Encouraging Parental Involvement
Learning Outcomes

• Identify opportunities to meet parents and ways for them to participate
• Find online resources available to you
• Know effective methods for good communication and relationships with parents
• Demonstrate good problem-solving skills with parents
Call to Arms

• Today’s parents are busier than ever, Girl Scout leaders included

• A Girl Scout troop is a family-friendly environment

• Help parents understand that they are an important part of the troop and there are responsibilities on a variety of levels for them to take on
Opportunities for Parent Volunteers

• Be up front with parents about what roles and responsibilities you need help with
• Including, but not limited to…
  – Assistant Leader
  – Treasurer
  – Troop Cookie Manager
  – Camp Parent
  – First Aid Parent
  – Transportation Coordinator
  – Snack Coordinator
  – Phone Tree Chair
  – Troop Photographer
Online Resource

On our website under Volunteer Resources > Support Materials > Misc Resources > Parent Meetings

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**PARENT / GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT FORM**

Girl Scout’s Name: ______________________
Grade Level: ____ School: ______________________
Parent / Guardian Name(s): ______________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________

Mother’s Cell: _________________ Mother’s Email: ______________________
Father’s Cell: ____________________ Father’s Email: ______________________
Girl Scout’s Cell: ______________ Home Phone: ______________________
What hobbies or skills could you share with the troop?: ______________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________

Running a quality Girl Scout troop requires the involvement of ALL parents. Please check how you and/or other adults in your family will support your daughter’s troop. Submit as soon as possible in order to get your first choice.

- **Assistant Leader(s):** Plans assists in leading activities, communicates with parents.
- **Treasurer:** Reconciles bank statements.
- **Cookie Parent:** Organizes cookie sales.
- **Fall Product Parent:** Organizes fall product sales.
- **Camp Parent:** Certified camper. Assists in planning/leading camp out activities.
- **First-Aid Parent:** Certified in CPR / First Aid. They must attend any camping event.
- **Field Trip Coordinator:** Calls about, plans and organizes troop field trips.
- **Service Project Coordinator:** Organizes and plans service projects.
- **Badge Coordinator:** Takes a specific badge or Journey and plans activities.
- **Meeting Helper:** Helps at each meeting with already planned activities.
- **Cookie Booth Chaperone:** Serves as adult chaperone and cookie booth supervisor.
- **Activity Chaperone:** Drives and serves as adult helper during activities and trips.
- **Snack Coordinator:** Organize and schedule snack rotation for meetings.
- **Troop Registrar:** Ensures that online registration and/or forms and money are submitted.
- **Phone Tree Chair:** Makes calls in case of last minute meeting/activity changes or emergency.
- **Volunteer Meeting Representative:** I can attend a Volunteer Meeting to pick up information relating to the troop.
Reaching Out

Establishing a connection with parents can plant the seed for parents to see a role in their daughter’s troop. Try any or all of the following:

– Meet & Greet
– Parent Meeting
– Parents attend troop meetings
– Girl-planned activities & troop family events
Meet & Greet

• At the end of your meeting, chat with parents and gauge interest
  – Helps give parents an idea of who you are and an opportunity to be comfortable interacting with you
  – Helps you understand the people who are in the lives of your girls and what the home atmosphere might be like
Online Resources
On our website under Volunteer Resources > Support Materials > Misc Resources > Parent Meetings

PARENT/GUARDIAN QUESTIONNAIRE

1) What makes your daughter feel happy? Does she have any special talents that she likes to show off?

2) If your daughter had an hour of free time, how would she most likely use that time?

3) Does your daughter have any developmental delays or disabilities? How can we accommodate these?

4) How does your daughter communicate stress or frustration at home or with peers? What do you do to manage negative behaviors? Any additional advice on handling your daughter’s behavior?

5) What is the most important thing I should know about your daughter?

A Handout for Helpful Parents & Guardians from your Troop Leader: Becoming a Troop Volunteer or Parent Helper

Welcome to Girl Scouts! And thank you for considering the many ways you can support your girl and her troop leader this year! Your Girl Scout troop leader will handle much of the day-to-day operation of your daughter’s troop. The leader has received training and screening and been approved to serve as a troop leader. Leaders are incredible people...and they need your support. It takes a village to support a Girl Scout troop! Here are a few of the ways you can help your girl’s troop leader:

- Help out at a troop meeting
- Be a driver for a troop field trip
- Chaperone at a troop overnight or campout
- Come teach a new skill to the girls related to a badge or Journey

At Girl Scouts, we are committed to ensuring that all girls are provided with opportunities to build courage, confidence and character in a safe and nurturing environment. We screen all adults who will work directly with girls. Our screening process is free to the volunteer, easy to access online, and takes about two weeks to complete.

We know parents rely on us to select adults who are great role models for their girls. We take this responsibility very seriously because girls need great adult volunteers to support their leadership skills in the Girl Scout program. The following guidelines explain how we create a safe environment for girls and our adult volunteers:

1. Before you help with troop programs, complete a background check and volunteer application. Visit www.girlscoutsnebraska.org, then click Volunteer to start this process. This is required and must be completed every 3 years and by everyone working with girls.
2. If you are driving girls for troop activities, you are required to have a valid driver’s license, good driving record and current auto insurance in addition to the completed volunteer application and background check.
3. Girl Scout membership is required for regular parent volunteers. Membership is $15 and good for the whole year. It provides basic accident insurance while participating in Girl Scout events and supports the national organization.
4. Younger siblings are invited to family events like picnics or awards ceremonies. Troop meetings and field trips are just for the girls in the troop and their adult volunteers. To make sure girls get the attention they need from adult volunteers and leaders, we ask...
Parent Meeting

• Maximize time/date/location so all parents can attend

• Have a “no kids allowed” meeting, or bring in extra adult helpers or older Girl Scouts to engage kids in age-appropriate activities during the meeting
Successful Parent Meeting Outcomes

- Understand basic information about Girl Scouting
- Identify ways they will support the troop/leaders during the coming year and have key positions filled
- Agree on what the troop pays for and what families pay for individually
- Know how the troop/leaders will communicate upcoming events, schedule changes, and forms and money due for various activities, etc.
- Have access to information about uniforms and books their daughter needs
- Know that financial assistance is available if needed and how to request it
Online Resources

On our website under
Volunteer Resources > Support Materials > Misc Resources > Parent Meetings

On our website under
About Us > Publications > Parent/Guardian/Volunteer Guides

Sample Parent Meeting Agenda

Introductions
- Leader and assistant leader names and contact info
- Parent introductions
- Basic communication expectations & preferences (call, email, text, etc.)

Meeting Basics
- Time / place / frequency of meetings
- Troop and Service Unit number
- Attendance guidelines (call if you aren’t coming, etc.)
- Forms: Parent Questionnaire (optional): Health History (needed before any activities involving risk are planned)
- Girl Scout Membership is $15, that covers national dues, is required for each girl. The leader can register all girls or the parents can do it from home.

Troop Program
- The Girl Scout Mission
- The GS Keys to Leadership: Discover, Connect & Take Action
- Leadership Journeys
- The Girls’ Guide to Girl Scouting

Plans for the Year
- Share any plans that are made or talk about how plans will be made.
- Tell parents that a signed permission slip is required each time the troop travels/meets outside of the regular troop meeting.
- Magazines, nuts and chocolates program is in the fall & Cookie program is in the winter/spring.
  - Girls learn valuable business and financial literacy skills through these programs. They also earn money to put toward troop activities and support regional service to girls and volunteers.

Troop Finances
- Identify what girls and parents will pay for each year: usually includes books, uniforms, troop dues, and $15 national GS membership dues.
- Identify what the troop will pay for each year: usually program supplies, troop equipment, service projects, field trips and events, and transportation.
- Financial assistance is available for membership dues and books/uniform components, from the Council, if needed.

Thank You
- It takes a village to support a successful GS troop.
- Girls will gain courage, confidence and character because of your willingness to support.
Parents Attend Troop Meetings

• Make an open-ended invitation and offer this as an informal way for parents to come and observe their daughters.

• Allowing parents to see how the troop functions may help them realize the commitment you have made to their daughters and thereby respect your needs and allows you the opportunity to establish your rules of respect, such as picking up their daughter on time.

• Have the last 10 minutes of every troop meeting include parents and take that time to share what you did at the meeting and what is coming up next.
Parents Attend Troop Meetings, Con’t

• Talk to parents about their daughter and let them know how she has grown and what leadership skills she is displaying

• Think about a parent meeting within your troop meeting when planning larger troop events requiring additional help, such as overnights
Girl-Planned Activities & Family Events

• Have the girls plan an event and invite all parents to attend

• Parents can see their daughter’s accomplishments and girls can demonstrate what they have learned in the troop environment

• Parents begin to see the value in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE), not just for their daughters but for all girls
Tips for Encouraging Parent Interaction

• Ask open-ended questions

• Listen attentively and make them comfortable with you and your role as a troop leader

• Call parents, especially those who do not come to pick up their daughter
  - Attempt regular contact with ALL parents to encourage communication and a sense of familiarity

• Be honest with parents regarding their daughter’s progress
Making the “Ask”

• Personally ask parents to help with specific task
  – Studies show that when asked directly, 85% of people who were asked to volunteer on a specific role/task did

• Offer sign-up sheets that have roles and commitments clearly stated
Our Volunteers Say…

“Don’t assume that sending a letter asking for volunteers will work. Take time to make a phone call to personally ask for help. It’s amazing how willing parents will be if your request is very specific rather than general.”
Our Volunteers Say…

“We calculate how many adults will be necessary for a meeting or event. Three times a year, I put out a 4 month calendar of meeting dates and ask that families sign up to help. I rarely have an empty date. If we don’t get the number of adults needed, the event is cancelled. After just one event cancellation, the girls apply pressure for us so that it does not happen again.”
Our Volunteers Say…

“My 6 year experience as a leader and service unit team member has taught me that parents do want to be involved. Ask them – personally – to be a part of the troop. Remember that parents are not psychic. Ask what they are interested in and see if you can incorporate those interests into your troop activities.”
Scenarios

Establishing good communication and relationships with parents will help you deal with difficult situations that may arise.

For the following scenarios, answer the following questions:

– How would you deal with the following situations?
– What steps would you take to ensure this would not happen again?
Scenario #1

Mae’s father always complains that the meetings are too short and is usually late picking up his daughter from the meetings. What will you say to him? What kind of options can you offer him?

Choose which of the following is the best answer:

When the meetings are over, leave Mae out front for her Dad to pick her up. He has to learn that your meetings are not formatted just for his needs; there are others that are affected too.

Stay late with Mae and explain to her father that troop meetings are likely to always end at the same time. Offer to pair him up with another parent to carpool and gently help him to understand that his lateness is an inconvenience for you and Mae.
Scenario #1

*If you chose option 2, you are CORRECT!*

Work with other parents on a carpooling schedule to ensure that Mae gets home on time and so do you. Making your expectations clear to parents is also always a good idea so that you can work to ensure their daughter gets the most out of her troop meetings.
Scenario #1

We would not recommend option 1.

You don’t want to jeopardize a girl’s safety or alienate parents from the troop environment. Work collaboratively with parents and make them aware of your expectations – do not simply “cut them off.”
Scenario #2

Kate’s mom insists on staying for the meeting, but is not helpful to the troop. She sits in the back of the room and watches her daughter. Sometimes Kate is distracted by this and tries to sit on her mother’s lap, away from the other girls. How do you best combat this behavior from both Kate and her mother?

Choose which of the following is the best answer:

- When Kate’s mom attends the troop meeting, explain to her why it is important that she let Kate develop her relationships with the troop. Ask her to not allow Kate to climb into her lap and let her know you would appreciate her participation during the troop meeting. Encourage her to take on some volunteer duties so she can be a role model for Kate and all of the girls in the troop.

- Ask all parents not to attend the troop meetings, as they can be a distraction for the girls.
Scenario #2

*If you chose option 1, you are CORRECT!*

Giving her a duty during troop meetings may encourage her to take on a bigger volunteer role within the troop. Also, make your behavior expectations clear to all parents who attend the meeting, and offer them an opportunity to help out during the time they are there.

Next Question
Scenario #2

We would not recommend option 2.

You don’t want to alienate parents from the troop environment. Work collaboratively with parents and make them aware of your expectations – do not simply “cut them off.”
Scenario #3

You have asked all of the parents in your troop to help this year, but so far none of them have returned your phone calls or letters. What do you do? How can you more effectively deal with this problem?

Choose which of the following is the best answer:

1. Call a parent meeting and tell the parents that you cannot proceed without their help. If no one offers help or attends the meeting, end all troop activities until someone volunteers.

2. Call a parent meeting and explain to parents that their daughter’s troop needs help. Explain volunteer roles and request that they sign up for at least 2 job duties. If they seem resistant, explain that they are an important part of the troop and that it cannot function without their help. Perhaps the girls can plan an event for them to enjoy and see what happens at troop meetings.
Scenario #3

*If you chose option 2, you are CORRECT!*

Working with your troop’s parents to find a volunteer role that would best fit your needs and their interests is the most effective way to get volunteers. Be firm on your requests for help and try to maximize the help being offered from the parents.
Scenario #3

We would not recommend option 1.

You don’t want to alienate parents from the troop environment. Work collaboratively with parents and make them aware of your expectations – do not simply “cut them off.”
Let’s Review

To improve parent participation…

– Identify opportunities for parent volunteers
– Know effective methods for good communication and relationships with parents
– Demonstrate good problem-solving skills with parents
Review #1

What are some opportunities for parent volunteers?

Choose which of the following is the best answer:

1. First-Aider for the Troop
2. Field Trip Chaperone
3. Awards Person
4. All of the Above
Review #1

If you chose option 4, you are CORRECT!

All of the opportunities listed are suitable for parent volunteers to take on in their daughter’s troop.
Review #1

If you chose option 1, 2 or 3, you are correct, but…

Actually, all of the opportunities listed are suitable for parent volunteers to take on in their daughter’s troop.
Review #2

Which is NOT a recommended way to foster good communication and relationships with parents?

*Choose which of the following is the best answer:*

1. Offer them the opportunity to participate in parent meetings and troop events.

2. Call them periodically and ask how they and the rest of their family are doing.

3. Send troop updates periodically so parents know what is going on in their daughter’s troop.

4. After the meeting, speak to them only of their daughter’s accomplishments and embellish quite a bit.
If you chose option 4, you are CORRECT!

This answer is NOT recommended. You should speak to parents about things other than just their daughter, and NEVER give them a false impression of her accomplishments. If there are obstacles to overcome, be honest about them. Maybe the parent can help you solve them so that their daughter can achieve her full potential.
If you chose option 1, 2 or 3, those are incorrect.

Those answers are actually methods recommended by leaders.
Review #3

What is NOT an effective way of asking parents for their help?

*Choose which of the following is the best answer:*

1. At the first meeting, threaten to quit if parents do not sign up to help for at least two duties.

2. Pass out a sign-up sheet to the girl in the troop. Have their parents fill out the information before the next meeting.

3. Call parents and personally ask them for their assistance.
Review #3

If you chose option 2 or 3, those are incorrect.

Those answers are actually methods recommended by leaders.

Try Again
Review #3

*If you chose option 1, you are CORRECT!*

This answer is *NOT* recommended. Threatening parents definitely will not encourage their (or their daughter’s) participation in the troop.
Questions?

Contact Amanda Schmidt at 402.779.8213 or aschmidt@girlscoutsnebraska.org.
CONGRATULATIONS!

You have completed

*Encouraging Parental Involvement*

Thank you for your time.