

Unsure about leading your Girl Scout troop this year? Hesitant about running virtual meetings? Hoping for at least a little in-person or outdoor activity for your girls? Never fear: we have [tons of resources and ideas](#) for Girl Scout troops in this unique situation. You'll find guidance below on navigating New Jersey's COVID-19 safety protocols to limit potential coronavirus exposure for girls, volunteers, and families, while still providing a robust, engaging Girl Scout Leadership Experience. Want more? Join us online for [Live Chats](#), [Troop Tip Tuesdays](#), and much [more](#)—or email [training@gshnj.org](mailto:training@gshnj.org).

### Can I get a Zoom account for my troop's virtual meetings?

Yes! For the significantly reduced price of \$36 for the year, you may [purchase a gsZoom license](#) to use for Girl Scout activities. gsZoom licenses are available to any adult with an active 2021 membership and clear background check. You must sign and return the End User Agreement found in your registration confirmation email prior to account activation. License allows for up to 500 participants and unlimited meeting length, and is valid through September 15, 2021.

### Can we meet in person?

Yes! Girl Scout troops and groups may gather in person, but must follow [local restrictions](#) on group sizes, wear facemasks over your noses and mouths when inside, and must stay six feet apart at all times. This means hugs, handshakes, high-fives, and even activities like the Girl Scout Friendship Circle are off-limits. Help your girls get creative in creating a safe way to greet and end meetings. Remember, chaperones and siblings are included in your total group size, even if they are not actively participating in your meeting.

Prior to gathering as a troop or group, you should ask everyone to answer the following questions. Anyone who answers “yes” to any of the questions should not attend the gathering.

1. Are you currently experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms as defined by the [CDC](#)?
  - Fever or chills (fever of 100.4 or higher)
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  - Fatigue
  - Muscle or body aches
  - Headache
  - New loss of taste or smell
  - Sore throat
  - Congestion or runny nose
  - Nausea or vomiting
  - Diarrhea
2. Have you tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 14 days?
3. Have you had close contact with someone who is currently sick with or suspected to have COVID-19 within the last 14 days?
4. Have you traveled or been in close contact with anyone who has traveled outside our region or to a state on the [NJ Travel Advisory list](#) within the last 14 days?

### Do we have to wear facemasks if we're outside?

If you can ensure that everyone stays six feet apart, you do not have to wear a facemask when gathering outside. If you are less than six feet apart at any time, you must wear facemasks over your noses and mouths during that time.

### Where should we meet?

Meeting in an outdoor space where social distancing can be maintained is strongly recommended. Meeting in a public indoor space like a school or church is allowed, as long as the group size adheres to [local restrictions](#) on group sizes and social distancing can be maintained at all times.

Get advance permission from the property owner or the jurisdiction that provides the space. If you don't already know, you should contact the facility ahead of time and ask:

1. Who else uses the space (how often, what size is the group)?
2. Is the space cleaned between groups? How often are touch surfaces (light switches, handles, tables, etc.) cleaned?
3. How often are shared facilities like public restrooms cleaned?
4. What type of faucets/soap dispensers are available in the restroom (sensory or manual)?
5. Then, consider whether you can supplement any practices that are less than ideal. For example, if you will arrive after another user group, plan to bring surface cleaner and sanitizing wipes to get the space ready for your troop.

### **Can we meet inside a private home?**

As advised in [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#), meeting inside a private home is very strongly discouraged. However, as the coronavirus has made many traditional meeting places unavailable, [your Membership Specialist](#) can advise on steps to take to receive temporary permission to meet in a private home.

### **Can we meet in the backyard of a private home?**

Yes; however, girls are not permitted inside the home at all, even to use the bathroom. Contact your Membership Specialist if you'd like to request temporary permission to meet in a private home.

### **Can we go on a day trip?**

We recommend that troops and service units resume normal in-person activities only after New Jersey has successfully passed [Reopening Phase 3](#). Troops may choose to participate in in-person programs and activities, but you must ensure that the same safety protocols required for troop meetings, above, are maintained anywhere the troop may gather. Your easiest and safest bet is to try a [GSHNJ-organized program](#).

### **Can we visit a GSHNJ camp property?**

Yes! Camp Hoover and Camp DeWitt are open for troop/group day trips and family POD camping (The OVAL is closed for the season). COVID-19 safety protocols are the same at camp as they are everywhere in NJ, so group sizes are limited, social distancing is required, and facemasks are essential. Create your own activities, or choose from our packages that will easily help you fill a meeting, an afternoon, or a whole day. [Here's more camp info](#).

### **Can we go on an overnight or camping trip?**

No. Overnight trips, even camping, are not permitted for Girl Scout troops or groups until after New Jersey has successfully passed Reopening Phase 3.

### **Do I have to collect permission slips?**

If your troop is gathering in person somewhere other than your usual meeting place, then you must collect completed permission slips from the parent/guardian of every girl who attends, even if her parent/guardian is present. Leaders complete the top portion of this [newly updated slip](#), save it, and then email it as an attachment to your troop's parents. Or, if your troop is using the [GSHNJ Annual Permission Slip](#), make sure you've shared the event details with parents and received confirmation that they understand, and then check to make sure you have each participating girls' annual slip on file.

### **Should we carpool?**

Individual parents should only drop off and pick up members of their own family PODs. Carpooling with people outside of your POD and using public transportation should be avoided to maintain social distancing.

### **What is a family POD?**

POD stands for People of your Own Designation. Since we all have different household and family structures, we want to be inclusive in our language for both the usual and the unique groupings. For many, your "POD" will be the adults and children who live in your home. However, it may also include others from outside your household with whom you feel comfortable being in close contact without personal protective equipment.

### **What should I do if someone connected to my troop is diagnosed with COVID-19 and I have reason to believe that others might have been exposed at a Girl Scout activity?**

Girl Scouts Heart of New Jersey's protocol for reporting COVID-19 exposure is a three-step process:

1. The organizer of the activity should complete a [GSHNJ COVID-19 Incident Report form](#), and submit to Michael Forrestall, Chief Operating Officer, Girl Scouts Heart of New Jersey via email at [mforrestall@gshnj.org](mailto:mforrestall@gshnj.org).
2. A positive COVID-19 test result will trigger notification to the appropriate public health authorities. This notification is intended to ensure that steps are taken to safeguard public health, including contact tracing, and notification of those who are deemed at-risk of having been exposed.
3. GSHNJ staff will notify all known participants of the incident via email. As we are obligated to adhere to healthcare privacy law, we cannot provide information such as the name or health status of any specific individual. Volunteers should not notify other participants; leave that to staff.