

Volunteer Essentials 2014–2015

Section four: Safety-Wise

In Girl Scouting, the emotional and physical safety and well-being of girls are always top priorities. Here is what you need to know.

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Knowing your responsibilities

You, the parents/guardians of the girls in your group, and the girls themselves share the responsibility for staying safe. The next three sections explain who's responsible for what.

Responsibilities of the Volunteer: Girl Scout Safety Guidelines

Every adult in Girl Scouting is responsible for the physical and emotional safety of girls, and we all demonstrate that by agreeing to follow these guidelines at all times.

1. **Follow the Safety Activity Checkpoints.** Instructions for staying safe while participating in activities are detailed in the Safety Activity Checkpoints, which are available at GirlScoutsRV.org under "Forms and Resources." Read the checkpoints, follow them and share them with other volunteers, parents/guardians and girls before engaging in activities with girls.
2. **Arrange for proper adult supervision of girls.** Your group must have at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers present at all times. Additional adults might be necessary, depending on the size of the group and the ages and abilities of girls. Adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old (or the age of majority defined by the state, if it is older than 18) and must be screened by River Valleys before volunteering. One lead volunteer in every group must be female.

3. **Get parent/guardian permission.** When an activity takes place that is outside the normal time and place, advise each parent/guardian of the details of the activity and obtain permission for girls to participate. Permission forms can be found at GirlScoutsRV.org under “Forms and Resources.”
4. **Report abuse.** Sexual advances, improper touching and sexual activity of any kind with girl members are forbidden. Physical, verbal and emotional abuse of girls is also forbidden. Follow River Valleys guidelines (in *Volunteer Essentials* Section six: Volunteer Policies, Standards and Practices) for reporting concerns about abuse or neglect that may be occurring inside or outside of Girl Scouting.
5. **Be prepared for emergencies.** Work with girls and other adults to establish and practice procedures for emergencies related to weather, fire, lost girls/adults and site security. Always keep handy a well-stocked first-aid kit, girl health histories and contact information for girls’ families.
6. **Travel safely.** When transporting girls to planned Girl Scout field trips and other activities that are outside the normal time and place, every driver must be an approved adult volunteer and have a good driving record, a valid license and a registered/insured vehicle. Insist that everyone is in a legal seat, wears a seat belt at all times and adheres to state laws regarding booster seats and requirements for children in rear seats.
7. **Ensure safe overnight outings.** Prepare girls to be away from home by involving them in planning so they know what to expect. Avoid having men sleep in the same space as girls and women. During family or parent/guardian-daughter overnights, one family unit may sleep in the same sleeping quarters in program areas. When parents are staffing events, daughters should remain in quarters with other girls rather than in staff areas.
8. **Model the right behavior.** Never use illegal drugs. Don’t consume alcohol, smoke or use foul language in the presence of girls. Do not carry ammunition or firearms in the presence of girls unless given special permission by River Valleys for group marksmanship activities.
9. **Create an emotionally safe space.** Adults are responsible for making Girl Scouting a place where girls are as safe emotionally as they are physically. Protect the emotional safety of girls by creating a team agreement and coaching girls to honor it. Agreements typically encourage behaviors like respecting a diversity of feelings and opinions, resolving conflicts constructively and avoiding physical and verbal bullying, clique behavior and discrimination.
10. **Ensure that no girl is treated differently.** Girl Scouts welcomes all members, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, culture, background, sexual orientation, gender, ability, family structure, religious beliefs, education or socioeconomic status. When scheduling, helping plan and carrying out activities, carefully consider the needs of all girls involved, including school schedules, family needs, financial constraints, religious holidays and the accessibility of appropriate transportation and meeting places. When planning food, consider the dietary needs and preferences of all girls involved. Be sure to provide inclusive food options that take into account dietary, allergy, cultural and religious needs. The goal is that all girls feel included in all food-related activities and experiences.
11. **Promote online safety.** Instruct girls never to put their full names or contact information online, engage in virtual conversation with strangers or arrange in-person meetings with online contacts. On group websites, publish girls’ first names only and never divulge their contact information. Teach girls the [Girl Scout Online Safety Pledge](#) and have them commit to it.
12. **Keep girls safe during money-earning activities.** The Girl Scout Cookie Program Activity and other council-sponsored product sales are an integral part of Girl Scouting. During Girl Scout product sales, you are responsible for the safety of girls, money and products. In

addition, a wide variety of organizations, causes and fundraisers may appeal to Girl Scouts to be their labor force. When representing Girl Scouts, girls cannot participate in money-earning activities that represent partisan politics or that are not Girl Scout-approved product sales and efforts. Refer to *Volunteer Essentials* Section five: Managing Group Finances for more details.

Responsibilities of parents and guardians

Engage each parent/guardian to help you work toward ensuring the health, safety and well-being of girls. Clearly communicate to parents/guardians that they are expected to:

- Provide permission for their girls to participate in Girl Scouting as well as provide additional consent for activities that take place outside the scheduled meeting place, involve overnight travel, involve the use of special equipment and/or cover sensitive issues
- Make provisions for their girls to get to and from meeting places or other designated sites in a safe and timely manner and inform you if someone other than the parent/guardian will drop off or pick up the girl
- Provide their girls with appropriate clothing and equipment for activities, or contact you before the activity to find sources for the necessary clothing and equipment
- Follow Girl Scout safety guidelines and encourage their children to do the same
- Assist you in planning and carrying out program activities as safely as possible
- Participate in parent/guardian meetings
- Be aware of appropriate behavior expected of their girls as determined by River Valleys and you
- Assist volunteers if their girls have special needs or abilities

Responsibilities of girls

Girls who learn about and practice safe and healthy behaviors are likely to establish lifelong habits of safety consciousness. For that reason, each Girl Scout is expected to:

- Assist you and other volunteers in safety planning
- Listen to and follow your instructions and suggestions
- Learn and practice safety skills
- Learn to “think safety” at all times and to be prepared
- Identify and evaluate an unsafe situation
- Know how, when and where to get help when needed

Knowing how many volunteers you need

Girl Scouts' adult-to-girl ratios show the *minimum* number of adults needed to supervise a specific number of girls (councils may also establish *maximums* due to size or cost restrictions). These supervision ratios were devised to ensure the safety and health of girls. For example, if one adult has to respond to an emergency, a second adult is always on hand for the rest of the girls. It may take you a minute to get used to the layout of this chart, but once you start to use it, you'll find the chart extremely helpful.

	Group Meetings		Events, Travel and Camping	
	Two unrelated adults (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus one additional adult for each additional number of this many girls:	Two unrelated adults (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls:	Plus one additional adult for each additional number of this many girls:
Girl Scout Daisies (K–grade 1)	12	6	6	4
Girl Scout Brownies (grades 2–3)	20	8	12	6
Girl Scout Juniors (grades 4–5)	25	10	16	8
Girl Scout Cadettes (grades 6–8)	25	12	20	10
Girl Scout Seniors (grades 9–10)	30	15	24	12
Girl Scout Ambassadors (grades 11–12)	30	15	24	12

Here are some examples:

If you're meeting with 17 Girl Scout Daisies, you'll need three unrelated adults (in other words, not your sister, spouse, parent or child), at least one of whom is female.

If, however, you have 17 Girl Scout Cadettes attending a group meeting, you need only two unrelated adults, at least one of whom is female (because, on the chart, two adults can manage up to 25 Girl Scout Cadettes).

In addition to the adult-to-girl ratios, please remember that adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old or at the age of majority defined by the state if it is older than 18.

River Valleys list of approved/appointed volunteers needed

Any adult who takes on the following roles must register as a member of GSUSA as well as complete the volunteer application and online background check:

- Any adults who regularly assist with the troop, such as at meetings or as chaperones, and/or have regular contact with the girls
- Any adult who is needed to cover the girl to adult ratio as noted in Volunteer Essentials/Safety-Wise during a day event or activity*
- The troop fall product program manager, troop cookie manager, treasurer, any signers on the troop bank account, or any other volunteers handling money
- Any adult who **accompanies** a troop trip or overnight**
- Any adults who transports (drives) the girls

**Any adult who has not registered and completed the volunteer application and online background check should never be left alone with girls attending a Girl Scout activity. These adults may, however, be paired with a registered and approved/appointed volunteer to lead a small group, as long as enough approved/appointed volunteers are present to cover the larger group's girl to adult ratio as published in this document.*

***If a trip or overnight is for families and each girl has a parent/guardian with her, then only the number of adults required to cover the girl to adult ratio need to complete the volunteer application and online background check.*

Transporting girls

How parents decide to transport girls between their homes and Girl Scout meeting places is each parent's/guardian's individual decision and responsibility.

For planned Girl Scout field trips and other activities—outside the normal time and place—in which a group will be transported in private vehicles:

- Every driver must be an approved/appointed adult* volunteer and have a good driving record, a valid license and a registered/insured vehicle (preferred five years of driving experience)
- Girls never drive other girls
- If a group is traveling in one vehicle, there must be at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers in the vehicle, one of whom is female, and the girl-volunteer ratios listed in this chapter must be followed
- If a group is traveling in more than one vehicle, the entire group must consist of at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers, one of whom is female, and the girl-volunteer ratios in this handbook must be followed. Care should be taken so that a single car (with a single adult driver) is not separated from the group for an extended length of time.

**"Adult" is defined by the age of majority in each state.*

Private transportation

Private transportation includes private passenger vehicles, rental cars, privately owned or rented recreational vehicles and campers, chartered buses, chartered boats and chartered flights. Each driver of motorized private transportation must hold a valid operator's license appropriate to the vehicle. State laws must be followed even if they are more stringent than the guidelines here. Anyone who is driving a vehicle with more than 12 passengers must also be a professional driver who possesses a commercial driver's license.

Please keep in mind the following non-negotiable points regarding private transportation:

- Even though written agreements are always required when renting or chartering, you are *not* authorized to sign an agreement or contract—even if there is no cost associated with the rental. Such an agreement must instead be signed by the person designated by River Valleys. Contact the registration department at registration@girlscoutsv.org or 800-845-0787.
- Check with your council to make sure you are following accepted practices when using private transportation; this ensures that both you and your council are protected by liability insurance in the event of an accident.
- If your council has given permission to use a rented car, read all rental agreements to be sure you comply with their terms and avoid surprises. Note the minimum age of drivers (often 25), as well as the maximum age (often under 70). Be sure the car is adequately insured, knowing who is responsible for damage to or the loss of the vehicle itself. Also, ensure you have a good paper trail, with evidence that the vehicle rental is Girl Scout–related.
- Obtain parent/guardian permission for any use of transportation outside of the meeting place.

River Valleys bus and motor coach use standard

The transportation service is to be requested through the most appropriate carrier as listed in the Bus Company list. The list is restricted to private carriers as the use of school district owned buses is either (a) no longer allowed, or (b) carries a high level of liability for River Valleys. Most of these private carriers provide both school buses and motor coaches. In addition, they have been evaluated and found to be compliant with Minnesota and Wisconsin statutes for use of school buses for non-school purposes.

Any school bus requirements that cannot be accommodated from the list of transportation providers must be reviewed and approved by River Valleys' registration department.

This standard does not address usage of private vehicles by non-employees. For review of that process, volunteers should reference "Private transportation" in this document.

More information and the bus company list can be found at GirlScoutsRV.org.

Checklist for Drivers

When driving a car, RV or camper, take the following precautions and ask any other drivers to do the same:

- Ensure all drivers are adults—girls should not be transporting other girls
- Never transport girls in flatbed or panel trucks, in the bed of a pickup or in a camper-trailer
- Keep directions and a road map in the car along with a first-aid kit and flashlight
- Check your lights, signals, tires, windshield wipers, horns and fluid levels before each trip and check them periodically on long trips
- Keep all necessary papers up to date, such as your driver's license, vehicle registration, any state or local inspections, insurance coverage, etc
- Wear your seat belt at all times and insist that all passengers do the same. Keep girls under 12 in the back seats
- According to Minnesota and Wisconsin state law, a child who is both under age eight and shorter than 4 feet 9 inches is required to be fastened in a child safety seat that meets federal safety standards. It is recommended to keep a child in a booster seat based on their height rather than age.
- Follow all the established rules of the road in your state (following the speed limit, keeping a two-car length between you and the car ahead of you, not talking or texting on a cell phone or

other personal electronic device, not using earbuds or headphones, driving with your headlights on, etc.)

- Avoid driving for extended periods at night, when tired or taking medication that makes you drowsy
- River Valleys policy states that drivers should limit their time on the road without a half-hour break to four hours. When driving a 15-passenger van, drivers are limited to driving 250 miles per day. Another authorized van driver must drive the van if the mileage exceeds this limit. If driving with others, prearrange stopping places along the way. When planning longer trips, arrange for relief drivers.

Remember that every time a group meets at a location different from the regular group meeting, you must use a permission form—even if the girls are responsible for getting to that location on their own. Permission forms give parents/guardians the “who, what, when, where and why” so that they can decide whether their girl can participate in an event or go on a trip. A signed permission form permits you to include the girl in the activity and also provides you with up-to-date emergency contact information.

Approaching activities

How can you, as a Girl Scout volunteer, determine whether an activity is safe and appropriate? Good judgment and common sense often dictate the answer. What’s safe in one circumstance may not be safe in another. An incoming storm, for example, might force you to assess or discontinue an activity. If you are uncertain about the safety of an activity, call River Valleys staff with full details. Don’t proceed without approval. Err on the side of caution and make the safety of girls your most important consideration. Prior to any activity, read the specific Safety Activity Checkpoints (available on the River Valleys website at GirlScoutsRV.org or from your support team in some other format) related to any activity you plan to do with girls.

If Safety Activity Checkpoints do not exist for an activity you and the girls are interested in, check with River Valleys **before** making any definite plans with the girls. A few activities are allowed only with written council pre-approval and only for girls 12 and over, while some are off-limits completely:

When planning activities with girls, note the abilities of each girl and carefully consider the progression of skills from the easiest part to the most difficult. Make sure the complexity of the activity does not exceed girls’ individual skills—bear in mind that skill levels decline when people are tired, hungry or under stress. Also use activities as opportunities for building teamwork, which is one of the outcomes for the connect key in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

Health histories (including examinations and immunizations)

Each council handles health histories differently. The staff at River Valleys typically does not obtain and store girls’ health histories—which may include a physician’s examination and a list of immunizations—as needed for troop activities. Troop leaders must collect and keep copies of the health histories for troop use. Keep in mind that information from a health examination is confidential and may be shared only with people who must know this information (such as the girl herself, her parent/guardian and a health practitioner).

Adult Development does ask participants in overnight training classes or at the Lakamaga Conference to fill out a health history form which is then held over the weekend and shredded.

River Valleys practice: Volunteers who collect health histories are responsible for storing these forms in a way that keeps the information confidential. When forms are outdated and no longer needed, the volunteer should shred the form.

For various reasons, some parents/guardians may object to immunizations or medical examinations. River Valleys must attempt to make provisions for these girls to attend Girl Scout functions in a way that accommodates these concerns.

It is important for you to also be aware of any medications a girl may take or allergies she may have.

- Medication, including over-the-counter products, must never be dispensed without prior written permission from a girl's custodial parent or guardian. A form can be found on the River Valleys website under "Forms and Resources." Some girls may need to carry and administer their own medications, such as bronchial inhalers, an EpiPen or diabetes medication.
- Common food allergies include dairy products, eggs, soy, wheat, peanuts, tree nuts and seafood. This means that, before serving any food (such as peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, cookies or chips), ask whether anyone is allergic to peanuts, dairy product or wheat! Even Girl Scout Daisies and Girl Scout Brownies should be aware of their allergies, but double-checking with their parents/guardians is always a good idea.

Girl Scout Activity Insurance

Every registered Girl Scout and registered adult member in the Girl Scout movement is automatically covered under the basic plan upon registration. The entire premium cost for this protection is borne by Girl Scouts of the USA. The basic plan is effective during the regular fiscal year (October to the following October). Up to 14 months of insurance coverage is provided for new members who register in the month of August. This insurance provides up to a specified maximum for medical expenses incurred as a result of an accident while a member is participating in an approved, supervised Girl Scout activity, after the individual's primary insurance pays out. This is one reason that all adults and girls should be registered members. Non-registered parents, tagalongs (brothers, sisters, friends) and other persons are not covered by basic coverage.

This insurance coverage is **not** intended to diminish the need for or replace family health insurance. When \$130 in benefits has been paid for covered accident medical or dental expense, any subsequent benefits will be payable only for expenses incurred that aren't compensable under another insurance policy. If there is no family insurance or healthcare program, a specified maximum of medical benefits is available.

An optional plan of activity insurance is available for Girl Scouts taking extended trips and for non-members who participate in Girl Scout activities. These plans are secondary insurance that individuals are entitled to receive while participating in any approved, supervised Girl Scout activity. Optional insurance coverage is available for any Girl Scout activity that involves non-Girl Scouts or lasts longer than four days and three nights.

Please note that for River Valleys, these plans are required.

How to purchase activity insurance for non-members and extended trips:

1. Fill out the appropriate Mutual of Omaha enrollment form. The forms can be found at GirlScoutsRV.org, under "Forms and Resources."
2. Send the form with a Girl Scout (troop or service unit) check or money order payable to Mutual of Omaha to the St. Paul Service Center, Attention: Business Services, 400 Robert Street South, St. Paul, MN 55107. **This must be sent at least one week prior to the first day of the event or trip.** The insurance company will not accept cash, credit cards or personal checks.

3. To calculate the cost for non-member insurance, use this equation: number of non-members x number of calendar days x \$0.11 = cost of insurance. The check must be made for \$5 minimum or the exact amount when over \$5.
4. To calculate the cost of extended trip insurance, refer to the United of Omaha Insurance Plan Description and Enrollment Form Procedures, found under “Forms and Resources” at GirlScoutsRV.org.
5. Include the service unit name, event coordinator’s or activity leader’s name, event or activity date, time, location and number of non-members you wish to insure. You may attach an event or activity flyer if you have one.
6. The site registrar will return your payment if:
 - a. It is not a troop or service unit check or money order
 - b. The information about the event or trip is incomplete
 - c. The payment is not received at the St. Paul Service Center at least one week prior to the event or trip
7. A River Valleys registration specialist can complete the Mutual of Omaha enrollment form for you upon request with the information provided.
8. Print out a claim form to take to the event. The claim form and more information about non-member insurance can be found on the Mutual of Omaha website, www.mutualofomaha.com/gsusu. If injury occurs at the event, please refer to Mutual of Omaha’s website for information on how to submit a claim. The claim form can also be found at GirlScoutsRV.org in the “Forms and Resources” section.

Providing emergency care

As you know, emergencies can happen. Girls need to receive proper instruction in how to care for themselves and others in emergencies. They also need to learn the importance of reporting to adults any accidents, illnesses or unusual behaviors during Girl Scout activities. To this end, you can help girls:

- **Know what to report.** See the “Procedures for accidents” section below. This also includes River Valleys’ emergency contact information.
- **Establish and practice procedures for weather emergencies.** Certain extreme-weather conditions may occur in your area. Please consult with River Valleys for the most relevant information for you to share with girls.
- **Establish and practice procedures for such circumstances as fire evacuation, lost persons and building security responses.** Every girl and adult must know how to act in these situations. For example, you and the girls, with the help of a fire department representative, should design a fire evacuation plan for meeting places used by the group.
- **Assemble a well-stocked first-aid kit that is always accessible.** First aid administered in the first few minutes can mean the difference between life and death. In an emergency, obtain professional medical assistance as soon as possible, normally by calling 911.
- River Valleys requires that an Accident Incident Report be filled out within 24 hours. This form can be found in the “Forms and Resources” section of GirlScoutsRV.org.

First aid/CPR

Emergencies require prompt action and quick judgment. For many activities, Girl Scouts recommends that at least one adult volunteer be first aid/CPR-certified. For that reason, if you have the opportunity to get trained in council-approved first aid/CPR, do it! You can take advantage of first-aid/CPR training offered by chapters of the American Red Cross, National Safety Council, EMP America, American Heart Association or other sponsoring organizations approved by River Valleys. Try to take age-specific CPR training, too—that is, take child CPR if you’re working with younger girls and adult CPR when working with older girls and adults.

Caution: First-aid/CPR training that is available entirely online does not satisfy Girl Scouts' requirements. Such courses do not offer enough opportunities to practice and receive feedback on your technique. If you're taking a course not offered by one of the organizations listed in the previous paragraph, or any course that has online components, get approval from your support team or River Valleys.

First-Aider

Activities can take place in a variety of locations, which is why first-aid requirements are based on the remoteness of the activity—as noted in the Safety Activity Checkpoints for that activity. For example, it's possible to do a two-mile hike that has cell phone reception and service along the entire route and EMS (Emergency Medical System) is, at maximum, 30 minutes away at all times. It is also possible to hike more remotely with no cell phone service at a place where EMS would take more than 30 minutes to arrive. It's important that you or another volunteer with your group has the necessary medical experience (including knowledge of evacuation techniques) to ensure group safety.

The levels of first aid required for any activity take into account both how much danger is involved and how remote the area is from emergency medical services. See below:

Access to EMS	Minimum Level of First Aid Required
Less than 30 minutes	First Aid
More than 30 minutes	Wilderness First Aid (WFA) or Wilderness First Responder (WFR)*

**Although a WFR is not required, it is strongly recommended when traveling with groups in areas that are greater than 30 minutes from EMS.*

It is important to understand the differences between a first-aid course, and a wilderness-rated course. Although standard first-aid training provides basic incident response, wilderness-rated courses include training on remote-assessment skills, as well as the emergency first-aid response, including evacuation techniques, to use when EMS is not readily available.

Note: The presence of a first-aider is required at resident camp. For large events—200 people or more—there should be one first-aider for every 200 participants. The following healthcare providers may also serve as first-aiders physician, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner, registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, paramedic, military medic, and emergency medical technician.

First-aid kit

Make sure a general first-aid kit is available at your group meeting place and accompanies girls on any activity (including transportation to and from the activity). Please be aware that you may need to provide this kit if one is not available at your meeting place. You can purchase a Girl Scout first-aid kit, you can buy a commercial kit or you and the girls can assemble a kit yourselves. The Red Cross offers a list of potential items in its [Anatomy of a First-Aid Kit](#) (note that the Red Cross suggested list includes aspirin, which you will not be at liberty to give to girls without direct parent/guardian permission). You can also customize a kit to cover your specific needs, including flares, treatments for frostbite or snake bites.

In addition to standard materials, all kits should contain River Valleys and emergency telephone numbers (see below). Girl Scout activity insurance forms, parent consent forms and health histories may be included as well.

Procedures for Accidents

Although you hope the worst never happens, you must observe River Valleys procedures for handling accidents and fatalities.

- At the scene of an accident, first provide all possible care for the sick or injured person
- Follow established River Valleys' procedures for obtaining medical assistance and immediately reporting the emergency.
- Always have on hand the names and telephone numbers of River Valleys' staff, parents/guardians and emergency services such as the police, fire department or hospital emergency technicians
- **River Valleys emergency contact information** is: 651-227-8835 during regular business hours and 800-845-0787 24 hours per day, seven days per week, 365 days of the year. Follow the telephone prompts when calling in on the 800-phone number after regular business hours.

After receiving a report of an accident, River Valleys' staff will immediately arrange for additional assistance, if needed, at the scene, and will notify parents/guardians as appropriate. If a child needs emergency medical care as the result of an accident or injury, first contact emergency medical services and then follow River Valleys procedures for accidents and incidents. Your adherence to these procedures is critical, especially with regard to notifying parents/guardians. If the media is involved, let a River Valleys' designated staff discuss the incident with the media representatives.

In the event of a fatality or other serious accident, notify the police. A responsible adult must remain at the scene at all times. In the case of a fatality, do not disturb the victim or surroundings. Follow police instructions. Do not share information about the accident with anyone but the police, River Valleys and, if applicable, insurance representatives or legal counsel.

For more information, refer to the **Crisis and Safety Management Report** found at GirlScoutsRV.org.

Sleeping arrangements for troop and service unit events

Sleep time can be a time when girls and adults can feel vulnerable and uncomfortable with their surroundings due to changing into sleepwear and sleeping in areas with people they may not be familiar with.

Also, through our association with the American Camp Association (ACA), Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys has become more aware of the increase in camper-to-camper abuse. Stated in an article in the ACA Fall 2008 issue of *The CampLine* concerning camper-to-camper abuse: "Unfortunately, the incidents of children abusing other children—whether sexually, physically, or emotionally—continue to grow in this country. Prevention of situations when campers are alone without staff is CRITICAL—we cannot stress that enough. The most vulnerable time when camper-to-camper abuse can happen is when staff are engaged elsewhere. Sleeping time, overnights in tents, trips to the bathroom, and times when campers are changing clothes for the pool are clearly the times when camps need to be ever more attuned for the possibilities of camper-to-camper inappropriate activities. Provide training and policies that do not allow campers to be alone without staff supervision—ever."

The following guidelines are to help minimize any unwanted behavior or uncomfortable feelings from happening.

Adult chaperones

- All adults chaperoning a Girl Scout overnight must be registered members and must have completed a volunteer application and criminal background screening process. Non-members should not be supervising sleeping areas unless the group is sleeping in family units.
- The supervision ratio of adult to girls should follow the guidelines found in *Safety-Wise*, with at least two unrelated registered adult volunteers (at least one must be female) present at all times.

Supervision of sleeping areas

- Only female adult registered volunteers supervise girl sleeping area.
- When possible, two unrelated female adults sleep in the sleep area with the girls. If this is not possible adults should:
 - Let girls know who to go to and what to do if they are not feeling comfortable
 - Work with girls to set ground rules for what is appropriate behavior
 - Remain present until girls are in their beds sleeping; i.e. be able to check on girls from time to time and always be in hearing distance
- Adults always remain in close proximity to girl sleeping area to monitor what is happening.
- For hotel or hostel stays requiring separate, unconnected rooms use the following guidelines:
 - Helpful tactics for hotel stays, as well as all overnight situations, are to work with the girls to set up ground rules, provide check in time, let girls know who to go to and what to do if they are not feeling comfortable, and give girls permission to seek help from an adult leader
 - All participants should know how to contact the adult volunteers whether through the room phone numbers and/or extensions or cell phone
 - Each participants should have contact information for all the participants, especially the adults (list of room and/or cell phone numbers)
 - If girls need to leave their room to go to a leader's room, go as buddies
 - Have clear guidelines as to where the girls can and cannot travel within the hotel facilities.
 - When using hostels or hotel rooms, the rooms should not be shared with non-Girl Scout groups
 - Hotel stays without adult presence in the sleeping rooms or connected rooms is not recommended for Girl Scout Daisies and Girl Scout Brownies. For Girl Scout Juniors consideration should be made to the experience of the girls and whether they are ready and prepared to stay in a hotel room or hostel without an adult present.

Adult male chaperone guidelines

- Adult males do not supervise sleeping areas
- Adult males should have separate sleeping quarters and bathrooms whenever possible
 - In circumstances where only one large sleeping space is available, such as at museum and mall sleepovers, there should be a separate designated area for adult males
 - If there is only one bathroom available, assign times to use the bathroom, as well as have a sign that can be turned over to designate whether it is being used by a male or female

Family or parent-daughter event guidelines

During a family or parent-daughter overnight where both male and female parents are participating, either:

- Have three areas: one for girls, one for female adults and one for male adults, with at least two of the female adults registered volunteers supervising the girl sleep area; or
- Sleep in family units, with each family unit having their own separate space; or
- Have girls and female adults sleep in one area and the male adults sleep in a separate area with at least two of the female adults registered volunteers supervising the girl sleep area

Bed space guidelines

- Each participant has her own bed or sleeping space. Parent/guardian permission must be obtained if girls are to share a double bed, such as in the case of staying in a hotel or home-stay.

- Girls and adults do not share a bed, with the exception of mothers and daughters. The bed should be a double bed or larger.

Using the safety activity checkpoints



When preparing for any activity with girls, start by reading the Girl Scout Safety Activity Checkpoints for that particular activity. You can find these at GirlScoutsRV.org under “Forms and Resources.”

Each Safety Activity Checkpoint offers you information on:

- Where to do this activity
- How to include girls with disabilities
- Where to find both basic and specialized gear required for the activity
- How to prepare yourselves in advance of the activity
- What specific steps to follow on the day of the activity and so on

In addition to reading these checkpoints yourself, you can e-mail or print them for co-volunteers, parents/guardians and the girls themselves. The checkpoints are formatted as checklists so that you, your co-volunteers and the girls can check off each step that has been accomplished.

In keeping with the three processes of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, be sure that

- **All activities are girl-led**, taking into account the age and abilities of the girls. Older girls can take the bulk of the responsibility for carefully planning and executing activities while younger girls will require more of your guidance but should still be deeply involved in making decisions about their activities.
- **Girls have the chance to learn cooperatively** by having girls teach each other new skills they may need for activities rather than hearing all that from you.
- **Girls learn by doing.** If research or special equipment is needed, they'll learn better doing that research themselves rather than by having you do the legwork and report back to them. Even Girl Scout Daisies can do basic research and give reports or do show-and-tell for each other. And Girl Scout Ambassadors may need you only for moral support as they research, teach each other and plan every detail of their excursions.

If Safety Activity Checkpoints do not exist for an activity you and the girls are interested in, check with River Valleys *before* making any definite plans with the girls. See information on next page for more information.

Activities needing council approval

A few activities are allowed only with written pre-approval from River Valleys and only for girls 12 and over while some are off-limits completely:

Caution: You must get written pre-approval from River Valleys for girls ages 12 and older who will:

- Operate motorized vehicles, such as go-carts and personal watercraft
- Use firearms
- Take trips on waterways that are highly changeable or uncontrollable
- Simulated skydiving and zero-gravity rooms

Activities that are never allowed

Warning: The following activities are never allowed for any girl:

- Potentially uncontrolled free-falling (bungee jumping, hang gliding, parachuting, parasailing and trampolining)
- Creating extreme variations of approved activities (such as high-altitude climbing and aerial tricks on bicycles, skis, snowboards, skateboards, water-skis and wakeboards)
- Hunting or shooting a projectile at another person (such as paintball)
- Riding all-terrain vehicles and motor bikes
- Taking watercraft trips in Class V or higher
- Flying in noncommercial aircraft, such as small private planes, helicopters, sailplanes, untethered hot-air balloons and blimps

One additional note: What may seem benign to one person could be a sensitive issue for another, so when you or the girls wish to participate in anything that could be considered controversial (health or education in human sexuality, advocacy projects, work with religious groups or anything that could yield a political/social debate), put the topic on hold until you've obtained written parental/guardian permission on forms available from River Valleys. Included on the permission form should be the topic of the activity, any specific content that might create controversy and any action steps the girls are to do when the activity is complete. Be sure to have a form for each girl, and keep them on hand in case a problem arises. For non-Girl Scout activities, find out in advance (from organizers or other volunteers who may be familiar with the content) what will be presented and follow River Valleys guidelines for obtaining written permission.

List and location of safety activity checkpoints

Safety-Wise and the 46 specific Safety Activity Checkpoints are available for download as PDFs at GirlScoutsRV.org. Go to the "Forms and Resources" section under "Health and Safety." If you are unable to download Safety-Wise documents and need a printed copy, please contact River Valleys for assistance.

Safety Activity Checkpoints are updated when necessary with specific information about River Valleys' process and procedures. When a checkpoint has been updated, the date of the update will be noted at the end of the checkpoint. Example: Updated for River Valleys 7/9/12

<p>Water Sports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canoeing Fishing Ice Fishing Kayaking Rowboating Sailing Scuba Diving Snorkeling Surfing Swimming Tubing Waterskiing and Wakeboarding White-Water Rafting Windsurfing 	<p>Camping Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Backpacking Group Camping Hiking Orienteering Outdoor Cooking Trip/Travel Camping
<p>Land Sports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Archery Bicycling Caving Challenge Courses Climbing and Rappelling Cross-Country Skiing Downhill Skiing and Snowboarding Fencing Geocaching Horseback Riding Ice Skating In-Line Skating and Roller Skating Other Land Sports Segway Skateboarding Sledding, Tobogganing and Snow Tubing Snowshoeing 	<p>Other Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arts and Crafts Computer/Online Use Girl Scout Cookies/Council-Sponsored Product Sales Hayrides Parades and Other Large Group Gatherings Playgrounds STEM (Science, Engineering, Technology, Math) Theme Park

Certificates of insurance

When River Valleys works with a program vendor such as a horseback riding stable or a water park, we request that they provide us with a certificate of insurance (COI) for our files. The COI is an indicator that they are a business in good standing and have risk management practices in place. It is generally requested from program vendors that offer high adventure activities and/or staff to lead the activity.

If you are planning an activity, check the applicable Safety Activity Checkpoint to determine if a COI is needed and if there is already one on file. To request a Certificate of Insurance go to <http://www.girlscoutsrv.org/forms-documents/health-safety/certificate-of-insurance-request/> or call 800-845-0787). Please note that River Valleys' staff will request the certificate of insurance and that it is best to allow two weeks for the certificate to arrive in our office.