



****See red box below for GSUSA statement on abortion.**

What We Stand For

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to answer some commonly asked questions about Girl Scouting, its principles, and its practices. It is designed to help all of us in the Girl Scout movement communicate what we stand for in a clear, consistent manner. It should be used to clarify the Girl Scout position on a variety of critical policy issues that may need to be relayed to the media, the general public, and our membership.

The statements in this document are designed to provide appropriate language related to Girl Scout positions on various issues. These statements are rooted in the long-standing beliefs and principles of the Girl Scout movement and are derived from other documents, including the Congressional Charter of Girl Scouts of the USA and the Preamble to the Constitution of Girl Scouts of the USA, as well as from actions taken on proposals at National Council Sessions and the policies, standards, and guidelines established by the National Board of Directors.

This booklet has been designed with one statement to each page, making it easier to locate a subject and to share the statement with external audiences. If you need to copy information from any page in this document to give to someone outside of Girl Scouting, we ask that you remove the citations. These cited resources are only to be referred to by the person putting together a Girl Scout statement for the media. Also, to assist in maintaining the Girl Scout brand voice in statements given by a council, the first section, The Girl Scout Voice, was designed as a one-page reference with key Girl Scout messages.

What We Stand For was written to help us move together in carrying out the Girl Scout mission. Therefore, it should not be widely distributed. It is a tool to help those entrusted with councils' communications efforts to clearly express our commitments and to state who we are, what we stand for, and why we matter.

Girl Scouts: Who We Are

Girl Scouts is the world's preeminent organization dedicated solely to girls -- all girls -- where, in an accepting and nurturing environment, girls build character and skills for success in the real world. In partnership with committed adults, girls develop qualities that will serve them all their lives -- like strong values, a social conscience, and conviction about their own potential and self-worth. In Girl Scouts, girls discover the fun, friendship, and power of girls together. Through the many enriching experiences provided by Girl Scouting, they grow courageous and strong.

The Girl Scout Purpose

The purpose of Girl Scouting is to inspire girls with the highest ideals of character, conduct, patriotism, and service that they may become happy and resourceful citizens.

The Girl Scout Tagline

Girl Scouts. Where Girls Grow Strong.

The Girl Scout Motto

Be Prepared

Key Aspects of Girl Scouting

Advocacy in Girl Scouting

In Girl Scouting, advocacy is a key component of helping girls, ages 5 - 17, to develop their full potential and become competent and resourceful citizens. Our advocacy efforts seek to inform and educate policy-makers and community leaders on the issues that directly affect girls and/or the corporate rights of Girl Scouts. These efforts include getting the community involved; influencing institutional practices and governmental policies at the federal, state, and local levels; and ensuring the fair enforcement and implementation of laws that impact on all girls and on Girl Scouting

Boy Scouts of America

Girl Scouting's Relationship with the Boy Scouts Boy Scouts of America is a totally separate organization from Girl Scouts of the USA. While some Girl Scout councils share programming activities with local Boy Scouts, the two organizations are governed separately. Girl Scouts of the USA does not comment on the policies and procedures of other organizations.

Diversity

Racial/Ethnic Data

The Girl Scout organization is committed to reflecting the racial and ethnic diversity of the United States in its membership. To that end, we ask our volunteer adult leaders to provide information on the racial and ethnic makeup of Girl Scout troops or groups. It is important to note that this information is not linked with the names of individual members, nor is it a consideration in the membership application process. Troop or group leaders record only numbers, not names, and such data are collected only after a person has already become a member of the Girl Scouts.

References:

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

-Pluralism and Diversity in Girl Membership, p. 21

-Criteria and Standards for an Effective Girl Scout Council, Criterion I, Standard 1, p. 32

Girl Scout Councils

Responsibilities: Girl Scout councils are chartered by Girl Scouts of the USA to deliver the Girl Scout program to all girls ages 5 -17 and to further the development of the Girl Scout movement in the United States. Councils are responsible for carrying out Girl Scout program activities, recruiting and supporting adult volunteers, governing and managing Girl Scouting in their jurisdictions, securing funds for council expenses, and promoting Girl Scouting in the community.

Girl Scout Council Charter

Every Girl Scout council is issued a charter from Girl Scouts of the USA every four years at the recommendation of the National Board of Directors. Prior to charter renewal, the council conducts an assessment of its performance over the past four years. It is then determined whether the council is meeting all charter requirements. If so, the charter is issued with or without qualifications. Currently, there are over 300 chartered Girl Scout councils in the United States, Puerto Rico, and the United States Virgin Islands.

Girl Scout Awards

The Girl Scout Gold Award

The Girl Scout Gold Award -- Girl Scouting's highest honor -- evolved from a long line of special Girl Scout awards. The equivalent of the Boy Scout Eagle Scout recognition, this prestigious award recognizes the work of Senior Girl Scouts who have achieved outstanding accomplishments in the areas of leadership, community service, career planning, and personal development. Each girl working toward the Girl Scout Gold Award must complete five requirements related to these areas, including spending a minimum of 50 hours planning and implementing a Girl Scout service project that has a positive and lasting impact on the community.

Girl Scouts who are in grades 9-12 or are 14-17 years of age are eligible to earn the award. Approximately 3,000 Girl Scouts earn the Girl Scout Gold Award annually, and are acknowledged by many governmental, national, and local organizations. A growing number of colleges and universities award scholarships and grants to Girl Scout Gold Award recipients.

References:

A Resource Book for Senior Girl Scouts (1995 ed.), pp. 167-173

The Girl Scout Silver Award

The Girl Scout Silver Award is the highest award a girl can earn as a Cadette Girl Scout. This award recognizes the efforts of girls who are in grades 6-9, or are ages 11-14, in a range of Girl Scout and community experiences, as well as recognizing their commitment to work to better their lives and the lives of others. Each girl working to achieve the Girl Scout Silver Award must complete four requirements that will help her build leadership and living skills, explore career possibilities, and make a commitment to improving herself. After these criteria are met, the final requirement is to design and carry out a Girl Scout Silver Award project that takes a minimum of 30 hours to complete.

References:

Cadette Girl Scout Handbook (1995 ed.) pp. 135-138

The Girl Scout Bronze Award

The Girl Scout Bronze Award is the highest award a girl can earn as a Junior Girl Scout. This award recognizes the efforts of girls who are in grades 3-6, or are ages 8-11, in a range of Girl Scout and community experiences, as well as recognizing their commitment to work to better their lives and the lives of others. Each girl working to achieve the Girl Scout Bronze Award must do a service project that demonstrates that she understands and lives by the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

References:

Junior Girl Scout Handbook (2001 ed.)

The Girl Scout Service Mark

The Girl Scout service mark and the tagline “Girl Scouts. Where Girls Grow Strong.” are highly recognized symbols and brand names that represent the fine reputation of our movement. They are owned by Girl Scouts of the USA, the national organization, which is responsible for legally protecting these trademarks and ensuring their continued integrity. Failure to protect the trademarks can result in their misuse and even their eventual loss. For these reasons, Girl Scouts must take care in how and where our trademarks are used. We do this in order to protect the name, reputation, and rights of the entire organization.

Local Girl Scout councils have the right to use the Girl Scout name and trademarks in carrying out the Girl Scout program. However, the Girl Scout name and trademarks may not be used on items for resale or by persons or groups outside of Girl Scouting without prior written approval of Girl Scouts of the USA.

References:

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

-Congressional Charter,” Sec. 6, p. 6

-Constitution of Girl Scouts of the United States of America, Article XV, p. 14

-Credentials section, p. 27

The Girl Scout Trademark (1995 ed.)

Girl Scout Week

Girl Scouts across the country celebrate the week that includes March 12 as “Girl Scout Week” because March 12 is the anniversary of the founding of Girl Scouting in the United States. This week was designated by the National Council as Girl Scout Week in October 1953. The week begins with the Sunday on or prior to March 12, and concludes the following Saturday. During Girl Scout Week it is customary for Girl Scout troops or groups to do a service project and to learn more about the history of Girl Scouting, about the life of founder Juliette Gordon Low, or about the government in their own communities.

Uniforms

Girl Scouts wear uniforms to show their pride in belonging to a movement whose mission is held in high regard by the American people. While a uniform is not a requirement for membership in the Girl Scouts, girl and adult members are encouraged to wear one. There is a wide choice of uniform components, so that some part of the uniform can be affordable for every girl. The uniform provides visibility and recognition for members, and helps all girls in a group to show they belong, regardless of individual socioeconomic status or family circumstances.

References:

Safety-Wise (2000 ed.)

-Program Standard 11, “Girl Scout Membership Pins and Uniforms,” p. 68

Nondiscrimination

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), HIV Positive

Girls and Adults

The Girl Scouts value diversity and inclusiveness and, therefore, do not discriminate on any basis. Since Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is transmitted only through sexual contact and the exchange of blood and blood products, girls and adults who have AIDS or are HIV positive are invited to participate in Girl Scout activities. In those rare instances when an injury might occur, we provide procedures to ensure everyone’s safety.

References:

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

-”Pluralism and Diversity in Girl Membership,” p. 21

-”Selection of Adults,” p. 21

Safety-Wise (2000 ed.)

-AIDS, p. 43

-First Aid and Infectious Diseases, p. 38

Employees with AIDS

The Girl Scouts value diversity and inclusiveness and, therefore, do not discriminate on any basis. People with AIDS and those who are HIV positive are generally protected under federal, state, and local anti-discrimination laws. Girl Scout employees who are diagnosed with AIDS or are HIV positive are treated no differently from those with any other catastrophic illness. Girl Scout personnel policies and practices apply to these employees in the same manner as they do to other employees.

References:

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

-EEO/Affirmative Action for Employed Staff, p. 21

Lifestyles

Sexual Orientation

The Girl Scouts value diversity and inclusiveness and, therefore, do not discriminate on any basis. However, we do not permit the advocacy or promotion of a personal lifestyle or sexual orientation, nor do we recruit accordingly. Indeed, we have firm standards relating to appropriate conduct on the part of all adults who work with girls. We believe that sexual orientation is a private matter for girls and their families to address.

References:

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

-Constitution of Girl Scouts of the United States of America, "Preamble," p. 7

-"Selection of Adults," p. 21

-"Membership Requirements," p. 25

People with Disabilities

Adults with Developmental Disabilities

The Girl Scouts value diversity and inclusiveness and, therefore, do not discriminate on any basis. It has been a long-standing practice of the Girl Scout organization to serve members according to their chronological age. This is in accordance with current expert opinion, which stresses age-appropriateness for all activities. Mentally retarded women (ages 21 and above) are the chronological peers of Girl Scout adults, and we help them participate as adults to the greatest extent possible. Young women who are mentally retarded may, if they wish, retain their girl membership until they reach their 21st birthday or until they complete high school or its equivalent.

References:

Focus on Ability: Serving Girls with Special Needs (1998 ed.)

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

-"Membership Requirements," p. 25

Safety-Wise (2000 ed.)

-Program Standard 1, "Girl Scout Program -- Its Foundation and Goals," p. 63

Girls with Disabilities

The Girl Scouts value diversity and inclusiveness and, therefore, do not discriminate on any basis. We have a long history of adapting activities for girls who have special needs, including those who have physical or mental disabilities and those who are chronically ill, including girls who have AIDS or are HIV positive.

References:

Focus on Ability: Serving Girls with Special Needs (1998 ed.)

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

"Pluralism and Diversity in Girl Membership," p. 21

Safety-Wise (2000 ed.)

Program Standard 19, "Pluralism and Diversity of Groups," p. 71

Program Standard 1, "Girl Scout Program -- Its Foundation and Goals," p. 63

Endorsements

Fundraising for Other Organizations

When people give money to those identifying themselves as Girl Scouts, they assume that they are helping provide Girl Scouting to girls in their community. It would be misleading and a breach of the public trust to use the Girl Scout name to raise money for another purpose, no matter how noble. Therefore, all money raised in the name of Girl Scouting must be used for that purpose.

References:

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

"Control of Funds," p. 23

"Solicitation of Contributions," p. 23

Safety-Wise (2000 ed.)

Program Standard 33, "Fund-Raising for Other Organizations," p. 76

Political Endorsements

As a not-for-profit organization, the Girl Scouts may take action only on legislation that directly affects the corporate rights, responsibilities, and purposes of Girl Scouting. Individual members may not take action on legislation or participate in any political activity that supports or opposes a candidate for public office, in their capacities as Girl Scouts. Such activities as conducting a flag ceremony at a political rally or appearing in an advertisement for a political candidate -- where the person is clearly being identified as a Girl Scout -- are

prohibited. Some Girl Scout troops or groups conduct activities that describe the political process and the importance of voting. These activities are designed to be informative and do not advocate one position over another.

References:

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

“Political and Legislative Activity,” p. 22

Safety-Wise (2000 ed.)

Program Standard 35, “Political Activity,” p. 77

Product Endorsements

In Girl Scouting, our first commitment is to our members and to the values and reputation of Girl Scouting. Before associating ourselves with an outside group, we first consider the potential impact on the Girl Scout movement. Girl Scout policies place certain restrictions on both direct and indirect endorsements of commercial products or services. Therefore, before even considering an endorsement, we must determine whether the product or service lives up to Girl Scout standards and principles, and is beneficial to the girls we serve.

References:

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

“Permission for Commercial Endorsements,” pp. 23-24

“Individual Testimonials,” p. 24

Voluntary Participation

For over 70 years, Girl Scout cookie activities have helped girls learn invaluable skills, such as decision-making, money management, and delivering on a promise. These activities are directly related to our mission of helping all girls realize their full potential and become strong, confident, and resourceful citizens. Each girl’s participation in cookie activities is voluntary. Most Brownie, Junior, Cadette, and Senior Girl Scouts enjoy the experience and look forward to taking part in these fun activities each year. Daisy Girl Scouts must wait until they are Brownie Girl Scouts to sell Girl Scout cookies.

Every girl participating in cookie activities must have written permission from her parent or guardian.

References:

Safety-Wise (2000 ed.)

Program Standard 28, “Activities Involving Money,” p. 74

Program Standard 29, “Group Money-Earning Activities,” pp. 74-75

Program Standard 30, “Council-Sponsored Product Sale Activities,” p. 75

Activity checkpoints, “Planning and Supervision,” “Clothing,” “Order-Taking and Selling,” p. 131

Benefits to Girls

For over 70 years, Girl Scout cookie activities have helped girls learn invaluable skills, such as decision-making, money management, and delivering on a promise. These activities are directly related to our mission of helping all girls realize their full potential and become strong, confident, and resourceful citizens.

Direct Benefits

Selling Girl Scout cookies is a fun program activity that teaches girls how to set realistic goals, work as a team, manage money, and be entrepreneurs. Each troop or group that sells cookies earns money for its treasury and plans how to spend that money to achieve its goals. The proceeds are used for field trips, service projects, and other activities. In addition, Girl Scouts can earn age-appropriate proficiency awards as part of their experience with cookie activities.

Indirect Benefits

On a broader scope, girls benefit by participating in a wide range of Girl Scout activities made possible by the local council with proceeds from its annual cookie activities. “Cookie revenue” helps to provide the financial assistance needed to make Girl

Scouting available for all girls, to fund special events and other program opportunities, to keep event/camp fees for all members to a minimum, to improve and maintain camp and other activity sites, and to recruit and train volunteer leaders.

References:

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

Constitution of Girl Scouts of the United States of America, Article VII, “Local Girl Scout Councils,” p. 11

“Girl Scout Council Authority and Responsibility,” p. 22

Safety-Wise (2000 ed.)

Money Earned from Girl Scout Cookie Activities

For over 70 years, Girl Scout cookie activities have helped girls learn invaluable skills, such as decision-making, money management, and delivering on a promise. These activities are directly related to our mission of helping all girls realize their full potential and become strong, confident, and resourceful citizens.

All of the money earned from cookie activities stays within the local Girl Scout council to supply essential services to troops, groups, and girls. This includes providing program resources and communication support, training adult volunteers, and conducting special events. It also includes the percentage given back to the individual troop or group that sold the cookies. Girls do not receive the money individually; instead, they decide as a troop or group how to spend it.

Revenue from cookie activities helps keep Girl Scouting affordable and provides the financial assistance needed to make Girl Scouting available for all girls. In general, cookie activities account for a significant portion of a council's operating budget. Therefore, these activities are critical to local Girl Scouting in that they make Girl Scouting, in large measure, self-supporting for the council.

Safety While Selling Girl Scout Cookies

For over 70 years, Girl Scout cookie activities have helped girls learn invaluable skills, such as decision-making, money management, and delivering on a promise. These activities are directly related to our mission of helping all girls realize their full potential and become strong, confident, and resourceful citizens.

In Girl Scouting, the safety and security of our girl members are our primary concern. That is why Girl Scout councils have guidelines that must be followed when girls sell cookies. Each girl participating in the cookie sale must have written permission from her parent or guardian. Older Girl Scouts (at least 12 years of age) must use the "buddy system" and work with other girls while selling, and younger Girl Scouts (6 to 11 years) must be accompanied by an adult. Daisy Girl Scouts (age 5 or 6) may not sell cookies.

Reference:

Safety-Wise (2000 ed.)

Program Standard 28, "Activities Involving Money," p. 74

Program Standard 29, "Group Money-Earning Activities," pp. 74-75

Program Standard 30, "Council-Sponsored Product Sale Activities," p. 75

Activity checkpoints, "Planning and Supervision," "Clothing," "Order-Taking and Selling," p. 131

Selling Girl Scout Cookies on the Internet

For over 70 years, Girl Scout cookie activities have helped girls learn invaluable skills, such as decision-making, money management, and delivering on a promise. These activities are directly related to our mission of helping all girls realize their full potential and become strong, confident, and resourceful citizens.

As with every Girl Scout activity, we are committed to the safety and security of our girl members when they participate in Girl Scout cookie activities. We realize that the Web is a wide-open medium that can attract more than our intended audience, including cyberstalkers who prey on children. And since there is no way to verify that an order for cookies goes to an actual Girl Scout, there is the possibility of fraud. Therefore, girls may not sell Girl Scout cookies by posting information or making transactions on a Web site on the Internet. However, they can use email to let their friends and relatives know about the sale.

These activities may also not be conducted by adults. Adults serve in a supporting role for girls but should not assume sole responsibility for sales and may not engage in selling Girl Scout cookies on the Internet.

Reference:

Safety-Wise (2000 ed.)

Exemption from Federal Taxes

For over 70 years, Girl Scout cookie activities have helped girls learn invaluable skills, such as decision-making, money management, and delivering on a promise. These activities are directly related to our mission of helping all girls realize their full potential and become strong, confident, and resourceful citizens. Girl Scout cookie activities, held once a year for a limited time, are directly related to the mission of the Girl Scout movement and its program. All cookie sale proceeds fund nonprofit Girl Scout activities in local communities. For these reasons, Girl Scout cookie sales are exempt from federal taxes. In a few states, Girl Scout cookie sales by local councils are subject to state sales tax.

Purchase of Girl Scout Cookies as Charitable Contributions

For over 70 years, Girl Scout cookie activities have helped girls learn invaluable skills, such as decision-making, money management, and delivering on a promise. These activities are directly related to our mission of helping all girls realize their full potential and become strong, confident, and resourceful citizens.

Individuals who buy Girl Scout cookies and take the cookies home or consume the cookies have purchased a product at a fair market value. For this reason, no part of the price of a box of Girl Scout cookies is tax-deductible.

Many Girl Scouts ask customers to pay for one or more boxes of cookies for use with their community service project -- for example, collecting for a food pantry. These customers do not receive any Girl Scout cookies and so do not benefit directly from paying for the cookies. These individuals may treat the purchase price of the cookies as a charitable contribution.

Cookie Bakers

For over 70 years, Girl Scout cookie activities have helped girls learn invaluable skills, such as decision-making, money management, and delivering on a promise. These activities are directly related to our mission of helping all girls realize their full potential and become strong, confident, and resourceful citizens.

Girl Scout cookies are produced by members of American labor unions at commercial bakeries located in the United States. They are made

with American-grown agricultural products and wrapped in American-made packaging materials. The three companies currently licensed to bake Girl Scout cookies are ABC/Interbake Foods, headquartered in Richmond, Virginia; Consolidated Biscuit Company, headquartered in McComb, Ohio; and Little Brownie Bakers, headquartered in Louisville, Kentucky.

Ingredients

There are several varieties of Girl Scout cookies, and, as with any dessert product, Girl Scout cookies are best eaten in moderation. So that consumers can make an informed choice, the ingredients and nutritional profile of each variety are clearly listed on both the cookie box and the cookie order form. All varieties of Girl Scout cookies are kosher.

The Girl Scout Promise

Flexibility

The Girl Scout organization does not endorse or promote any particular philosophy or religious belief. Our movement is secular and is founded on American democratic principles, one of which is freedom of religion. That is why Girl Scouting provides flexibility in speaking the Girl Scout Promise. An individual member may use the word or words for “God” that best reflect her own spiritual beliefs. While we believe the motivating force in Girl Scouting is a spiritual one, we do not attempt to dictate the form or style of a member’s worship. Religion is a private matter for girls and their families to address.

The Girl Scout Promise is always written as follows:

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.

References:

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

Congressional Charter of Girl Scouts of the United States of America, Section 3, p. 5 (reference to Girl Scout movement as nonsectarian)

Constitution of Girl Scouts of the United States of America, “Preamble,” Beliefs and Principles, p. 7

“Flexibility in Wording for Spiritual Beliefs in the Girl Scout Promise,” p. 22

Appropriate Wording

The Girl Scout organization does not endorse or promote any particular philosophy or religious belief. Our movement is secular and is founded on American democratic principles, one of which is freedom of religion.

In the event that a girl chooses what appears to be inappropriate wording for “God,” the Girl Scout troop leader, in conjunction with the girl’s family, will help the girl find a substitute word or words. Flexibility in expressing the Promise can empower girls to more closely examine their own spiritual beliefs and motivate them to discuss these important matters with their families. The way in which a girl fulfills her beliefs is a matter for her to decide with her family and is not defined by the Girl Scout organization.

References:

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

“Place of Religion in the Girl Scout Program,” p. 22

“Respect for Religious Opinions and Practices,” p. 22

“Troops Sponsored by Religious Groups,” p. 22

Religion

The Girl Scout organization does not endorse or promote any particular philosophy or religious belief. Our movement is secular and is founded on American democratic principles, one of which is freedom of religion. Each individual decides whether she or he can meet our membership requirements, which include making the Girl Scout Promise. While we believe the motivating force in Girl Scouting is a spiritual one, we do not attempt to dictate the form of a member’s worship. We believe that religious beliefs are private matters for girls and their families to address.

References:

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

Congressional Charter of Girl Scouts of the United States of America, Section 3, p. 5 (reference to Girl Scout movement as nonsectarian)

Constitution of Girl Scouts of the United States of America, “Preamble,” p. 7

“Pluralism and Diversity in Girl Membership,” p. 21

“Membership Requirements,” p. 25

Days of Worship During Girl Scout Week

The Girl Scout organization does not endorse or promote any particular philosophy or religious belief. Our movement is secular and is founded on American democratic principles, one of which is freedom of religion.

“Girl Scout Week” begins with the Sunday on or prior to March 12, and concludes the following Saturday. This allows members of diverse faiths to celebrate Girl Scouting on their chosen day of worship. In many communities and places of worship, a Girl Scout flier produced by the national organization is inserted into bulletins and programs of churches, synagogues, and other places of worship.

Graces, Blessings, and Invocations

The Girl Scout organization does not endorse or promote any particular philosophy or religious belief. Our movement is secular and is founded on American democratic principles, one of which is freedom of religion.

Although Girl Scouts has policies supporting religious diversity, there is no policy by Girl Scouts of the USA that prohibits or requires the saying or singing of a grace, blessing, or invocation before meals by Girl Scout members in a troop/group setting, in a resident or day camp, or at meetings, conferences, and other large events. The decision to say a grace, blessing, or invocation is made locally at the troop or group level, and should be sensitive to the spiritual beliefs of all participants.

References:

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

“Place of Religion in the Girl Scout Program,” p. 22

“Respect for Religious Opinions and Practices,” p. 22

“Flexibility in Wording for Spiritual Beliefs in the Girl Scout Promise,” p. 22

“Troops Sponsored by Religious Groups,” p. 22

Safety-Wise (2000 ed.)

Program Standard 19, “Pluralism and Diversity of Groups,” p. 71

Prayer in Schools

The Girl Scout organization does not endorse or promote any particular philosophy or religious belief. Our movement is secular and is founded on American democratic principles, one of which is freedom of religion.

The Girl Scout organization does not take a position on prayer in schools. Instead, we encourage each member to establish for herself the nature of her spiritual beliefs. We believe that prayer in schools is a private matter for girls and their families to address together.

References:

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

“Respect for Religious Opinions and Practices,” p. 22

Gun Control

The Girl Scout organization does not take a position on any political issue related to gun control at the state or federal level. We believe that gun control is a private matter for girls and their families to address together.

Firearms/Hunting

The Girl Scout organization does not support or take a position on the political issue of gun control at the federal or state level.

Hunting is not permitted as a Girl Scout activity. Girls who wish to take part in hunting activities do so with and under the guidance of their families. If a possible Girl Scout activity involves the use of firearms, the troop or group leader must obtain written permission from the local council. Such an event may not involve girls under 12 years of age and must take place under the guidance of certified instructors. Parental permission must be obtained.

References:

Safety-Wise (2000 ed.)

“The Parent or Guardian,” p. 10

“Activities That Are Not Permitted,” p. 80

Sexuality

Abortion and Birth Control

The Girl Scout organization does not take a position on abortion or birth control. Our membership is a cross-section of America’s diversity with regard to religious opinions and practices. We believe these matters are best decided by girls and their families.

References:

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

“Respect for Religious Opinions and Practices,” p. 22

Sex Education

In some areas of the country, depending on community norms and in response to requests, Girl Scout troops or groups may hold discussions about human sexuality. In all instances, the topic is discussed from an informative rather than advocacy point of view. Participation in these discussions is totally optional, and each girl who participates must provide written consent from her parent or guardian.

In addition, dating and relationship issues are briefly treated in the Junior, Cadette, and Senior Girl Scout handbooks, but again, from an informative rather than advocacy view.

References:

Safety-Wise (2000 ed.)

“Guidelines for Sensitive Issues,” p. 40

Membership Requirements

Girls

Membership in Girl Scouting is granted to any girl, 5 to 17 years of age, who makes the Girl Scout Promise and accepts the Girl Scout Law, and has paid annual membership dues.

References:

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

“Membership Requirements,” p. 25

Adults

Membership as a Girl Scout adult is granted to any person who accepts the organization’s principles and beliefs as stated in the Preamble of the Constitution of Girl Scouts of the USA, and has paid annual membership dues.

Lifetime membership is also available to a person 18 years of age or older, or to a high school graduate or equivalent.

Membership standards are set by the national organization, Girl Scouts of the USA.

References:

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

Constitution of Girl Scouts of the United States of America, “Preamble,” p. 7

“Selection of Adults,” p. 21

“Membership Requirements,” p. 25

Men

The Girl Scouts value diversity and inclusiveness and, therefore, do not discriminate on any basis. Every volunteer and staff position in Girl Scouting is open to qualified men, as well as women.

Because we believe that female role models are especially important to young girls during their developing years, men working directly with girls must serve as co-leaders with women leaders of troops or groups.

References:

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

Constitution of Girl Scouts of the United States of America, “Preamble,” p. 7

“Selection of Adults,” p. 21

“Membership Requirements,” p. 25

Boys

Girl Scouting exists only to serve girls. Our many years of experience show that girls have unique needs and interests that are best met in a program designed especially for them, delivered in an all-girl setting. A great deal of research supports this conviction.

We recognize that boys have unique needs and interests as well, which are addressed by organizations designed to meet their specific needs.

References:

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

Constitution of Girl Scouts of the United States of America, “Preamble,” p. 7

“Membership Requirements,” p. 25

Adult Selection

An application process exists for all adult positions in Girl Scouting. Candidates complete a written application form, provide references, and participate in a face-to-face interview. There are written personnel policies for Girl Scout volunteers and staff, and we make every effort to ensure that an applicant fully understands the policies prior to accepting a position.

References:

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

“Selection of Adults,” p. 21

Volunteer Management System in Girl Scouting

Child Abuse

The Girl Scouts’ primary concern is always the health and safety of the girls we serve. All adults who work with girls are carefully selected. Candidates complete an application process, including providing references and participating in a face-to-face interview. Adults participate in periodic evaluations of their job performance, whether they are volunteers or staff.

Adults who work directly with girls receive training in how to recognize girls who are victims of abuse. Additional resources are also available, designed to help girls develop behaviors and attitudes that increase their personal safety.

If a leader or council receives a report of child abuse by an adult member in Girl Scouting, they are instructed to take immediate action to protect the girls in their care. The report is immediately conveyed to the appropriate law enforcement and social welfare authorities. While we believe that a person is innocent until proven otherwise, we do require that the adult involved suspend all Girl Scout activities until the matter is resolved. We cooperate fully with investigating authorities and provide all possible supports to the affected girls and their families.

References:

Volunteer Management System in Girl Scouting

Safety-Wise (2000 ed.)

“Child Abuse,” pp. 41-42

Program Activities

The Girl Scouts' primary concern is always the health and safety of the girls we serve. All activities are planned and carried out in accordance with program standards and guidelines established by Girl Scouts of the USA, which are designed to safeguard the well-being of both girl and adult members. These guidelines also ensure that program activities are appropriate for the age level of the girls participating in them. Girl Scout guidelines are published in a book called *Safety-Wise*, which is distributed free of charge to all Girl Scout troop or group leaders.

References:

Safety-Wise (2000 ed.)

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

"Health and Safety," p. 22

"Girl Scout Council Authority and Responsibility," p. 22

Camping Activities

The Girl Scouts' primary concern is always the health and safety of the girls we serve. Girl Scouts of the USA has policies, program standards, and guidelines to ensure that girls engaged in camping activities are safeguarded, as well as that the camping activity being planned is appropriate to the age level. Girl Scout councils are required to comply with GSUSA policies and standards on health and safety, to have procedures in place for approving campsites, to require that leaders be trained according to Girl Scout standards, and to obtain all proper permissions.

References:

Blue Book of Basic Documents 2000

"Health and Safety," p. 22

"Girl Scout Council Authority and Responsibility," p. 22

Safety-Wise (2000 ed.)

Program Standard 8, "Girl Scout Camping," p. 66

Program Standard 14, "Health, Safety, and Security -- Adult Supervision and Preparation," p. 70

Program Standard 18, "Adult Leadership -- Girl Scout Camps," p. 71

Program Standard 23, "Girl Scout Camps," p. 72

Program Standard 24, "Overnight Trips, Camping," p. 73

Safety of Girls Using the Internet

The Girl Scouts' primary concern is always the health and safety of the girls we serve. While the Internet is a powerful informational resource for girls, we realize that the Web is a wide-open medium that can attract more than our intended audience, including cyberstalkers who prey on children. To ensure that girls are safe when conducting activities on the Internet, Girl Scouts of the USA has established policies, standards, and guidelines for both councils and girls.

References:

Safety-Wise (2000 ed.)

"Planning and Supervision," p. 128

"Product Sales," p. 129

"Cyberspace Safety," p. 130

"My Online Safety Pledge," p. 130

Internet Sales Policy

The Girl Scouts' primary concern is always the health and safety of the girls we serve. While the Internet is a powerful informational resource for girls, for safety and security reasons, sales on a Web site on the Internet that are regarded as "council-sponsored product sales" -- such as the sale of Girl Scout cookies, candy, nuts, calendars, or magazine subscriptions -- may not be conducted on the Internet by anyone at any time. This policy applies to individual girls, parents, and other adults.

Sales on the Internet of Girl Scout merchandise -- such as uniforms, insignia, publications, and equipment -- may only be conducted by duly authorized and licensed Girl Scout councils, council shops, retail agencies, and/or GSUSA licensed vendors.

Permission to sell on the Internet must be obtained from GSUSA.

References:

Adopted by the National Board of Directors, June 4, 2000 (will be included in the 2003 edition of the *Blue Book of Basic Documents*)