

**Affirmative Action**

There shall be no discrimination against an otherwise qualified volunteer by reason of disability or on the basis of age, race, color, ethnicity, sex, creed, national origin, or socioeconomic status.

In addition, to ensure full equality of opportunity in all operations and activities of the organization, affirmative action policies and procedures shall be utilized in the recruitment, selection, training, placement, and recognition of volunteers. Special emphasis shall be placed upon securing representation of underutilized groups.

**Membership/Registration**

All volunteers participating in the Girl Scout Movement shall be registered as members of the Girl Scouts of the USA, except for those volunteers working in short-term, advisory, support, or consultative capacities. Volunteers are also expected to agree to abide by the policies of GSUSA and Girl Scouts Heart of the South.

**Background Screening**

For the safety of the girls, we require that volunteers complete a criminal background check. We appreciate your dedication to keeping our girls safe! The processing fee is \$8.25 for a two year background check.

A volunteer's clearance status will be shared with staff or volunteers only as needed. The reasons for a disqualification will always remain confidential. Any Girl Scout volunteer who is formally accused of, charged with, or under investigation by authorities for any automatically disqualifying offense (or offenses which might result in disqualification at the discretion of Girl Scouts Heart of the South), will not be allowed to volunteer until disposition of the charge.

All volunteers must complete a criminal background check before participating in troop activities. This requirement includes:

- Any volunteer handling troop/group or service unit funds and/or product programs
- Any volunteer fulfilling volunteer-to-girl ratio, which includes all co-leaders, as well as any other volunteer serving as part of that ratio
- Any volunteer serving as a driver, chaperone, or serving as the first aider for a troop/group/service unit
- Any volunteer staying overnight in a volunteer capacity, participating in a high-risk activity, or a trip over 200 miles with Girl Scouts

The council requires volunteers to rescreen every two years for the duration of your volunteer service with Girl Scouts Heart of the South. The overall screening process will usually take 2-3 business days. Providing false information on the application, including social security number and/or date of birth, is grounds for automatic exclusion from participation regardless of the results of the search.

Girl Scouts Heart of the South has no control over the information maintained by the reporting agencies and cannot be liable to any person or entity for the information provided by a reporting agency or its agents and cannot be liable for any actions taken in reliance on such information. Any applicant who desires to contest the information provided by Sterling Volunteers may contact The Advocates, 1-855-326-1860 option 1 or at [theadvocates@sterlingvolunteers.com](mailto:theadvocates@sterlingvolunteers.com)

*What Does Screening Cover?* The screening completed by our vendor, Sterling Volunteers, includes the following services:

- Social Security Trace is performed using the Social Security number provided. This search identifies places where the individual has lived, and alias names used within the last seven years.

- The 50 State DOJ Registered Sex Offender Registry checks the Federal Department of Justice database which includes the listing of registered sex offenders for all 50 States – except Nevada.
- The Government Watch List Search identifies individuals and companies, owned, controlled by, or acting on behalf of countries targeted by US foreign policy as terrorists and narcotics traffickers. These individuals are identified as Specially Designated Nationals ("SDN"). The SDN search is conducted using documentation provided by the US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control ("OFAC").
- The Advanced Criminal Record Locator Search first looks for criminal records in your current county of residence jurisdiction. Then it checks a nationwide criminal database to identify any further records in places you have lived and/or visited.

The decision whether to exclude altogether or limit a prospective volunteer's participation is exclusively within the discretion of Council staff. Regardless of the background screening results, Council management retains exclusive discretion to exclude or limit an applicant's participation. The following guidelines shall apply if Girl Scouts Heart of the South learns through the screening process or other means that a prospective volunteer has at any time been convicted of, pled guilty to, has received deferred adjudication for, or has pled "no contest" to one of the following crimes under the laws of any state or the federal government

**Automatic Disqualification** for any felony offense, regardless of type and/or if the applicant is a registered sex offender.

**Possible Disqualification** for all misdemeanors and infractions which will be handled on a case by case basis and may result in disqualification or conditional approval. Factors to be considered in making such determinations include, but are not limited to:

- Nature and severity of the conduct
- Frequency of the conduct
- Length of time since the conduct occurred
- Relationship between the incident and the type of service the individual will provide for the organization
- Likelihood that the incident would prevent the individual from performing her or his responsibilities in a manner consistent with the safety and welfare of girls
- Age of the individual at the time of the incident
- Individual's employment and or volunteer history

The Council reserves the right to consider other factors such as:

- Mishandling troop/group or service unit funds
- Unsatisfied debt to Council

Girl Scouts Heart of the South will maintain the confidentiality of all criminal background search information contained in reports from Verified Volunteers.

In the event that a Girl Scout volunteer is formally accused of, charged with, or under investigation by authorities for the crime of child abuse after becoming approved as a volunteer, the following procedures will be followed. A volunteer so accused is required to suspend all Girl Scout activities and turn over all monies, materials, and records to a designated representative of the Council until the matter is resolved.

Registered sex offenders are expressly prohibited from serving as Girl Scout volunteers in any capacity. Those living in households with registered sex offenders may not host girls or Girl Scout related activities in their household and must uphold restriction barring sex offenders from locations where children may gather.

**Uniforms**

Girl Scouts at each level have one official uniform item for the display of official pins and awards. This uniform item will be required when girls participate in ceremonies or officially represent the Girl Scout Movement. The official dress code will unite girls as Girl Scouts. Girl Scouts will wear solid white shirts and khaki pants or skirts with their official uniform item.

The formal volunteer uniform is a scarf worn with the membership pins for women and a tie for men. The scarf/tie and membership pins will be worn with navy blue business attire. Volunteers may also opt for the official navy vest or official Navy shirt with insignia. Additional official Girl Scout clothing options can be ordered through local council shops.

**Conduct**

Members shall conduct themselves with dignity, respect, and courtesy, treat others equitably, and model behavior that inspires the highest standards of character, conduct, patriotism, and service.

The council reserves the right to refuse membership endorsement or reappointment, and to dismiss or suspend from affiliation with the council any volunteer or employee who, in conducting Girl Scout program, advocates, solicits, or promotes a personal lifestyle or sexual orientation so as to create a substantial risk that such conduct will be detrimental to the proper role model for girl members.

This also applies to those persons temporarily or tangentially associated with Girl Scouting in any form during their association. This policy shall encompass all forms of behavior: overt or implied, physical or verbal, by commission or omission.

**Volunteer Appointment and Support**

Every attempt will be made to place volunteers in positions that best meet both their needs and the needs of Girl Scouts Heart of the South. In instances where this is not possible, the needs of the council will take precedence over the needs of the individual. Individuals not placed in a position for which they applied may be recommended for other positions and they may request reassignment.

Volunteers are selected on the basis of willingness to accept the Girl Scout Promise and Law, ability to perform the job, clear criminal background check, and willingness and availability to participate in training for it. A listing of available volunteer positions shall be publicized.

The council shall provide a position description, outline of expectations, and the term of appointment. When a volunteer accepts an appointment, an agreement confirming expectations between the council and volunteer shall be signed electronically. This may also be used to discuss future goal setting, such as reappointment/reassignment.

All volunteers who carry primary responsibility for working with girls are required to be trained for the position they will take on. The council shall provide training and any other assistance necessary, either formal or informal, to support volunteers in fulfilling their commitments.

All volunteers assigned to a position must take any training as required by GSHS prior to serving in the volunteer role.

**Volunteer Performance Management Program**

The Performance Management Program is a process to help ensure goal setting, communication and evaluations that are consistent with the council’s operating objectives. This process depends on a continuous exchange of information between volunteers and staff. This shared responsibility provides a consistent means for evaluating volunteer performance and recognizes individuals whose efforts and performance contribute to Girl Scouts Heart of the South’s overall success.

*Progressive Disciplinary Procedure*

There will sometimes be situations in which a volunteer may not be performing up to the standards required for her or his position. A performance problem exists when some area of a volunteer’s performance does not meet expectations.

Once a performance problem or unsatisfactory volunteer situation occurs, it is important to manage the situation promptly and to seek improvement. How the situation is handled will depend on the individuals and the issues involved. Sometimes just making a volunteer aware of any concerns is enough. In other cases, to bring about improvement, it may be necessary to follow up with further discussions, or to start the more formal progressive disciplinary process.

When the progressive disciplinary procedure is used in dealing with a volunteer’s performance, conduct or other issues, the following progressive disciplinary steps should be followed whenever possible: oral counseling, written warning, final warning, and release. However, depending upon the infraction, progressive discipline may not be involved, and volunteer termination could be warranted immediately. Otherwise, discipline may be imposed at any level of the following steps:

<b>Steps to Progressive Discipline</b>	
<b>Step</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1. Oral Counseling	When a performance issue is first identified, or inappropriate behavior is displayed, it should be brought to the attention of the volunteer as soon as possible. An informal discussion between GSHS staff and the volunteer is often sufficient to prompt voluntary corrective action by the volunteer. There will be one other responsible person present during the discussion to help avoid the possibility of misunderstanding or misquoting. Additional training may be recommended for the volunteer. A summary of the discussion may be given to the volunteer in writing.
2. Written Warning	If oral counseling with the volunteer does not result in corrective action, GSHS staff, only after consultation with their immediate supervisor, should prepare a written warning. This formal memorandum highlights the prior counseling session and the subsequent performance problem(s) leading to this warning. This written warning should be addressed to the volunteer a copy to GSHS supervisor attached to the volunteer record, and should include all of the information required by the progressive disciplinary process. Additional training may be mandatory for the volunteer.

3. Final Warning	Should the performance problem(s) continue, or deteriorate, a final written warning should be given to the volunteer, after consultation with the appropriate GSHS supervisor and attached to volunteer record.
4. Termination	When the facts indicate that release or termination is necessary, the individual will be given the opportunity to resign or withdraw voluntarily by submitting their resignation in writing. If the volunteer's performance continues to deteriorate or an acceptable level of performance is not achieved, GSHS staff should, after consultation with the appropriate GSHS supervisor, should prepare a termination letter. This letter may be sent electronically and will also be mailed. Copies of the letter will be included in the volunteer's record, as well as provided to the appropriate GSHS supervisor and chief executive officer. All release and termination proceedings shall remain strictly confidential. The council reserves the right to notify relevant GSHS persons.

Throughout the procedure, the GSHS staff member should state the nature of the performance problem, take steps to help the volunteer understand the seriousness of the situation, and cite specific expectations for improvement.

Although the progressive disciplinary procedure consists of a sequence of established steps, GSHS has discretion in determining which of those steps to take and the time allotted for each. Any steps beyond Step 1, Oral Counseling, must be reviewed by the appropriate GSHS supervisor beforehand.

For serious offenses, any one or more of these steps may be omitted, and discipline, up to and including termination may be initiated.

The seriousness of a volunteer's conduct, history of misconduct, volunteer record, length of time as a volunteer with GSHS, the volunteer's ability to correct the conduct, the volunteer's attitude about the conduct; actions we have taken for similar conduct by other volunteers; how the volunteer's conduct affects GSHS, the volunteer's service unit, troops, girls and parents; and any other circumstances related to the nature of the misconduct will be taken into consideration with this policy.

The council may release or terminate an individual because of, but not limited to:

- Restriction of positions or elimination of the volunteer's position
- Inability or failure of the volunteer to complete the requirements or meet the competencies and expectations of the position(s)
- Conduct inconsistent with the principles of the Girl Scout Movement as indicated by the Girl Scout Promise and Law
- Misappropriation of funds; co-mingling of council, service unit and/or troop funds with personal funds; or debt incurred to the council, service unit or troop
- Refusal to comply with Girl Scouts of the USA and/or GSHS policies
- Failure to support the council's policies, activities and/or goals
- Refusal or failure to adhere to financial guidelines of GSHS

The progressive disciplinary procedures are only guidelines, are not all-inclusive, and are not intended to apply to every situation.

### **Grievance/Conflict Resolution**

All volunteers shall have the opportunity to present concerns and resolve issues. The council recognizes the importance of resolving conflicts/grievances promptly and efficiently. The grievance/conflict resolution process is based on the fundamental values of fairness and respect for the individual. A distinct procedure is in place for each of the two classes of disagreement. The initiation of these procedures will not restrict the council from taking immediate and appropriate action with respect to the volunteer, when necessary.

#### *Definitions:*

- A **conflict** is any kind of disagreement between two or more people.
- A **grievance** is a dispute over the interpretation or application of a council or GSUSA policy, practice or procedure.

#### *Conflict Resolution for Volunteers*

GSHS is committed to providing individuals with a safe, neutral and private process to resolve conflicts. Recognizing that each individual has both a personal interest in and a share of the responsibility for resolving conflicts in which she or he is involved, the council favors a collaborative volunteer conflict resolution process.

Step 1: Volunteers should discuss concerns directly with and only with the individuals involved, in a problem-solving tone. If this does not resolve the issue, the volunteers should proceed to step two.

Step 2: The parties should jointly discuss the situation with volunteer leadership or staff for support or guidance. If this does not resolve the issue, the volunteers should proceed to step three.

Step 3: The volunteers participate in negotiation and dialogue facilitated by a mediating staff member or designee. Mediation enables participants to retain decision making power. If this does not resolve the issue, the volunteers should proceed to step four.

Step 4: The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or designee will make a final, binding decision.

#### *Grievance Appeal Procedure for Volunteers*

Step 1: The volunteer should discuss the grievance with the local volunteer leadership/service unit manager. If this does not resolve the issue, the volunteer should proceed to step two.

Step 2: The person filing the complaint must cite the issue in writing. The signed and dated document must be specifically titled "Grievance Resolution Request," identify the person with whom the grievance is registered and cite the policy or procedure that has allegedly been misapplied.

Step 3: The volunteer support coordinator or appropriate staff member will offer direction and request written documentation. If this does not resolve the issue, the volunteer should proceed to step four.

Step 4: The appropriate department manager will become involved to offer direction and resolution. If this does not resolve the issue, the volunteer should proceed to step five.

Step 5: The CEO or designee will assist in resolving the grievance and reaching a final decision and will document the outcome in writing.

It is the responsibility of the CEO or designee to implement the decision in either procedure. The council reserves the right to deviate from these steps when circumstances warrant.

### **Volunteer Reappointment**

Succession planning is a process whereby GSHS ensures that volunteers are recruited and developed to fill each key role within the organization. GSHS matches and nurtures the skills of volunteers, allowing them to take on new or broader roles within the organization. Reappointment is an integral part of this process.

Reappointment is based on:

- Past council performance in a volunteer role.
- Adherence to council and GSUSA policies and standards
- Support of the Girl Scout purpose, values and council goals
- Positive relationships with the community, parents, other volunteers and staff

Reappointment takes place only after completion of a satisfactory performance assessment. If reappointed, the volunteer must sign a new position agreement, confirming acceptance of position accountabilities, expectations, and time commitments.

In some cases, volunteers may not be reappointed to their position. However, they may be appointed to a new or different position. Council may limit or extend the term of any volunteer position on a case-by-case basis.

A volunteer may request reassignment to another position at any time. Volunteers who are not reappointed to their position or disagree with their reassignment have the right to utilize the Grievance/Conflict Resolution Policy and Procedure.

In the case of non-reappointment, volunteers will receive a letter confirming and explaining the reason for their non-reappointment. Volunteers who disagree with their non-reappointment may submit a letter to the council for their area requesting an alternate resolution. The council will then implement the Grievance/conflict resolution policy and procedure.

### **Resignation/Separation**

Unfortunately, the continued service of some volunteers is not in the best interest of the girls or the organization. Any action to release a volunteer will receive careful, detailed, and confidential consideration.

Either the council or the volunteer may initiate a resignation/separation from a position. A volunteer is requested to give as much notice as possible when resigning. A minimum of two weeks is preferred.

Generally, separation shall be initiated only after steps involving corrective action are not successful. Separation of a volunteer is the ultimate responsibility of the professional staff of Girl Scouts Heart of the South and shall be supported by appropriate documentation as outlined by GSUSA.

Reasons for separation may include, but not be limited to the following:

- Unwillingness or inability to perform the job
- Refusing to comply with Girl Scouts Heart of the South and/or GSUSA policies
- Restructuring of volunteer positions

- Membership in an organization that is not compatible with Girl Scouts Heart of the South and/or GSUSA
- Misappropriation of funds; financial carelessness of Girl Scout funds, co-mingling of council, service unit and/or troop funds with personal funds; or debt incurred to the council, service unit or troop
- Conduct inconsistent with the policies and practices of the council or Girl Scouts of the USA
- Threatening, intimidating, or coercing any volunteer, parent, or child
- Unauthorized possession of drugs, narcotics, intoxicants, or weapons
- Discrimination against anyone because of race, color, age, creed, sex, disability, national origin, or socio-economic level
- Consistent neglect of the obligations of the position

Release from the position does not automatically cancel Girl Scouts of the USA membership.

### **Benefits**

Though benefits of service to Girl Scouting are primarily intangible, specific benefits include:

- Training, skill development, and other learning opportunities
- Insurance, as appropriate
- References, as requested
- Friendships and positive associations in a respected, worldwide organization

### **Reimbursement/Financial Assistance**

The concept of volunteer service, of time and talent given without remuneration, is the strength of the Girl Scout Movement. Within this concept, it is recognized that special situations may warrant the council meeting some expenses of volunteers so that their services and skills will be available.

Assistance is based on availability of funds, and volunteers receiving financial assistance may be expected to share their experiences with other volunteers in the council, as appropriate.

### **Insurance**

The troop/group must comply with GSUSA and Girl Scouts Heart of the South policies, standards and procedures at all times. Drivers of motor vehicles used to transport Girl Scouts must be age 21 or older with valid driver's licenses and adequate insurance. The vehicle must also be licensed and adequately insured.

All registered members have limited protection (up to \$10,000) under the Girl Scout Activity Accident Coverage for medical expenses resulting from accidents occurring during Girl Scout activities and traveling directly to or from covered activities.

### **Privacy Policy**

Personal information shall be disseminated only as needed for Girl Scout events. Only authorized personnel shall have access to materials specifically designated by the council as confidential.

### **Child Abuse**

As a Girl Scout volunteer, you are, by law, a "mandated reporter." If you suspect a child in your troop/group is a victim of abuse or neglect, you have a legal and ethical responsibility to report your suspicion.

The council supports and maintains environments that are free of child abuse and neglect as defined by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act.

Child abuse and neglect are unlawful acts, and it is against the council's policy for any volunteer, male or female, to physically, sexually, mentally, emotionally, or verbally abuse or neglect any girl member.

Girl Scouts Heart of the South reserves the right to refuse membership endorsement or reappointment, and to dismiss or to exclude from affiliation with the council, any volunteer implementing Girl Scout programs who is found guilty of child abuse or neglect.

To report suspected child abuse, call your Girl Scout office, local county social services agency or the Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-222-8000.

The person answering the call will ask several questions. *You are not required to give your name. Reporting is confidential.*

### **Harassment**

Girl Scouts Heart of the South is committed to an environment and climate in which relationships are characterized by dignity, respect, courtesy and equitable treatment.

Harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, disability, or citizenship is a violation of the law. The council expressly prohibits any form of volunteer or employee harassment on these bases.

Any volunteer who feels that she or he has been a victim of or a witness to harassment of any type, whether by another volunteer, council staff member, or any agent of the Heart of the South Council, should promptly report the incident to a supervisor or to the Chief Executive Officer. Council staff will take appropriate measures to resolve or correct the situation in an expeditious manner.

### **Sexual Harassment/Misconduct**

It is against the council's policies for any individual, male or female, to sexually harass another volunteer, employee, or Girl Scout member of the same or opposite sex. The council reserves the right to refuse membership endorsement or reappointment, and to dismiss or suspend from affiliation with the council any volunteer who, in conducting Girl Scout program, sexually harasses another volunteer, employee, or Girl Scout member of the same or opposite sex.

Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual acts or favors, abusing the dignity of another through insulting or degrading sexual remarks or conduct and threats or suggestions that a volunteer's status is conditioned upon toleration of or acquiescence to sexual advances. Some examples of sexual harassment that could create a hostile work environment include telling of sexual jokes or stories; the presence of sexually explicit photographs or other materials; touching of another person's clothing, hair or body; making sexual comments about another person's body; making sexual comments or innuendoes; asking personal questions about another person's social or sexual life; staring; leering; and making sexual gestures. Any volunteer who feels that she or he has been sexually harassed should promptly report such behavior to a supervisor or the chief executive officer. Upon receiving a complaint, a supervisor will report the matter to the chief executive officer. The chief executive officer will conduct an investigation and, depending on the findings, take appropriate corrective action.

Retaliation against anyone who has reported an allegation of harassment or sexual harassment is expressly prohibited and, if it occurs, will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination.