



Volunteer Relations Conflict Management RoadmapSM

For Volunteers



Updated: 8/8/2019

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Welcome to the Girl Scouts of North East Ohio (GSNEO) Volunteer RelationsSM Conflict Management Roadmap for Volunteers

The goal for the staff and volunteers of Girl Scouts of North East Ohio is to provide a high-quality Girl Scout Leadership Experience for girls, while ensuring their safety and well-being. Adults, serving as role models of leadership for girls, demonstrate it through their actions, attitude, and behavior. One key aspect of leadership is the ability to effectively work with others and the effective usage of communication and teamwork to achieve the desired goals and outcomes.

Differences of opinion, disagreements, and conflicts are inevitable parts of life. When they are handled constructively, they can actually enhance communication, improve relationships, and achieve a higher quality result or outcome. However, when disagreements or conflicts escalate, they interfere with the ability of adults to ensure a high-quality Girl Scout Leadership Experience for girls.

Volunteer Relations Consulting Group, LLC and GSNEO have developed this Volunteer RelationsSM Conflict Management Roadmap for volunteers in relationships with others in order to provide the highest quality Girl Scout Leadership Experience for all girls and adults.

Grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change
Courage to change the one I can change,
And wisdom to know it's me.

Special Thanks to:

Marla Benson, SPHR, Certified Workplace Mediator and President/Founder of *Volunteer Relations Consulting Group, LLC* for creating this customized Volunteer RelationsSM Roadmap.



con·flict

Conflict is a disagreement through which the parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concerns.

What is Volunteer RelationsSM?

Volunteer RelationsSM involves the body of work concerned with maintaining staff-volunteer, parent-volunteer, and volunteer-volunteer relationships that contribute to satisfactory productivity, motivation, and morale. Essentially, Volunteer RelationsSM is concerned with preventing and resolving problems involving individuals which arise out of or affect work situations and the Girl Scout Leadership Experience for girls and adults.

What Is Meant By 'Volunteer Conflict & Disputes?'

Conflict may be between volunteers, parents, troops, it does not matter what ones position is there is no choice but to manage that conflict towards an end.

Common issues include when volunteers/parents...

- Are in conflict or dispute with other volunteers, parents or staff that now interfere with mission and goals.
- Behave or communicate in a manner that is contrary to mission and goals.
- May deliver a threatening message to the organization including 'going to the media' or 'contacting a lawyer'.
- Do not perform the volunteer role as desired or required even with training and coaching.
- Have broken procedures, policies or laws in an extreme manner.
- Are in the wrong role for current knowledge, skills and/or abilities.

Where Does Conflict Originate?

Conflict arises from a clash of perceptions, goals, or values in an arena where people care about the outcome. The breeding ground for conflict may lie in confusion about, or disagreement with, the common purpose and how to achieve it while also achieving individual goals within an organization.

Conflict: Good or Bad?

'True' conflict is not necessarily destructive. Conflict can lead to new ideas and approaches to organizational processes and increase interest in dealing with problems. Conflict, in this sense, can be considered positive, as it facilitates the surfacing of important issues and provides opportunities for people to develop their communication and interpersonal skills. Conflict becomes negative when it is left to escalate to the point where people begin to feel defeated and a combative climate of distrust and suspicion develops (Bowditch & Buono, 1997).

GSNEO Proactive Approach to Managing Conflicts, Disputes & Difficult Conversations

Regardless of the role, people choose to be part of the Girl Scout movement because, as a parent or volunteer, they support the organization and believe in the mission that teaches girls to lead like a Girl Scout. For many individuals, Girl Scouts becomes part of who they are and their identity. When a passionate volunteer or parent

who identifies on a personal level with Girl Scouts is faced with a situation rooted in conflict, it can be challenging to resolve without getting emotionally charged.

The earlier that steps are taken to resolve the conflict, the more positive the outcome and the more likely the affected individuals will remain engaged with Girl Scouts.

Sometimes, issues appear from a complainant who either misunderstands or has incomplete information about their role or other aspect of Girl Scouting. As a GSNEO Volunteer, you are in a position to participate in and guide others with information that may answer their concerns including directing them to *Volunteer Essentials*, *Volunteer Policies*, the GSNEO website, and sharing your knowledge and expertise.

Common Sources of Conflict

1. **Unclear definition of responsibility** — there can be numerous occasions for conflict to arise over decisions made or actions taken in disputed territory.
2. **Limited resources** — time, money, space, materials, supplies, and equipment are all valuable resources. Competition for any of these resources can inevitably lead to interpersonal and interdepartmental conflict.
3. **Conflict of interest** — individuals may fight for their personal goals and lose sight of organizational goals. Each individual needs to know how his or her personal goals and efforts fit within the organizational goals and efforts.
4. **Unmet personal needs** - beyond the primary needs of every human being, those being food, clothing, and shelter:
 - The need to be loved, valued, and appreciated
 - The need to be in control – of ourselves and our destinies
 - The need for self-esteem. (Feel good about myself)-Denis Waitley

When one of these needs is unmet in an interaction or relationship, that relationship can suffer. When someone is 'acting out', look to this list to determine what may be lacking.

Using Common Language About Conflict

Like a fire, conflicts and disputes generally begin with one incident or misunderstanding, a **spark** that if addressed early on, can often be extinguished. When not addressed, the issues may continue or increase in severity becoming a **flame**. In situations where the conflict or dispute becomes public and interferes with The Girl Scout Leadership Experience for girls and adults, a **blaze** has taken place and must be addressed. As the parties work through the conflict and identify action steps to resolve the situation, the fire starts to go out and the **coals** start to glow. When the parties start to rebuild their relationship and find ways to work together the **fire is extinguished** and focus on the Girl Scout Leadership Experience is restored.

Full crisis is another category altogether. This may be someone posing a risk to physical safety, threats of 'going to the media', legal action, or other serious retribution. Crisis issues requires one to follow GSNEO Emergency Procedures.

Understanding the levels of conflict creates common language within the organization and helps with clear identification and communication of issues.

Levels of Conflict

SPARK: The materials to start a fire are gathered and ready and a fire can begin at any time. People feel slighted and often are experiencing an injustice that include not being heard or not being followed up with on a task that is to be accomplished. Relationships and trust can more easily be restored at this level. Categorized by: annoyance, low stakes, not continuous pattern.

FLAME: The fire has started to burn. Individuals are starting to confront each other and are demonstrating elevated levels of emotions. People are starting to distance themselves from each other and/or bring in other parties to “take sides”. The parties are less likely to cooperate with one another to find a resolution without outside assistance. Categorized by: low-level anger, repeated disputes, less cooperation and trust, use of coercion and/or distancing.

BLAZE: Left alone, a flame quickly turns into a blaze. The relationship between the affected parties is broken. Parties start to gossip about each other and bring others into the situation. If started as a “troop issue” it is now a “service unit issue,” or if started between 2 individuals on a committee it now involves the whole committee. The situation is interfering with the Girl Scout Leadership Experience and directly affecting one’s ability to fill their Girl Scout role and responsibilities. Outside help is needed to bring the conflict to a resolution. Categorized by: sustained anger, blatant coercion and/or distancing, gossip/rallying of troops.

COALS: The fire is being actively tended to, the flames and blazes have turned into a steady glow. The individuals involved in a conflict have worked through addressing the conflict and have accepted a mutually agreeable solution. While with hesitation, the parties are starting to work together again to rebuild their relationship. However, the coals can reignite at any point to become a flame or blaze again. Categorized by: tentative cooperation, progression.

FIRE EXTINGUISHED: If individuals in conflict reach this stage, the embers have cooled and all parties have decided to accept the past and to create a better future by implementing an agreed upon action plan. Categorized by: restored harmony, moving forward.

FULL CRISIS: This may be someone posing a risk to physical safety, threats of 'going to the media', legal action, or other serious retribution. Crisis issues requires one to follow GSNEO Emergency Procedures.

Effective Tools to Resolve Conflict

As a volunteer with GSNEO, you will have the opportunities to forge and grow working relationships with fellow volunteers, girls, parents, and community members. As with any relationship, there may be times that friction arises even as everyone is trying to achieve a common goal of ensuring the quality of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. Every volunteer has a role in understanding the following tools and how to use them effectively to address difficult conversations and minimize the potential for tension. This is how we all lead by example and show girls what it means to lead like a Girl Scout.

The following table outlines the levels of conflict, what signals to look for when identifying the level of conflict, and what tools to use to address the conflict. Proceeding this table, each tool will be discussed in detail.

Level #	Level Title	Signals	Tools
Level 1	Spark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annoyance Level - Not much at stake - Not a continuing pattern - Overall, there is trust and openness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACTIVE Listening • ERA1SM • Direct communication between parties using self-resolution meeting guidelines
Level 2	Flame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low-level anger occurs - Repeated disputes occur between parties - Less cooperation - Less trust - Starting to use coercion and/or distancing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACTIVE Listening • ERA1SM • Direct communication between parties using self-resolution meeting guidelines • If no resolution, may use peer support from Service Unit Team and/or notify CME
Level 3	Blaze	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustained anger on the part of one or more parties - Coercion and/or distancing are blatant - Gossip/rallying of troops occurs - Conflict/issue interferes with roles & responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACTIVE Listening • ERA1SM • Contact CME; will escalate to Volunteer RelationsSM Coordinator if appropriate
Level 4	Coals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parties starting to work through the conflict - Parties open to mutually agreeable solutions - Using a 3rd party to resolve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACTIVE Listening • ERA1SM • Volunteer RelationsSM Coordinator if appropriate • Action Plan created
Level 5	Fire Extinguished	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parties have accepted a mutually agreeable solution - Action Plan to move forward is in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Plan in place
Level 6	Full Crisis	<p>Any circumstance or incident that may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - threaten the safety and health of girl and/or adult members - adversely impact finances or property - result in negative media coverage - cause opposition from the community 	Follow Emergency Action Plan Card

ACTIVE Listening

ACTIVE Listening is useful for all verbal communication whether in-person or via phone and is critical to:

1. Better understanding of others
2. Demonstrate your interest in others' feelings and well-being
3. Enablement of clear and impartial perception of situations

ACTIVE Listening is an effective tool to use regularly to minimize conflict, but is particularly helpful once you are aware of a difference of opinion.

In conversation, we often jump in with our own advice or experience which may deter the speaker from providing complete information. An ACTIVE Listener puts his/her own feelings aside in order to better understand the speaker and only interrupts to request clarifications.

How to use ACTIVE Listening:

It is helpful to choose a time and place (by phone or in person) that will allow you to focus on the conversation and have few distractions.

Acknowledge the Speaker:

Acknowledge the speaker with proper body language, eye contact, and head nods. If on the phone, 'mmhmmms' to indicate you are listening.

Concentrate on the Content:

Try to strip out the emotion that you may hear. You want to fully understand the issue in order to resolve it.

Track the Sequence:

What series of events happened in what order? Understanding the chain of events is often useful in facilitating resolution.

Inquiring Minds (Really do want to know):

Ask questions to uncover specific details such as sequencing of events, what was said and done, who were parties present and more. Understanding facts helps prevent us from making assumptions.

Vocal and Visual Cues:

Although we are stripping away emotion, you need to understand the level of anger or frustration by paying attention to the vocal tone and body language of the other person.

Emotional Control:

A main component of listening is staying neutral. Only you can control your own emotions!

Careful Communication

When having a difficult conversation with another person it is extremely important to be mindful of word choice and the tone of voice that is used with the other person.

The purpose of careful communication is to avoid having an issue explode into a major conflict. To achieve this goal, you want to refrain from using any of the following phrases:

- “You must...” and “Don’t ask why, just do it.”
- “You always...” or “You never...”
- “You know better than that!”

Instead, you want to try the following:

- Be purposeful: explain what you need from a person and why you need it.
- Be specific: explain why something is an issue and suggest an alternate solution.
- Assume that the person has good intentions.
- Use ACTIVE listening to find out what is motivating the other person’s behavior.

If using careful communication is not resulting in a meaningful conversation about the issue and how to come to a resolution, it is ok to end the conversation and ask for help to resolve the issue.

ERA1SM

The ERA1SM tool is extremely useful in communicating with others in all aspects of life when you:

- Need to say 'no' or deny someone's desire or request
- Need to deliver what may be perceived by the other as 'bad news'
- Need to deliver feedback to another that may be perceived as negative

Crafting an ERA1SM statement takes practice and above all else, requires one to be truly empathetic to the others situation and needs in determining an appealing alternative to what is being denied.

ERA1SM Begins with Empathy:

Empathy is a Greek word that means 'listening with the eyes and the heart'. Empathy in tandem with ACTIVE Listening provides assurance to speakers that it's safe for them to share their concerns. Empathy does not mean agreement with the speaker or reacting in a way that leads the speaker to believe that you are 'taking a side'.

Empathy is:

- Non-Judgmental
- Non-Critical
- Non-Threatening

ERA1SM

Empathetic Phrase

To show empathy, use positive body language and vocal tone along with the following phrases:

- 'I understand.....',
- 'I can appreciate.....',
- 'I'm sorry.....'

Reason

- That you have to say 'no'
- That you are delivering bad news (or what may be perceived as bad news)
- They should adopt the 'new' behavior that you wish for them to embody

Alternative Solution

- If they cannot have what they want, what can they have instead?
- **WIIFT** – What's In It For Them?
 - How seeing and/or complying with your proposal benefits them (and common goals)
- If they need to comply or change behavior, how can you assist them or lead them towards finding a best solution

1-Step Further

How you are willing and able to go 1-step further in helping them?

When and How to use ERA1SM:

ERA1SM allows you to help the other party see the importance of complying with your request without resorting to bullying or coercion. In being empathetic (E) and in seeking an alternative solution (A), you are showing that you are attempting to see their point of view and are willing to team with them towards future solutions.

A complete ERA1SM statement may be something like the following:

Empathy..... 'I certainly understand how busy your schedule must be, however

Reason.....by turning your paperwork in on time, your daughter will be assured
participation in this activity that I'm sure she is looking forward to.

Alternative Solution.....Would it be helpful if I were to send out an e-mail reminder of the
deadline a couple of days ahead of time?

1- Step Further.....And, that technique may work for many of the other parents as well.

What do you think?'

Empathy..... ‘I can appreciate that you value your Girl Scout camping experiences and want your daughter to have the same memories.

Reason.....At this time, we are a newer troop and do not have the required training to offer a troop camping experience.

Alternative Solution.....Would you be interested in helping to lead the organization of a troop camping event?

1- Step Further.....I can even connect you with the available outdoor training schedule.’

Empathy..... ‘I can understand that you want to see our service unit offer more local program opportunities to girls..

Reason.....Our service team is overwhelmed with multiple responsibilities to organize quality GSLE programs for our girls.

Alternative Solution.....Would you be interested in chairing one or two events this year where members of the service unit could assist you?

1- Step Further.....I can connect you with a former program organizer in the service unit who can provide you with support and advice.

When to Confront...or, Not

Not all situations are worth the stress, time and effort. These questions may help you to decide.

Is it important? Or..... simply annoying?

Look at the big picture. Does this cause harm, interruption or a safety hazard to the business at hand? Or does it just bother you and have no real long-term effects.

Is the behavior consistent?

Is the behavior repeated? Does it demonstrate a separation from policies, goals, or safety?

Is the behavior intentional?

Is the behavior a power-play, domination, or retribution technique? Then yes, it may be worth confronting.

Can you affect a change in their behavior?

Are you able to affect change? If not, you may need to let it go.

Will you possibly win the battle, but lose the war?

You may win the skirmish, but what happens to the overall relationship? If you desire to confront from a domination or retribution position, you may win the battle, but you may also cause irreparable long-term damage.

What is a Self-Resolution Meeting (SRM) and When to Use It

A self-resolution meeting is best used when the parties involved have experienced a past foundation of trust. Direct conversation can help prevent a spark or flame level of conflict to turn into a blaze.

- The situation is a 'true' conflict between parties.
- There are no more than two people in the dialogue. Additional parties can add fuel to the fire and prevent a breakthrough.
- Use when parties have an on-going, interdependent relationship.
- Future cooperation is the goal, not settlement of past complaints.
- There is a spark or flame level of severity.
- There is no or low risk of retaliation for initiating the dialogue. (i.e., The other person has no history of abusing authority).
- There is no risk of physical violence. If this is a concern, escalate to crisis and follow crisis guidelines.

Self-Resolution Meeting Guidelines Snapshot

1. DEFINE the issue and its impact on Girl Scouting



2. Find a time to talk: A conversation about having a conversation



3. Talk it out



4. Create a written action plan

Self-Resolution Meeting Guidelines in Detail

1. Define the issue statement of the problem (that is impacting the high-quality Girl Scout Leadership Experience for girls and adults).

The focus is on the 'business' problem that is causing an issue, not to find fault with the other person. This is your opportunity to DEFINE the issue and its impact on Girl Scouting. No conversation is taking place just yet.

Criteria:

- Unbiased & impartial
- Objective - does not place blame
- Specific - so the other knows exactly what is to be solved
- Resolvable – do we have the authority to solve it?
- Concise – brief

For example:

- Negative impact on the girls experience
- Specific evidence (observable behavior/facts) of the issue

2. Find a time to talk: a conversation about having a conversation

The 'In the moment' conversation often occurs to vent about a problem, however it isn't always the best time to discuss issues in a manner that will lead to solutions. Approach the other person to suggest a direct conversation and to set some ground rules.

- **Initiate:** Contact the other person to discuss having a self-resolution meeting.
- **Provide the issue statement:** The reason we need to talk
 - *I'm concerned about the girls experience when we...*
 - *I've noticed evidence (observable behavior / facts). When that occurs, it is affecting...*
 - *I'd like for us to find a solution to the difficulty we are having in working together to ensure that we provide a high-quality experience for girls.*
- **The request:** *Would you agree to sit down with me to explore a solution?*
- **The rules:** *Can we agree that we will continue to discuss until we can come up with a mutually agreeable solution? And, that neither of us will leave until that is accomplished?*
- **The time & place:** When and where we will have our conversation that will provide privacy, no interruptions or distractions.

3. Talk it out

- **Express appreciation:** *Thanks for meeting with me* (reduces the perception of a threat).
- **Express optimism:** *I am sure we can find a way to work together better.*
- **Focus on the issue:** *My understanding of the problem we are here to solve is.....; what is your understanding?*

Sometimes you are in a more powerful position by using ACTIVE Listening and asking probing questions rather than pushing your own agenda. Let the other person get their points on the table and the more you explore, you may have a better understanding of their position.

Probing statements include:

- *Help me to understand your viewpoint.*
- *I want to understand.*
- *Can you explain further?*
- *How do you believe that impacts...(the girls, the troop, the event, other parents)*

4 Forces that lead to breakthrough:

- **Weariness:** Fatigue that occurs from stressful or frustrating conversation
- **Realization:** The 'light bulb' moment when one realizes one's own contribution to the issue
- **Desire for resolution:** The wish for a solution that satisfies all parties
- **Susceptibility response:** The natural lessening of anger in response to the display of openness or susceptibility from another

Use careful communication (page 9).

4. Create a written action plan

The meeting itself is certainly important, but equally important is recording what was agreed to. This may be useful in the future for review.

- Plan the future by creating an agreement that is mutually beneficial. If you feel you are being coerced or dominated, indicate that you don't feel the solutions are balanced and keep working on it. Both parties should benefit and share sacrifices or compromises.
- Agree on who will write up the agreement and determine the delivery date.
- For a more complex issue, it may be necessary to meet again. *Let's meet again in two weeks to review our progress...*

When the Self-Resolution Meeting (SRM) Works, How You Will Feel

Effectively using SRM will help you to feel empowered to work toward solutions with others. By resolving the conflict, you will be able to maintain the focus for all parties on ensuring that the girls are receiving a high-quality Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

**When Self-Resolution Doesn't Work, What's Next?
(i.e., Blaze, Level 3)**

If Active Listening, ERA1SM, and SRM tools do not lead to resolution, volunteers should contact their Community Membership Executive for assistance, and the situation may be referred to the Volunteer RelationsSM Coordinator. He/she provides and facilitates a 90-minute, in-person staff facilitated conversation session. The goal of the staff facilitated conversation session is for the two parties to come to a written agreement detailing what each party will do to work more effectively in the future.

Review:

Volunteer Steps to Managing & Escalating Conflicts & Disputes

1. Identify that there is an issue that is causing you concern. Use the levels of conflict to evaluate where the issue currently falls (page 6).
2. Use Active Listening and the ERA1SM tools (pages 8-11) to resolve situations before they escalate and become a true conflict between the two parties. Deal directly with the party involved and ensure that the situation does not have a negative impact on the quality of the leadership experience for the girls.

Confidentiality should be maintained at all times in order to protect the dignity and rights of the individuals involved. Do not discuss the situation with other adults or girls in the troop/group.

When working to resolve a situation, keep in mind that a Troop/group Leader may not dismiss a Girl Scout from a troop/group for any reason.

3. If the situation escalates to a conflict, set up a private, in-person meeting with the other individual and use the Self-Resolution process/tool (pages 12-14) to address and resolve the situation. Inform the Community Membership Executive (CME) of the meeting. Additional support is available to you at request.
4. If the two parties are unsuccessful in resolving the conflict during the Self-Resolution session, the person who initiated the meeting will contact the Community Membership Executive (CME) in order for the matter to be referred to a neutral Staff member, the Volunteer RelationsSM Coordinator.
5. The Volunteer RelationsSM Coordinator will serve as a third-party Facilitator to work with the parties towards creating an agreement with a written action plan of the outcome. The Volunteer RelationsSM Coordinator will compile the group agreement/plan of action and a copy will be provided to both parties for signatures.
6. If resolution of the conflict does not result in an agreement, or the parties are unable to fulfill an Action Plan, the Volunteer RelationsSM Coordinator is to be informed to determine further actions.

When Staff Assistance is Needed

What Happens Once a Matter is Referred to Volunteer RelationsSM?

The role of the Volunteer RelationsSM Team:

The Volunteer RelationsSM Team supports all aspects of the council by addressing volunteer conflict and dispute issues and quickly moving to resolution. In addition to mastering communication methods outlined in this Roadmap, members of the Volunteer RelationsSM Team are trained in conducting impartial inquiries, creating documentation and conducting staff facilitated conversations.

First to receive and review Volunteer RelationsSM matters is the Volunteer RelationsSM Coordinator. When needed, the VRC consults with other members of the Volunteer RelationsSM team and may escalate matters.

The Volunteer RelationsSM Coordinator serves as a neutral, *impartial third party* who does not decide solutions to conflicts. The Volunteer RelationsSM Coordinator supports both parties in arriving at a mutually acceptable agreement.

When the Volunteer RelationsSM Coordinator 'opens' a matter:

1. Volunteer RelationsSM Coordinator contacts complainant, other parties, and witnesses to gather information.
2. Whenever possible in situations of 'true' conflict, Volunteer RelationsSM Coordinator encourages parties to communicate directly with one another in attempt to resolve.
3. If direct communication does not occur or fails, the Volunteer RelationsSM Coordinator offers mediation through a staff-facilitated meeting and acts as impartial staff mediator.
 - a. The goal of staff facilitated conversation is to encourage the two primary parties to sit down together with the staff Facilitator to discuss how they will work together moving forward.

Staff-facilitated conversations are NOT:

- For the purpose of judging guilt or innocence
- A substitute for discipline
- A substitute for training

Prior to the staff facilitated conversation, disputing parties are made aware of the following:

- No action is taken by council administration on behalf of either party to resolve true conflict situations.
 - Staff Facilitator's role is to support complainants in solving their own issue, not to solve problems or suggest solutions.
 - Mediation happens only once. If parties are unsatisfied with the staff facilitated conversation process or outcome, there is no opportunity for another.
 - During staff facilitated conversation, parties reach a balanced, behaviorally specific, mutually acceptable agreement referred to as an 'action plan' recorded by the staff Facilitator. The action plan defines each party's future behavior with regard to the situation that has impacted the Girl Scout Leadership Experience for girls and adults.
4. Post mediation, the staff Facilitator provides the written action plan to both parties, in which both parties are expected to sign and return a copy. Regardless of whether a party signs and returns a copy of the action plan, the action plan is expected to be adhered to by both parties.

5. The Volunteer RelationsSM Coordinator will follow up with both parties a few weeks after the action plans are put in place to inquire how both parties are progressing in moving forward.
6. If the issue persists and is not completely resolved by mediation and an action plan, the Volunteer RelationsSM Coordinator will address the matter as appropriate per policy and procedure.

Volunteer RelationsSM is Here to Help You

Remember that GSNEO has the staff, processes, and tools to assist you in any conflict situations. Whether you need to talk to someone for advice or need direct support do not hesitate to call Customer Care at 800-852-4474. At GSNEO, we all want to do our best to follow the Girl Scout Promise and live by the values of the Girl Scout Law. Volunteer RelationsSM is just one example of how all members are empowered to demonstrate the leadership skills we are seeking to instill in Girl Scouts.

Resources

On the following pages, you will find two documents that we recommend troop leaders put into place annually. The first is the Girl Code of Conduct Agreement, which sets expectations for behavior for girls in the troop. Girls are encouraged to create their own additional group agreements and hold each other accountable for following the Code through the Girl Scout year. The second document is the Parent/Caregiver Support Agreement, which sets expectations for adult behavior. All adults involved with Girl Scouts in any capacity are compelled to comply with this agreement, and it is a good idea to review it and have it signed annually.

These documents were created with you, the Girl Scout volunteer, in mind. We hope that you find them useful in preventing and addressing conflict within your troop or service unit.



Girl Code of Conduct Agreement

As a Girl Scout member, I agree that the following statements are true and I will follow them. They will be in effect every time I participate in a Girl Scout activity.

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* (for example, I will always tell the truth.)
- *Friendly and Helpful* (for example, I will be nice to others and I will help when I am asked or I see someone who needs help.)
- *Considerate and Caring* (for example, I will show kindness to others.)
- *Courageous and Strong* (for example, I will stand up for what I know is right. I will go to my leader or another adult when I see someone is being bullied or hurt.)
- *Responsible for what I say and do* (for example, If I say I will do something or say I won't do something, I will keep my promise.)

And

- *Respect Myself and Others* (for example, I will not put myself down or make fun of others.)
- *Respect Authority* (for example, I will listen and do as I'm asked by my leaders and parents.)
- *Use Resources Wisely* (for example, I will only take what I need and not waste supplies. I will respect the meeting and event property by following the rules of the facility.)
- *Make the World a Better Place* (for example, I will live by the Girl Scout Promise and Law not only in my Girl Scout meetings but every day and everywhere.)
- *Be a Sister to Every Girl Scout* (for example, I will respect, be inclusive, and have fun with every Girl Scout I meet.)

Additional Group Agreements:

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Girl Scout Signature _____ Date _____

Parent/Caregiver Signature Date

Troop/Group Leader Signature	Date
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Parent/Caregiver Support Agreement

We're the Girl Scouts! We're 2.6 million strong – 1.8 million girls and 800,000 adults who believe in the power of every G.I.R.L. (Go-getter, Innovator, Risk-taker, Leader)TM to change the world. Through Girl Scouting, girls learn to face challenges head-on, embrace failure as a learning opportunity, create lasting relationships, and find dynamic solutions to social issues—all while building the skills and courage they need to take the lead every day and empower themselves for life.

Girl Scouts of North East Ohio connects girls to a world of possibilities in a positive and inclusive, girl-led environment. Girls are inspired to discover their passions and empowered to reach their full potential through a proven leadership development program. More than 25,000 girls are served every year throughout 18 counties. You are a special part of our Girl Scout family, and we welcome you to the largest organization for girls!

The Girl Scout Promise and Law are the backbone of all things Girl Scouts. Every member, girl and adult, pledges to abide by them. As caregivers and role models of Girl Scouts, we ask that you also abide by the Girl Scout Promise and Law and help advance the Girl Scout Mission.

Girl Scout 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.

*Members may substitute the word God in accordance with their own spiritual beliefs.

Our children learn by example. Our volunteers endeavor to follow and teach the Girl Scout Promise and Law. It is expected that families/guardians will support those values in all Girl Scout activities.

As a Caregiver of a Girl Scout, I agree to:

- Demonstrate a genuine interest in my daughter's participation in Girl Scouts, so I will reflect on the Girl Scout Promise and Law to be a positive role model for the girls.
- Recognize that Girl Scouting is girl-led so I will uphold the Girl Scout Promise and Law by demonstrating positive support and respecting the opinions and goals of my daughter and other girls.
- Support the volunteers who are working with my child in order to encourage a positive and enjoyable Girl Scout Leadership Experience for all. I will make every effort to attend any required parent meetings and adhere to parent deadlines.
- Ensure that my daughter's behavior supports the Girls' Code of Conduct.
- Submit requested permission slips, dues, and/or materials on time, ensure that my daughter is prepared for Girl Scout activities, and drop her off and pick her up on time.
- Support the Girl Scout efforts to provide an environment of acceptance for all girls and their families by asking my child to treat others with respect, regardless of race, color, creed, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, citizenship, ancestry, physical or mental disability, marital status, veteran status, socio-economic/public assistance status, national origin or any other protected status.
- Communicate any concerns that I may have directly to the volunteer responsible for the activity that my daughter is participating in private (***not in the presence of the girls, other parents, or on social media***) and will follow the GSNEO Conflict Management process if we are unable to resolve a particular conflict situation.
- Not initiate or participate in gossip or negative statements about Girl Scouting and will refrain from behavior that may undermine the leadership of a Girl Scout activity or the troop/group. Should I have a complaint or problem, I will share a suggested solution.
- Play an active role in my daughter's Girl Scout Leadership Experience. I will follow safety guidelines for all activities and guarantee a high-quality environment for my child that is free from drugs, tobacco, and alcohol. I will refrain from their use at all Girl Scout events.
- Support my daughter's participation in product sales and follow the GSNEO requirements for the distribution of rewards and recognitions.
- Acknowledge that there are a variety of ways for girls and adults to participate in Girl Scouting. If I, or Council staff, feel that a different participation option would be best for my daughter, staff will assist in engaging her in those activities.
- Understand that to participate as a volunteer (Troop Helping Hands, Troop Field Trip Driver, Troop Field Trip Chaperone, Troop Treasurer, etc.) I must become a member of Girl Scouts of the USA and pass a criminal background check.

I understand that my behavior directly impacts my daughter's ability to participate in a troop/group or other Girl Scout activities. I will honor this agreement so that my daughter can have a high-quality Girl Scout Leadership Experience. I will follow the guidelines in this agreement and support my girl by helping her to honor the Girl Code of Conduct Agreement.

Parent/Caregiver Signature

Date