

VOLUNTEER POLICIES, STANDARDS, AND PRACTICES

PURPOSE

Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys (River Valleys) is committed to serving girls with the highest possible standards. Although girls and adults work as partners, encouraging the development of leadership and decision-making skills, it is the adult volunteers who make Girl Scouting a reality in the majority of communities. Adult volunteers are fundamental to Girl Scouting as role models and for the direct delivery of the Girl Scout leadership program.

Volunteer policies are established by the River Valleys Board of Directors with the principle that the successful accomplishment of River Valleys' goals and objectives is based upon knowledgeable, trained and motivated volunteers. To be informed and perform at high standards, it is essential that volunteers understand policies directly affecting their pivotal role within Girl Scouting. The purpose of this document is to bring together basic volunteer policies of River Valleys to set expectations for River Valleys' board, staff members, and volunteers.

Whatever her or his role, whether in governance or management, in partnership with adults or with girls, a volunteer or employed staff member, everyone contributes to and benefits from working toward goals set in the context of our organizational commitment to institutionalizing pluralism.

We recognize the importance of having relationships within Girl Scouting, and in the community, which are the best that they can be. Volunteers with the Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys are expected to welcome, embrace, and appreciate people of all ages, races, religions, cultures, abilities, sexual orientation, gender, educational and economic backgrounds, status with regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, and to create an inclusive environment where all girls and adults feel welcome.

Definition of a Volunteer

River Valleys is a membership organization. The membership policy states that adults participating in the Girl Scout Movement as volunteers must be registered as members with Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA). Membership as a Girl Scout is granted to any person who:

- meets GSUSA membership standards;
- has paid annual membership dues based on the membership year, which is October 1 to September 30, or is a Lifetime Member; and
- abides by GSUSA Policies, Standards and Guidelines, River Valleys Policies and Operational Procedures, governmental and affiliated organization regulations and standards, and the Constitution of GSUSA.

Although female role models are essential for carrying out the purpose of Girl Scouting, men are welcome to serve as board and committee members and in other volunteer capacities. Girl Scouts requires that at least one of the troop's leaders must be an adult female not related to the other adults. (*Safety-Wise*, Standard 13)

An adult volunteer is defined as anyone who serves without compensation or expectation of compensation beyond reimbursement of expenses.

VOLUNTEERS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Girl Scout volunteers are expected to serve as appropriate role models for girls and for other adults. Any behavior that violates law or Girl Scout policy or standards compromises the image of Girl Scouting as well as the individual involved and can be grounds for termination or failure to be re-appointed to a volunteer position. In performing their assignments, volunteers must exercise common sense and sound judgment, and be courteous and respectful to employees and other Girl Scouts. Volunteers are responsible for following the policies, standards, practices, and procedures set out in the *Blue Book of Basic Documents*, *Safety-Wise*, and by Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys.

While functioning in the capacity of a River Valleys' volunteer, adults must:

- Promote the positive image, goals, and standards of Girl Scouts at all times;
- Use council property and the personal property of other volunteers, employees, and girls with care;
- Make an effort to be punctual for Girl Scout events and keep absences to a minimum;
- Adhere to River Valleys' financial policies and use Girl Scout funds responsibly for Girl Scout purposes only; and
- Follow Girl Scout safety and program standards and use *Safety-Wise*.

In addition, volunteers must not:

- Use tobacco in the presence of girls at Girl Scout programs, activities, and events;
- Consume alcohol while they are responsible for girl members or present at girl events;
- Possess, sell, or use illegal drugs or misuse prescribed drugs;
- Perform volunteer duties or drive to or from Girl Scout events while under the influence of alcohol or prescription drugs that impair alertness or judgment;
- Promote religious preferences during Girl Scout activities, except as permitted in the context of Girl Scouts' Faith-Based Initiatives Programs;
- Promote political preferences during Girl Scout activities; or
- Promote an individual opinion or philosophy inconsistent with the Girl Scout Mission during Girl Scout activities.



Confidentiality

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary, privileged, or sensitive information (“Confidential Information”) to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer - whether this information involves a staff person, volunteer, girl, or River Valleys’ business in general. Volunteers are prohibited from discussing or sharing Confidential Information with River Valleys employees or volunteers who do not have a need to know such information, or with any individuals or organizations outside of River Valleys, including family members. Failure to protect Confidential Information may result in termination of the volunteer’s relationship with River Valleys.

Dress Code

Girl Scouts of the USA is a uniformed organization in which the uniform is a symbol and mark of distinction. Although a uniform is encouraged, it is not required for participation in most Girl Scout activities. The uniform may be worn when appropriate at Girl Scout activities and is recommended for River Valleys’ official functions. (Financial assistance for uniforms is available through River Valleys to qualifying members.) Proper placement of the insignia is required.

Volunteers are representatives of River Valleys in their communities. Personal appearance, public conduct, and attitude should exemplify the best in Girl Scouting.

Equal Opportunity and Volunteer Management

River Valleys provides equal opportunities to all volunteers and applicants for volunteer positions without regard to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, pregnancy, age, disability, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, or status as a covered veteran in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws. River Valleys complies with applicable state and local laws governing non-discrimination in its provision of services in every location in which River Valleys’ volunteers perform their assignments. This policy applies to all terms and conditions of the volunteer program, including, but not limited to, hiring, placement, supervision, training, recognition, evaluation, release, and volunteer career development. Program activities and educational materials for both girls and adults will respect and reflect the nature of a global society.

Representation of River Valleys

Volunteers are not agents of River Valleys. Unless authorized to do so by River Valleys’ management, volunteers must not take any action or make any statement which might obligate River Valleys with respect to third persons or the general public, including statements to the media, coalition, or lobbying efforts with other organizations, or any agreements involving contractual or other financial obligations. Volunteers are only authorized to act as representatives of River Valleys as specifically indicated within their position descriptions.

Training

Training is offered to help volunteers gain the skills and knowledge to provide exemplary Girl Scout program. Volunteers are required to complete general orientation to Girl Scouting and River Valleys. Adult volunteers working directly with girls are required to complete Leadership Essentials.

Volunteers who work directly with girls are required to complete training within four months of recruitment.

Safety-Wise must be consulted and adhered to when determining the training standard for adults supervising specific Girl Scout program activities.

Outdoor Training standards for adult volunteers are published in this guide and must be adhered to when conducting Girl Scout activities occurring outdoors and/or beyond the regular troop meetings.

Training is developed to accommodate adult learners and is offered through the website, classroom, and self-study.

CLIMATE AND SAFETY

River Valleys is committed to an environment and climate in which all relationships are characterized by dignity, respect, courtesy, and equitable treatment, including relationships between volunteers, volunteers and staff members, and volunteers and girls. River Valleys also maintains environments that are free of child abuse and neglect. Under these basic tenets, the policy is divided into five sections: working with children, safety standards, harassment, conflict management, and background screening.

A. WORKING WITH CHILDREN

1. Prohibition of Maltreatment of Minors

River Valleys provides an environment for all girls that is free of child abuse, exploitation and neglect, and safeguards the health and well being of girls. River Valleys will not tolerate any behavior that may physically, emotionally, or sexually abuse, exploit or neglect girls, or put girls' safety at risk. Conduct prohibited by this policy includes, but is not limited to:

- Sexual advances toward girls;
- Touching girls in a sexual way;
- Any display or demonstration of sexual activity in the presence of girls, including but not limited to kissing, etc.
- Exhibitionism or voyeurism in the presence of girls;
- Involvement of girls in sexual activities;
- Use of sexual materials or objects in the presence of girls except as part of an approved education curriculum (to be approved by each girl's parent/guardian);
- Infliction of physical injury on a girl other than by accidental means;
- Use of physical restraint or force on a girl that exceeds the amount necessary to prevent harm to the girl or others;
- Threatening to inflict physical injury or use excessive restraint or force on a girl;
- Intentional, reckless, or negligent failure to provide adequate safety measures, care, and supervision to girls during Girl Scout activities; and
- Emotional maltreatment of girls including, but not limited to, verbal abuse or verbal attacks such as comments that berate, belittle, or demean; comments that tend to stigmatize or victimize; and name-calling.

Any volunteer in violation of this policy will be subject to immediate discipline up to and including discharge and/or criminal prosecution.

2. Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect

As a matter of River Valleys' policy, any volunteer who has reason to believe that a Girl Scout is being abused physically or sexually, or neglected, must immediately report the information to the following:

- Iowa: the Iowa Department of Human Services, county attorney, or law enforcement agency.
- Minnesota: local child protection, police department, or county sheriff's office.
- Wisconsin: the county Department of Health and Family Services, the sheriff, or police department.

The volunteer must also report this information to River Valleys' Chief Executive Officer or his or her designee.

Under Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa state laws, a person acting in good faith in making a report of suspected physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect of a child as defined by Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa law shall have immunity from civil or criminal liability that otherwise might result from making the report.

B. SAFETY STANDARDS

The Girl Scout program largely rests with River Valleys' volunteers. All volunteers must be thoroughly familiar with *Safety-Wise* and be responsible for ensuring that all Girl Scout activities meet required safety standards.

No animal other than service dogs may be brought onto River Valleys' properties by a service unit, troop, or non-Girl Scout group/organization without prior council authorization.

No weapons may be brought onto River Valleys' properties by a service unit, troop, or non-Girl Scout group/organization without prior council authorization.

C. BACKGROUND CHECK POLICY STATEMENT

In order to ensure the safety and well-being of the girl members of River Valleys, River Valleys has the right to disqualify or restrict the duties of any person who has been convicted of certain crimes; who has pleaded guilty or no contest to certain crimes; who has been placed on probation or deferred adjudication for certain crimes; and/or who resides on the same premises as a registered sex offender.

The criminal background search is one component of River Valleys' Volunteer Screening Procedure, the goal of which is to screen prospective adult volunteers and place capable and qualified adults in all operational positions. Prospective River Valleys' volunteers must complete and sign the volunteer application authorizing River Valleys to conduct a criminal background search. Without a completed and signed Volunteer Application, a person cannot serve in or be appointed to a volunteer position with River Valleys.

River Valleys will conduct a criminal background search on:

- Any volunteer for any position in the 2008-2009 membership year who is not currently a registered volunteer in the 2007-2008 membership year.

River Valleys' primary concern is to safeguard the safety and best interests of its girl members. The criminal offenses that will disqualify a person from volunteer participation in River Valleys, as well as the process used to determine disqualification of a person from volunteer participation, are set out in greater detail below.

Criminal Background Check Procedure

1. Application and Authorization Form

Volunteers must complete and sign a Volunteer Application, which provides reference information and authorization for River Valleys or its agents to search the records of the relevant Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa government agencies in order to ascertain the applicant's criminal history record.

2. Accuracy of Application and Authorization Form

Providing false information on the application, including driver's license number, social security number or date of birth, is grounds for automatic exclusion from participation in River Valleys, regardless of the result of the criminal background search.

Disqualification From Volunteer Participation

The following rules shall apply if River Valleys learns (via a criminal background search or otherwise) that a prospective volunteer has been convicted of, has pleaded guilty to, has received deferred adjudication for, or has pleaded no contest to one of the following crimes.

1. Automatic disqualification:

- Crimes against children
- Felony offenses against persons
- Felony offenses against a family member
- Crimes defined as public indecency
- Crimes involving the use of weapons
- Any violent crime or felony drug-related offense, other than the drug offense specifically identified below
- Any felony conviction within the five (5) year period preceding the background check
- Residing on same premises as a registered sex offender *

* Registered sex offenders are not eligible for membership in Girl Scouts of the USA and may not participate in any capacity with Girl Scouts. Any adult living on the premises with a registered sex offender may participate only as a parent.

2. Possible Disqualifications:

For all other criminal offenses, or felony convictions older than the five-year period preceding the background check, River Valleys shall review the applicant's situation on a case-by-case basis. The decision whether to allow service shall be within the discretion of River Valleys. Factors to be considered by River Valleys in making such determinations include, but are not limited to, the nature and severity of the criminal conduct, the position for which the person seeks to volunteer, the length of time since the criminal conduct occurred, the circumstances under which the crime was committed, the degree of rehabilitation, the likelihood that the person will commit the crime again, and the number of crimes committed by the prospective volunteer.

3. Confidentiality

River Valleys will maintain the confidentiality of all criminal background search information, including information regarding disqualification decisions.

D. DISCRIMINATORY HARASSMENT

Discriminatory Harassment Policy

It is the policy of River Valleys that our volunteers enjoy an environment free of discrimination and discriminatory harassment. Accordingly, all forms of discriminatory harassment are strictly prohibited. Anyone found to have violated this policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

This policy refers to discriminatory harassment. Discriminatory harassment is harassment based on race, color, creed, religion, age, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, status regarding public assistance, or membership or activity in a local commission.

Any discriminatory harassment action based on the above criteria by any employee or volunteer toward another that has the effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's volunteer performance and creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment will not be tolerated. It could include, for example:

- the display of written materials or pictures which are offensive to gender or to racial, ethnic or religious groups, or to persons who have a different sexual orientation.
- Verbal abuse, jokes or insults directed at members of the opposite sex, members of a particular racial, ethnic or religious groups, or persons who have a different sexual orientation.

E. SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

One particular category of discriminatory harassment is sexual harassment. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct or communication that is sexual in nature when:

1. submission to such conduct or communication is made, either explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of volunteer service;
2. submission to, or rejection of, that conduct or communication by an individual is used as a factor in decisions affecting such individual's volunteer service;
3. that the conduct or communication has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's volunteer service, or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- sex-oriented verbal "kidding," abuse or joking;
- subtle or overt pressure for sexual activity;
- intentionally brushing against another's body; and
- demands for sexual favors accompanied by implied or overt promises of preferential treatment or threats concerning an individual's volunteer status.

Sexual harassment can be perpetrated by both men and women and may be directed at the same or opposite sex.

1. Responding to Discriminatory Harassment

Any volunteer who believes that he/she has been subject to discriminatory harassment should make his/her concerns known by:

1. Telling the person engaging in the harassing conduct or communication that the conduct or communication is offensive, against this policy, and must stop; and/or
2. Advising his/her supervisor, the CEO, or any other member of River Valleys' management of the incident(s). This option should be used if an individual does not wish to communicate directly with the person whose conduct or communication is offensive, or if direct communication has been unsuccessful.

All complaints of prohibited harassment are investigated promptly and impartially. If it is determined that a violation of this policy has occurred, appropriate action, up to and including discharge or other disciplinary action will be taken. The type of action taken will be determined by the severity, frequency, and nature of the offense, as well as other relevant considerations.

2. Retaliation

No retaliation will occur because a volunteer has, in good faith, reported an incident of suspected discriminatory harassment.

If any volunteer is found to have violated this policy, he or she will be terminated from his or her assignment immediately and may be reported to the appropriate authorities.

F. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT POLICY

River Valleys' staff members will work to resolve conflicts between staff members and volunteers in an equitable manner consistent with its policies and procedures. Additionally, River Valleys is committed to the timely resolution of conflicts between volunteers, and between volunteers and Girl Scout adult family members. Girls' welfare is River Valleys' highest priority in resolving conflicts among adults, and River Valleys will resolve such conflicts in the context of the values, traditions, and purposes of Girl Scouting as stated in the Constitution of GSUSA.

Conflict of Interest

At times, volunteers may be faced with situations where the decisions they make in their volunteer capacity may conflict with their own personal or family interests. An actual or potential conflict of interest occurs when a volunteer is in a position to influence a decision involving River Valleys which may result in a personal gain or benefit to the volunteer or the volunteer's relatives or in a gain or benefit to a business which is owned or managed by the volunteer or the volunteer's relatives.

If a volunteer is in a position to influence a decision involving River Valleys which may result in an actual or potential conflict of interest, the volunteer must report the actual or potential conflict of interest to a member of River Valleys' management and must not participate in or influence the decision without the prior written consent of a member of River Valleys' management.

Volunteer Grievance

A grievance is a complaint that policies and/or procedures related to a volunteer's position are not being administered properly. If a volunteer feels that the policies and/or procedures related to a volunteer's position are not being administered properly she/he may use the council's Volunteer Grievance Procedure.

Procedure: While serious conflicts are rare among positively motivated volunteers in Girl Scouting, circumstances can result in uncomfortable relationships. We encourage persons in conflict to talk to each other openly and calmly. If an individual feels the need for help in resolving the conflict, the circumstances surrounding the conflict should be discussed with the immediate supervisor and all parties involved. If a solution is not reached by this group, the unresolved conflict should be taken to the next level.

QUICK GUIDE TO ADULT DEVELOPMENT AND VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Adult development is of great importance to achieve and maintain the highest standards of program delivery for our girls in Girl Scouts. The following section provides a quick reference to training requirements, as well as awards and recognitions for adult volunteers. Further details may be found on the website.

Volunteer Training Requirements

River Valleys' board of directors requires all volunteers attend training to ensure that they understand the duties of the position they have agreed to perform and understand the organization. It is recommended that training be completed within four months after the first day of appointment to a volunteer position.

Leadership Training Requirements

Girl Scout troop leaders are required to take the following training in the order listed:

- Orientation: online or self-study (available in Spanish)
- Fast Start: supplemental learning program to help new leaders gain more in depth knowledge on starting a troop
- Leadership Essentials: classroom or self-study

Trained Troop Requirements

- Orientation*: online or self-study
- Leadership Essentials*: classroom or self-study
*completed within four months after the first day of appointment as a *leader*
- One registered adult member has successfully completed CPR/First Aid training as needed for activities
- One registered adult member has successfully completed Cookie Program Activity training
- One registered adult member has successfully completed outdoor training as needed for activities

Service Team Position Training Requirements

Girl Scout volunteers are required to take training to fulfill the requirements for appointment to a service team position within four months after the first day of appointment. Position descriptions are available on the website.

Special Needs in Training

Most training sites are accessible to participants with limited mobility. Please call the adult development staff at the council service center regarding accessibility. American Sign Language interpreters are available upon request.

Quick Note for New Leaders

Thank you for completing the steps to become a leader for the Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valley. Potential volunteers need to complete a registration form and application located on the back of the registration form. This form needs to be given to the registrar or sent into the River Valleys office for processing. The next step is to complete an online background check. The link to the background check is on the website. Orientation is the last step to completing the volunteer process. Orientation is available as a self-study in English or Spanish or online at <http://training.girlscouts.org>. When you log on, please type in the assigned password: discover. The learning log email address is orientation@GirlScoutsRV.org. It takes about 25-45 minutes to complete. After these steps are completed, a letter will be sent to you letting you know about your volunteer status.

ADULT AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

Adults participate in Girl Scouting to support girls and the Girl Scout Movement. Although volunteers do not seek special rewards for their contributions, everyone likes to feel appreciated. There are many ways to express appreciation and recognition in Girl Scouting. Listed below are the available options at the council level and service unit level awards. Look on our website for information about awards, recognitions, nomination forms, applications, and more.

COUNCIL LEVEL AWARDS

Council level awards require board approval and are distributed at River Valleys' volunteer recognition event to be held in April. The deadline for award nominations is January 15.

GSUSA Awards

Appreciation Pin
Honor Pin
Thanks Badge I & II
Years of Service (20+ years)
Membership Numerals (25+ years)



River Valleys Awards Service Unit Award of Excellence

This award recognizes a service unit's accomplishments in moving toward River Valleys' goals and objectives during the previous membership year.

Extraordinary Event

This award recognizes service units that have implemented events in the previous membership year that exceed standards of quality and serve as models for future innovative programming. The award is given to the head of the committee or the individual who coordinated the event.

SERVICE UNIT AWARDS

Service unit awards are presented at a local recognition event as determined by the service unit team. The deadline for award nominations is March 15.

GSUSA Awards

Outstanding Leader
Outstanding Volunteer
Progressive Volunteer
Years of Service (under 20 years)
Membership Numeral (under 25 years)
S.T.A.R. (Short Term As Requested) Volunteer



River Valleys Awards Heart in Hand

This award recognizes outstanding service that benefits a Girl Scout troop above and beyond expectations. This award may be given to a Girl Scout member, non-member or community organization who has given a significant amount of time and energy to the troop. This award should be presented locally and can only be given to a person or organization once.

Commitment to Inclusiveness

This award recognizes an adult volunteer or group of volunteers who have carried out a unique and innovative project, or delivered outstanding service and leadership in the areas of inclusiveness and multiculturalism.