



Girl Scouts of Colorado Abuse Prevention and Reporting Policy

Maintaining a safe and nurturing environment for children participating in Girl Scouts of Colorado programs is the top priority and the responsibility of all employees and volunteers. Physical, verbal, emotional or sexual abuse of girls is forbidden and is not tolerated within Girl Scouts of Colorado. Sexual pressure, sexual advances, improper touching, sexual communication, such as text messaging, and sexual activity of any kind with Girl Scout members is not tolerated.

The adult supervision requirements and adult-to-youth ratios in Safety Activity Checkpoints must always be met. Girl Scouts has a strict standard that whenever Girl Scouts meet, whether in person or virtually, there are to be at least two unrelated, registered, and Girl Scout-approved adults who have been background checked, and one of whom is female, supervising Girl Scout members. An adult is never to be alone with one-to-one access to a minor in a closed door or transportation situation (with the exception of their own child). If you witness or experience any behavior of this nature, notify appropriate council staff or risk.management@gscolorado.org immediately.

Incidences of abuse of any kind will result in immediate council intervention.

Volunteers are responsible for following GSCO's guidelines for reporting any direct information or concern around physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse with respect to girls. Even if staff or volunteers do not fall within a [Colorado mandatory reporter category](#), GSCO still requires all staff and volunteers to report any suspected abuse.

How to Report Suspected Child Abuse or Maltreatment:

National: The Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with professional crisis counselors who have access to emergency, social service, and support resources. Contact them at (800) 4-A-CHILD or (800) 422-4453.

Colorado: The Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline, 844-CO-4-Kids. The hotline serves as a direct, immediate and efficient route to the counties, which are responsible for accepting and responding to child abuse and neglect inquiries and reports. All hotline calls will be routed to the county where a child resides.



Any actions which could harm or endanger a child are strictly prohibited, and all suspected child abuse must be reported immediately. Sexual advances, improper touching, and sexual activity of any kind with girl members, as well as physical, verbal and emotional abuse of girls is strictly forbidden. Girl Scouts of Colorado has zero tolerance for all forms of abuse. It is required that suspected child abuse by an employee, volunteer, or any other party engaging with Girl Scouts must be reported immediately to the Chief Risk Management Officer at risk.management@gscolorado.org and the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline.

If an employee or volunteer believes a girl is in immediate danger, they should call 911 immediately.

The Girl Scouts of Colorado will not tolerate:

- Infliction of any abusive behavior or bodily injury upon children; including sexual and physical abuse or molestation.
- Neglect of children
- Emotional maltreatment of children, including verbal abuse and/or verbal attacks.

Additional information and definitions on the types of abuse can be found by following the below links:

[Emotional Abuse](#)

[Physical Abuse](#)

[Sexual Abuse](#)

[Child Trafficking](#)

The Girl Scouts of Colorado reserves the right to refuse membership, to dismiss, or to exclude from affiliation with the Girl Scouts of Colorado, any employee or volunteer who has been convicted of child abuse/neglect or been found to have committed sexual advances, improper touching, and sexual activity of any kind with girl members, as well as physical, verbal, and emotional abuse.



Alleged Abuse by Employee or Volunteer

If you have reason to suspect an employee or volunteer of child abuse or neglect, immediately notify the Chief Risk Management Officer at risk.management@gscolorado.org of the suspicion. They will guide you to complete an incident report.

The Chief Risk Management Officer, the employee, or the volunteer will make a report to the applicable Department of Human Services and/or police within 24 hours of receiving the report. They will stay in communication and follow-up with the authorities on the status of the investigation. The employee or volunteer suspected of child abuse will be removed from any duties that require contact with children or access to children's information during the investigation. Other appropriate action may be taken, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer role.

Responding to Youth-to-Youth Abuse

Youth-serving organizations' response to youth-to-youth is another critical aspect of ensuring the continued safety of youth. There may be ambiguity in defining normal developmental and inappropriate behaviors. Girl Scouts of Colorado should respond to every sexual peer interaction to eliminate staff and volunteer subjectivity. This includes an internal response within GSCO and an external report. As a part of the internal response, an incident report should be completed to provide a detailed record of all potentially problematic behaviors. Please contact risk.management@gscolorado.org to report concerns of youth-to-youth abuse.

Additionally, staff and volunteers should report any and all youth-to-youth abuse externally to investigating bodies like Child Protective Services and law enforcement. If a child is in immediate danger, please call 911 immediately.

The Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline, 844-CO-4-Kids. The hotline serves as a direct, immediate and efficient route to the counties, which are responsible for accepting and responding to child abuse and neglect inquiries and reports. All hotline calls will be routed to the county where a child resides.

This comprehensive response procedure allows:



- The children involved access to appropriate resources
- Assurance of safety for other children in programming
- Redirection of the harmful behavior
- Identification of the source of the sexual conduct or original abuse
- Clear communication to staff and volunteers of standardized response procedure

Policy Acknowledgment: All employees and volunteers are required to sign an acknowledgement that they have read and understand their responsibility to report any suspected child abuse. Any employee who is found to have violated this policy and procedure will be subject to immediate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Confidentiality: Reports of alleged abuse are to remain confidential and only shared with individuals directly involved in the allegation and investigation. This is for the safety and privacy of all involved. Please contact risk.management@gscolorado.org if you have questions about confidentiality.

Retaliation: GSCO does not tolerate retaliation. No one who in good faith reports a violation shall suffer harassment, retaliation or adverse employment consequence. Additional resources:

- Additional resources:
- [U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Child Abuse and Neglect](#)
- [U.S. Department of Health & Human Services: How to Report Child Abuse and Neglect](#)
- General Federal Information on Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect: [Mandatory Reporters](#)
- [Colorado Information on Mandatory Reporters](#)
- [CDC Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention](#)



Youth Violence and Bullying

Youth violence or bullying is also not tolerated in Girl Scouts. Youth violence occurs when young people intentionally use physical force or power to threaten or harm others. Bullying is a form of youth violence. Volunteers should become familiar with the signs, risk factors, and preventive measures against this type of behavior. If you witness or experience any behavior of this nature, notify the appropriate council staff for guidance.

The CDC provides excellent resources on this topic, including:

- [CDC Youth Violence](#)
- [CDC Bullying](#)
- [CDC Youth Violence Prevention Mental Health and Safety.](#)

As an adult volunteer overseeing the activities and behaviors of young girls, and similar to child abuse, you may witness other signs of harmful tendencies such as self-harm. Self-harm can take a physical form such as cutting, burning, bruising, excessive scratching, hair pulling, poisoning, or drug use. Other tendencies of self-harm are suicidal ideations that can be expressed verbally or with the written word. Another harmful expression involves harm to others which can be detected verbally or with physical aggression. If a situation of this nature is observed or comes to your attention in any form, always notify an appropriate council staff member immediately and follow your council guidelines with respect to the next steps. The CDC provides informative guidance around identifying and responding to harmful behaviors:

Self-Directed Violence and Other Forms of Self-Injury and also a section on at-risk youth Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Youth at Risk. Here are a few signs that could indicate a girl needs expert help:

- Marked changes in behavior or personality (for example, unusual moodiness, aggressiveness, or sensitivity).
- Declining academic performance and/or inability to concentrate.
- Withdrawal from school, family activities, or friendships.



- Fatigue, apathy, or loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities.
- Sleep disturbances.
- Increased secretiveness.
- Deterioration in appearance and personal hygiene.
- Eating extremes, unexplained weight loss, distorted body image.
- Tendency toward perfectionism.
- Giving away prized possessions; preoccupation with the subject of death.
- Unexplained injuries such as bruises, burns, or fractures.
- Avoidance of eye contact or physical contact.
- Excessive fearfulness or distrust of adults.
- Abusive behavior toward other children, especially younger ones.

Contact a staff member at GSCO to share your concerns. The GSCO team can help support, including finding out how to refer the girl and her parent/guardian to experts at school or in the community. If you believe a child is at risk and it is not feasible to share your concern with her family, please let GSCO staff know this. You can also reach out directly to risk.management@gscolorado.org