men cannot be counted as Safety-Wise ratio adults or serve as the primary Troop Camp Trained Adult or First Aider during campouts at GSNETX camp facilities.

During overnight activities not taking place at GSNETX camps:

- It may be appropriate for registered volunteers who are men to be counted as Safety-Wise ratio adults if more than two adults are required to meet youth-to-adult safety ratios.
- It may be appropriate for a man to serve as the primary Troop Camp Trained adult or First Aider if he is able to be easily contacted and provide assistance quickly during sleeping hours. If this assistance requires that he enter sleeping quarters designated for youth or women for any reason, one of the Safety-Wise volunteers who is a woman must be present at all times.
- If a volunteer who is a man is not able to be easily contacted or if the facility has rules that would prevent this type of supervision or interaction, he may not serve in these roles.

**Vehicles at Camp:**

A maximum of one vehicle per Girl Scout troop per unit is allowed to park at the Girl Scout troop campsite. This vehicle must have a council hangtag displayed from its rearview mirror. These hangtags

are received at check-in. All other vehicles must park in designated parking areas. The Site Coordinator/Site Manager makes the final decision as to the safe placement of vehicles. With the exception of loading and unloading that is directly related to the arrival and departure of Girl Scout troops, all vehicles must remain parked in their designated areas. If you have special needs such as medical, physical, and ADA accessibility, speak directly with the Site Coordinator / Site Manager before arrival. The posted speed limit must be followed at all times.

**Personal Property:**

Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas is not responsible for property damage such as loss, theft, vandalism, acts of nature to personal vehicles and effects brought to camp property for programs, events, training, Girl Scout troop camp, special events, and resident camp.

**Camp Sleeping Arrangements:**

See Overnight Sleeping Arrangements.

**Camp Emergency Procedures:**

Girl Scout troops will be provided a copy of the camp emergency procedures before they arrive at camp.

**Reservations of GSNETX facilities:**

See GSNETX website ([www.gsnetx.org](http://www.gsnetx.org)) for current guidelines.

**Camping on Non-Council Sites:**

- All sites must meet all Safety Activity Checkpoints standards and council approval must be obtained.
- Use the GSNETX Activity Approval form to obtain council approval for camping at non-council sites. Activities that are three nights or longer or outside the four-state council geographic area may also require additional training or certifications depending on the event.

**Day Use of Council Sites:**

Reservation requests may be made for activities such as picnics, hiking, outdoor skill building, and nature study. Girl Scout troops that want to use council sites during the day for Girl Scout programs must follow Camp Reservation Procedures.

**Burn Bans:**

Burn bans are occasionally implemented by the Texas Forest Service for the protection of life and property. Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas follows the forest service's recommendations. Information will be posted online. During burn bans, solar and indoor cooking is permitted.

**Camp Closings:**

In the case of pending inclement weather, emergency repairs, or other unforeseen situations, GSNETX will determine no later than noon on the date of departure to camp whether facilities will remain open for activities. Listed Event Coordinators will be notified by phone and/or email if a camp is officially closed.

## **XV. Public Relations**

### **Policy:**

The public impression of Girl Scouts is affected by the activities of everyone in the Girl Scout Movement. Keeping positive, consistent messages before the public is primarily the function of the council's marketing and communications department. By coordinating communications, Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas will provide strong, consistent messages to external and internal audiences. The marketing and communications department will handle all broadcast media, television, and radio and *The Dallas Morning News*, as well as collaborate with the Girl Scout Service Unit PR Specialists to promote Girl Scouts with print media within the GSNETX jurisdiction.

In the case of serious accident, health emergency, or death, all volunteers and staff need to be aware of the council procedures.

### **Procedures:**

#### **Girl Scout Service Unit Public Relations:**

When a newsworthy event or happening in a Girl Scout service unit occurs, Girl Scout volunteers must contact their Public Relations (PR) Specialist. The PR Specialist will then draft a press release and contact the appropriate local print media, (newspapers, newsletters, etc.) in their Girl Scout service unit.

#### **National Public Relations:**

National media are never contacted by members of Girl Scout councils; GSUSA's PR staff handles all national media contact. If a Girl Scout volunteer thinks that an event or happening has national appeal, they should contact the GSNETX marketing and communications department. If it is determined that the event or happening has national appeal, appropriate GSNETX staff will contact GSUSA's staff.

#### **Emergency Situations:**

If an emergency occurs, Girl Scouts members and volunteers must follow the GSNETX Emergency Procedures that include making NO statement of ANY KIND to the media. Do NOT give out any names or information. Ask the media to contact GSNETX headquarters at 972-349-2400 or 1-800-442-2260.

#### **Cookie Program Public Relations:**

In order to give every Girl Scout an equal opportunity to meet and exceed their personal cookie program goals, all Girl Scout Cookie Program media efforts such newspaper, magazine, television, radio, and billboards, are coordinated by the GSNETX marketing and communications department. A single Girl Scout troop, service unit, or individual may NOT contact the media nor list contact information in an advertisement, commercial, or public service announcement without written approval. Individuals who violate this policy may lose the privilege of participating in the GSNETX Cookie Program.

**Flyers/Information in Mailboxes:**

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

**Technology****Policy:**

Safety Activity Checkpoints and Volunteer Essentials must be consulted and guidelines followed.

Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas supports the development and use of technology, and it is the council's intent to protect the safety, security and privacy of all registered members of the council.

Electronic mail (email) sent to Girl Scout volunteer lists is never to be used to send solicitations of any kind, inappropriate jokes or political information.

**Procedures:**

The use of email is a convenient and quick method of communication between council staff and Girl Scout volunteers, youth members and their parents/caregivers.

**Confidentiality:**

Anyone using email should be aware that most emails are not necessarily sent through secure channels and should not email content that could be considered confidential or libelous. Individuals using email should not blanket mail an email from someone else to a list or anyone else, without the permission of the person who sent the original email. Steps should be taken to properly secure and protect personal information in possession of volunteers, whether in paper or electronic form.

**Conflict Resolution:**

Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas encourages volunteers and staff to take positive actions to resolve conflicts quickly. We believe a personal phone call or meeting is the most effective and positive action step. Due to potential escalation of conflicts, email exchanges to resolve issues are not recommended by council. See IV. Conflict Escalation and Resolution for more information.

**Children's Online Privacy Protection Rule:**

Adults must be aware of the Children's Online Privacy Protection Rule ("COPPA")

<https://www.ftc.gov/enforcement/rules/rulemaking-regulatory-reform-proceedings/childrens-online-privacy-protection-rule> and comply with its provisions.

## Part 4: Girl Scout Finances and Money-Earning

### XVII. Girl Scout Finances

#### Policy:

Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints must be consulted and guidelines followed.

All volunteers who are responsible for Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas finances, fundraising and associated collections must be registered Girl Scouts with an appropriate volunteer security status and in good standing. This includes volunteers responsible for troop and service unit finances.

All money collected, earned or deposited in the name of Girl Scouting must be used to meet the purpose of Girl Scouting in Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas. Such money becomes the property of Girl Scouting and is not the property of individuals. Girl Scout troop and service unit funds are not to be credited or given to individuals. Girl Scout troop and service unit funds are not to be commingled with an individual's personal or business accounts.

To safeguard Girl Scout troop funds, all Girl Scout troops and service units should open and maintain bank accounts.

Girl Scout bank accounts may be audited by GSNETX at any time. Girl Scout bank accounts must be reconciled monthly and must always maintain a positive balance.

When all of the members in a disbanding Girl Scout troop are not continuing in Girl Scouting, the youth members of the disbanding Girl Scout troop will decide fund placement. When the troop is disbanding and some youth members are continuing in another Girl Scout troop(s), the funds will follow these members to the new Girl Scout troop(s). All undesignated funds will be returned to GSNETX and be placed in the council fund for financial assistance. Since all funds raised through Girl Scouts are for that sole purpose, when a youth member chooses to end their participation in Girl Scouts, they will not receive any fund disbursement.

**Procedures:****Bank Fees:**

Choosing a bank that does not charge monthly service charges or charges only minimal fees on Girl Scout Troop bank accounts is recommended.

**Account Name:**

“GIRL SCOUTS OF NORTHEAST TEXAS” must be included in the name of bank accounts. Examples of this are “Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas Troop XXXX” or “Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas Service Unit XXX.”

**Signatures:**

Two authorized signers are required for each Girl Scout troop or service unit bank account but only one signature is required on each check. Any exceptions must have prior approval from the GSNETX finance department.

For troop bank accounts, appropriate signers are Girl Scout volunteers registered with the Girl Scout troop. For service unit bank accounts, appropriate signers are Girl Scout volunteers who are active and registered in the Girl Scout service unit – usually the Girl Scout service unit manager and one to three additional Girl Scout volunteers.

For any bank account, there must be at least two unrelated people who are not members of the same family and who do not reside in the same household on each account. Any time the signers on an account are changed, the account must be re-registered with GSNETX.

All bank account signers are responsible for following all GSNETX policies and procedures regarding the use and protection of Girl Scout funds. Anyone found to be mishandling funds may lose their ability to serve as a volunteer and potentially have collection, civil, or criminal action taken against them.

**To Open or Make Any Change on a Bank Account:**

In order to open or make any changes on a Girl Scout bank account, the signers on the account must follow the process included in the form [Opening or Changing a Girl Scout Bank Account and ACH Registration](#).

**Managing Girl Scout Finances:**

- Troops and service units reimburse only those expenses that were approved in advance and that directly relate to a troop activity. Expenses that exceed the amount approved may not be reimbursed. If possible, potential overages should be discussed with the troop committee before purchases or expenditures are made.
- Sales tax exemption forms provided by GSNETX should be used only when purchasing goods and services for troop or service unit activities. These forms allow volunteers to avoid paying state and local sales taxes, which are not reimbursable.
- Expenses must be submitted no later than 30 days after the expense was incurred or the date of the event, whichever is later. The troop, group or service unit may elect not to reimburse items

submitted after this date. No expenses will be reimbursed if submitted beyond six months of when the expenses were incurred.

- Mileage will not be reimbursed unless the troop committee or service unit team elects to do so under special circumstances.
- Checks issued by a troop, group, or service unit for reimbursement of expenses must be deposited within 90 days of issuance. The troop, group or service unit will not be obligated to honor, reissue or replace checks still outstanding beyond this 90-day period.
- Expenses should be reported in detail, including the name of the vendor, store or other location, the purpose of expense, the date the purchase was made, and a detail of the itemized amounts to be reimbursed. Itemized receipts should be provided whenever possible.
- The troop or service unit treasurer must deposit cash or checks received from third parties such as parents/caregivers or GSNETX within 10 days of receiving them.
- All funds received by a Girl Scout volunteer payable to GSNETX, must be turned over to GSNETX within 30 days.

#### **Private Benefit:**

Money raised by a troop or service unit is used to further the Girl Scout program. Per the IRS, a section 501(c)(3) organization must not be organized or operated for the benefit of private interests. No part of net earnings may be used to benefit any individual. No separate accounts, ledgers, or points system can be established for individual girls. Additionally, Girl Scout funds should not be used to purchase gift cards or to provide any type of educational scholarships at the individual, troop, or service unit level

#### **Permitted Money-Earning Activities:**

In accordance with the additional policies and procedures outlined below, the following activities are permitted for troops and service units:

- Restaurant nights when a share of proceeds is donated to the troop or service unit.
- Bake sales or craft sales when the items are made by girls, in compliance with any local ordinances regarding food handling.
- Garage sales
- Concession stands (when specifically designated for non-profit participation)
- Partnering with a small local business for donations of up to \$1000 to support troop and service unit activities or programs.
- Small program grants up to \$500 that can be applied for by troops and service units.
- For volunteers earning matching dollars through their employer for volunteer hours, please refer to policy [XXV Volunteer Hour Matching Gifts and Other Tax-Deductible Gifts](#).
- See other examples included in “Chapter 5, Managing Group Finances” in [Volunteer Essentials](#).
- Only after reaching Family Partnership goals may service units engage in additional money-earning activities.

#### **Prohibited Money-Earning Activities:**

- Raffles, bingo, scratch cards or any game of chance
- Auctions, live and online
- Selling of gift cards (scrip)

- Selling of coupon books or discount cards
- Direct selling of any non-Girl Scout products by youth members or parents/caregivers (such as Avon, Scentsy, or Pampered Chef)
- Soliciting non-local businesses
- Working as car hops
- Activities that take a paying job from someone (including concession stands that are paying jobs not specifically designated for non-profit participation)
- Grants from corporations or foundations except as noted in this section
- Use of any external online fundraising sites that are not promoted directly by GSNETX.

#### **Approval Process:**

- For any non-council money-earning activity, the troop or service unit must complete the GSNETX Activity Approval form and submit it for approval four to six weeks ahead of time.
- Approval requires participation in the most recent cookie program and good financial standing.
- If approved, the Girl Scout troop or service unit may proceed with the approved project.
- If not approved, the troop or service unit may provide updates and resubmit the approval form.

Activity Approval forms are not required for unsolicited donations or hour matching gifts.

#### **Tax Deductions for Donated Funds:**

Troops and service units may not receive donations totaling more than \$1000 over the course of a single Family Partnership year.

Any donations of \$250 or more, or donations of any amount that need a tax receipt must:

1. Be made payable to GSNETX.
2. Be submitted directly to Fund Development with a Pass-Through Donation form.
3. 100 percent of the funds (\$1000 or less) received will be sent back to the designated troop/SU.
4. The donating entity will be sent an official tax receipt by GSNETX.

Since only Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas holds non-profit status as a 501(c)(3) with the IRS, any donations or proceeds from fundraising events conducted by troops or service units are not eligible for tax receipts unless they are submitted to GSNETX for processing.

#### **Pass-Through Donation Form:**

All donations received by GSNETX are processed as a General Giving or Family Partnership contribution unless a Pass-Through Donation form is turned in before or with the donation. The Pass-Through Donation form is located on the Forms page of the GSNETX website at [www.gsnetx.org/forms](http://www.gsnetx.org/forms). Please reference the form for more information about the pass-through process.

Donations that will not be considered or included as pass-through donations:

- Contributions made through United Way
- Donations given on North Texas Giving Day



- Corporate Matching Gifts
- Capital Donations

For funds to be passed through to a service unit, the service unit must have first reached their Family Partnership goal. Troops and service units cannot receive a pass-through exceeding \$1000 during the current Family Partnership Year.

## **XVIII. Financial Assistance**

### **Policy:**

Financial assistance is available to youth and adults based on multiple factors, including financial need. It is the intent of Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas that financial consideration is not a barrier to participation in the Girl Scout program.

### **Procedures:**

#### **Eligibility:**

Applicants must be registered Girl Scouts and actively participate in Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas activities before funds can be allocated, unless applying for membership dues. All applicants will be considered, unless an applicant has an outstanding account with the council. If there is an outstanding account, no financial assistance will be considered until the outstanding balance is paid. Financial assistance will only be granted once per category per member each year. Category descriptions and additional information may be found at [gsnetx.org/financialassistance](https://gsnetx.org/financialassistance).

#### **Application Process:**

Application for financial assistance must be made in writing online. Each application will be evaluated on a rating system so that the application process remains objective. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times. All applications will be submitted to the Financial Assistance Committee for review and decision. If more than \$300 is requested, documentation of family income may be requested with the application. Requests for financial assistance can be submitted online via the Financial Assistance Request form that can be located on the GSNETX website under the Forms section at [gsnetx.org/forms](https://gsnetx.org/forms).

## **XIX. 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 troop members. These Girl Scout troop money-earning activities are consistent with the goals and principles of the Girl Scout program. For more specific direction, see “Chapter 5, Managing Group Finances” in Volunteer Essentials.

The cookie program is an approved money-earning activity. Additional money-earning projects must be approved in writing through the GSNETX Activity Approval form 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 (or commitment to participate) 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 decision made by the youth members.

Permission must be obtained in writing from a youth member's parent/caregiver before they may participate in Girl Scout troop money-earning projects or the cookie program.

Money-earning projects will not take place from the first day of cookie pick-up to the last day of council organized booth sales. Girl Scout troops must also follow their local 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:**

The primary money-earning activity for Girl Scout troops is the GSNETX Cookie Program. Participation in the GSNETX Cookie 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.

Youth 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 GSNETX's Community Cookie project. If a customer gives an unsolicited donation, the troop is allowed to keep the donation.

**Troops Hosting Girl Scout Events:**

In the promotion of events, including service unit events, hosted by youth members, troops must advertise if they are planning to make a profit. In any case, the profit should be modest, with advertising noting how profit will be used. Any associated income and expenses should be shared through the troop financial report.

## **XX. Girl Scout Troop Budgeting and Reporting**

### **Policy:**

Always keep in mind that Girl Scouts is an organization for youth and all funds should be spent to benefit the youth members of the troop. Regular reporting of Girl Scout troop finances is essential. Every Girl Scout troop should report at least three times a year to the families of Girl Scout troop members on the troop financial status and how its funds are being earned and spent.

### **Procedures:**

#### **Troop Budgeting:**

It is recommended that Girl Scout troop funds should be spent as follows:

- 65% for the direct benefit of the youth members active in the troop at the time the money is earned
- 25% may be maintained for a long-term activity planned by the youth members of the troop
- 10% may be used to recognize volunteer contributions to the Girl Scout troop

Direct Benefit for the Girls could include but is not limited to:

- Renewal costs for youth members
- Girl Scout activities open to all Girl Scout troop members
- Girl Scout badges and/or patches
- Girl Scout uniform components or Girl Scout program books
- A donation to a cause the youth members decide upon

A long-term girl-planned activity must be based on the youth members' decision and could include:

- A future Girl Scout trip that is age appropriate and will take place within three to four years
- Assistance so that all Girl Scout troop members will have the opportunity to attend Girl Scout summer camp

Recognition of volunteer contributions could include but is not limited to:

- Renewal costs for adult volunteers
- Girl Scout patches
- Girl Scout adult uniform components or Girl Scout program books
- A small appreciation gift for the volunteers, such as flowers for the troop leadership team members

#### **Troop Financial Reporting to Troop Parents/Caregivers and Adults:**

- GSNETX recommends that all troops complete a troop financial report and share it with parents/caregivers.
- Parents/caregivers of the girls in the Girl Scout troop/group always have the right to review the income and expenses of the Girl Scout troop.
- Keeping Girl Scout troop income and expense records up-to-date will reduce misunderstandings with girls and their parents/caregivers about the use of Girl Scout troop funds.
- No funds due from GSNETX to a Girl Scout troop will be disbursed for troops that have not submitted a troop financial report within the most recent 12 months.

### **Disbanding Girl Scout Troops:**

A troop disbands when all the youth members in the troop decide to leave the troop and either are not going to re-register as a Girl Scout in any Girl Scout troop or are going to join another Girl Scout troop. As soon as a troop decides that it will disband, the troop leader should contact GSNETX staff and follow any instructions they provide. At that point, the disbanding troop number is retired, and the troop is no longer considered active. The term “disbanding troop” does not apply to a troop when one or more girls choose to leave a Girl Scout troop that remains active.

### **Allocating Funds and Troop Supplies:**

1. If none of the youth members in a disbanding troop are continuing as a Girl Scouts in another troop, all remaining funds must be sent to GSNETX. These funds will be used to support members and may be designated in the following ways:
  - The disbanding troop members may choose a council program area such as Destination grants or Gold Award scholarships
  - If the girls do not choose a specific designation, the money will go into the Anne White Opportunity Fund.
2. If all of the youth members continuing in Girl Scouts choose to join the same active Girl Scout troop, all funds will be transferred to that troop.
3. If the youth members continuing in Girl Scouts choose to join two or more other active Girl Scout troops, funds will be divided among those troops based on how many members join each troop.
4. Consider donating any remaining troop supplies, equipment, and books to your service unit or a new troop.

### **Final Financial Responsibilities**

The Girl Scout troop leader must submit final troop financial information within 30 days of disbanding the troop.

If no youth members are continuing in Girl Scouts, a check should be sent for the remaining Girl Scout troop funds payable to Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas. The troop leader should include the service unit number and the troop number on the memo line of the check. If the youth members have decided on a designation for the funds, this information should be included with the check.

### **Youth members transferring to another active Girl Scout troop or becoming an individual member:**

When a youth member transfers to a new troop, troop funds from their current troop should be transferred to their new troop. In the case of a youth member deciding to become an individual member, the appropriate share of funds would go to a GSNETX service unit to be held for their participation in Girl Scout activities. The decision to transfer funds may not be based on a youth member’s specific participation in any money-earning activity. However, factors such as length of time in the troop, participation level in the troop and other circumstances can be taken into consideration, in consultation with and when approved by GSNETX staff. Troop supplies and equipment should remain with the original troop.

The troop leader should use the following formula to determine the amount of troop money to be transferred to the new troop or service unit:

$$\begin{array}{cccccc} \text{Current full} & & & & & \text{Amount that} \\ \text{balance of the} & & \text{Total number of} & & \text{Number of youth} & \text{goes to the new} \\ \text{troop bank} & \div & \text{youth members} & \times & \text{members} & \text{troop or the} \\ \text{account} & & \text{in the troop} & & \text{transferring} & \text{service unit} \\ & & & & = & \end{array}$$

*Example:*


$$\begin{array}{cccccc} \$200 \text{ in troop} & & 10 \text{ youth} & & 3 \text{ youth members} & \text{\$60 is transferred} \\ \text{bank account} & \div & \text{members are in} & \times & \text{transferring to a} & \text{to the new troop} \\ & & \text{the troop} & & \text{new troop} & \end{array}$$

To be considered for a share of the troop funds, a youth member’s parent/caregiver must be in good financial standing, meaning they do not have an outstanding debt due to the troop or GSNETX. In the instance that the amount owed is less than the amount to be transferred, what is owed should be subtracted from the transferred amount. *For example, if the amount to be transferred to the new troop is \$100 but the parent/caregiver owes \$25 to the troop then only \$75 needs to be transferred to the new troop/SU.*

The troop leader/troop treasurer should make a check out to the troop/SU the youth member(s) will move into within 30 days. Money does not ever go directly to a youth member or parent/caregiver. If the troop leader does not know the new troop number or where to send funds, they should contact the appropriate GSNETX staff as soon as possible.

GSNETX does not recommend that youth members transfer during the course of the GSNETX Cookie Program after the initial order has been placed by the troop and before all cookie rewards have been distributed. In the event that a member transfers before rewards have been dispersed, the troop leader needs to provide the member with all earned rewards as soon as they are received.

If an agreement cannot be reached, refer to the Conflict Resolution section of GSNETX Volunteer Policies and Procedures.

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**XXI. Individually-Registered Members Money-Earning**

**Policy:**

Money earned by individually-registered members participating in the cookie program will be retained by the council. Registered Girl Scouts participating in the cookie program may receive a Girl Scout Bucks Card. The dollar amount of this card will be based on the product sales profit and incentive structure, the program grade level, and the level of participation. As noted in Volunteer Essentials, council-sponsored product sales and group money-earning projects: “Money raised is for Girl Scout activities and is not to be retained by individuals.”

## **Procedures:**

### **Eligibility:**

Individually-registered members may participate in the cookie program only if they follow the guidelines outlined in this section.

If an individually-registered member participates as a Girl Scout troop member for the purposes of the cookie program under the supervision of a Girl Scout Troop Cookie Manager:

- The individually-registered member will participate in the program in the same manner as the other members of the Girl Scout troop.
- Proceeds generated will be retained by the Girl Scout troop and will become the property of that Girl Scout troop's treasury.
- It is recommended that individually-registered members be included in Girl Scout troop activities funded with monies earned during the cookie program.

If an individually-registered member participates under the supervision of a Service Unit Cookie Program Coordinator:

- The member's participation may be managed directly by an individual Troop Cookie Manager and/or the Service Unit Cookie Program Coordinator. In this instance, the troop cookie manager would not be affiliated with a specific troop. However, this volunteer must register as a member of Girl Scouts, complete a background check with GSNETX, and complete the requirements of the Troop Cookie Manager role. They will manage the individually-registered member's cookie program in partnership and under the supervision of the Service Unit Cookie Program Coordinator.
- The individually-registered member will participate in the cookie program and will not be associated with a Girl Scout troop.
- The entire package price for each package sold must be turned in to the Service Unit Cookie Program Coordinator or the troop cookie manager and paid to council in order for the individually-registered member to be in good standing and receive rewards and/or "Cookie Dough."
- Member participating in this manner are eligible to receive rewards and "Girl Scout Bucks," which is calculated at specific package increments and issued at the current program year's base rate. Alternatively, members at the Cadette, Senior, and Ambassador levels may choose to opt out of rewards and receive "Girl Scout Bucks" only, which is calculated at specific package increments and issued at the current program year's proceeds-only tier.

## **XXII: Girl Scout Service Unit Funding**

### **Policy:**

The Family Partnership Campaign is an adult-generated fundraising campaign that enables families of Girl Scouts to tangibly express their belief in the value of Girl Scouting through the financial support of their local Girl Scout council. Funds from the Family Partnership Campaign are a key component of the operational budget, helping the council to achieve Girl Scouts' mission of building

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

GSNETX determines annually the rebate to Girl Scout service units derived from each Girl Scout service unit's participation in the Family Partnership Campaign and the GSNETX Cookie Program. These funds are to be used for operations of the Girl Scout service unit and the guidelines in this section should be followed. Since these funds are available through the efforts of Girl Scout troops, every effort should be made to use the funds in the same year in which they are collected.

After reaching Family Partnership goals, service units may engage in other permitted money-earning activities as detailed in the procedures in this section.

### **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 for the service unit to ensure the service unit is in compliance.

### **Source of Funds:**

Service units may receive funds from the GSNETX Cookie Program, the Family Partnership Campaign and Girl Scout service unit events. The per package amount for cookie rebates and Family Partnership rebate requirements are approved annually. Money collected from service unit events should balance out with expenditures. If there is money left over, it should be used for the next member event.

Service units are encouraged to limit the amount of time spent on external fundraising activities so they can spend time on youth programming and adult development and recognition. Service units are not allowed to conduct any money raising activities (excluding individual Family Partnership donations) from the first day of cookie pick-up to the last day of council organized booth sales. Service units must also follow their local United Way guidelines in scheduling dates for money-earning activities.

### **Receiving Funds:**

Service units may receive funds directly only if the previously required Girl Scout Service Unit Financial Report is on file with the council. Funds for Girl Scout service units that have not filed a Girl Scout Service Unit Financial Report, or that do not have an established bank account, are held in a custodial account. Written requests to release or use custodial funds must be approved in advance by GSNETX.

## **XXIII. Girl Scout Service Unit Budgeting and Reporting**

### **Policy:**

Always keep in mind that Girl Scouts is a girl organization and all funds spent should benefit the girls of the service unit. At least two times during the year, troop leaders and service unit team members should be informed about the current status of the Girl Scout service unit income and expenses.

## **Procedures:**

### **Managing Girl Scout Service Unit Funds:**

The Girl Scout Service Unit manager is accountable for the management of Girl Scout service unit funds, even if another volunteer is appointed to help manage the funds. The Girl Scout service unit manager may appoint another volunteer to be responsible for managing the Girl Scout service unit bank account. The volunteer must be a registered member of GSUSA, complete the background check process, and support the principles of Girl Scouting and the goals and objectives of Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas and GSUSA.

### **Service Unit Budgeting:**

It is recommended that Girl Scout service unit teams develop a budget that includes projected sources of funds and anticipated expenses for major events in the upcoming year when they complete their Girl Scout Service Unit Action Plan.

As a guideline, it is recommended that Girl Scout service unit funds should be spent as follows:

- 75% for activities that provide direct benefit to youth members
- 15% operational expenses
- 10% adult recognition

Girl Scout service unit funds may be used for the following:

- Postage or postcards
- Office supplies such as paper, copies, or checks
- Girl Scout leader appreciation gifts or events
- Reduction of service unit event fees
- Service unit equipment
- Resource materials such as handbooks or songbooks
- Annual meeting attendance for delegates
- Girl Scout troop start-up funds
- Membership recruitment events

### **Service Unit Financial Reporting:**

Members of the Girl Scout service unit always have the right to review the income and expenses of the Girl Scout service unit. Keeping Girl Scout service unit income and expense records up-to-date will reduce misunderstandings about the use of Girl Scout service unit funds. Accounting of Girl Scout service unit operational funds and individual event funds are maintained separately, then combined for reporting on the Girl Scout Service Unit Annual Financial Report. This report is due to GSNETX by June 15 each year, recapping the entire SU fiscal year from June 1 to May 31. A copy of this report should be retained by the service unit team for SU records.

Service unit team members managing the SU finances should obtain bills and receipts for all Girl Scout service unit expenses and deposits and attach them to the Girl Scout service unit copy of the required financial report. A copy of the report must be shared with the Girl Scout service unit members.



## **XXIV. Financial Reimbursement for Designated Council Operational Volunteers**

### **Policy:**

The concept of volunteer service, time and talent given without remuneration, is essential to the future of the members who want and need Girl Scouting. Within this concept, it is recognized that special situations will warrant meeting some out-of-pocket expenses of volunteers whose needed skills and services would not otherwise be available.

Officers of the council, board members, certified volunteer trainers, and other council-level volunteers may – from time to time – incur expenses related to carrying out their responsibilities. Volunteer expenses may be itemized as IRS expenses, or may be reimbursed all, or in part, by the council in accordance with council procedures.

### **Procedures:**

#### **Designated Council Operational Volunteers:**

Designated council operational volunteers include council task group volunteers and council trainers. Designation of volunteers at this level is defined at the time of volunteer appointment.

#### **Reimbursable Expenses:**

Expenses that will be reimbursed may include, but are not limited to, the following: reimbursement for gasoline, postage, rental fees, mileage, parking fees, toll charges, airport transportation, business meals, overnight lodging, airfare, and meeting supplies.

#### **Making a Request:**

To request council reimbursed funds for the expenses, the volunteer must:

- Obtain preapproval.
- Forward a completed expense report with receipts to the lead staff member assigned to the task group responsible for the activity.
- Allow at least three weeks for processing and disbursing.

#### **Reimbursement Process:**

The appropriate budget manager reviews and approves the request and forwards a Payment Authorization Request to the accounting department for processing.

#### **Sales Tax Exemption:**

Sales tax exemption forms provided by GSNETX should be used only when purchasing goods and services for Girl Scout activities. These forms allow volunteers to avoid paying state and local sales taxes, which are not reimbursable.

**Remaining Funds:**

Receipts and money remaining from the advancement of funds must be returned to Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas within two weeks following the activity or event.

**XXV: Volunteer Hour Matching Gifts and Other Tax-Deductible Gifts**

**Policy:**

All voluntary contributions intended to benefit the Girl Scout program in the Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas jurisdiction, regardless of value, form or designated use will be made only to the council and must follow current IRS guidelines. Incorporated as a public charity and designated as a 501(c) (3) organization, the council is the only entity to which tax-deductible contributions can be made. The Federal Internal Revenue Code determines any tax deduction available to a donor.

Because Volunteer Hour Matching Gifts are adult-generated funds and not generated by youth members as money-earning program activities, they must be considered separately. Once Volunteer Hour Matching Gift funds are received at the council headquarters, 100 percent can be returned to the Girl Scout troop or service unit if a Pass-Through Donation Form was received regarding the volunteer hours. Otherwise, the funds will be applied to the service unit's Family Partnership Campaign.

In cases when a company will match volunteer hours with a donation to an organization recognized by the IRS as a 501(c) (3) charitable organization, council will verify hours as requested, and all contributions must be receipted by Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas. Individual Girl Scout troops are not recognized as 501(c) (3) charitable organizations and therefore may not deposit these gifts.

Donations received as matching grants for volunteer service will be credited to the Family Partnership Campaign unless they are passed through to the troop or service unit.

**Procedures:**

In order for the funds to be appropriately distributed the volunteer must follow these steps:

- Complete the paperwork required by the company and submit it to the company for processing.
- Send a copy of the submitted paperwork to Fund Development immediately upon requesting the grant. Include the completed Pass-Through Donation Form if applicable. Email the information to [donations@gsnetx.org](mailto:donations@gsnetx.org) with the subject line "Volunteer Hours".
- Include the following information:
  - The full name, service unit number, troop number, and address of the volunteer submitting the request
  - The name of the company to which the grant request is directed
  - The number of volunteer hours being reported
  - The amount being requested

- Information as to whether the funds should be added to Family Partnership or passed-through to the troop or service unit
- If the funds are to be returned to the troop, include the full name and address of the troop leader

When checks are presented either to the council or to the volunteer, the council will deposit them, and the council will write thank you letters to the company and volunteer. The gift will be recorded in the council's database. Volunteer Matching Gift checks must not be deposited in Girl Scout troop funds. Should a payment for volunteer hours not be delivered to the council, the volunteer's hours will no longer be verified and no tax letter verifying the donation will be sent to the company.

Many employers sponsor matching gift programs and will match any charitable contributions made by their employees. Refer to [www.gsnetx.org/matchmygift](http://www.gsnetx.org/matchmygift) to see if any Family Partnership campaign contributors may be eligible for a matching gift.

Any funds received as matching gifts will be counted toward the maximum amount of funds a troop or service unit may receive in donations throughout the year as described in the [Tax Deductions for Donated Funds procedure](#).

## **XXVI. Collection of Outstanding Funds**

### **Policy:**

To protect the integrity of council-approved Girl Scout troop money-earning activities, all efforts will be made to ensure that outstanding balances are paid.

The Girl Scout troop will not assume debt responsibility for any individual.

Persons with an outstanding amount due to Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas beyond 90 days will not be allowed to serve in any volunteer capacity for the council until the account is paid in full.

Youth members with parents/caregivers having delinquent or outstanding funds may not participate in council-sponsored money-earning activities until the debt is cleared.

### **Procedures:**

#### **Program Participation:**

Youth members may continue to participate in Girl Scout troop and service unit activities if their parents/caregivers have delinquent or outstanding balances with the council. Youth members with parents/caregivers with delinquent or outstanding funds may not participate in council-sponsored money-earning activities until the debt is cleared.

**Girl Scout Troops:**

Girl Scout troop outstanding funds will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine if the debt should be assigned to an individual or volunteer. Eligibility for the troop to participate in the following activities may be withheld:

1. Money-earning activities will be determined on a case-by-case basis
2. Events that require activity approval

**Course of Action:**

All avenues available to the council, including use of collection agencies and legal action, will be pursued regarding outstanding debt or delinquencies.

**Resigned or Terminated Volunteers:**

If a volunteer resigns her or his position or is terminated, any balances owed the council are still considered outstanding until paid in full.

**XXVII. Other Financial Situations**

**Policy:**

- Adult members acting in a Girl Scout capacity may not solicit financial contributions for purposes other than Girl Scouting. Adults may engage in combined fundraising efforts authorized by GSNETX in which the council is the beneficiary (such as United Way). Girls may not engage in any direct solicitation for money.
- Any permission for endorsements, individual testimonials or authorization of books, plays, promotion pictures, radio programs, and television programs about Girl Scouting shall be first referred to the GSNETX chief executive officer for further action in keeping with the policies of GSUSA.
- For safety and security reasons, sales and marketing on the Internet for any Girl Scout troop/group money-earning activities may not be conducted by individual youth members, parents/caregivers, or other adults except as provided for in the Girl Scouts of the USA Product Sale Guidelines and with appropriate parental permission. (*The Blue Book of Basic Documents – Internet Sales.*)
- Sales on the Internet of Girl Scout merchandise, such as uniforms, insignia, publications, and equipment may only be conducted by duly authorized and licensed Girl Scout councils, council shops, retail agencies, and/or GSUSA licensed vendors. Permission to sell on the Internet must be obtained from GSUSA. (*The Blue Book of Basic Documents – Internet Sales.*)
- Day/twilight camps will follow similar procedures to Girl Scout troops and service units for the management of camp monies. Day/twilight camp training materials will address specifics for this situation.

- No soliciting of funds using any external online fundraising sites that are not specifically promoted by GSNETX is permitted. Prohibited sites include, but are not limited to: gofundme.com, kickstarter.com, giveforward.com and crowdrise.com. Any money solicited in this manner will be retained by Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas.

**Procedures:**

Consult the noted sections of The Blue Book of Basic Documents. Individual violations will be reviewed and discussed with the person involved. Circumstances of the situation will be considered.

## **Part 5: GSNETX Policies and Procedures**

### **XXVIII. GSNETX Policy and Procedures Revisions**

**Policy:**

Proposed GSNETX Policy and Procedure changes are initiated by volunteers and staff review groups and reviewed with the staff leadership team. GSNETX policy changes will be submitted for approval to the GSNETX Board of Directors.

**Procedures:**

A fully updated GSNETX Volunteer Policies and Procedures document will be prepared every three years, during the membership year following Girl Scout National Convention. The changes will go into effect during the following membership year. The updated document will be published on the GSNETX website. Volunteers attending the annual GSNETX Kickoff will receive information about the most recent changes. GSNETX service unit team members and staff members are responsible for ensuring that volunteers are informed of the changes.

As outlined in this section, GSNETX teams are responsible for reviewing designated sections of the policies. In some cases, departments will need to work together to determine necessary changes. If changes are needed more frequently than the update timeline, a draft of proposed changes will be submitted, reviewed, and implemented as necessary.

The GSNETX senior leadership team will be presented with the final draft. All policy changes will be approved by the GSNETX Board of Directors.

**Part 1: Girl Scout Members and Volunteers**

Membership, Customer Care, Volunteer and Organizational Learning

**Part 2: Risk Management and Safety**

Programs, Customer Care

**Part 3: The Girl Scout Program**

Programs, Membership Marketing and Communications

**Part 4: Girl Scout Finances and Money-Earning**

Finance, Membership, Fund Development and Product Sales

**Part 5: GSNETX Volunteer Policies and Procedures**

Membership

**Summary of Revisions – Fall 2021**

Document-wide changes:

- More inclusive language regarding parents/caregivers, volunteers, and youth members
- Process changes to reflect updates to GSNETX technology, Volunteer Systems 2.0
- Updates to reflect expectations of both adult and youth behavior
- Language clarity changes

Procedure: Volunteer Training & Equipping

- Expanded upon to provide overall training information and guidance.
- Asks that all volunteers stay up-to-date with GSNETX governing documents.
- Includes newly established requirement to take TR402: Protecting Our Girls. Per the State of Texas, this training is only valid for 2 years and the curriculum must be updated every 6 years.
- Unless otherwise specified, all other GSNETX volunteer training is generally considered to be valid for 3 years.
- Updated Troop Leader training requirements and information
- Updated Council-Level Trainers / Learning Facilitators

Procedure: In-Person Activity Participation

- New procedure to specify members should refrain from in-person participation if feeling sick or ill

Procedure: Bank Account Signatures

- Updated to provide clarity and emphasis on financial responsibility for bank account signers.

Procedure: Private Benefit

- Clarified that scholarships are not permitted at the individual, troop, and service unit level.