One of the most important functions of the Service Unit is to provide Troop Leader Support so that our volunteers who work with girls have the knowledge they need to deliver high-quality Girl Scout program, in a safe setting.

Having one person (or a team) designated as the “Troop Coach” is a great way to organize this function in your Service Unit. This document provides suggestions on how to implement the Troop Coach function – the Table of Contents is below. Exactly how you organize it in your Service Unit is completely up to the Service Unit Manager (SUM) and the other members of your Service Team. Do what works best!

And, if you are just getting started with the Troop Coach function, don’t feel that you need to do everything. Focus first on providing enhanced New Troop Leader Support, and add the other learning support functions over time.

The more the merrier! Once you review these suggestions see if you can organize a team to take on different parts of the Troop Coach responsibilities. This might also be a great opportunity to re-engage past volunteers who are ready for a new challenge.

Plan together, add your own flair, share the work, and have fun!

**Assisting with New Leader Support**
- New Troop Leader Support
- When You Meet...
- Troop Management Tips
- Troop Year Planning
- Volunteer Resources

**Facilitating Ongoing Learning**
- Mini-Trainings
- Roundtable Discussions

**Promoting Training & Resource Awareness**
- The Council Training Program
- Website & Newsletters
- Leadership Development Pin
Assisting with New Leader Support

New Troop Leader Support
The first thing that will help us provide Troop Leader Support is to have a good sense of the overall learning expectations as a new volunteer enters the support cycle.

When You Meet
Here is a set of suggested guidelines for how to prepare for and conduct one of the crucial first meetings with a new Troop Leader. If the co-leader is assigned, it is best to meet with both at the same time. This is typically led by the SUM or a member of the Volunteer Support Team. Modify as you see fit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prepare Yourself</th>
<th>Making the Call</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read the updated Volunteer Essentials, Family Guide and Troop Coach Workbook so that your knowledge is current.</td>
<td>Contact each new leader within 1 week of their appointment to:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Introduce yourself and explain that you are calling to help them get started with their troop.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make sure to follow up with the new leaders 4 weeks after initial meeting to ensure they feel supported and answer any questions they may have.</td>
<td>• Ask them if they would like to have an in-person meeting or a phone meeting.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Emphasize that they will have a productive meeting if they read their Family Guide, Volunteer Essentials, and take the Girl Scouting 101/Orientation in person or online and the Volunteer Essentials Quiz online prior to your meeting. (Effective August 2013, Orientation/101 will be mandatory before being appointed a leader or co-leader)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If they have a chance to browse their Volunteer Essentials Handbook, that would be extra great. Remind them to bring their troop leader notebook to the meeting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ask them if they have any questions right off the top. Then, work through the following items in any order that feels best for you and the Troop Leader(s).

Welcome them to the Service Unit (SU)
- Review the definition and purpose of a Service Unit (SU).
- Tell them the SU number and give them your contact information and the contact list for the SU.
- Explain how your SU is structured, what region/schools it covers, how large it is, etc.
- Tell them when your SU meets and emphasize how important it is to attend.
- Describe any SU events that are planned, or being planned.

Troop Organizing
- Explain the position codes 01 and 02. Explain the difference between the 01 and 02 is the access to adult and girl registration online and the main point of contact for the council office.
- Stress the importance of the 2 adult minimum.
- Review who their co-leader will be or inform them how you will be helping them find a co-leader.
- It is very important for the leader and co-leader(s) to meet and talk about their goals before meeting with the girls. If they do not see eye to eye it will make it very difficult to lead together.
• Assist with introductions to co-leader(s).
• Discuss plans to recruit girls for the troop and/or give them a list of girls already interested.
• Provide suggestions for finding a suitable meeting place.
• Provide suggestions about troop dues. Maybe suggest that they start with $2 per girl until the group is rolling and ready to do some troop year planning.
• Provide tips on how to keep organized with girl paperwork, financial paperwork, girl award records, etc.

Troop Year Program Planning
• Review the Quick Start section in Volunteer Essentials Handbook.
• Assist with troop planning by talking with leaders about their goals and the girl’s goals for the year. Ensure co-leader and the leader, are on the same page.

Review Opening a Bank Account
• Do they have any questions about the instructions they received?
• Do they understand the form and that if any changes need to made, the form must also be used?
• Stress the fact that they must have at least 2 signers on the account, both approved volunteers.
• Help them with whatever they need to open their account (accounts must be set up with Girl Scouts of Silver Sage Council (GSSSC) tax ID #).
• Emphasize that they need to review the money management chapter of VEH so that they know what their money sources are, how they can spend troop funds, and how to manage funds to stay organized and accountable.
• Urge them to find another volunteer to be their Troop Treasurer if money management is not their strong suit or they don’t have that extra time to manage and maintain accurate records. Troop Treasurer can assist with the Troop Annual Reports that are due June 15th. (Remind them that the treasurer needs to be an approved volunteer.)
• Review the year end troop report.
• It is very important to be organized with the troop account. Keep all bank statements and receipts.
• Remind them that it is the girls’ money and the parents should be kept up to date of the financials of the troop.

Family & Friends (Parent) Meeting
• Review the importance of a family & friends meeting.
• Show the family guide that we mail to each new girl member.
• Review the “Organizing a Parent Meeting” document.
• Help them set a date and time and pair someone up to help them with their first meeting.

Membership Registration
• Review the importance of registering every girl and adult.
• Suggest best ways to get their girls registered, such as at the parent meeting. Review the online registration process.
• Review the process and requirements for requesting financial assistance for girl registration.
• Explain the paperwork flow and why it is important for SU's to receive registrations from troops.
• Explain what the SUR does to maintain accurate records.
• Explain the importance of the Dues Summary form.

Other Essential Paperwork
• Review Health History forms.
• Review when Permission for Special Activity forms are needed and why they are so important.
Tips for Girl Scout Leaders

Have a backup plan. Even the best of plans are interrupted by life. Don’t worry about the little things; those will take care of themselves. Your job is to ensure that the girls are safe, having fun, and hopefully learning something along the way.

Communications

- Remind them to stay current by reading any newsletters and emails from Girl Scouts Silver Sage Council.
- Describe how you communicate with troop leaders – a SU website, a newsletter, regular emails?

Troop Management Tips

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting Logistics</th>
<th>Ask them if they have any questions about the standard meeting structure. Share your experiences.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Agreements</td>
<td>Share tips on how to get started with a new group of girls. Maybe some ideas about group agreements, ice-breakers, team-building, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spread the Work</td>
<td>Emphasize that the best way to keep it sane and fun is to have more adults helping. Don’t let parents pressure you into doing more than you have time for. Ask them to step up! It is okay to make some demands on parents to ensure the success of the troop. Share some examples.</td>
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</table>

Tips for Girl Scout Leaders

Be a friend to the girls; listen to them; sing with them; join in the games. The girls have more fun when the leader participates instead of just supervising.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Troop Year Planning</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Essentials Handbook Chapter 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Schedule

It is perfectly okay to only meet once a month, if that works best. If you have the energy and enough volunteers to meet twice a month (or more), that’s great.

What matters most is that you develop a sustainable pace for yourself and your troop support team. If you aren’t having fun and feeling good, the girls won’t either. Quality over quantity.

### The Troop Year

The ideal troop year plan has a mixture of Journey activities, badge-earning activities, cookie program activities, Girl Scout traditions, community service, and more.

BUT, don’t feel that you have to do everything your first year! AND, don’t feel that your plan has to look like anyone else’s.

### Journeys and The Girl’s Guide to Girl Scouting

Journeys are the core Girl Scout program, but if your group is still bonding and you are still learning, consider using the Girl’s Guides at first.

With the Girl’s Guides, you can learn about Girl Scouting with your girls and pick several badge-earning activities to start working on together (with Daisies, it’s all about Petals). As everyone’s knowledge and confidence grows, and once you have enough helper adults, you can start planning a Journey. Eventually, you will be interweaving Journeys and badge-earning activities to create a balance of leadership development and skill building.

### Special Days

There are a few very special days in Girl Scouting, such as Founder’s Day, Thinking Day, Girl Scout Birthday.

Explain each and share some examples of what your troop or SU has done, and maybe what your SU is planning that they can get involved in.

### Cookies

Go over the basics, maybe share some tips from your experience, but if they want details, connect them with your Service Unit Cookie Manager (SUCM).

### Community Service

Explain that this is what a lot of troops do once or twice each year. Share some examples of what your troop or SU have done, maybe what your SU is planning. Stress that they should not feel pressure to add this to the first year plan.
### Ceremonies & Traditions

Demonstrate how to do the circle, squeeze, hand shake, etc. Share ideas about investiture.

Explain what bridging is and point them to the requirements. Share some examples of what your troop or SU have done, maybe what your SU is planning.

### Five Star Troop Award

Review the Five Star Troop Award and emphasize how it can help them learn how to run a successful troop, even if they don’t actually fit everything in their first year. They will be prepared to earn the award next year! Discuss how this is on the service unit level and troops are responsible for purchasing the patches on their own.

### Volunteer Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Make sure they know the council website address and the resources available on the Volunteers menu: specifically Training, Forms, Safety, and Resource Central. Also discuss Girl Scouts of USA (GSUSA) website for additional resources.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SU Meetings</td>
<td>Be sure that they know the meeting details for your monthly Service Unit meetings. Stress how important it is to attend in order to stay up to date on SU activities and to have a chance to learn and network. Have a plan to be sure that new volunteers are personally welcomed at the SU meetings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Facilitating Ongoing Learning**

There is so much to learn in Girl Scouting – it can take years! So, we consider **Ongoing Learning** a necessary part of volunteer support. One of the best ways to provide ongoing learning is to offer learning opportunities where adults gather, at the Service Unit meeting. Here are some ideas.

### Mini-Trainings

We are all sitting on gold mines of knowledge among the experienced leaders and other Service Team members of our Service Units. You can make that knowledge available to everyone by presenting knowledge in an organized fashion as “mini-trainings”. They can be as short as 15-minutes, or as long as an hour.

Sample mini-training topics:
- Ceremonies & Traditions
- Bridging
- Money Management Tips
- Cookie Marketing Ideas
- Event Planning
- Songs & Games

**You don’t have to be an experienced trainer to offer a mini-training!**
Here are a few tips for preparing a mini-training:

- Identify at least two people who have the knowledge and can work together.
- Ask them to create an outline to cover the information in an organized manner in the time provided.
- Ask them to prepare a short handout for the participants with key points and include any additional resources or references.
- Have them practice with one or two others before presenting to the rest of the Service Unit.
- Provide tips to help them keep the session focused - stick to the outline, don’t run on, don’t let someone’s questions derail you, etc.

GSSSC staff is always looking for good training material. If your SU has developed any we encourage you to share them with the program staff for distribution.

**Roundtable Discussions**

Group discussions are a great way to provide informal learning, while at the same time building camaraderie.

Here are a few topics that might make for good discussions:

- Grade level experiences/ideas
- Journey experiences
- Community resource ideas
- Trip ideas
- Outdoor education ideas
- Cookie marketing ideas
- Event planning ideas
- Etc.

Here are a few tips for facilitating group discussions:

- Do not take control of the discussion.
- Ask open-ended/leading questions to keep the discussion moving.
- Gracefully stop a high-talker so that others can participate.
- Encourage the quiet ones.
- Keep it positive.

**Promoting Training & Resource Awareness**

As a Troop Coach, it is important that you are up-to-date on the training program and our volunteer learning resources.

**The Council Training Program**

Here is a summary of the requirements for a new volunteer. Please also familiarize yourself with the other courses available, and regional learning opportunities throughout the year. (Found on the Training page of the website.)
Girl Scouting 101/Orientation - This is a two hour in person training that new volunteers are encouraged to complete right away. If not able to attend an in person training an online option is available. Starting August 2013, this will be required before a volunteer is appointed as a leader or co-leader. There will be isolated situations (remote location) where on-site training isn’t available and will require program staff involvement.

The Volunteer Essentials Handbook - Be sure you are always familiar with the latest version. It is available on the Resource Central page of the website. There is a quiz (quiz can be found on the Training page of the website) to be completed and turned in to the Boise office.

Intro to Journeys - This is an in-depth in person course about our National Curriculum. Journeys are explored and participants engage in hands-on planning exercises and discussion.

Program Resources
A lot of our learning happens by reading the program resources themselves. (Bring copies of all 3 Program Resources when meeting with leaders) It is important for someone on the Troop Coach team to be comfortable with the core Girl Scout program resources:

- Journeys
- Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting
- Badge Activity Sets

Website & Newsletter

Website

Our council website is at www.girlscouts-ssc.org. We try to keep it up to date with the latest activity and resource information. Consider browsing maybe once a month to see what's new and what's changed.

A few of the “volunteer” pages that will be particularly important to Troop Coaches include:

- Training
- Forms
- Resource Central
- Safety

Newsletter

Our monthly newsletter for service units, Service Team Connection comes out toward the end of each month. This is our one big way to provide comprehensive and consistent information to the service units each month. Our program department also creates a newsletter, Program Chat, comes out periodically based off of what hot news they receive. This goes out to all adults’ emails in the data base.

As a Troop Coach, please set aside time each month to read it completely and support the review of information at your Service Unit meetings.
Leadership Development Pin

The Leadership Development Pin is an adult “earned award” that recognizes a volunteer’s commitment to ongoing learning. The Troop Coach in partnership with the SUD reviews completion requirements and approves purchase of the pin. You can use the Leadership Development Pin Application template available on the website, as is, or modify as desired.

To earn the Leadership Development Pin, leaders must meet the following requirements.

- Complete one full year as a Troop Leader or Co-Leader
- Be currently registered for the next membership year
- Complete Core Training: Girl Scouting 101/Orientation and Volunteer Essentials
- Attend at least 50% of the total number of Service Unit Meetings held during the year

Once a leader earns the Leadership Development Pin, they can earn attachable leaf segments according to the following guidelines:

- **Green Leaf**: represents approximately 10 hours of additional learning
- **Silver Leaf**: represents approximately 50 hours of additional learning
- **Gold Leaf**: represents approximately 250 hours of additional learning

The following are examples of learning activities that apply towards earning leaf segments:

- Council trainings
- CPR/FA Training – initial or re-certification
- Community training or workshop that enriches leadership
- Advising on a Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award project
- Attending Oktoberfest or other regional learning event
- Attending Annual Conference
- Mentoring a new Troop Leader
- Developing and delivering a SU mini-training
- Facilitating a SU round-table discussion

Hours are cumulative, so leaders can earn 5 credits at a time and combine them to earn a leaf segment. Learning hours never expire. Other requirements can be established at the discretion of the Service Unit. The goal is to acknowledge leaders for taking the initiative to continue their learning and personal leadership development.

Make it a fun and rewarding process, and take time to celebrate!

The Leadership Development Pin

The Leaf Segments