

Below is page 2 from a GSUSA document titled *Girl Scouts Beyond Bars* that states “Regarding sexual orientation, Girl Scouts of the USA holds fast to a commitment to embrace diversity” and further states that their nondiscrimination policy regarding sexual orientation must be “honored by every person working in the Girl Scout movement.” The relevant text has been highlighted in yellow to help you see it easily. The document can be accessed online [here](#).

include any information that directly or indirectly identifies the individual or individuals you are describing.

### SEX, SEXUALITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Girls are curious creatures and one of the topics they are most curious about, especially from puberty through their teen years, is sex. Over the past few decades, girls have become increasingly more open about sex and its related issues, so don't be caught off guard by related side discussions or questions from them. What you might be surprised by is the broad continuum of how much and how little they know. Girls as young as 11 may have already engaged in sexual intercourse, yet they obviously bring an expected (but frightening) naiveté to such encounters. On the one hand they know about sex, but on the other they possess little or no knowledge of sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy risks, or the emotional implications of physical intimacy at such a young age. This is often true of older girls as well.

Discussing sex with girls, especially when they are not your children, can be daunting. If you decide to address this topic formally, first seek parental permission. Also, engage the mothers in the planning of the session, including specific issues they'd like to see addressed. If you feel uncomfortable facilitating a session about issues related to sex, bring in a consultant or a staff member from a hospital or health care clinic.

Answering girls' questions about sex, outside of a formal workshop or presentation, requires three things: honesty, tact, and the confidence to say, "I don't know," if indeed you are unsure about something. If you feel uncomfortable responding, you might say, "Have you spoken to your mother about this issue? She would probably want to know that you have questions like this on your mind." If talking to her mother is not an option for her, refer her to another reliable source for an answer.

Regarding sexual orientation, Girl Scouts of the USA holds fast to a commitment to embrace diversity and has in place a policy that prohibits discriminatory treatment of any kind, including on the basis of one's sexual orientation. This policy, which applies to interactions with adults and girls, must be honored by

every person working in the Girl Scout movement. Keep in mind that it is not appropriate to ask or assume what a girl's sexual orientation is.

### PARENT INFRACTIONS

Usually, parental participation in GSBB is an incentive for consistent good behavior on their part, since a breach of prison rules could disqualify a mother from continued participation in the program. Unfortunately, there may be times when a mother compromises her good standing and winds up ineligible to receive one or more visits from her daughter. In some cases, depending on the infraction, a mother could be permanently banned from participating in GSBB.

The impact of such an occurrence on a girl in GSBB could be devastating, and it becomes an issue not only for the mother and daughter, but also for GSBB staff as well. What are some ways to deal with it?

#### WHEN A MOTHER IS BANNED FROM PARTICIPATING IN GSBB

Remember that your accountability is to the girl, not her mother. While you may be just as disappointed as the girl, it is not your responsibility to censure her mother. Focus your energies on helping the girl understand and manage her feelings about what has happened. She may be hurt, angry, or embarrassed, or feel rejected. Reassure her that her mother's actions are not her fault.

Encourage her to talk to you or someone else about how she is feeling. Seek out the expertise of prison or school counselors or caseworkers. They may be able to offer helpful clinical services.

Do not negotiate on behalf of the mother, but ask when or if the mother will be able to continue her participation in GSBB, and let her daughter know.