

GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH GIRL SCOUTS IN FOSTER/KINSHIP CARE



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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Girl Scouts of Black Diamond believes in the power of every girl. Our leadership program is designed to help a girl discover who she is, what she can do and connect her with a powerful community of girls and mentors to make it happen. Through unique opportunities, Girl Scouts explore, learn, succeed and take action to make a difference in their communities.

With support from dedicated adult volunteers, parents and staff, we deliver the best Girl Scout experience to 10,500 members: 7,600 girls and 2,900 adults in 61 counties within West Virginia, Ohio, Maryland and Virginia. Our headquarters, shop and urban camp – the Girl Zone – are located in Charleston, WV. While our headquarters is based in Charleston, most of our staff work from home offices in the hearts of our communities.

Girl Scouts helps girls thrive in five key ways as they:

- Develop a strong sense of self
- Seek challenges and learn from setbacks
- Display positive values
- Form and maintain healthy relationships
- Identify and solve problems in their communities

Research shows that girls learn best in an all-girl environment where they practice different skills, explore their potential and take on leadership positions. At Girl Scouts, they'll always feel encouraged to dust themselves off, get up and try again.

As a Girl Scout, your girl will participate in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience— a proven, one-of-a-kind leadership development program (and the largest in the world!) where she will:

- Engage in healthy activities
- Find her entrepreneurial spirit and learn financial literacy
- Explore the great outdoors
- Participate in hands-on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) skill building
- Connect with girls around the world
- Carry out meaningful community service projects
- Take the lead in her own life and in the world
- Earn badges and pursue the Girl Scout Gold Award
- Discover her future potential

Every step of the way, she'll lead her experience and learn by doing in a collaborative environment created by and for every girl. With the support of her peers and caring adults, she'll have so many opportunities to jump in and make amazing things happen.

Our Mission

Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

Girl Scout Promise

On my honor, I will try:

To serve God and my country,
To help people at all times,
And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

Girl Scout Law

I will do my best to be
honest and fair,
friendly and helpful,
considerate and caring,
courageous and strong, and
responsible for what I say and do,
and to
respect myself and others,
respect authority,
use resources wisely,
make the world a better place, and
be a sister to every Girl Scout.

Definitions

Foster/Adoptive Family Adoption - A permanent option that should be considered for any child who has been in a foster/adoptive home for a sufficient amount of time to bond with the family and establish family connections.

Foster/Adoptive Family Care - Services provided by a person not related to the child who has been certified to provide care in an out-of-home living situation.

Foster Care – 24-hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents or guardians and for whom the state agency has placement and care responsibility. This includes, but is not limited to, placements in foster family homes, foster homes of relatives, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, child care institutions and pre-adoptive homes.

Child in Foster Care - Children and youth currently in a foster care home or living with a foster/adoptive family.

Child in Kinship Care – Children and youth currently living with a relative or next of kin.

Sibling – The sibling, in this case, is any child, whether biological or of the foster/adoptive/kinship family living in the home.

Legal Guardianship - A legally binding, permanent relationship between a child and a caretaker, other than the child's biological parent, which may be considered as a permanent placement option for the child. This arrangement transfers all the rights and responsibilities for a child from the department to the caretaker through a court sanctioned process. A monthly maintenance subsidy, medical card and non-recurring subsidy may be provided to eligible children to ease the financial burden of caring for the child.

Placement - The child's living arrangement. For a child to be considered in foster care, the department must have legal custody of the child. The child is placed outside their own home and in a certified foster home, relative/kinship home or with a licensed facility.

Relative/Kinship Care - Services provided by any person related to the child by blood or marriage including cousins and in-laws. This includes persons whom the child considers a relative, such as a godparent or significant others the child claims as kin. This person may also be considered as a placement resource.

Council - Corporation chartered by Girl Scouts of the USA that is responsible for the development, management and maintenance of Girl Scouting in a defined geographic area.

Troop Leaders - The volunteers who organize and guide fun, girl-led, interactive activities that focus on the Girl Scout mission.

Training for Troop Leaders

For Troop Leaders to be successful in working with children in foster or kinship care, the following trainings are necessary and are available in gsLearn:

- Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention – Signs that help identify child abuse and the process of reporting
- Stigma Words Matter – Being mindful of the words used
- Connections Matter – Trauma Informed Care Overview – The first glance at handling children with traumatic experiences
- Poverty and the Brain and Girl Scouts – How poverty plays a role in the development of children
- Connections Matter: Foster System and Kinship Care Training – An overview of the foster and kinship care system

Guidelines

When working with children in the foster or kinship care system, rules and guidelines are expected to be followed. Among the rules and guidelines, Troop Leaders should be aware of the policies set by the state about working with children in foster or kinship care. Each troop may have their unique way of handling this situation.

Gathering of Information

Meeting with **ALL** parents would be essential. It allows the Troop Leader to gather important information about the girl and explain the necessary information. During this meeting, the Troop Leader will address the troop rules, expectations, attendance, and other details about joining Girl Scouts. Meeting with **ALL** parents ensures that no girl is singled out because of her status as a child in foster or kinship care.

Additional information about allergies, medications, etc. can be obtained during this initial meeting. Sharing the interest of the girl will help to make the Girl Scouts experience even better. This is also the opportunity for parents/guardians to share what they would like to gain from Girl Scouts.

Obtaining this information from **ALL** girls will be helpful in the event of an emergency.

ALL information obtained by Troop Leaders about the girl will be stored securely and confidentiality maintained.

Social and Digital Media

It is suggested that the troop's Facebook page be private. This will ensure that the privacy of the girls and their families is secure.

Some Troop Leaders may share photos of children in foster or kinship care. Those wishing to share the photos should blur the the faces of the girls and remove identifying features, such as names or locations. For those wishing to share photos without blurring the faces, please remove all identifying features, such as names or locations. These photos should be kept on the troop's private page.

Travel

Children in foster or kinship care are permitted to travel anywhere within the state with their foster family/guardian's permission. No special permissions are required if travel is in the state where they reside. For out-of-state trips, special permission from the caseworker, and in some situations, the Circuit Court Judge involved in the case, is a requirement.

The same precautions for safety in Girl Scouts travel and overnight trips apply to this situation.

Grant-Funded Initiative

The Girl Scouts of Black Diamond Council ensures that **ALL** girls have the opportunity to join and engage in Girl Scouts. Through this grant-funded initiative, children in foster or kinship care, along with their siblings, will be eligible to receive support for their Girl Scouts experience. Financial aid is available to girls who may not fall under this category.

The following are the support received by the troop and the child in foster or kinship care, funded by a grant:

Troop Support

Based on the grant, troops are eligible for \$50.00 for each child in foster or kinship care present in their troop.

Girl Support

The child in foster or kinship care and her sibling are eligible for the following support:

- Membership fee, or reimbursement of membership fee if already paid, of \$25.00
- Event fee of \$25.00
- Girl Scouts uniform sash kit for the appropriate grade level

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: *What if I have a new child in foster or kinship care that registers by paper application?*

A: Let your Membership Delivery Manager know and specify that the girl is a child in foster or kinship care. Here is a link to the Leader Survey:

<http://bit.ly/TroopLeaderSurvey>.

Q: *What if I have a child in foster or kinship care in my troop? How do I receive the troop support funds?*

A: If you have not submitted information in the Leader Survey, please reach out to Customer Care to start the process of receiving your troop support.

Q: *I have a child in foster or kinship care and her foster or kinship care family has three other girls living in the home. Will the other girls benefit from the girl support?*

A: Yes, the siblings (biological or living in the home) will benefit from the girl support amounts.

Q: *Will my troop receive support for the siblings of a child in foster or kinship care?*

A: No, the troop will not be eligible for troop support based on the sibling, unless the sibling is also a foster/kinship care girl.

Q: *Will I receive a refund if my child in foster or kinship care's membership was paid for with financial aid?*

A: No, you will only receive a refund if the troop or an individual paid it.

Q: *Will I receive a refund if my child in foster or kinship care bought the uniform already?*

A: No, you will not receive a refund on uniforms and supplies.

Q: *I used to have a child in foster or kinship care who I recently adopted. Will this program benefit us?*

A: Unfortunately, at this time, the program has not expanded to adoptive care.

Q: *Do I have to live in West Virginia to benefit from this program?*

A: Currently, this grant-funded initiative is only available to the counties in West Virginia.

Resources

Need more information on foster/kinship care in West Virginia? Visit the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources' website:

<https://dhhr.wv.gov/>

Learn more about FREE services available to children, youth and families from

Prestera: <https://www.prestera.org/>

Know someone willing to volunteer or want to learn more about being a volunteer?

Contact our Volunteer Resource Manager, Shawn Kasten, at

Shawn.Kasten@bdgsc.org or 304-345-7722 ext. 1025.

Have input or would like to learn more about what the Black Diamond Council is doing for foster/kinship care girls? Reach out to our Membership Support Manager, Portia Smith, at Portia.Smith@bdgsc.org or 304-345-7722 ext. 1031.

If you are a Troop Leader and have foster/kinship care girls in the troop, complete the Leader Survey at <http://bit.ly/TroopLeaderSurvey> or reach out to Customer Care.

For general inquiries, please reach out to Customer Care at 304-345-7722 or visit our website to learn more: www.bdgsc.org.

Disclaimer

Information presented in this document was retrieved from DHHR Foster Care Policies, Girl Scouts of Black Diamond Council's website, council staff and volunteer input.