

INTRODUCTION TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Girl Scouts of Western Washington staff and volunteers are dedicated to providing a safe, positive, and high-quality experience for all Girl Scouts. Volunteers serve as role models, and their actions, attitudes, and behaviors help instill the values reflected in the Girl Scout Promise, Law, and Mission.

An essential part of leadership is the ability to work with others and communicate effectively. While differences of opinion and conflict are natural in any relationship, addressing them with empathy, respect, and kindness can enhance communication and improve relationships. However, unresolved or escalating conflicts can often interfere with the ability of adults to provide our youth members with a high-quality Girl Scout experience.

To help navigate conflict situations, the following conflict management essentials should be followed:

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT ESSENTIALS

- **Try to talk it out directly.** Approach conflicts calmly and in person (or by phone). Avoid trying to resolve issues over text or email. If appropriate, begin with a brief email summarizing the issue and requesting a conversation. Plan ahead and consider using the [Conflict Conversation Prep Worksheet](#).
- **Use “I” statements.** Express your own feelings and needs without blame. Start with phrases like “I feel”, “I need”, and “I would like” to explain your perspective, why it matters, and offer a solution.
- **Ask open-ended questions.** Encourage dialogue and understanding with questions that can’t be answered with one word. Examples: “Can you describe what happened?” “What would it take for us to move forward?” “What ideas do you have that would meet both our needs?”
- **Maintain confidentiality.** Keep conversations private and involve only those directly responsible for resolving the issue. Avoid discussing conflicts with others or on social media to protect privacy and dignity.
- **Handle conflicts calmly, respectfully, and in private.** Aggressive behavior—including shouting, insults, or physical confrontations—is never acceptable in the Girl Scout environment. Resolution conversations should take place privately between adults, without youth present.



MEMBER-LED CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

When you experience a conflict within your service unit or troop, be it caregiver/volunteer, volunteer/volunteer, or caregiver/caregiver, make an appointment with the parties involved to work with them toward the shared interest of ensuring their Girl Scouts have an excellent Girl Scout experience.

This is the step-by-step approach for resolving conflicts directly within troops or service units.

1. **Seek Guidance and Support.** Connect with your service unit manager or volunteer support manager for advice and/or support resources.
2. **Practice [active listening](#).** Be mindful of body language, take notes, and ask thoughtful, clarifying questions.
3. **If you are mediating,** speak to parties individually first and then bring them together for a joint conversation. Work to uncover solutions that could result in mutual gain and have the best possible outcome for all parties.
4. **Be direct and honest.** Address concerns openly without minimizing issues. Stay respectful and assertive, focusing on what's best for the troop.
5. **Focus on facts, not people.** Address the specific actions, events and their impact without assigning blame or labeling the other person.
6. **Set clear expectations.** Misunderstandings often stem from unclear roles and responsibilities. Create a written agreement outlining expectations and follow up with a summary email.
7. **Speak with respect and kindness.** Conflict is normal—not a failure. Approach it guided by the values in the Girl Scout Law. Handling challenges with care today helps build trust and healthier connections for the future.
8. **If unresolved, escalate formally.** If your efforts don't resolve the situation, the party concerned should complete the [Girl Scout Conflict Resolution Form](#) to begin a 'Staff Led' process.



STAFF-LED CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

Girl Scouts of Western Washington is committed to providing our volunteers with a satisfying experience that supports their efforts to provide a quality Girl Scout Leadership Program.

When the [Girl Scout Conflict Resolution Form](#) is submitted, a Girl Scouts of Western Washington staff member will begin the information gathering process and contact the member or volunteer who submitted the form. As we seek to resolve issues brought to our attention, we ask that the volunteer or members who submitted the form assist in containing the situation by not communicating to parties not involved or using social media to discuss the issue(s). Appropriate time will be needed for staff to gather information and speak with necessary parties to aid in the resolution process. This process may include:

- phone calls
- emails
- in-person meetings with parties involved
- interviewing witnessing parties
- involvement of other Girl Scouts of Western Washington departments

The Girl Scouts of Western Washington staff member will act as an impartial mediator that supports all parties in creating a mutually agreed upon plan of action that outlines expectations for each party's future behavior with regard to the source of conflict. In the absence of mutual agreement, the staff member will work to establish a fair and balanced course of action. Should resolution fail after council staff mediation, other actions may be considered including the release from the organization of one or both parties involved. This decision will not be made lightly.

A volunteer may have their appointment terminated by Girl Scouts of Western Washington because of, but not limited to:

- Refusal to comply with Girl Scouts of Western Washington or GSUSA policies
- Conduct inconsistent with the principles of the Girl Scout Movement as indicated by the Girl Scout Promise and Law
- Inability to perform or fulfill duties of the position
- Unsatisfactory follow through of agreed upon objectives of the role.
- Refusal or failure to adhere to financial guidelines of Girl Scouts of Western Washington
- Status as a registered sex offender or convicted of crimes against a child

Girl Scouts of Western Washington staff will focus on defined resolution actions that are specific, achievable, comprehensive, and final. The solution will include an evaluation process and subsequent actions for non-compliance. In all resolutions, Girl Scouts of Western Washington will keep our youth members in the forefront of the decision-making process.

When working to resolve a situation, keep in mind that a troop/group leader should not remove a Girl Scout, including both adults and youth, from a troop/group without staff intervention. Girl Scouts Western Washington will not release Girl Scouts from a troop because of an adult conflict, except in a last-resort situation where all other options have been explored.

Once the staff member becomes involved in a matter, it will be managed by the assigned staff until its conclusion. All participants in these matters are expected to comply with all requests and work toward a mutually beneficial outcome.