

## Conflict Resolution: Council Expectations for Digital Communication

When we become Girl Scouts, we all commit to our Girl Scout Law. We need to ensure that we are living those values with everything that we do, including how we interact with each other in person, over text, email and on social media.

We are a diverse community with different perspectives, interests, goals and ways of doing things. These differences enrich us all and make us stronger as a Council, even when conflict arises. We uphold the Girl Scout Law by being respectful and inclusive, ensuring that differences of opinion and conflict are used as an opportunity for mutual growth and understanding in a constructive manner.

This is especially important on social media and any form of digital communication. In those types of exchanges, personal tone gets lost and there is potential for incorrect assumptions and inferences to be made. Delayed response times or abbreviated replies are interpreted as intentional slights, rather than the realities of life taking priority. People can disregard that they are interacting with Girl Scouts, or other human beings in general, who all deserve to be treated with “consideration, care, and respect.”



### Why we are concerned about social media and digital communication:

#### For Youth:

- Nearly 2 in 3 adolescents are “often” or “sometimes” exposed to hate-based content on social media.
- Studies have found a connection between social media cyberbullying and depression among young people.
- Teen girls and LGBTQ youth are more likely to experience cyberbullying and online harassment, which can lead to negative emotions.
- Children often learn from what they see around them. This is very true as it relates to modeling responsible social media behavior.

#### For Adults:

- Adults experience similar adverse mental and physical health issues as youth when encountering negativity via digital communication.
- Adult cyberbullying can have devastating effects. This includes:
  - **Reputation attacks:** personal, professional, corporate
  - **Viral campaigns:** using social media to spread malicious content
  - **Doxing:** discovering and distributing personal information online with ill-intent

## **For Girl Scouts:**

- The Girl Scout Movement was established to bring people together in an inclusive way, to build community and make the world a better place. Negative digital interactions are divisive, disruptive and counter-productive to the Girl Scout mission.
  - Conflicts or areas of tension, inequity and exclusion should be handled in a direct, respectful and SOLUTION-BASED manner IN PERSON. We work together to collaborate, compromise and come to a reasonable resolution.
  - Girl Scouts should handle disagreements directly with courage, confidence and character. This is what we should be teaching and modeling to our youth members.
- Brand reputation: Negative comments, online disputes, or even online attacks - either within our community or externally - can harm Girl Scouts' reputation, leading to decreased trust of the Girl Scout movement, customer and member dissatisfaction, and potential impact to Girl Scouts success in our entrepreneurial program.

## **Guidelines and Expectations for Digital Communication**

- Use online platforms **only** as a vehicle to share information for dates, facts, events or details regarding Girl Scout business.
  - Adhere to our Internet Safety Pledge  
<https://www.girlscouts.org/en/footer/help/internet-safety-pledge.html>
- Specific or individual concerns should be handled offline using direct communication with the individuals involved.
  - In person conversations are best.
  - Virtual meetings are good.
  - Phone calls are okay.
  - Texting and email tend to lead to more misunderstanding.
  - Social media is not appropriate to convey differences of opinion regarding Girl Scout issues.
    - The first level of Conflict Resolution should be Volunteer-Led.
    - If necessary, involve the appropriate administrative volunteers or Council staff.
    - See our Council's Conflict Resolution Guidelines.
- As an administrator of any Girl Scout related online groups, it is your responsibility to ensure that content is appropriately representative of our Girl Scout Law and following these guidelines. You should delete inflammatory posts or turn off the ability to comment, and follow up with that person privately.
- **DO NOT** contact news sources or post on public platforms if a situation arises that involves Girl Scouts or our programs.
  - Let the Council Staff deal with conflicts and issues. Staff serves as informed, professional representatives of our entire local Girl Scout community in those situations.

