

Planning the Parent/ Caregiver Meeting

So what is a Parent/ Caregiver Meeting? It's the first meeting you have to start each troop year. It is valuable for all troops – new and returning! Caregivers are an invaluable source of time, talent, and experience for a Girl Scout troop. Set the expectation that parents are important and necessary for a troop's success right from the get-go. Communicate with caregivers via a variety of methods such as: VTK e-mail option, personal email, phone, newsletter, or social media.

100% of troops with the most satisfied parents and troop leaders report they hold a Parent / Caregiver Meeting

Parent/ Caregiver Meeting Guidance & Resources

- Check out *Tips for Troop Leaders* on the Resource Tab of the *Volunteer Toolkit*
- Talk to a Girl Scout volunteer with experience
- Ask your Troop Support Specialist for guidance and direction
- ★ Use the Outline with the Caregiver Packet for further aid

Plan Ahead

1 adult is needed to conduct the Parent/ Caregiver Meeting while 2 additional adults do activities with the troop members.

Supplies

Have these items on hand at the meeting:

- Online mobile devices (phones, tablets, etc.) for online registration
- Supplies for a troop activity (a new song, a skit, a craft, etc.)
- Receipt book for all money transactions or payments
- pens

Forms – found in the Forms & Documents section of www.gsnim.org **all forms listed in purple can be found in the Parent/ Caregiver Packet**

- Girl Registration and Adult Registration forms – paper versions for any caregiver not comfortable with online registrations
- Membership Subsidy (membership fee financial assistance for those in need)
- Girl Health History - required for all girls
- Adult Health History –encouraged for all adults present at troop meetings and events
- Girl Product Program Permission - required for girls participating in a Product Program (Fall Product or Cookie Program; available online or in paper form)
- Girl & Adult Code of Conduct Agreements – optional but very helpful
- Ways Adults Can Help – encourage parents to help!

- ❑ [Annual Permission Form](#) or, in case any caregiver is reluctant to give blanket permission, [Individual Activity Permission Form](#)

Handouts

- ❑ Troop roster if you have the information in advance
- ❑ Troop meeting schedule
 - Could also refer caregivers to the Volunteer Toolkit where they can find the troop's year plan
- ❑ Contact information for Troop Co-Leaders
- ❑ Parent/ Caregiver Packet

Note: Most forms listed in the supplies to have on hand can be found in the Parent/ Caregiver Packet

- ❑ [Uniform Insignia placement](#) (optional – found on the VTK Resource tab)

Benefits of Caregiver Involvement

1. [They know their daughters](#). They can provide insight and are helpful when problem solving. They recognize girls' interests and can prove helpful in planning troop meetings and activities.
2. [Their help can ease the troop workload](#). Be sure to ask every caregiver how he/she would like to help the troop. One of the top reasons why people do not volunteer is because no one asks them.
 - Caregivers do best when given a specific task. Rather than say "We need some help in the troop", instead say "[we need someone to be a treasurer and here's what that entails](#)" or "[the troop could use someone to organize a snack rotation schedule](#)".
3. [They benefit from their own involvement](#). They build a closer relationship with their own daughter, meet their daughter's friends, develop a deeper social network, and contribute to the community.



Sample Agenda

Welcome & Mission

Introduce yourself and other Girl Scout adults. Ask families to introduce themselves.

- Explain to families the process of becoming a leader (completion of membership and a criminal background check and that you will participate in ongoing training courses).

- Explain that the troop leader's role is to work with the girls, but it is the girls' troop. The troop will do activities that the Girl Scouts choose.
- Explain the *Girl Scout Mission* and how the Girl Scout program activities engage girls in discovering who they are and what they can be, connecting with others, and taking action to make the world a better place.
 - *Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.*

Contact List & Meeting Dates (Caregiver Packet Page 1)

Ask adults to review a troop roster (if available) to ensure accuracy of information. This list is for Girl Scout purposes only; do not give to anyone outside of the troop.

- Ask caregivers for communication preferences (BAND or Facebook group, email, text, etc.)
- Review the troop meeting schedule and ask if families have conflicts that would prevent a girl from attending regularly scheduled meetings.
- Can caregivers carpool or share transportation responsibilities if needed?

MyGS & the Volunteer Toolkit (VTK)

Caregivers can follow their daughter's membership, attendance, awards, and meeting activities by logging onto **MyGS** on our website. Caregivers receive an email after registration that contains information.

Troop Meetings (Caregiver Packet Pages 3-4)

Go over a typical meeting here and discuss anything that caregivers may need to know: whether the troop will be having snack, are you having parents sign their Girl Scouts in and out of meetings, etc.

★ Discuss badges as parents can sometimes have the expectation that their Girl Scout will earn a badge every meeting. Let's set realistic expectations from the start.

Troop Dues (Caregiver Packet Page 4)

Tell adults that troop dues may support the cost of badges, troop supplies, and some activities.

- New troops– charging dues at the first meeting provides funds to support early activities.
- Typically, for new troops, caregivers purchase uniforms and books.
- Explain that troop dues stay with the troop. The girls will help set the amount and how often they will pay dues (every meeting, once a month, etc.).
 - ❖ GSNI-M does not require dues, but new troops average about \$20 a year.

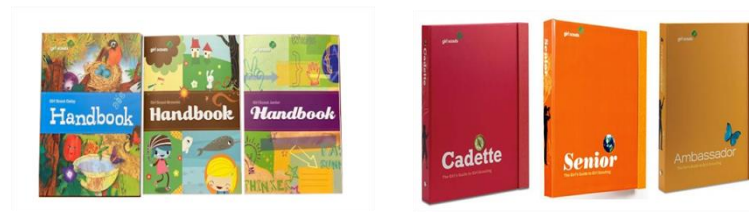
Uniforms & Handbooks (Caregiver Packet Page 5)

While uniforms are not mandatory, we strongly encourage them. They provide a sense of belonging to the organization and are a place to display earned badges and fun patches.

- The official Girl Scout insignia is the Girl Scout pin.
 - ❖ See “Where to Place” on girlscoutshop.com, under FAQs, for a complete diagram.

An individual copy of *The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting* book for older girls, and the *Handbook* for younger girls is not mandatory, but can be a valuable resource for both girls and their caregivers.

- A **Starter Kit** for each level is available from the **Girl Scout Shop** that contains the *Girls' Guide* or *Handbook*; a vest, sash, or tunic; and all of the starter uniform insignia. For current pricing information, contact the Answer Center or the Girl Scout Shop.



Donations

GSNI-M relies heavily on monetary donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations to support Girl Scout programs. GSNI-M doesn't ask caregivers to pay the true cost of Girl Scouts.

- In fact, we subsidize each girl's experience by about \$360 annually.
 - We offer each caregiver the opportunity to donate. Caregiver donations ensure we can provide the Girl Scout experience for his/her daughter and thousands of girls like her.
 - ❖ Find the donation space on the registration form under Membership Options.

Ways Adults Can Help (Caregiver Packet Pages 5-6, 16-17)

Leading a Girl Scout troop is a big responsibility and requires teamwork. Use this form to educate parents on how to help! You may share other specific needs too. Some parents may commit to chaperoning or providing transportation one time. Others may be able to commit to coming to all the meetings, but may not have time to help plan.

Find an option for all
who wish to help



- Let them know the troop cannot meet unless an appropriate number of adults attend. **Refer to the girl/adult ratio chart in the Parent/Caregiver Packet, page 3)**
- GSNI-M must approve any adult working directly with or transporting girls. Adults working with troop funds and/or product from the Fall Product and Cookie Programs must also be approved. **Adults working with girls, handling troop money or product, must be registered, background checked adults.**
- Adults transporting Girl Scouts must have a valid driver's license, good driving record, be at least 21 or older, and insure their vehicle is in good working order.
- An important short-term volunteer is the *Troop Product Program Coordinator*. The cookie program is a big responsibility and leaders would benefit by recruiting a caregiver to this role.
- Each troop also needs a **Troop Treasurer** who is responsible for managing the troop's funds.
- Even providing snacks for troop meetings is a big help. Families can sign-up to provide snacks for meetings. Make all aware of any foods to avoid due to allergies.

Registration/Membership

Each girl and adult must register to participate in Girl Scouts. Give instructions on how adults can register both girls and themselves through Online Registration on our website.

- Encourage parents, grandparents, and other adults to register and complete a background check so they can fully participate in their Girl Scout's experience.
- Explain that the GSUSA membership fee includes Girl Scout activity insurance.
 - ❖ Share that financial assistance (subsidy) is available for new members in need.

The screenshot shows the Girl Scouts website's 'Join' page. At the top, there is a green navigation bar with links: ABOUT, ACTIVITIES, COOKIES+, VOLUNTEERS, OUR COUNCIL, CAMP, DONATE, and SIGN UP. Below the navigation bar, on the left, is a sidebar menu with options: Who We Are, Our Program, Our History, Join (highlighted), Recruitment Events, How to Start a Troop, Want More Information?, Individually Registered Girls, Renew, and null. The main content area features a purple banner with the text 'It's time to press play.' Below the banner, there is a link for 'Already a member? Log in to renew.' The 'Get Involved' section is titled 'Become a Girl Scout' and includes the text 'Your new friends can't wait to meet you.' followed by a paragraph about Girl Scouts meeting furry friends at animal shelters. At the bottom of the page, a green button with the text 'JOIN GIRL SCOUTS' is circled in pink.

Important Documents (Caregiver Packet Pages 7-17)

Girl Health History Forms

Caregivers must complete the *Girl Health History Form* for their Girl Scout. This allows medical treatment if an accident should happen. It also lets you as the leader know about any allergies or special needs. These forms are important and caregivers must submit them before beginning the first event.

Adult Health History Forms

Adults attending meetings or events, working with girls, or providing transportation should complete the *Adult Health History Form*. Adults may seal their forms in an envelope with the adult's name on the front and troop leaders or emergency responders will only open in case of an emergency.

All Health forms may contain confidential information and leaders should respect privacy but make forms accessible in case of an emergency.



Girl Product Program Permission Form

Girls may participate in two product programs each year: Fall Product and the Girl Scout Cookie Program. Troops can earn money for recognitions, materials, and other troop activities.

- Each caregiver signs and submits the **Girl Product Program Permission Form** before the Girl Scout participates in either program.
 - ❖ One agreement covers both the *Fall Product* and *Cookie Program*.

Establish Troop Guidelines

Share that the Girl Scouts encourages girls to treat others with respect. We want everyone to enjoy a safe and fun experience. Involve girls in developing agreements to encourage ownership of their behavior. Use the *Girl Scout Law* to write a *Girl Code of Conduct* as a guideline for behavior standards, or use the one provided.

Closing

Bring the troop members back to the main group. Encourage them to share/perform their activity. Thank caregivers for coming and answer any questions. Collect any paper registration forms and fees, troop dues, health forms, and any other forms already filled out. Be sure to write receipts for any money collected.

Congratulate yourself – YOU DID IT!!
Your troop is off to a great start for the year