

The Parent and Caregiver Meeting Guide

Girl Scouting provides the best opportunities for girls when families step up and play an active part in the troop. Without meaningful support from parents and caregivers, it's difficult for a troop to be all it can be. Plus, girls feel a special sense of pride when their families take part and show interest in the things they are doing!

Managing a Girl Scout troop requires a team, and the parent and caregiver meeting is a great opportunity to engage Girl Scout families. Your first job as a troop co-leader will be to plan a parent and caregiver meeting to share the goals of the Girl Scout program, establish expectations and identify areas in which families can be of the most support. Our experienced Girl Scout volunteers tell us, loud and clear, that a supportive team makes your role as troop co-leader easier, and it enhances the Girl Scout troop experience.

So, what is a parent and caregiver meeting? Basically, it's first meeting a Girl Scout troop holds to kick-off the troop year or new troop experience and it typically lasts anywhere from 45 minutes to 1 hour. Whether you are a new or returning troop, this meeting is beneficial for all troops. In this guide, you will find resources to make planning the parent and caregiver meeting a cinch; including a sample meeting agenda, a parent/caregiver sign in sheet, a parent/caregiver survey, the 4 Hour Pledge, and activities and games to keep your girls busy while families learn the Girl Scout basics! The Girl Scout Games handout includes numerous games and icebreakers that will keep your girls engaged for meetings to come! Now, let's get started!

Tips for Planning a Successful Parent and Caregiver Meeting:

- Complete new co-leader online and in-person trainings in advance.
 - Successful Leader Learning Series
 - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Training for Volunteers
 - Volunteer Toolkit (VTK) Tutorials
 - Troop Banking: Getting Started and Making Changes
 - New Co-Leader LIVE! (Register through [Activities](#))
 - Don't forget to utilize other helpful new co-leader resources like [Volunteer Essentials](#), [New Leader's Guide to Success](#), and [Lead On! A Go-To Guide for Troop Co-Leaders](#)
- Connect with the host meeting location to confirm the meeting date and time.
- Give parents and caregivers plenty of advanced notice of the meeting date, time and location to ensure they can attend.
- Prepare game, craft or activity materials prior to the meeting.
- Provide light refreshments. A small healthy snack always hits the spot.
- Share the responsibilities. Designate one co-leader to speak with families while the other co-leader shares a fun activity or game with the girls.
- Follow up with parents and caregivers using the established method of communication and tie up any loose ends, briefly recap the meeting, and share a reminder of the next troop meeting.

Supplies for the Parent/Caregiver Meeting:

- Parent and Caregiver Meeting Guide
- Parent and Caregiver Sign In Sheet
- Parent Interest Survey and Meet My Girl Handout
- 4 Hour Pledge
- Starter kit and uniform information (if possible)
- Troop calendar of events
- Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting (or excerpts) and Journey books
- [Parent/Guardian Permission and Health History for Troop Outings \(TP105\)](#)
- Game and icebreaker supplies

Desired Outcomes of the Parent and Caregiver Meeting:

- Parents understand the fundamentals of the Girl Scout program
- Parents identify ways they can support the troop throughout the year
- Parents understand the troop finances and how troop monies will be earned and spent
- Parents have access to information about uniforms and programming supplies and how to purchase those items
- Parents understand how troop co-leaders will communicate with them
- Key troop positions, like Fall Product Coordinator and Troop Cookie Coordinator are filled by willing parents

The Parent and Caregiver Meeting Agenda

Welcome and Introductions – 2 Minutes

Welcome families to Girl Scouts! Introduce yourself and your co-leader and share why you chose to volunteer as a troop co-leader. Ask parents to introduce themselves and share any memories they may have of Girl Scouting as a child or what they hope their daughter will gain from joining Girl Scouts.

Girl Scout Basics – 3 Minutes

Share the basics of the Girl Scouting program such as the Girl Scout Promise and Law. Help parents to understand that Girl Scouting offers girls the opportunity to discover their inner strength, passions and talents. Share our Mission of building girls of courage, confidence and character who make the world a better place.

Troop Activities – 5 Minutes

Give parents a taste of what their girls will be doing in Girl Scouts. Share the Girls' Guide to Girl Scouting and Journey books and any badges or activities you have either planned or are considering for the troop. You may also want to review the Girl Scouts – North Carolina Coastal Pines Activity Guide with parents; explaining that once girls are registered, they can participate in any events listed for individual registration, even if the troop isn't planning to attend.

Troop Finances – 5 Minutes

Many troops request start-up funds of \$15 or less to help their troop begin purchasing supplies, badges and other materials the girls need during the first few months. Additionally, many troops request dues at each meeting. This is usually one dollar or less and serves to help girls learn the importance of supporting their troop. It is important that parents understand that if the troop chooses to attend events or activities that

cannot be covered by troop funds, they may be asked to cover those costs separately. Be flexible and work with parents and caregivers to establish a troop dues pattern that meets their needs that could be weekly, monthly, quarterly or annually. Your troop can also choose to earn funds in many different ways. Although the Girl Scout Cookie Program is usually the troop's biggest fundraiser of the year, troops can also earn money by participating in the Fall Product Program or planning an approved Money Earning Project for special troop trips and events. GS-NCCP wants to see every girl have an opportunity to achieve her dreams and therefore offers financial assistance for both troop and council-sponsored events.

Girl Scout Uniforms and Books – 5 Minutes

Although Girl Scout uniforms are not required for participation, we encourage families to purchase either the vest or sash (or tunic for Girl Scout Daisies) to help girls proudly display their Girl Scout accomplishments. During the meeting, share the start-up bag flyer (typically distributed at the beginning of the Girl Scout year) or direct parents to our website, www.nccoastalpines.org to purchase both the uniform and Girl Scout program books.

Troop Communication – 3 Minutes

What is the best means of communication for the group? You can choose to set up an email distribution list or create a private Facebook group or other social media outlet to share not only information, but troop photos and more. Some other methods of communicating with parents and caregivers include utilizing online platforms like [Sign Up Genius](#) and [Google Forms](#). Be sure to share your preferred method of contact in case parents have questions post meeting and beyond.

Ask for Help – 7 Minutes

You and your fellow troop co-leader may feel like you have it under control, but our experienced troop co-leaders tell us that having supportive and active parents and caregivers makes a stronger positive impact in any troop. We recommend you encourage troop engagement in several key roles:

- ◆ Troop Support Volunteer
- ◆ Fall Product Coordinator
- ◆ Troop Cookie Coordinator
- ◆ Troop Treasurer
- ◆ First Aid/CPR Certified Volunteer
- ◆ Outdoor Certified Volunteer

Any parent or caregiver serving in these roles or helping with the troop on a regular basis must register and complete a background check.

Another easy way to learn more about troop parents and caregivers is to encourage them to complete the Parent Interest Form and 4 Hour Pledge. This will allow you to determine how you can best utilize the talents and connections that are already within your troop. Be creative! You may have a parent who loves photography. The parent volunteer could not only serve as the troop photographer at events, but could help girls earn a badge or create an activity that encourages girls to explore the world of photography.

Making sure that parents and caregivers understand that a Girl Scout troop requires support from every family is essential to the success and longevity of a troop. There are many ways they can help, so don't be afraid to ask!

Forms – 5 Minutes

Distribute the [Parent/Guardian Permission and Health History for Troop Outings \(TP105\)](#). Encourage parents and caregivers to complete and submit the form by the end of the meeting. Explain that this private form provides troop co-leaders with family contact information and basic girl health history and remains with the troop co-leaders at all Girl Scout meetings and events.

Expectations – 5 Minutes

Gently remind parents and caregivers that one of the parts of the Girl Scout Law is to respect others. Parents should plan to both drop off and pick up their daughter in a timely manner. Girls will also be asked to demonstrate respect within the troop setting and will create their own code of conduct guided by the attributes of the Girl Scout Law.

Troop Logistics – 2 Minutes

In closing, remind parents of troop meeting day, time and location. Review any information pertinent to the next few meetings.

Questions – 8 Minutes

Provide an opportunity at the end of the meeting for parents and caregivers to ask questions. Being a new co-leader, you may not know the answer and that is totally okay! You can always reach out to local volunteers, like the area Service Unit Manager or Troop Mentor and your Membership Director for additional support.

Sample Scenarios

As part of the Parent and Caregiver Meeting Guide, we have included a few scenarios of circumstances you may encounter as a new troop co-leader and easy solutions to get you started.

Scenario I

Mae's father complains that the meetings are too short and is consistently late picking up his daughter from the meetings. What will you say? What options can you offer?

- A. When the meeting is over, leave Mae outside unattended for her dad to pick her up. He must learn that troop meetings are not formatted for his needs; there are others affected, too.
- B. Stay late with Mae and explain to her father that troop meetings are likely to always end at the same time. Offer to pair him with another Troop Support Volunteer parent to carpool and gently help him understand that his tardiness is an inconvenience for you and Mae.

Answer B is correct! Work with Troop Support Volunteer parents and caregivers on a carpooling schedule to ensure that the meeting is able to end on time. Establishing boundaries and setting clear expectations with parents and caregivers is always a good idea so troop co-leaders can ensure that the girls get the most of the meeting.

Answer A is NOT recommended. You never want to jeopardize a girl's safety or alienate a parent or caregiver from the troop environment. Working collaboratively and communicating expectations clearly with parents and caregivers is always a best practice!

Scenario II

Kate's mom insists on staying for the meeting but is not helpful to the troop. She sits in the back of the room and watches her daughter. Sometimes this is distracting to Kate and often leads to Kate wanting to sit in her mom's lap, away from the other girls. What is a productive way to address this behavior?

- A. When Kate's mom attends the troop meeting, explain that you have noticed that Kate is often distracted and off task and that this is a very common behavior for many girls. Suggest that what seems to work best when parents and caregivers prefer to stay at the meeting is for them to volunteer within the troop. Encourage Kate's mom to serve in the volunteer role that best suits her talents and interests. This way, she can be helpful to the troop's co-leaders and also serve as a role model for her daughter and the other girls in the troop!
- B. Ask all parents not to attend troop meetings, as they can be a distraction for the girls.

Answer A is correct! By encouraging Kate's mom to assist with a few small tasks during a troop meeting, this may lead to increased troop leadership. Also, it is a best practice to clearly share both parent/caregiver and girl behavior expectations during the parent and caregiver meeting.

Answer B is NOT recommended. We do not want to alienate parents and caregivers from the troop environment. Instead, focus on teamwork and the need for positive parental engagement for the betterment of the troop.

Scenario III

You have reached out to the troop's parents and caregivers for assistance with little response. What is your next step?

- A. Hold a parent and caregiver meeting and explain that the troop cannot proceed without their help. If none of the parents and caregivers are willing to volunteer, end all troop activities until they are willing to assist.
- B. Reach out to parents and caregivers by email or the established method of communication and share the various role opportunities within the troop for their review and consideration. Suggest that parents can 'tag team' roles to share responsibility. Schedule a parent and caregiver meeting for either a few minutes before or after an already scheduled troop meeting. Gently remind parents and caregivers of the importance of parental involvement in a Girl Scout troop. Transparently share how the lack of support has had a negative impact on the troop co-leaders, but more importantly, the girl experience.

Answer B is correct! Once parents and caregivers hear that minimal troop support is having a negative impact on THEIR girl's Girl Scout experience, they will be more likely to take action. If there is one thing that we are certain that matters, it is their girl. Being transparent and openly communicating with parents and caregivers will prove greater results. Also, working with your troop's parents and caregivers to find a volunteer role that best fits their needs is an effective way to engage volunteers. By providing a list of volunteer roles in advance, parents and caregivers have the opportunity to determine which volunteer role mirrors their interests.

Answer A is NOT recommended. Again, we never want to alienate parents from the troop environment. Instead, focus on teamwork and the need for positive parental engagement for the betterment of the troop.

If you are ever unsure how to approach a circumstance, please reach out to your area Service Unit Manager, Troop Mentor or Membership Director for recommendations and best practices for troop co-leader success!

Thank You!

Thank you for embarking on an extraordinary journey of Girl Scout leadership! For additional resources for planning a parent and caregiver meeting, please visit:

- 🍀 [Volunteer Essentials - Engaging Girl and Families](#)
- 🍀 [GSUSA - The Parent/Caregiver Meeting: The Agenda](#)
- 🍀 [GSUSA - Working with Girls and Families](#)

Questions? Please reach out to the Learning and Development Department at learning@nccoastalpines.org.