

Volunteer-Run Day Camp Guide

Creating Outdoor Adventures, Building Leadership, and Making Memories

This guide is designed to help you plan, operate, and celebrate a successful Volunteer-Run Day Camp.

gseiwi

Welcome to Volunteer-Run Camps!

Thank you for your commitment to creating amazing outdoor experiences for Girl Scouts. Volunteer-run camps are often a camper's first experience with camping, outdoor adventure, and leadership development. The skills, confidence, friendships, and memories made at camp can last a lifetime.

Whether you're organizing your first camp or you're a seasoned camp leader, this guide will help you navigate planning, safety, staffing, finances, and program development so your camp can be fun, safe and unforgettable.

What Is a Volunteer-Run Day Camp?

A Volunteer-Run Day Camp is:

- A camp lasting at least two days
- Operating a minimum of four hours per day
- Focused on outdoor experiences
- Offering one or more activities classified as higher risk under Safety Activity Checkpoints

Why Volunteer-Run Camps Matter

Volunteer-led camps:

- Create meaningful youth-led outdoor experiences
- Build confidence and leadership skills
- Strengthen volunteer engagement
- Support community connections
- Increase access to Girl Scout outdoor programming
- Create lifelong memories

Why Does GSEIWI Need to Know About Your Camp?

Council approval benefits everyone involved.

Safety and Compliance

Council review helps ensure camps meet Girl Scout, state, and national safety standards.

Insurance Coverage

Approved camps are covered under Girl Scout insurance. Camps operating without approval may not be covered.

Staff Support

Council staff are available to review plans, answer questions, help promote your camp and provide guidance throughout the planning process.

Official Recognition

Approved camps can operate as official Girl Scout programs and use Girl Scout branding.

Access to Resources

Approved camps may qualify for:

- Marketing support
- Funding opportunities
- Program resources
- Professional consultation
- Additional council benefits

Camp Leadership Team

A successful camp depends on a strong team of volunteers.
Required qualifications for each team member:

- Current Girl Scout Membership
- Up to date background check complete
- Required gsLearn Trainings for Camp Leadership Team:
  - 514 - Girl Scout Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Training
  - GSUSA Behavior Management for Girl Scouts
  - GSUSA Navigating Conflict with Confidence

Camp Director

The Camp Director serves as the primary contact with the council and provides overall leadership for camp operations.

Camp Director Responsibilities:

- Plans, delivers, and evaluates camp programming
- Ensures compliance with GSUSA, GSEIWI, and local requirements
- Coordinates logistics and operations
- Manages camp finances along with the Treasurer
- Recruits and supervises volunteers
- Oversees staff training
- Coordinates facilities, equipment, and supplies
- Submits all required reports
- Serves as liaison to council staff
- Completes post-camp reporting within 45 days

Required Training

- [ ] Camp Director Training-in person or virtually
- [ ] Outdoor Skills Training- in person
- [ ] 514-Troop Travel and Overnight Training (gsLearn)
- [ ] Adult and Child First Aid/CPR/AED- in person

Registrar

Registrar Responsibilities:

- Registrations
- Membership verification
- Attendance rosters
- Camper communication
- Grants for Campers submissions
- Program Credit reimbursements
- Record retention requirements

Treasurer

Treasurer Responsibilities:

- Budgets
- Deposits
- Bank accounts
- ACH transactions
- Reimbursements
- Financial reporting
- Payment processing
- Service Unit Budget and Expense Report

Health Care Manager

The Health Care Manager oversees the health and wellness of campers and staff.

Health Care Manager Responsibilities:

- Health screening
- Medication administration
- First aid response
- Health documentation
- Emergency medical response
- Health form management

Required qualifications:

- ☐ Current First Aid/CPR/AED certification

OR

- ☐ Licensed healthcare provider (RN, MD, Paramedic, EMT, etc.)

Food Service Manager

Food Service Personnel Responsibilities:

- Wear clean, washable outer garments, head coverings (hairnet or hat), and appropriate footwear.
- Wear food service gloves when handling food.
- Maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness.

All Appropriate Food Service Personnel Are Trained In:

- Safe use of cleaning compounds and drying agents.
- Safe and proper use of all food service equipment.
- Correct procedures for manually lifting and moving heavy objects.
- The use, type, and location of fire extinguishers.

Outdoor Cooking Areas:

- Have an extinguishing device readily available (bucket of water, sand, shovel, rake, fire extinguisher, etc.).
- Be located in an area reasonably protected from the elements.
- Be situated away from trails and traffic patterns.
- Comply with all local fire ordinances.
- Be built on existing sites whenever available.

Required gsLearn Training:

☐ 514-Food Allergy Awareness

Planning Your Camp

Choosing a Facility

When selecting a site, consider:

- Capacity
  - Ensure the site accommodates all participants and activities comfortably.
- Restrooms
  - Provide clean, sanitary, and accessible facilities.
- Communication
  - Cell service or reliable phone access should be available.
- Security
  - If using a public location, participants should be separated from public traffic whenever possible.
- Safe Buildings
  - All structures should be:
    - Clean
    - Secure
    - Well-ventilated
    - Hazard-free
    - Equipped with at least two clearly marked exits

Accessibility

Consider participants, volunteers, and guests with disabilities.

Environmental Hazards

Evaluate:

- Trees
- Waterways
- Wildlife
- Trails
- Roads
- Buildings
- Playground equipment
- Other site-specific risks

Communication Plan

Staff and campers should understand all facility rules and safety procedures before activities begin.

Volunteer Requirements and Ratios

Adult supervision is required for all Girl Scout activities.

Groups must have:

- At least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers
- One female lead volunteer
- Additional volunteers based on participant age and group size

Adult-to-Youth Ratios

	Group Meetings		Events, Travel, Camping	
Volunteer-to-Girl Scout Ratio Chart	2 unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for this # of kids:	Plus 1 additional volunteer for each additional # of this many kids:	2 unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for this # of kids:	Plus 1 additional volunteer for each additional # of this many kids:
Daisies (Grades K-1)	12	1-6	6	1-4
Brownies (Grades 2-3)	20	1-8	12	1-6
Juniors (Grades 4-5)	25	1-10	16	1-8
Cadettes (Grades 6-8)	25	1-12	20	1-10
Seniors (Grades 9-10)	30	1-15	24	1-12
Ambassadors (Grades 11-12)	30	1-15	24	1-12

Creating an Amazing Camp Program

A great camp balances learning, adventure, leadership, and fun.

Badge Opportunities
Day camp is an excellent place for Girl Scouts to:

- Earn badges
- Explore interests
- Learn new skills
- Practice leadership

Award and Badge Explorer | Girl Scouts

Fun Activities
Not every activity needs to earn a badge. Some of the most memorable camp experiences come from:

- Camp-wide games
- Theme activities
- Special events
- Outdoor adventures
- Community service projects
- Camp traditions

Let Older Girl Scouts Lead
Older Girl Scouts bring valuable ideas and leadership skills. Consider creating opportunities for them to:

- Recommend themes
- Plan activities
- Mentor younger campers
- Lead stations
- Serve as Program Aides

Youth voice helps create a camp experience that feels exciting, relevant, and meaningful.

Sample Day Camp Schedule

Pre-Camp Activity	Once checked in, girls need to be kept busy while they are waiting for day camp to officially begin. Offering organized games or singing songs is a good way to maintain a smooth transition into the opening of camp.
Opening Ceremony *15 minutes*	The entire camp gathers in an areas as the official beginning to camp. Girls normally sit as a unit. Usually a flag ceremony is presented or songs are sung. This is the time that announcements are made and the exciting schedule for the day reviewed. Don't forget to remind girls about wearing sunscreen and staying hydrated! After the opening, units go to their "home base" to begin their activities.
Unit Activities *1-2 hours*	Activity sessions can be broken into smaller time segments. A time frame of 30-45 minutes for an activity is usually plenty of time. When program specialists are teaching a specific activity involving one unit at a time, it is important to schedule the units into a rotation. This allows each group to receive the special attention needed to do the activity successfully. Remember to add in clean up and transition time when scheduling activity rotations.
Lunch & Clean-up *30 mins – 1 hour*	If cooking, allow for more time for food preparation.
Free Time *20-30 minutes*	This gives the girls an opportunity for socialization, to do self-guided activities, to finish projects, to rest, etc. before the afternoon activities.
Unit Activities *1-2 hours*	More activity sessions.
Camp Clean-up *10-15 minutes*	Camp housekeeping is not only a part of the program, alone with hiking and games, but part of community living. Examples of kapers include flag, song leading, trash and litter pick up, sweeping common areas, etc.
Closing Ceremony *15 minutes*	It is nice to come together as an entire group once more and "wrap up" the day. Announcements (which may include lost and found or reminders for tomorrow) are made at this time. Sometimes closing song(s) are sung, poems are read or a friendship circle is executed. This is a good time to get feedback from the girls on what they learned and their favorite parts of the day.
After Closing	An activity may be organized if you have girls waiting to be picked up.

Camp Healthcare

A person certified through a nationally recognized First Aid and CPR/AED training program must remain available at camp while camp is in session.

The health care center or first aid station should:

- ☐ Provide a quiet place for camper rest
- ☐ Have access to drinking water
- ☐ Have nearby restroom facilities
- ☐ For overnight camps, provide one bed per 50 participants
- ☐ Have an appropriately trained First Aider for every 200 people

Health Care Responsibilities

The designated Health Care Manager is responsible for:

- Health screenings
- Medication administration
- First aid
- First aid supplies
- Illness response
- Emergency response
- Accident and injury reporting

Health History Forms

Health forms must be completed for all participants and staff. Required information includes:

- ☐ Birth date
- ☐ Medical history
- ☐ Immunization information
- ☐ Current medications
- ☐ Activity restrictions
- ☐ Health conditions and accommodations
- ☐ Emergency treatment authorization

Additional Health Forms

Health forms must be stored securely and treated as confidential.

Medication Procedures
Medication must:

- Be collected at check-in when appropriate
- Be stored securely
- Be administered according to instructions
- Be logged each time it is administered

Exceptions may apply for emergency medications that must remain with the participant.

Medication Log
Medication Log Form

Health Screenings

Day Camps
Health histories must be reviewed within 24 hours of the participant's arrival.

Overnight Camps
Participants and staff must:

- Have a physical examination within the previous 12 months
- Complete a health screening within 24 hours of arrival

Health Records
At the conclusion of camp, submit copies of:

- [ ] Health forms
- [ ] Accident reports
- [ ] Incident reports (unless previously submitted online)
- [ ] Medication logs

To submit these forms, simply email them to: Info@GirlScoutsToday.org

Safety and Risk Management

Camping and outdoor activities involve inherent risks. Volunteer-run camps must comply with all applicable GSUSA, GSEIWI, federal, state, and local requirements. This guide is not intended to be an all-inclusive list of safety standards, and volunteer-run camps are responsible for ensuring compliance with all applicable safety requirements.

Key Resources

- Safety Activity Checkpoints
- Emergency Action Plan
- Accident Report Forms
- Incident Report Forms
- Budget Templates
- Training Resources

Links

Safety Activity Checkpoints
Emergency Action Plan Worksheet
Accident and Incident Reports

Emergency Action Planning

Every camp should create a site-specific Emergency Action Plan (EAP).

The EAP should address:

- Weather emergencies
- Medical emergencies
- Missing campers
- Fire response
- Severe storms
- Evacuation procedures
- Communication plans
- Emergency contacts

Use the council Emergency Action Plan worksheet to customize procedures for your camp.

Weather Policies

High Winds
- Zip line: Closed if gusts ≥ 30 mph
- High ropes course: Closed if sustained winds ≥ 30 mph
- Horse trail rides: Canceled if winds > 30 mph
- Campers in outdoor units will be moved indoors overnight: If sustained winds ≥ 40 mph or frequent gusts ≥ 58 mph

Thunderstorms
- No horseback riding: During thunderstorms or heavy rain
- All outdoor activities paused: If lightning within 10 miles; outdoor activities can resume 30 mins after the last lightning strike
- Campers in outdoor units will be moved indoors overnight: If storm warning within 20 miles of camp during dinner

Tornadoes
- Activities will be moved indoors: if a tornado watch is within 20 miles
- Campers will be moved to storm shelter: If a tornado warning is within 20 miles
- Campers in outdoor units will be moved indoors overnight: If tornado watch is within 20 miles

Air Quality
- AQI 100–150: Limited outdoor activities
- AQI 151–199: Activities indoors; outdoor time limited to transitions between buildings
- AQI ≥ 200: All activities and overnight indoors

Heat
- Real feel ≥ 90°F: Limited outdoor time; campers will participate in water games, frequent application of sunscreen, and extra hydration encouraged
- Real feel ≥ 80°F for extended periods overnight: Campers in outdoor units will be moved indoors overnight
- No horseback riding: If real feel ≥ 95°F

Low Temperatures for Pool Operation
- Air temp < 72°F: Pool closed
- Water temp < 78°F: Pool closed

Lost Camper / Missing Person Procedure

1. Notify the Camp Director immediately.
2. Gather all campers and conduct a head count.
3. Assign a volunteer to remain with the group.
4. Conduct a quick search of the immediate area.
5. If the individual is not located quickly, contact emergency services.
6. Notify council according to established procedures.

Transportation

Transportation plans should be developed before camp begins. Options may include:

- Care giver drop-off and pick-up
- Charter buses
- Rental vehicles
- Personal vehicles operated by approved volunteers

When personal vehicles are used, volunteers must meet all Girl Scout driver requirements.

If your camp offers transportation to and/or from camp, refer to Safety Activity Checkpoints for all rules and regulations.

Arrival and Departure Procedures

Arrival

- ☐ Clearly mark drop-off locations
- ☐ Use attendance rosters
- ☐ Collect missing paperwork
- ☐ Collect outstanding fees
- ☐ Contact families of absent campers

Departure

- ☐ Sign out every camper daily
- ☐ Verify approved pickup persons
- ☐ Check photo identification
- ☐ Never release a camper to an unauthorized individual
- ☐ Never allow a camper to leave without an authorized adult

Inclusion Matters

Inclusion means everyone participates and everyone belongs.
Girl Scouts of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois is committed to ensuring all participants have meaningful opportunities to engage in camp experiences.

When planning camp:

- Consult caregivers about participant needs
- Focus on strengths
- Identify reasonable accommodations
- Create opportunities for everyone to succeed

Every child deserves to feel welcomed, included, and valued.

Communication With Families

Successful camps communicate early and often.

Recommended Communications

- Confirmation Email Sent immediately after registration.
- Know Before You Go Email Sent approximately one week before camp.
- Emergency Contact Collection: request the best phone number and alternate contact for every participant.

Marketing Your Camp

Ways to Promote

- Service Unit meetings
- Council promotion
- Flyers
- Social media
- Email campaigns
- Word of mouth

Include:

- [ ] Dates
- [ ] Times
- [ ] Location
- [ ] Camp theme
- [ ] Grade levels
- [ ] Highlights
- [ ] Volunteer needs
- [ ] Registration information

Social Media Guidelines

Social media can be a wonderful tool for promotion and communication. When using social media:

- Never share private participant information
- Use password-protected photo sharing when possible
- Follow Girl Scout online safety requirements
- Obtain photo permissions as required

Girl Scout Online Safety Pledge

Finances and Payment Options

Budget Planning
Remember to budget for:

- Facility rental
- First aid supplies
- Food
- Badges/Patches
- T-shirts
- Program supplies
- Cleaning supplies
- Marketing
- Transportation
- Miscellaneous expenses

Event Budget Worksheet Template

ACH Accounts
Volunteer-run camps may use a Service Unit account and ACH system. Camps operating across multiple Service Units or with a long history may benefit from establishing a dedicated account.

Service Unit or Troop Bank Account Request Form

Financial Assistance
Virtual Program Credit Reimbursement Form
Grants for Campers

Volunteer Training

Every volunteer should receive training before camp begins.

Suggested topics:

- Job responsibilities
- Ratios and supervision
- Emergency procedures
- Risk management
- Camp operations
- Inclusion practices
- Environmental considerations
- Youth protection
- Camp culture and expectations

Important Resources

- GirlScoutsToday.org
- gsLearn Training Catalog
- Safety Activity Checkpoints
- Emergency Action Plan Worksheet
- Pop-Up Shop Request Form

Remember: the most successful camps are not necessarily the biggest or the most elaborate. They are the camps where youth feel safe, welcomed, included, challenged, and inspired.

Thank you for helping create outdoor adventures, leadership opportunities, friendships, and memories that will stay with campers long after camp ends.

Happy camping!