

GSWNY COVID-19 Guidance FAQs 4-27-21

Please see updates in yellow.

Q1: My usual meeting space is not currently available, or I'm concerned I won't have access to my usual troop meeting place in the winter.

A1: If you are interested in meeting in-person now and your meeting place is not available, we encourage you to utilize outdoor public spaces such as local parks, and GSWNY properties are currently available for bookings on weekends, and some of our properties are available for troop meetings. Please contact customer care@gswny.org if you are interested in booking a GSWNY property.

For the winter, we will be working with service units to identify available meeting places, as well as the potential to expand our utilization of GSWNY service centers and properties. We await the decisions from school districts as to whether they will be available as meeting spaces.

In the meanwhile, we encourage you to connect with your meeting place to determine their plans. You may share the GSWNY COVID-19 guidelines with them so they may see the steps Girl Scouts is taking to keep their meeting places safe.

Q2: If we can maintain social distance (6+ feet), do we have to wear masks? Do we have to wear masks if we are outside?

A2: Yes, our guidelines state that girls and adults must wear masks in addition to social distancing (6+ feet). These guidelines apply in both indoor and outdoor settings.

An exception is when girls and adults may be eating or drinking. Follow social distancing and hygiene practices to create a safe environment in these cases.

Q3: Does GSWNY offer a medical exemption for masks?

A3: Girls and adults who identify a medical exemption can contact customer care@gswny.org to request a reasonable accommodation.

Q4: What is the meeting size in New York State?

A4: Meeting Size. Smaller gatherings are generally considered to be safer, and GSWNY recommends that you limit the size of gatherings as much as possible, for example if you have 10 girls in your troop, limit activities to the 10 girls plus the required number of approved volunteers to fulfill supervision ratios. Based on the most recent NYS requirements for Phase 4, as of March 22, 2021, social gatherings in public spaces, previously limited to 50 people, will be limited to **100 people indoors** and **200 people outdoors**. All attendees must utilize all social distancing practices and follow all preventative guidance (such as face coverings).

If you have a troop/service unit larger than the maximum gathering size, or you are not comfortable with large gatherings, stay connected while you wait for a safe time for everyone to gather. Some ideas:

- Host virtual troop or service unit meetings (see below).
- Gather up in smaller groups—such as age-level groups, patrols, or groups of girls with a particular badge they'd like to work on.

NYS allows for outdoor activities where the total size of attendees are greater than the above ranges, but may have restrictions on total occupancy size, such as outdoor movies, zoos, concerts, etc. Your troop may attend these events where the total size is larger than the maximum gathering size, however, in those cases, your troop must stay separate from the larger group, maintaining social distance and following all other guidelines.

Q5: What are the travel and overnight stay guidelines?

A5: Travel and overnight stays. If the families of your troop are in agreement to travel, and understand the inherent risks, overnight camping and travel is allowed with these stipulations:

- Current GSWNY COVID-19 guidelines must be followed. Guidelines can be reviewed [here](#).
- Council approval is required for ALL travel and overnight activities by completing the [GSWNY Intent to Travel](#). Please email girl.experience@gswny.org for any assistance. For travel less than 250 miles outside of Council jurisdiction, the Intent to Travel form must be submitted at least one month prior to travel. For travel of more than 250 miles, the Intent to Travel form must be submitted at least three months prior to travel.
- No International travel is allowed at this time.
- Troops are expected to research and plan to meet all safety requirements.
- Girls and parents of separate households must travel separately whenever possible. If the troop would like to carpool, a carpool exemption must be requested. Contact customercare@gswny.org with your request at least 2 weeks prior to your travel dates.
- Continue to practice the Hygiene and COVID-19 Risk Mitigation guidance for all travel.
- The following measures are to be taken:
- Prior to departure, wellness checks must be made on all travelers including temperature checks and an assessment as to current symptoms of illness or exposure to a positive person during the last three days. If any of the questions on the assessment are answered in the affirmative, that individual may not go on the trip.
- Overnight sleeping is only permitted in separate quarters, individually, or with members of the same household. Girls and adults need to be in individual tents or rooms and cannot share quarters with members outside of their own household.
- Masks MUST be worn at all times except when eating and drinking.
- Maintain a 6ft social distance
- Daily health/temperature checks
- Handwashing and hand sanitizing stations must be made available at all times
- GSWNY COVID-19 Waiver of Liability must be signed for all participants [GSWNY COVID-19 Waiver of Liability](#)
- Additional insurance should be purchased for non-members. [Application for Insurance](#)

Advice for a successful trip

Travel plans are often arranged several months in advance and contingencies must be planned ahead of time for re-scheduling, cancelling, or pivoting to a virtual activity. For all planned trips, create a timeline and identify a final date when decisions must be made about whether or not to move forward with the planned trip, based primarily on the safety of our girls, along with financial commitment deadlines and/or other factors.

Consider purchasing travel insurance and read all fine print and ensure COVID or pandemic related cancellation is covered; it is often excluded. Decisions about whether or not to approve troop travel or proceed with planned council-organized travel will be based on all current health and safety guidance available in our jurisdiction as well as for the destination jurisdiction to ensure the safety of girls.

Please note: If an approved troop-organized trip gets cancelled due to COVID, Girl Scouts of Western New York is not responsible for rescheduling or reimbursing funds expensed by the troop or families. GSWNY monitors public health guidance and will continue to make changes to these guidelines if any new restrictions or guidance is issued by authorities.

Q6: What is the baseline temperature that is considered a fever?

A6: NYS school guidelines updated that any temperature 100 degrees and over should result in members (girl & adults) staying home and not attending any Girl Scout activities.

Q7: Can we host any meeting or activity at our home?

A7: All Girl Scout activities are prohibited from being facilitated in and at the home, whether inside or in a yard. In an effort to continue to mitigate the risk of the virus, and to ensure girl safety, no home in-person programs or meetings are allowed.

Q8: Are funds available to assist troops in purchasing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for my Girl Scout Troop?

A8: Yes, PPE purchases are a legitimate troop expense and troops can either use troop funds if available, and GSWNY will also provide financial assistance as this is a new and unexpected necessary expense for troops. In addition, Troop Leaders can request funding to purchase related Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at up to \$100 per troop for reimbursement (Example: thermometers, disposable facemasks, disinfectant, hand sanitizer/solution). Troops larger than 12 members may require more supplies and can note the additions on the form for review.

Q9: Can you provide guidance on media photos?

A9: Media Guidelines: we understand that families and troops want to take photos to document girls' participation in Girl Scouting and that photos are treasured memories, and also can showcase girls' accomplishments.

Due to the risk of COVID-19, all photos must comply with the above guidelines including wearing masks and social distancing. GSWNY reserves the right to refrain from posting any photos that do not align with safety guidelines, and also remove public photos, including photos submitted by troops and families to local media.

Girls can be documented without masks if they are participating at home, or with members of her family. Girls in photos with other non-family members of the troop must be wearing a mask and social distancing in accordance with GSWNY COVID-19 guidelines.

Q10: Are there any exceptions?

A10: One exception is during a ceremony, if a family wishes for a girl to remove her mask for a photo, that is acceptable as long as she is socially distanced from others, and the photo must be of the girl alone, or with family members, and that this is only for a minimal amount of time to take the photo.

Q11: How will in-person programs be affected if a WNY county is placed in a yellow, orange, or red zone by NYS?

A11: If any county is placed in a COVID-19 microcluster by NYS, there may be additional restrictions. If any county is placed into the yellow zone, that county will need to limit group sizes to 25 or less. If any county is placed in the orange zone, that county will need to limit group sizes to 10 or less. If any county is placed in the red zone, that county will need to suspend in-person programming per NYS guidelines. Yellow zone restrictions may be applied across the council, and orange, or red zone restrictions will be handled county by county, and will not be applied across the council, unless NYS advises.

Q12: Where can I find Cookie Program direct sale guidelines and other helpful resources?

A12: For direct sale guidelines and helpful resources go to <https://www.gswny.org/en/cookies/cookies/for-cookie-sellers/resources-abc.html>.

Q13: Can troop leaders and volunteers arrange contactless delivery/pick-up of program supplies for girls/families in the orange zone?

A13: Yes, as long as they follow all COVID-19 safety guidelines and social distancing.

Please Note: Details regarding red zone are not currently released but we continue to monitor NYS guidelines and we expect to be able to offer curbside retail and delivery.

Thank you for all that you do, and please contact Customer Care if you have any questions: customer care@gswny.org or call 1-888-837-6410. In an emergency, please call 1-800-882-9268.