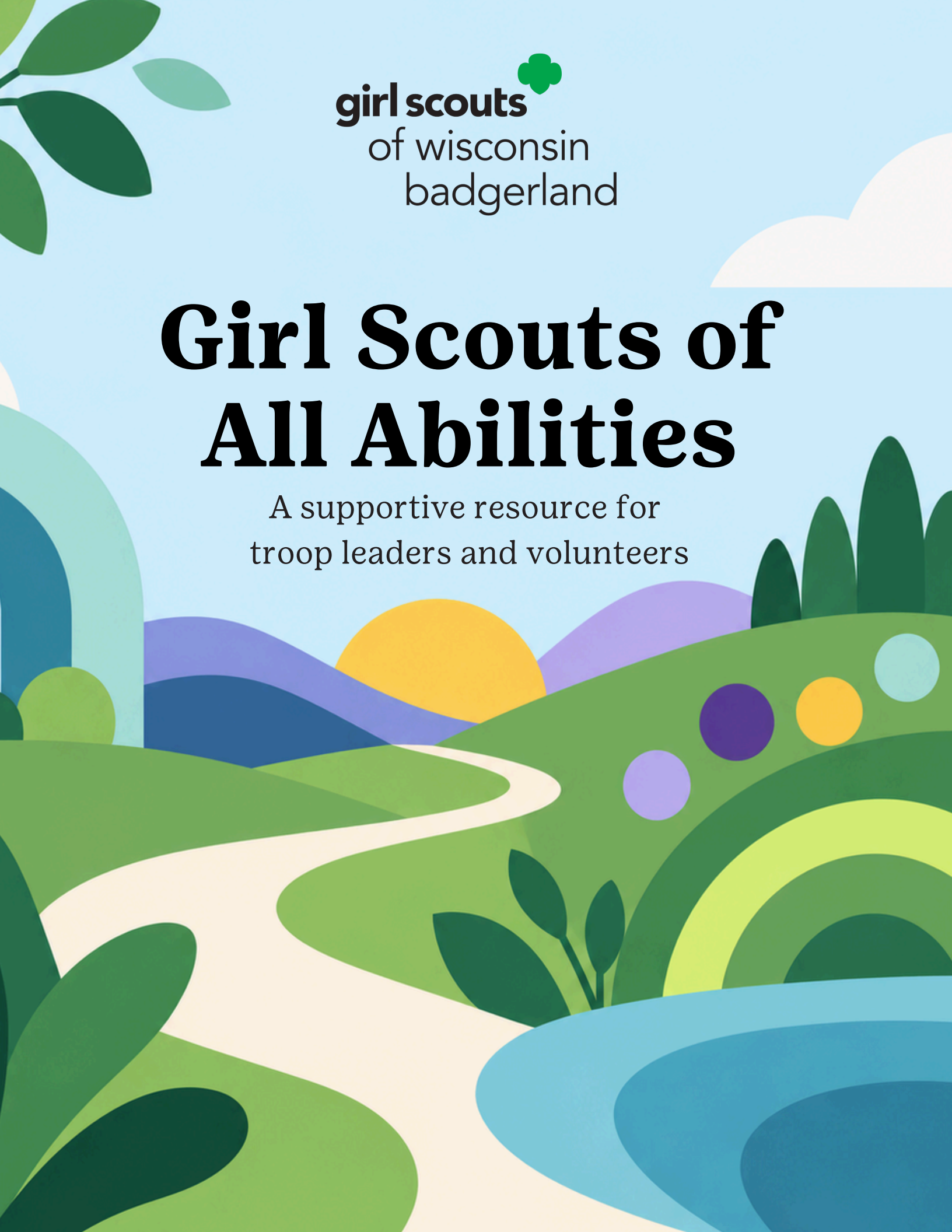




girl scouts
of wisconsin
badgerland

Girl Scouts of All Abilities

A supportive resource for
troop leaders and volunteers

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About this resource: This resource is intended to provide general information and practical guidance to help Girl Scout volunteers create inclusive experiences for participants of all abilities. Every individual is unique, and needs, preferences, and accommodations may vary. This resource is not a substitute for medical, legal, therapeutic, or other professional advice. Whenever possible, volunteers should work directly with Girl Scouts and their families or caregivers to understand and support individual needs.

PART 1

Understanding Inclusion



The Girl Scout Experience is for Everyone

Every Girl Scout brings something special to the table: creativity, curiosity, determination, and unique life experiences. At Badgerland, we are proud to welcome all Girl Scouts and volunteers, including those with disabilities, learning differences, medical conditions, and neurodivergence.

We believe every Girl Scout deserves to feel like they belong, can contribute meaningfully, and can thrive. The Girl Scout Leadership Experience is flexible and adaptable, allowing all members to participate fully and joyfully in troop life. With the right support and inclusive mindset, every Girl Scout can fully participate, contribute, and thrive.

Supporting Girl Scouts of All Abilities

People with disabilities make up the largest minority group in the United States. Yet despite their numbers, individuals with disabilities are often pushed to the margins of society, facing discrimination, exclusion, and significant barriers to participation. These barriers can include inaccessible environments, a lack of understanding, and harmful language or assumptions.

Supporting Girl Scouts with disabilities, differences, or impairments may be unfamiliar at first, but it does not require special expertise, just a willingness to learn, adapt, and create a space where every member feels welcome. That commitment to inclusivity can make a lifelong impact. A troop that includes Girl Scouts of all abilities offers meaningful benefits to everyone, fostering empathy, leadership, and friendship across difference.

What Is Inclusion?

Inclusion is more than just making room. It is about ensuring everyone belongs. An inclusive space is one where people of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities are not only present, but empowered to participate fully. It honors each person's unique experiences and perspectives, and is free from bias and discrimination. In an inclusive troop, every Girl Scout knows their voice matters and that they have equitable access to opportunities.

Understanding Disability and Difference

A disability is any physical, mental, or neurological condition that may affect how someone moves, communicates, learns, or engages with the world. It can impact one or more aspects of daily life, but it does not define who someone is or what they can achieve.

Some disabilities or differences are visible, such as mobility challenges or those requiring assistive devices. Others, like ADHD, autism, or dyslexia, are invisible, meaning they are not immediately noticeable. Whether a disability or difference is seen or unseen, every person deserves dignity, respect, and the chance to grow.

Juliette Gordon Low Led the Way

Juliette Gordon Low, founder of Girl Scouts of the USA, was deaf for most of her adult life. Despite the barriers she faced, she pursued her dream and created a movement that continues to empower millions of young people. Her story reminds us that a disability should never limit someone's potential or their ability to lead, connect, and make the world a better place.

Getting Started



Planning for Support

If a family shares that their Girl Scout needs accommodations, you do not need to have all the answers. You just need a good starting point, and a plan that helps the Girl Scout participate safely and comfortably.

Start With the Family

A conversation with the caregiver can help you understand what support may be helpful.

- What helps your Girl Scout have a good experience in groups?
- What tends to be hard (waiting, transitions, noise, crowded spaces, unstructured time)?
- What helps when your Girl Scout is overwhelmed?
- Are there any safety patterns we should be aware of ahead of time, like moving quickly away from the group or running ahead in busy spaces? If so, what tends to help your Girl Scout stay with the group?
- What would you like us to do first if something changes?

If it is age-appropriate, include the Girl Scout too:
“What helps you feel comfortable at Girl Scouts?”

Common Concerns

“What if I say or do the wrong thing?”

Mistakes happen, and that is okay. Lead with curiosity and respect. Ask questions. Say, “Help me understand.” Avoid making assumptions.

“What if they need accommodations?”

You likely already adjust for different needs. Some Girl Scouts need reminders to take turns, others need help reading or staying organized. Supporting a young person with a disability or difference is simply another version of meeting Girl Scouts where they are, and helping them shine.

“What about the rest of the troop?”

Inclusion benefits everyone. Some supports, like breaks, clear directions, or different ways to participate, can be built into troop routines when they are helpful for everyone. Other accommodations are individual and should be based on what a particular Girl Scout needs.

You Can Do This!

Just keep these truths in mind:

- Every Girl Scout deserves to belong.
- Flexibility is a strength, not a burden.
- You are not alone. Your fellow volunteers, service unit, and Badgerland are here to support you.
- It is okay to ask for help, try something new, and learn as you go.

Your role is to help every Girl Scout grow in courage, confidence, and character. That is the same, no matter how they learn, communicate, or process the world.

Getting Support From Badgerland Council

Need Support?

Badgerland staff can help you think through questions or challenges that come up as you work to create an inclusive Girl Scout experience, including:

- Adapting activities so every Girl Scout can participate
- Accessibility ideas for badges, events, outings, and overnights
- Troubleshooting program or troop challenges
- Navigating questions that come up with families
- Finding resources and next steps
- Connecting you with the right Badgerland staff when additional support is needed
- Trainings that support volunteers in delivering safe, inclusive programming

Need help adapting Girl Scout program materials or activities?

Use the [Request an Expert Form](#) for support adapting badges, activities, or other programming to better meet a Girl Scout’s accessibility needs.



For all other questions or support, contact Customer Care:
1-800-236-2710 or info@gsbadgerland.org

Respectful Language



When talking about disability and differences, language matters. The words we choose can shape how people feel included, respected, and valued. Girl Scouts welcomes everyone, and that means being intentional about how we talk about and describe others, including those with disabilities.

People-First and Identity-First Language

People-first language puts the person before the disability. It emphasizes that a disability is just one part of a person's identity, not their defining feature. For example, instead of saying "an autistic Girl Scout" you would say "a Girl Scout with autism." This phrasing highlights the person first.

At the same time, some individuals prefer identity-first language (for example, "autistic person," "disabled adult") because they see their disability as an integral and positive part of who they are. The best approach is to ask and use the language that each individual prefers. That is being truly person-centered.

Words That Reflect the Whole Person

You can use the same words for people with disabilities that you would use for anyone else: friend, neighbor, coworker, classmate, Girl Scout, leader, parent, athlete, dancer, artist, student, engineer, child, teen, adult, member, volunteer, cousin, buddy.

They're people first, just like everyone else. Their disability is only one piece of their story.

Every person is different. If you're unsure what language to use, it's okay to ask:

"How do you prefer I describe your disability, if at all?"

This simple question shows respect and invites open, inclusive conversation. It also models empathy and acceptance for the Girl Scouts in your troop.

By using language that is respectful and inclusive, we ensure that every Girl Scout and volunteer feels seen, valued, and empowered. That is what Girl Scouting is all about.

Say this	Not this
Girl Scout with a disability	Disabled Girl Scout (unless they use that term themselves)
Person who uses a wheelchair	Confined to a wheelchair / wheelchair-bound
Girl with autism / autistic person (if preferred)	Autistic kid (unless they prefer it) / suffers from autism
Person with ADHD	ADHD kid / hyper
Person with Down syndrome	Downs kid / mongoloid (offensive)
Child with a learning disability	Slow / dumb / mentally handicapped
Child with an intellectual or developmental disability	Retarded (offensive and outdated)
Has a developmental disability	Is developmentally delayed (when not clinically accurate)
Nondisabled / typically developing / neurotypical	Normal / healthy (implies others are not)
Communication differences/uses communication device	Can't talk / mute
Person with mental health needs	Crazy / psycho
Accessible parking	Handicapped parking
Accessible bathroom	Disabled bathroom
Disability community / people with disabilities	The disabled (impersonal and outdated)

Safety & Support



First Aid and CPR

Badgerland recommends that all troop volunteers keep First Aid and CPR certification up to date. At minimum, a certified adult must be present at every troop meeting, outing, and event. If only one volunteer in a troop is certified, that volunteer would need to attend every meeting or activity, so having multiple certified adults helps the troop plan more flexibly.



- Find Badgerland First Aid/CPR/AED classes on our [events page](#).
- Volunteers may also take CPR/First Aid/AED classes in the community. Courses MUST include in-person, hands-on skills assessments. This [reference list](#) of approved safety courses for recreational programs is helpful.
- [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) guidebook



Keeping Everyone Safe

Troop volunteers are expected to provide basic first aid when needed. Caregivers help us understand what supports work best for their Girl Scout, and that information helps the troop plan ahead and respond appropriately.

Some health supports can be planned for with caregiver instructions, proper documentation, and a certified adult, such as helping a Girl Scout access their rescue inhaler or epinephrine auto-injector (EpiPen), or administering medication when those requirements are in place.

Other types of care are not realistic or appropriate for troop volunteers. For example, volunteers are not expected or authorized to inject insulin or provide hands-on personal care. When a situation needs more than basic first aid or the caregiver plan, we contact the caregiver and, if needed, call 911.

Privacy and Sharing

- Share health or disability information only with registered volunteers who genuinely need it to support the Girl Scout's safety and participation.
- Do not share diagnoses, medication details, or personal information with other families.
- When talking about accommodations, use troop-wide language that normalizes support, like "We all take breaks when we need them" or "We have options for how to participate."

Medication Administration and Documentation

Some Girl Scouts may need medication support during meetings, outings, or overnight activities. Medication may only be administered when caregiver instructions, proper documentation, and a certified adult are in place.

Who Can Administer Medication?

- Any registered volunteer who has completed the required Medication Administration Training may administer medication during Girl Scout activities, following Badgerland procedures.
- After medication is given, it should be recorded right away according to the medication administration training and documentation instructions. This keeps everyone safe and informed.
- [Medication Administration course](#)



Note: Certified doctors, nurses (MD, DO, RN, LPN), and EMTs qualify and do not need additional certifications.

Rescue Items

For items like epinephrine auto-injectors (EpiPens) and rescue inhalers, the simplest plan is often for the Girl Scout to carry their own if they are able to do so responsibly and the caregiver wants that. If not, the troop should plan for a designated adult to keep the item safe and immediately accessible.

EpiPen and rescue inhaler use are included in Badgerland's First Aid/CPR/AED training. These free online refreshers may also be helpful:



- [EpiPen/anaphylaxis awareness](#)



- [Rescue inhaler/asthma awareness](#)

You Don't Have to be a Medical Expert

Volunteers are not expected to diagnose conditions or make medical decisions.

Your role is to know the Girl Scout's plan, follow the guidance provided, keep needed supports accessible, and get additional help when something is outside your role or training.

Safety & Support



Hands-On Personal Care and Physical Transfers

Troop volunteers can provide inclusive supports like flexible pacing, seating options, breaks, and thoughtful planning. Some supports, though, need to be handled by a parent/guardian or designated caregiver.

If a Girl Scout needs hands-on personal care, such as toileting assistance, changing clothes, dressing, hygiene support, or physical transfers/lifting, including transfers between mobility devices, chairs, vehicles, or restrooms, a parent/guardian or designated caregiver should plan to attend and provide that support.

Even if a caregiver offers to show a volunteer what to do, troop volunteers are not expected or authorized to provide this type of hands-on care. This protects the Girl Scout's dignity and safety and helps protect volunteers from injury.

If a family requests an accommodation that may involve hands-on personal care, toileting assistance, dressing, hygiene support, physical transfers, or lifting, volunteers should connect with Badgerland staff before the activity so an appropriate participation plan can be discussed.

Planning may include:

- Planning for accessible restrooms and adequate time
- Building in privacy and calm
- Adjusting activities so the Girl Scout can participate comfortably

“*To put yourself in another's place requires real imagination, but by doing so, each Girl Scout will be able to love among others happily.*”

- Juliette Gordon Low

Planning for Outings, Outdoor Activities, and Overnights

Outdoor activities, field trips, and overnights often go best when volunteers preview the plan and think through access needs ahead of time. Before the activity, consider what the Girl Scouts will be doing, who will lead each part, what the space will be like, and whether there may be noise, crowds, uneven ground, long walks, food needs, weather concerns, or quiet/private spaces available.

When helpful, contact the location ahead of time to ask about accessibility, activity expectations, and possible accommodations. Share key details with families before the activity so they can help identify needs, concerns, or supports that may help their Girl Scout participate comfortably.

Participation does not have to look the same for every Girl Scout. For example, a Girl Scout may be able to join daytime outdoor activities, cooking, songs, service projects, or skill-building even if an overnight stay or tent sleeping is not the right fit.

Support Without Taking Over

A Girl Scout may need help with some parts of an activity and not others. Ask before stepping in, offer choices when possible, and follow the support plan already in place. The goal is to provide the help that is needed while protecting privacy, independence, and belonging.

Participation Can Look Different

Full participation does not always mean everyone doing an activity in exactly the same way. A Girl Scout might take breaks, use adaptive equipment, participate for part of an activity, or approach it differently. What matters is that they have a meaningful way to be included.

Topic-Specific Guidance



Neurodiversity, Learning, & Communication

This section includes guidance for supporting Girl Scouts with differences in how they think, learn, communicate, process information, regulate emotions, and respond to their environment. These needs may look different from person to person, and support often begins with understanding what helps each Girl Scout participate, communicate, and feel successful.

- **Neurodivergence**—An introduction to differences in how people think, learn, communicate, process sensory information, and regulate emotions.
- **Autism**—A developmental difference that can affect communication, sensory processing, routines, social interaction, and flexibility.
- **ADHD**—A condition that can affect attention, impulse control, organization, time awareness, and self-regulation.
- **Behavioral Challenges**—Difficult or disruptive behaviors that may be connected to stress, communication needs, sensory overload, or other unmet needs.
- **Communication Differences, Including AAC**—Different ways of communicating, including speech, sign language, gestures, writing, communication boards, devices, or apps. AAC means augmentative and alternative communication.
- **Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD)**—Lifelong differences that can affect learning, communication, problem-solving, routines, or independence.
- **Learning Disabilities**—Differences that can affect reading, writing, math, language, organization, memory, or how information is processed.

Physical, Sensory & Access Needs

These topics focus on making spaces, activities, communication, and outings accessible for Girl Scouts with physical or sensory access needs.

- **Deaf and Hard of Hearing**—Hearing differences that may affect how a Girl Scout receives information or communicates with others.
- **Mobility and Physical Access Needs**—Needs related to movement, stamina, physical access, mobility devices, transportation, or accessible spaces.
- **Visual Impairment and Low Vision**—Vision differences that may affect reading, navigation, lighting needs, or how information is accessed.

Health & Medical Support

These topics focus on planning for health conditions, medications, medical devices, emergency supports, and safe participation.

- **Asthma**—A condition that affects breathing and may be triggered by exercise, weather, allergens, smoke, scents, or illness.
- **Complex Health Needs and Medical Devices**—Health conditions or medical equipment that may require additional planning, monitoring, or caregiver guidance.
- **Allergies**—Allergic reactions triggered by foods, medications, insect stings, environmental allergens, or other substances, ranging from mild to life-threatening.
- **Diabetes**—A condition that affects blood sugar and may involve meal timing, snacks, monitoring devices, medication, or other daily routines.
- **Seizure Disorders**—Conditions that cause seizures, which can look different from person to person and may require an individual care plan.

Neurodivergence



Neurodivergence is a natural part of human diversity. Some Girl Scouts process sensory input, communication, emotions, transitions, and routines differently. These differences are not “bad behavior” or lack of effort. They are often a sign that the environment, activity, or support plan needs a small adjustment.

Talking With Caregivers

- What helps your Girl Scout feel comfortable and included in groups?
- What tends to be hard at meetings (noise, transitions, waiting, crowded spaces, open-ended instructions)?
- What helps when your Girl Scout is overwhelmed?
- Are there sensory sensitivities we should be aware of?
- Do they use any tools that help (fidgets, headphones, visuals, a timer, a break option)?
- Are there any safety patterns we should be aware of ahead of time, like moving quickly away from the group or running ahead in busy spaces? If so, what tends to help your Girl Scout stay with the group?
- Is there anything else you'd like the troop leadership team to know that would help your Girl Scout have a great experience?

Helpful Supports

Predictability

- A simple agenda helps. Keep the meeting rhythm consistent when possible.
- Let Girl Scouts know what is coming next.

Transitions

- Offer a heads-up before switching activities.
- Give brief countdowns when helpful.

Processing Time

- Ask one question at a time.
- Pause before repeating or rephrasing.

Sensory Supports

- Offer a calm break option that any Girl Scout can use.
- Normalize tools like fidgets or headphones when safe.

Communication Style

- Be clear, direct, and concrete.
- Say what you mean kindly.

Movement and Regulation

- Build in movement naturally.
- Offer jobs that keep engagement up.

Planning for Outings & Overnights

- Preview the plan when possible: where you are going, what it will look like, and what the schedule is.
- Plan for noise, crowds, and transitions.
- Build in a calm option and flexible participation.
- If an overnight is involved, plan for sleep needs, quiet time, and predictable routines.

When Things Don't Go as Planned

For minor incidents or general concerns, contact the parent or guardian first and follow caregiver guidance on file.

When in doubt, err on the side of caution.

For medical emergencies requiring immediate attention:

1. Call 911.
2. Contact the parent or guardian.
3. Call the Badgerland emergency line: 1-800-236-2710.
4. Fill out the [Incident/Accident Report Form](#)



Need More Support?

If you are unsure how to support a Girl Scout's participation, contact Badgerland so we can connect you with the support you need. For help planning or adapting an event or activity, use the [Request an Expert Form](#)



Autism



Girl Scouts with autism may experience sensory input, communication, routines, and social expectations differently. Many do best with predictability, clear communication, and sensory-aware planning. The goal is to support participation, comfort, and belonging.

Talking With Caregivers

Start with the caregiver questions in the Neurodivergence section. In addition, these questions can help you plan for autism more specifically.

- Are there sensory sensitivities we should be aware of (noise, lights, crowded spaces, touch, strong smells)?
- What helps with transitions and unexpected changes?
- What does overwhelm look like for your Girl Scout, and what helps them reset?

Helpful Supports

Predictability and Clarity

- Use a simple agenda and consistent routines.
- Give concrete instructions: “First we do X, then Y.”

Transitions and Flexibility

- Offer a heads-up before switching activities.
- Offer choices within the plan when possible.

Sensory-Aware Planning

- Provide a calm break option that any Girl Scout can use.
- Normalize sensory tools when safe.

Communication Support

- Speak plainly and kindly.
- Do not require eye contact.
- Offer ways to participate without speaking in front of the group if helpful.

Belonging and Social Connection

- Use structured roles and clear ways for Girl Scouts to take turns.
- Address unkindness quickly and calmly.
- Consider smaller group work when helpful.

Self-Regulation

- If movement, fidgets, or repetition are safe and not disruptive, it is usually best to allow them.

Planning for Outings & Overnights

- Preview the plan when possible: where you are going, what it will look like, and what the schedule is.
- Plan for noise, crowds, and transitions.
- Build in a calm option and flexible participation.
- If an overnight is involved, plan for sleep needs, quiet time, and predictable routines.

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ADHD



Girl Scouts with ADHD, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, often experience challenges with attention, impulse control, organization, time awareness, and regulation. Many are creative, energetic, quick thinkers, and strong leaders when the environment supports how their brain works.

Talking With Caregivers

Start with the caregiver questions in the Neurodivergence section. In addition, these questions can help you plan for ADHD more specifically.

- What helps with focus and follow-through during multi-step activities?
- Do timers, checklists, movement breaks, or specific jobs help your Girl Scout stay engaged?
- What helps your Girl Scout regroup when they are overwhelmed or having a hard time?

Helpful Supports

Instructions

- One step at a time is often better than a long explanation.
- Offer a simple checklist or visual example when helpful.

Movement

- Build in planned movement breaks.
- Give active jobs like setup lead or timekeeper.

Time Awareness

- Timers and countdowns may help.
- Give a heads-up before switching activities.

Regulation and Attention

- Reduce distractions during instruction moments.
- Smaller groups can help when possible.

Encouragement

- Name what you are seeing: “Thanks for waiting your turn.”
- Keep feedback specific and kind.

Safety Planning

- If impulse control affects safety, plan proactively with the caregiver and co-leaders.

Planning for Outings & Overnights

- Outings can be high stimulation. Plan pacing and movement.
- Use a clear schedule and give a heads-up before switching activities.
- Build in roles and responsibilities to keep engagement high.
- Overnights often go better with structure and planned wind-down time.

When Things Don't Go as Planned

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Behavioral Challenges



Sometimes a Girl Scout may have a hard moment that may be disruptive, intense, or unexpected. These moments can be stressful for the Girl Scout, the volunteers, and the rest of the troop. It helps to remember that behavior is often communication. Many challenges improve when the environment is clearer, calmer, more predictable, or better matched to what the Girl Scout needs.

Talking With Caregivers

- What situations tend to be most challenging in group settings (waiting, transitions, noise, unstructured time)?
- What are early signs your Girl Scout is getting overwhelmed?
- What helps them calm and regroup?
- Are there any safety patterns we should be aware of ahead of time in busy spaces, and what tends to help your Girl Scout stay with the group?
- What would you like us to do in the moment if things escalate?

Helpful Supports

Clear Expectations

- Keep rules simple and positively stated.
- Review expectations before transitions.

Reduce Common Triggers

- Build in movement and breaks.
- Plan for waiting time with something to do.
- Keep instructions short and concrete.

Reinforce What You Want to See

- Catch the good moments and name them specifically.
- Use roles and jobs to keep engagement up.

Dignity First

- Correct privately when possible.
- Avoid power struggles in front of peers.

Planning for Outings & Overnights

- Preview the plan and keep the schedule clear.
- Assign clear buddies and adult check-in points.
- Choose environments that match the troop's capacity when possible.
- If leaving the group quickly is a known pattern, plan supervision and boundaries proactively with the caregiver.

When Things Don't Go as Planned

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Communication Differences & AAC



Girl Scouts communicate in lots of different ways. Some use AAC (augmentative and alternative communication), such as communication devices, communication boards, or text-to-speech apps. Others communicate through sign language, gestures, writing, pointing, short responses, or a mix of methods. The goal is to help every Girl Scout participate, connect, and lead in ways that work for them.

Talking With Caregivers

- How does your Girl Scout communicate best?
- Do they use AAC, a communication board, an app, sign language, or another tool?
- What helps them answer questions (choices, yes/no, visuals, extra time)?
- What makes communication more challenging (being put on the spot, background noise, interruptions)?
- How do they show “yes,” “no,” “I need a break,” or “I am overwhelmed”?

Helpful Supports

Participation Options

- Normalize options: talking, pointing, writing, showing an answer on a device, or partner sharing.

Supportive Questions

- Ask one question at a time.
- Offer choices.
- Give processing time.

Reduce Pressure

- Avoid putting a Girl Scout on the spot.
- Let a Girl Scout pass without making it awkward.

AAC Support

- Make communication tools welcome and accessible.
- Treat AAC voice output like any other voice.

When Speaking Is Hard in Groups

Some Girl Scouts can speak comfortably in certain settings but freeze in others, especially with unfamiliar adults, in groups, or when they feel pressure. Families sometimes use the term “selective mutism” for this pattern.

- Keep interactions warm and low-pressure.
- Offer participation options that do not require talking.
- Celebrate participation and connection, not volume.
- Avoid calling attention to it in front of others.

Planning for Outings & Overnights

- Noisy, crowded environments can make communication harder. Build in quieter moments.
- Make sure communication tools come with the Girl Scout and stay accessible.
- Confirm how the Girl Scout communicates urgent needs, especially discomfort or “I need help.”

When Things Don’t Go as Planned

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Intellectual & Developmental Disability



Intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) is a broad term for lifelong differences that can affect learning, communication, problem-solving, routines, or independence. Girl Scouts with IDD may learn at a different pace, need extra support with communication or routines, or benefit from more repetition and structure. The goal is to make participation doable, meaningful, and age-appropriate.

Talking With Caregivers

- What helps your Girl Scout feel comfortable and successful in a group?
- What helps your Girl Scout understand instructions (visuals, demonstration, one step at a time, extra time)?
- How does your Girl Scout communicate best, especially when tired or frustrated?
- Are there safety needs we should be aware of in busy spaces?
- What does a hard moment look like, and what tends to help them regroup?

Helpful Supports

Clear and Predictable

- Use a simple agenda and consistent routines.
- Show steps whenever you can.

Independence Through Structure

- Offer choices that are manageable.
- Give extra time without rushing.

Age-Appropriate Belonging

- Avoid baby talk.
- Offer meaningful roles that match strengths.

Social Connection

- Small groups or buddy support can help.
- Use clear ways for Girl Scouts to take turns.

Planning for Outings & Overnights

- Preview the plan and keep the schedule clear.
- Plan for transitions and busy environments.
- Think ahead about restroom access, breaks, and pacing.
- If a Girl Scout needs hands-on personal care or physical transfers, a parent/guardian or designated caregiver should plan to attend and provide that support.

When Things Don't Go as Planned

For minor incidents or general concerns, contact the parent or guardian first and follow caregiver guidance on file.

When in doubt, err on the side of caution.

For medical emergencies requiring immediate attention:

1. Call 911.
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Learning Disabilities



Learning disabilities are differences that can affect how a person takes in, processes, remembers, or shows what they know. They may affect reading, writing, math, language, organization, or following multi-step directions. Girl Scouts with learning disabilities may be bright, creative, and capable, but need information presented in a different way. Many benefit from clearer directions, more time, and more than one way to show what they know.

Talking With Caregivers

- What helps your Girl Scout learn best (visuals, demonstration, reading aloud, extra time)?
- Are there specific challenges we should consider (reading out loud, writing, timed tasks)?
- Does your Girl Scout use tools that help (text-to-speech, speech-to-text, enlarged print)?
- What helps when your Girl Scout feels frustrated or embarrassed?

Planning for Outings & Overnights

- Busy, unfamiliar days can make learning differences show up more.
- Preview the plan and keep expectations clear.
- Use simple schedules and reminders.

When Things Don't Go as Planned

For minor incidents or general concerns, contact the parent or guardian first and follow caregiver guidance on file.

When in doubt, err on the side of caution.

For medical emergencies requiring immediate attention:

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Helpful Supports

Directions

- Give one step at a time.
- Show an example whenever possible.

Multiple Ways to Participate

- Let Girl Scouts share ideas verbally, by drawing, or by choosing from options.
- Avoid making reading aloud the only way to participate.

Time and Pacing

- Build in extra time for tasks that involve reading or writing if needed.
- Avoid putting speed on display.

Normalize Supports

- Checklists, visuals, and partner work can be offered to the whole troop.

Deaf & Hard of Hearing



Girl Scouts who are Deaf or hard of hearing may communicate in different ways, including spoken language, sign language, lip-reading, or technology supports. Hearing levels and communication preferences vary widely. In troop spaces, we want every Girl Scout to be able to follow what is happening, participate, and feel included.

Talking With Caregivers

- How does your Girl Scout communicate best (spoken language, sign language, lip-reading, or a mix)?
- What helps your Girl Scout follow along in a group setting?
- Does your Girl Scout use hearing aids or assistive devices, and is there anything we should know to support them?
- In group settings, what tends to be most challenging (background noise, people talking over each other, instructions while walking)?
- What helps your Girl Scout know what's happening (visual agenda, written steps, demonstrations, one person speaking at a time)?
- Are there any safety considerations you want us to consider for busy outings or crowded spaces?

Helpful Supports

Make Communication Visible

- Face the troop when giving directions.
- Speak clearly at a natural pace.
- Avoid covering your mouth while speaking.

Share Instructions More Than One Way

- Pair spoken directions with a written agenda or demonstration.
- Repeat key directions calmly as needed.

Group Discussion

- Encourage one person to speak at a time so everyone can follow the conversation.
- Briefly repeat key peer comments when needed.

Background Noise

- Closer seating during instructions can help.
- Smaller groups can make conversations easier to follow.

Planning for Outings & Overnights

- Preview the plan and key details (schedule, meeting points, check-in times).
- Agree on a simple meet-up plan and buddy expectations for crowded places.
- For overnights, plan how key information will be shared at night or early morning.

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Mobility & Physical Access



Girl Scouts show up in all kinds of bodies, with all kinds of access needs. Some use wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, braces, or other equipment. Some have chronic pain, limited stamina, or fatigue. The goal is to plan in a way that helps the Girl Scout participate fully and comfortably, without feeling singled out.

Talking With Caregivers

- What supports help your Girl Scout participate comfortably at meetings and outings?
- Are there mobility devices or equipment we should plan around?
- Do they fatigue easily? What are early signs they need a break?
- Are there restroom access needs we should plan for, such as an accessible stall, extra time, or privacy?
- If your Girl Scout has a minor fall or is in pain, what would you like us to do first?

Helpful Supports

Make the Space Work

- Prioritize spaces with accessible entry and an accessible restroom when possible.
- Set up the room with clear pathways.

Offer Options

- Make seating available as a regular option.
- Build in breaks and flexible pacing.

Meaningful Leadership

- Offer real leadership roles that fit different bodies.
- Choose roles that are useful, age-appropriate, and connected to what the troop is doing.

Adapt Without Isolating

- Adjust distance and pacing, not belonging.
- Look for ways to adjust the setup, not the Girl Scout's belongings. For example, an outdoor cooking or campfire-related activity may be easier to include if some preparation happens at a table or another accessible height.
- Plan alternatives that keep the Girl Scout connected to the troop.

Planning for Outings & Overnights

- Do a quick access scan: parking, entry, surfaces, distance, restroom access, and seating.
- Build in time buffers and pacing.
- Confirm transportation and equipment needs.
- For overnights, confirm access and comfort. If hands-on personal care or physical transfers are needed, a parent/guardian or designated caregiver should plan to attend and provide that support.

When Things Don't Go as Planned

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Visual Impairment & Low Vision



Girl Scouts with visual impairments may have low vision, partial vision, or blindness. Some use glasses, magnifiers, canes, large print, or screen readers. Needs vary by person and environment. In troop spaces, we want activities to feel accessible and safe, without making the Girl Scout feel singled out.

Talking With Caregivers

- What helps your Girl Scout participate comfortably at meetings and outings?
- Does your Girl Scout use any tools we should keep in mind when planning (glasses, magnifier, cane, large print, screen reader)?
- What environments are most challenging (low lighting, glare, cluttered spaces, crowded rooms)?
- What helps your Girl Scout stay oriented and confident in new spaces?
- Are there any safety considerations you want us to consider in new spaces or busy outings?
- What helps if your Girl Scout gets disoriented or frustrated?

Helpful Supports

Predictable and Safe Spaces

- Keep walkways clear.
- Avoid moving furniture mid-meeting.
- Point out hazards casually when needed.

Accessible Information

- Read aloud what you put on a board, screen, or handout.
- Use high contrast and larger print when possible.
- Use hands-on demonstrations and tactile examples when you can. For example, show how to fold the paper, where to place the glue, or how to start the first stitch, and let the Girl Scout feel the materials and the finished example as you go.

Clear Directions

- Use directions like “to your left” rather than “over there.”
- Describe key details that matter for the activity or safety.
- Ask before offering physical guidance. If a Girl Scout wants help navigating, offer your arm instead of grabbing or pulling them.

Planning for Outings & Overnights

- Preview the plan and share key details about the environment ahead of time.
- Consider lighting, stairs, uneven surfaces, crowds, and distance.
- For overnights, plan for safe navigation at night, including lighting, clear pathways, and predictable storage of belongings.

When Things Don't Go as Planned

For minor incidents or general concerns, contact the parent or guardian first and follow caregiver guidance on file.

When in doubt, err on the side of caution.

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Asthma



Asthma can affect Girl Scouts in different ways. Exercise, cold air, allergens, smoke, strong scents, illness, and other factors can trigger symptoms. The goal is to understand the Girl Scout's needs, know what to do if symptoms occur, and keep medications and other supports easy to access.

Talking With Caregivers

- What triggers should we be aware of (exercise, cold air, allergies, smoke, strong scents)?
- What are early signs your Girl Scout needs support?
- Does your Girl Scout carry their rescue inhaler? If they are able to carry it responsibly and you want them to, we will support that. If not, we will plan for a designated adult to keep it close and accessible.
- Are there activity limits we should consider, or ways to adapt activities?
- What would you like us to do first if symptoms start?
- For non-emergency concerns, what is the best way to contact you?

Helpful Supports

Rescue Inhaler Access

- Confirm whether the Girl Scout will carry their inhaler if appropriate.
- If not, plan for a designated adult to keep it safe and immediately accessible.
- Make sure co-leaders know the plan.

Trigger Awareness

- Be mindful about strong scents and smoke.
- Consider cold air exposure for winter activities.
- Build in warm-up breaks for active outings.

Pacing

- Offer flexible participation without spotlighting.

Planning for Outings & Overnights

- Confirm who has quick access to the rescue inhaler throughout the outing.
- Plan for weather and physical activity level.
- For overnights, confirm nighttime needs and where rescue medication will be kept.

When Things Don't Go as Planned

For minor incidents or general concerns, contact the parent or guardian first and follow caregiver guidance on file.

When in doubt, err on the side of caution.

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Complex Health Needs & Medical Devices



Some Girl Scouts manage health needs that require extra planning. This can include chronic illness, significant allergies, diabetes, seizure disorders, breathing concerns, fatigue conditions, migraines, pain conditions, or medical devices. You do not need to understand every medical detail. You do need a clear plan, good communication with the caregiver, and a calm approach that keeps the Girl Scout included.

Talking With Caregivers

- What helps your Girl Scout participate safely and comfortably?
- What are early warning signs we should watch for?
- If symptoms start, what should we do first?
- Is there a care plan or caregiver guidance we should follow?
- Does your Girl Scout use devices during meetings or outings? If a device alarms, what should we do?
- What is your preferred order of contact for non-emergency concerns?

Helpful Supports

Predictable and Calm

- A simple agenda and consistent routines help.
- Keep timing for breaks, snacks, water, and bathroom needs in mind when planning.

Privacy and Dignity

- Ask what the Girl Scout prefers.
- Avoid drawing attention to devices or supports.

Supplies and Timing

- Confirm what needs to be accessible and by when.
- Avoid last-minute surprises during outings.

Planning for Outings & Overnights

- Confirm timing for meals, snacks, meds, rest, and device checks.
- Plan for weather and high activity days.
- Confirm who has quick access to what is needed.
- If hands-on personal care or physical transfers are required, a parent/guardian or designated caregiver should plan to attend and provide that support.

When Things Don't Go as Planned

For minor incidents or general concerns, contact the parent or guardian first and follow caregiver guidance on file.

When in doubt, err on the side of caution.

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Allergies



Allergies can range from mild to life-threatening, including severe reactions like anaphylaxis. Some Girl Scouts need careful planning around foods, insect stings, latex, or other known allergens. The goal is to create a clear, calm plan that keeps the Girl Scout safe and helps the whole troop feel confident.

Talking With Caregivers

- What foods or other allergens must be avoided, and how serious is the allergy?
- What does a reaction look like for your Girl Scout, and what are early signs we should watch for?
- Is there an allergy care plan or caregiver guidance we should follow?
- Does your Girl Scout carry emergency medication, like an epinephrine auto-injector (EpiPen)? If they are able to carry it responsibly and you want them to, we will support that. If not, we will plan for a designated adult to keep it close and accessible.
- What would you like us to do first if you think a reaction is starting?
- Are there troop practices that make this easier (no food sharing, ingredient lists, handwashing)?

Helpful Supports

Food Routines

- Communicate ahead of time about snacks.
- Avoid surprise food activities when possible.
- Consider a consistent snack approach that works for the group.

Reduce Exposure

- No food sharing.
- Handwashing before and after eating.
- Wipe down tables after food.
- If insect stings are a concern, ask caregiver what precautions are helpful for outdoor activities
- Be aware of latex products such as gloves and balloons.

Emergency Medication Planning

- Confirm whether the Girl Scout will carry their EpiPen if appropriate.
- If not, plan for a designated adult to keep it safe and immediately accessible.
- Make sure the adult team knows where it is and what the caregiver wants you to do first.

Planning for Outings & Overnights

- Confirm food options in advance, including venue policies, ingredients, and shared cooking spaces.
- Plan for safe access to emergency medication throughout the activity.
- Make sure the adult team knows the plan for the outing.

When Things Don't Go as Planned

For minor incidents or general concerns, contact the parent or guardian first and follow caregiver guidance on file.

When in doubt, err on the side of caution.

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Diabetes



Girl Scouts with diabetes can thrive in troop activities with a little planning and consistent routines. Many manage their care independently with support nearby. The goal is to understand what “safe participation” looks like for that Girl Scout and to follow the caregiver plan.

Talking With Caregivers

- What does your Girl Scout need during meetings and outings to manage diabetes safely?
- Does your Girl Scout use devices (monitor, pump), and what should we do if an alarm goes off?
- What are early signs of a concern for your Girl Scout, and what should we do first?
- Are there snack or meal timing needs we should plan for?
- What supplies does your Girl Scout carry, and what do you want the adult team to know about access and timing during meetings and outings?
- For non-emergency concerns, what is the best way to contact you?

Helpful Supports

Planning for Timing and Access

- Keep timing for snacks, water, bathroom needs, and device checks in mind when planning.
- Avoid drawing attention to alarms or checks.

Routines

- Predictable timing helps, especially on outings.
- Avoid long stretches with no breaks or food access.

Privacy and Dignity

- Ask what the Girl Scout prefers for privacy.
- Keep communication calm and matter-of-fact.

Keeping Everyone Safe

- Troop volunteers provide basic first aid when needed.
- Medication may only be administered when caregiver instructions, proper documentation, and a certified adult are in place.
- Volunteers are not expected or authorized to inject insulin or provide hands-on personal care. When more is needed, contact the caregiver and call 911 if urgent.

Planning for Outings & Overnights

- Confirm timing for meals, snacks, activity pacing, and device checks.
- Build in breaks where the Girl Scout can regroup.
- Make sure the adult team understands the caregiver plan for the outing or overnight.

When Things Don't Go as Planned

For minor incidents or general concerns, contact the parent or guardian first and follow caregiver guidance on file.

When in doubt, err on the side of caution.

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Seizure Disorders



Some Girl Scouts have seizure disorders, and many participate fully in troop activities with a clear plan in place. Seizures can look different from person to person. The goal is to know what is typical for that Girl Scout, follow the caregiver plan, and respond calmly.

Talking With Caregivers

- Is there a seizure care plan or caregiver guidance we should follow?
- What does a typical seizure look like for your Girl Scout?
- Are there early signs we might notice?
- What helps during and after a seizure for your Girl Scout?
- Are there medications involved, and who is expected to carry them during activities?
- After a seizure, when should we call you, and what helps your Girl Scout recover and rejoin?

Helpful Supports

Know the Plan and Keep It Calm

- Make sure the adult team knows the caregiver guidance and what “typical” looks like for this Girl Scout.
- A calm response helps everyone.

Recovery Time

- After a seizure, a Girl Scout may need rest, quiet, water, or time before rejoining.
- Plan for a supportive reset.

Keeping Everyone Safe

- Troop volunteers provide basic first aid when needed.
- Medication may only be administered when caregiver instructions, proper documentation, and a certified adult are in place.
- When more is needed than basic first aid or the caregiver plan, contact the caregiver and call 911 if urgent.

Planning for Outings & Overnights

- Make sure caregiver guidance is available to the adult team for the outing or overnight.
- Confirm how any needed medication will stay accessible during the activity.
- For overnights, confirm what the caregiver wants you to do if a seizure happens at night, and how they want to be contacted.

When Things Don't Go as Planned

For minor incidents or general concerns, contact the parent or guardian first and follow caregiver guidance on file.

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