

GIRL SCOUTS OF CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL COAST

Crisis Communication Plan

One book for volunteers and staff. What to do first, who to call, and how we speak with one voice — from a hard week in a troop to a council-wide emergency.

START HERE

Five steps. Every situation. Every time.

01

Make it safe

Call 911 if anyone is in danger. Give first aid. Separate or move people. An adult stays with every girl.

02

Gather the facts

Who, what, when, where, how. Write it down while it is fresh. Do not speculate or assign blame.

03

Call one person

Volunteers: your Council contact. Staff: your supervisor. Nights and weekends: 800-340-7179.

04

Set the level together

You never decide alone. Council confirms Level 1, 2, or 3 and tells you what happens next.

05

Document & follow up

In the moment, leave yourself a voicemail. Write the report within 24 hours and submit it (Appendix A), then check back on the girls, the family, and yourself.

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

- **Volunteers** live in Part One. Find your situation, follow the steps, call your Program Center Manager or Council Contact.
- **Staff** live in Part Two. Roles, checklists, messaging, media.
- Contacts appear **once**, on the roster page. Keep that page on your phone.
- Forms and cards are in the appendices — print and carry the wallet card (Appendix F).

WHAT WE PROMISE EACH OTHER

- Safety first, always — people before property, property before reputation.
- Report every crisis up. No one handles a crisis alone.
- Only authorized spokespersons speak publicly.
- “No comment” is never our answer. Personnel and medical details stay confidential.

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SHARED

Contact roster

The only page in this plan with phone numbers. Photograph it. Update it every January and July.

IMMEDIATE DANGER
CALL OR TEXT
911

COUNCIL, 24/7
800-340-7179

SUICIDE & CRISIS
988

CORE CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

ROLE & NAME	WORK	CELL
CEO — Dr. Tammie Helmuth	805-232-3971	805-320-4078
Sr. Dir. Mission Delivery, Marketing — Summer Helmuth	805-799-9715	820-234-6240
Sr. Dir. Mission Delivery, Product — Michele Lofte	831-632-9772	831-214-8397
Controller / IT / Accounting — Dianelli Gomez	805-232-3954	805-512-6995
Sr. Dir. Mission Delivery — Gina Silva	831-632-9777	805-791-6176

SITES & PROGRAM CENTERS

Camp Arnaz — Lexi Cross	805-767-1590	805-914-8001
Oxnard & Thousand Oaks — Michelle Aliano	805-232-3986	805-208-3211
Second contact — Summer Helmuth	805-799-9715	820-234-6240
Santa Barbara — Gina Silva	831-632-9777	805-791-6176
San Luis Obispo — Lauren Carroll	805-232-3952	310-245-3686
D'Arrigo Leadership Center — Michele Lofte	831-234-0854	

GIRL AND FAMILY CRISIS LINES

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline	Call or text 988
Crisis Text Line	Text HOME to 741741
Poison Control	800-222-1222
Community resources & food, housing, utilities	Call 211
National Domestic Violence Hotline	800-799-7233

COUNTY CHILD ABUSE HOTLINES

Mandated reports go to the county where the child lives.
Verify each number annually.

Ventura County	805-654-3200
Santa Barbara County	800-367-0166
San Luis Obispo County	805-781-5437
Monterey County	800-606-6618
Santa Cruz County	831-454-2273
San Benito County	831-636-4190

SHARED

Three levels, one path up

Levels describe *who leads*, not how serious anyone's feelings are. A Level 1 situation can become a Level 2 in an hour — that is normal and expected. The person who takes the first call confirms the level; when in doubt, go up a level.

LEVEL 1 Handle locally Volunteer leads, with the Program Center Manager or Council Contact advising. Council is informed and documents the call. No public communication. LOOKS LIKE Bullying · minor injury · a girl struggling · a family in hardship · rumors · one-off complaints · product program debts	LEVEL 2 Escalate to council Council staff lead; the volunteer supports. A Crisis Team Leader is named, the CEO is briefed, and communication is always required. LOOKS LIKE Mandated reports · suicide attempt · violence · misconduct allegations · theft or data loss · product quality issues · public speculation	LEVEL 3 Council-led emergency CEO convenes the Core Crisis Response Team. Full internal and external communication. GSUSA notified. Final decisions rest with the CEO. LOOKS LIKE Death or major injury · missing girl · wildfire or disaster at a site · acts of violence or threats · litigation · national media
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ESCALATION AT A GLANCE

SOMETHING HAPPENS Volunteer or staff member makes the scene safe and gathers facts.	ONE CALL Program Center Manager or Council Contact (volunteers) or supervisor (staff). After hours: 800-340-7179.	LEVEL SET TOGETHER Staff contact confirms 1, 2 or 3 and names who leads from here. They make the next call, not you.	DOCUMENTED & CLOSED Incident report within 24 hours; debrief within 30 days (Appendix E).
L1 Program Center Manager or Council Contact. Logged, no wider action.	L2 Program Center Manager hands to a Crisis Team Leader, who briefs the CEO within the hour.	L3 CEO convenes the Core Crisis Response Team in Teams immediately — day or night.	

PART ONE

For volunteers

You are not expected to be a counselor, an investigator, or a first responder. You are expected to keep girls safe, tell us what happened, and let council carry the weight with you.

YOUR FIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Make the situation safe and keep an adult with every girl.
2. Gather the facts and complete a Crisis Incident Report (Appendix A) within 24 hours.
3. Call your Program Center Manager or Council Contact to decide together if it stays local or goes up.
4. Follow the steps for your situation on the pages that follow.
5. Point families to council resources, and take care of yourself afterward.

Mandated reports: call your Program Center Manager or Council Contact immediately — not at the end of the meeting.

You cannot fill in paperwork while a crisis is happening — do not try. Call or text your own number instead: what happened, who was there, times, and anyone's exact words. Later, review it while you complete the form, or forward it to your Program Center Manager or Council Contact if the form will have to wait.

TALKING WITH GIRLS

- Stick to facts. Name the rumor, then set it down.
- Do not overshare — share only what the family agreed to.
- Let feelings be feelings. You do not have to fix them.
- Point to trusted adults: a teacher, counselor, coach, clergy, an aunt, you.
- Return to structure quickly — a schedule helps everyone feel safe.

"All we know is that there was an accident and Sofia was hurt. We're not going to pass along anything else. Let's talk about how we can support her."

WHERE THE TEAM TALKS

All council crisis coordination happens in Microsoft Teams — in **Senior Management Team** for Level 2, or a purpose-made **Core Crisis Response — Topic** chat for Level 3. Teams works over cell data or wi-fi, so it holds up when the phone network does not. Every final document is timestamped and filed in that chat's Files tab before it leaves the building.

SITUATION PLAYBOOKS

Accident, no fatality

LEVEL 1

1. Confirm the girl is safe and being cared for; call 911 if needed.
2. Reach the parent or guardian. Ask what, if anything, they want the troop to know.
3. Ask whether the girl needs medical clearance or accommodations to return.
4. Tell the troop only what the family approved. Shut rumors down gently.
5. Agree on how the troop can show up — cards, texts, a visit.

ESCALATE IF

The injury is serious, it happened at a Girl Scout activity, or a vehicle, another organization, or law enforcement is involved.

Bullying

LEVEL 1

1. Separate the girls involved. Call your Program Center Manager before taking any other action.
2. Interview each girl separately, always with a co-leader or other adult present. Never interview alone.
3. Ask each girl who else saw it; decide with council whether to speak to witnesses.
4. Agree the resolution with council, then address the whole troop: bullying is not tolerated here.
5. Name the trusted adults girls can go to. Speak with each parent or adult/guardian involved.

STOP AND CALL NOW IF

Anyone was touched, hurt, or directly threatened, or it has moved onto social media. Separate the girls and call immediately — do nothing else first.

Online harassment or a social media incident

LEVEL 1

1. Screenshot everything before it disappears. Do not reply, repost, or comment.
2. Send the screenshots to your Program Center Manager the same day.
3. Tell the girls not to engage or share further; ask them to save, not spread.
4. Notify the parents/guardian of any girl named or pictured.

STOP AND CALL NOW IF

The content is sexual, threatens harm, names Girl Scouts, or involves an adult contacting a girl.

Incident during an activity, overnight, or camp

LEVEL 1

1. Account for everyone. Move girls to a safe location with an adult.
2. Call council before you decide anything — including whether to continue or send girls home.
3. Gather the girls to talk. Expect guilt (“it’s my fault”) and say plainly that it is not.
4. Rebuild the schedule: set meal times, set activities. Structure is the fastest comfort.
5. Write the incident report while details are fresh, before you sleep.

ALSO

This will hit you too. Debrief with the other adults, and take the council for additional support as needed.

Something happened outside Girl Scouts

LEVEL 1

1. Find out what happened — a death at school, a fight, an accident in town.
2. Judge whether your girls are actually affected. Sometimes they are not.
3. If they are, make time and space for them to talk without judgement.
4. Help each girl name a trusted adult outside the troop.
5. Move the troop forward together: what can we do about this?

STILL REPORT IT

Council tracks community events so that other troops in the same school or town are also supported.

Death of a parent or guardian

LEVEL 1

1. Call your Program Center Manager and find out about services
2. Tell troop parents/families first, so they can prepare their own girls.
3. Gather the troop to share the news and let them feel it. Tell parents/families in advance — some may opt out.
4. If the troop elects to attend, offer to go together.
5. Have one person the family trusts ask what the girl wants: to come back, to pause, to be asked nothing.
6. Rehearse with the troop what to say — and what not to say — when she returns.

BECOMES LEVEL 2 IF

The person who died is a troop leader, or the death was sudden, violent, or public.

Food insecurity

LEVEL 1

1. Talk with the parent/guardian privately and without pity. Most families are embarrassed and asking for the first time.
2. Give them 211 — it connects to food, utilities, and rent help across all our counties.
3. Ask about transportation. Getting there is often the real barrier.
4. Inform council, if disclosed, so that possible costs can be evaluated and covered.

REMEMBER

Confidentiality matters more than help offered publicly. Never mention it in front of other girls or parents/guardian, and never single her out during meal times.

Housing instability

LEVEL 1

1. Listen first. Confidentiality matters more here than almost anywhere else.
2. Connect the family to 211 for rent, utility, and shelter assistance.
3. Ask what would actually help — often it is a ride, a meeting place, or a paused fee.
4. Tell your membership manager and file an incident report; council can waive costs and help the girl stay enrolled.

REMEMBER

A girl who has lost her housing has lost her routine. Troop may be the steadiest hour of her week — protect her place in it.

Disordered eating

LEVEL 1

1. Notice quietly: restricting, bingeing, counting calories, frequent trips to the bathroom, talk about her body.
2. Compare notes with your co-leader before acting.
3. Tell the parent/guardian what you have observed and why you are concerned — observations, not diagnosis.
4. Report to your Program Center Manager and pass on council's family resources.
5. Never comment on her eating in front of others or make her feel watched.

SAY

"I've noticed she hasn't eaten lunch at our last two meetings, and I wanted to check in with you."

RESOURCES

National Alliance for Eating Disorders: 866-662-1235 or text ALLIANCE to 741741. ANAD Helpline: 888-375-7767.

Self-harm

LEVEL 1

1. Signs include cuts, burns, scratches, or long sleeves and hoodies in hot weather.
2. If you do talk with her: no judgement, no shock, no promises asked for or given.
3. Never promise to keep it secret. Tell her you care too much not to tell her parent/guardian.
4. Call your Program Center Manager, then the parent/guardian, the same day.
5. File an incident report and share council's family mental health resources.

ESCALATE NOW IF

She mentions wanting to die, or the injury needs medical care. Go to Suicidal Ideation.

Suicidal ideation

LEVEL 1 → 2

1. Take a breath. You can do this, and asking directly does not plant the idea.
2. Move somewhere quiet. Say what you heard, and ask plainly: *"Are you thinking about ending your life? Do you have a plan?"*
3. **If she has a specific plan or means, call 911 immediately** and stay with her.
4. If there is no immediate plan, call or text 988 together, or give her the number.
5. Call your Program Center Manager and the parent/guardian the same day — do not wait for a better moment.

NEVER

Leave her alone. Promise secrecy. Debate whether she means it. Wait until the end of the meeting.

A parent/guardian tells you about a mental health condition

LEVEL 1

1. Ask how it shows up for her, what helps, and whether medication is involved.
2. Build a written safety plan together with the parent/guardian and the girl: the break signal, who she goes to, what happens on overnights.
3. Agree a code word or an agreed way she can say "I need to step out" without explaining.
4. Give the family a copy of the plan. Review it before every trip.
5. Keep it confidential — need-to-know only, and note it in your report.

ASK TO BE TOLD ABOUT

Hospitalizations, medication changes, and any suicide or self-harm screening. Then update the plan.

Hospitalized — illness, surgery, or injury

LEVEL 1

1. Ask the parent/guardian what they are comfortable sharing, what form of support may help, and what the troop can do.
2. Treat everything as need-to-know unless they say otherwise.
3. Check in again after discharge — needs change.
4. Update your report and your Program Center Manager as things change.

BEFORE THE NEXT TRIP

Re-read the health history form and confirm medications with the parent/guardian in writing.

Hospitalized — mental health

LEVEL 2

1. Call your Program Center Manager first; council staff will join the conversations with the family.
2. Ask what support is needed and how the troop can help.
3. A **return-to-troop meeting is required** before she resumes activities — girl, parent/guardian, both leaders, and a council staff member.
4. Write the plan down: overnights, medication, who she signals, what changes.
5. Meet the rest of the troop first. Retire the rumors and agree what is kind to say.

IF THE FAMILY ASKS FOR SILENCE

Honor it. Still hold the return meeting. If other girls already know, tell the parent/guardian so they are not blindsided.

Substance use

LEVEL 2

1. Keep an adult with her at all times. Treat slurred speech or a personality change as possibly a medical issue.
2. **If there is any danger, call 911** — and Poison Control, 800-222-1222, if something was ingested.
3. Call your Program Center Manager immediately, then the parent/guardian.
4. If she leaves with a parent/guardian or in an ambulance, gather the troop and tell them only that she is getting care.
5. Written, agreed-upon return-to-troop conditions which include the council, family, and the girl.

AFTERWARDS

Breathe. This is frightening to witness. Debrief with your co-leader and council.

Child abuse or neglect

LEVEL 2 · MANDATED

1. Call your Program Center Manager immediately. You report together, to the county hotline where the child lives.
2. Write down her words *exactly as she said them* before you forget. Do not ask leading questions or investigate.
3. Expect to be asked: who the child is, her caregiver, her address, the alleged person, what was said, when and where.
4. You do not need to be certain and it is not your job to decide. You pass the information on.
5. If the child is in immediate danger — for example an impaired adult arriving at pickup — call 911.

YOU ARE PROTECTED

Good-faith reporters are immune from liability. The county conducts all interviews; you will not be part of them.

Domestic violence

LEVEL 2

1. If anyone under 18 has been harmed, follow **Child Abuse or Neglect** instead — that is a mandated report.
2. For an adult: listen, believe, and do not advise them to leave or stay.
3. Give them the National Domestic Violence Hotline, 800-799-7233, and 211 for local shelters.
4. Call your Program Center Manager for next steps and document what was reported.
5. Never contact the other party. Never put anything in a group message.

IMMEDIATE DANGER

Call 911. If a protective order affects pickup, tell council so the roster is updated.

Violence or a physical altercation

LEVEL 2 → 3

1. Separate the parties. Move everyone else to a safe place with an adult.
2. If it escalates or a weapon is involved, call 911.
3. Call council. Decide together whether to end the meeting or call all parents/guardians.
4. Talk to witnesses while it is fresh and write it down.
5. No one returns until council, the families, and the leaders have agreed written conditions.

TELL PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Council will draft what information goes to troop families. Do not send your own message first.

Suicide attempt at a Girl Scout activity

LEVEL 3

1. **Call 911 now.** Give your exact address; send someone to meet the responders.
2. **Never leave her alone.** Begin CPR if she is unresponsive and you are trained.
3. Note anything nearby — pills, containers, a note. Do not clear it away.
4. A second adult moves the other girls away and stays with them. Listen; promise nothing.
5. A third adult calls 800-340-7179 and starts the incident report.
6. Give responders her name, address, and parent/guardian contact. An adult rides with her or follows to the hospital.
7. Another adult calls her parent/guardian with what is known and where she is being taken.

SUPPORT RESOURCES

Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services
877-727-4747

WellSpace Health Suicide
Prevention
916-368-3111

Family Service Agency of the
Central Coast
988

Death by suicide

LEVEL 3

1. Call council before contacting anyone. Wording matters enormously and staff will help you.
2. Council will contact the parent/guardian first, using the agreed wording, and invite girls to gather.
3. If the family has approved, hold that gathering with extra adults and a council staff member present.
4. Expect every reaction, including none. Watch the girls who were closest — and the ones who clashed with her.
5. Share service details through parent/guardian so each family can decide.
6. Later, not immediately, make cards or share memories for the family.

DO NOT MEMORIALIZE

Honor her, but avoid permanent tributes, plaques, or awards. They raise real risk for other grieving girls.

Accident with a fatality

LEVEL 3

1. Call 911, then 800-340-7179. Speak only to police and appropriate authorities.
2. Do not release names, accept or place blame, or sign anything except for law enforcement.
3. Refer every media question to council. Do not post anything, anywhere.
4. Council determines how and when the troop or membership is told, and provides the words.
5. When the troop gathers, have extra adults and council staff there. Girls need a safe room, not answers.

IF THE GIRL WHO DIED WAS IN YOUR TROOP

Gather the girls as soon as council advises. Extra adults so anyone can step out accompanied.

Death of a troop leader

LEVEL 2

1. Contact council. If you are a co-leader, ask for help from nearby leaders before you carry this.
2. Council and the service unit name an interim leader so meetings do not simply stop.
3. Tell troop parents/families, then gather the girls with an extra adult present.
4. Gather service and memorial details; offer to attend together.
5. Re-establish the routine within two weeks. Predictability is the support.

PRACTICAL

Council handles troop funds, bank access, and records. Do not ask the family for anything.

Lost or missing girl

LEVEL 3

1. Stop the activity. Head-count by name against your roster, out loud.
2. Keep the remaining girls in one place with an adult. Never split the group to search.
3. Send two adults to search the last known area and the nearest exits, hazards, and water.
4. **Call 911 at ten minutes.** Do not wait to be sure. Then call 800-340-7179.
5. Have ready: her full name, age, what she was wearing, where and when last seen, and a photo.
6. Council contacts the parents/families. Do not post to social media or a group chat.

AT CAMP

Notify the site manager at once and follow the site's missing-person procedure — it names search zones and water access.

Wildfire, earthquake, flood, or evacuation

LEVEL 1-3

1. **During:** follow official evacuation orders immediately. Account for every girl and adult; release only to authorized ones.
2. Tell council where you are going and when you arrive.
3. If you are personally affected, say so and hand the lead to a co-leader. That is not a failure.
4. **After:** run a quick needs check — housing, clothing, transport, medication, food.
5. Work with council on what the troop can organize; others will want to help.
6. Get the troop together, even virtually. The routine is the recovery.

LEVEL RISES WHEN

A council property is threatened, girls are displaced at an event, or operations are interrupted.

Take a breath. One step at a time.

PART TWO

For staff

One checklist, run in three phases, with a column telling each role what it owns. Nothing here repeats — if your role is not named in a row, it is not your row.

WHO DOES WHAT

ROLE	WHO	OWNS
Executive Leader	CEO Dr. Tammie Helmuth Designee: Board Chair	Convenes the team. Confirms the level. Approves every external message. Notifies the board, GSUSA, insurers, counsel, and completes insurance notification. Final decision rests here.
Crisis Team Leader	The director or manager over the affected area	Runs the response on the ground. Protects life and property. Gathers names and facts. Keeps unaffected operations running.
Communications	Sr. Dir. Mission Delivery (Marketing) Summer Helmuth	Drafts the three key messages. Handles all media and social. Briefs the CEO or Board Chair only. Aligns internal and external timing. Keeps the media log.
Operations	Controller Dianelli Gomez	Property, finance, IT, data, insurance notification follow up. Restores critical infrastructure and connectivity.
Staff Support	Dianelli Gomez, or CEO Dr. Tammie Helmuth	Staff notification and wellbeing, counseling resources, personnel confidentiality, and Spanish-language support.
Volunteer liaison	Program Center Manager for the troop	The single point of contact for the volunteer. Confirms the level, logs every call, and closes the incident.

Mandated reporting (staff)

STAFF DUTY

1. California law makes you a mandated reporter. If you reasonably suspect abuse or neglect, you must report it — you do not need proof.
2. Call 911 if a girl is in immediate danger. Otherwise, call your county Child Protective Services or local law enforcement right away.
3. Notify your Council Contact at the same time. Council cannot decide whether you report — only you can.
4. Submit the written report the law requires within 36 hours of your phone call (DOJ Form BCIA 8572 — see Key laws & resources).
5. Reporting in good faith protects you from liability, even if the suspicion is unfounded.
6. Staff and regular volunteers complete mandated reporter training every 2 years (CA AB 506) and sign the annual Mandatory Reporter Acknowledgment.

KEY LAWS & RESOURCES

California Penal Code §§ 11164–11174.3 — the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA).

CA DOJ reporting forms (incl. BCIA 8572): oag.ca.gov/node/271
 State-approved reporter training: mandatedreportertraining.com
 GSCCC's AB 506 policy & FAQ — available on girlscoutsgccc.org and in GS Learn.

Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline: 800-422-4453, 24/7. For guidance only, not a reporting line. Report to the county where the child lives (page 3).

How to file the written report: see Appendix I.

Other girl-protection policies

REMINDER

- Two-adult rule — no one is ever alone with a single girl, in person or online.
- Background checks & Live Scan for every adult with regular direct contact.
- Only background-checked drivers 21+; two adults required per vehicle.
- One bed per girl on overnights — adults and girls never share a bed.
- Zero tolerance for abuse, forceful discipline, or bullying of any kind.

WHERE TO FIND MORE

Volunteer Essentials & Safety Activity Checkpoints (GS Learn).
girlscoutsgccc.org — Volunteer Essentials: Safety
 GSUSA Child Abuse Prevention Policies & Procedures

THE RESPONSE CHECKLIST

PHASE 1 — ASSESS, BEFORE ANYTHING IS SAID PUBLICLY

ALL	Life safety first. 911 if needed. Confirm everyone is accounted for and cared for.
CEO	Convene the team in Teams. Confirm the level. Name the Crisis Team Leader. The CEO is the sole spokesperson, with the Board Chair as backup.
LEAD	Build the fact summary — who, what, when, where, why, how — and the list of everyone involved. Facts only; mark what is unconfirmed.
LEAD	Answer four questions: Is it still happening? Who else could be drawn in? Was it preventable? What will it interrupt?
COMMS	Draft the three key messages — compassion, plan, investigation — plus a one-paragraph holding statement and an anticipated-questions list including the hardest ones.
COMMS	Give the holding statement to reception and Customer Care before any call arrives.
OPS	Assess property, data, and financial exposure. Identify which operations pause and which continue.
CEO	Consult counsel on anything that could lead to litigation. Approve all documents before distribution; timestamp and file in Teams.

PHASE 2 — ACT, IN THIS ORDER

LEAD	Families of anyone involved or injured — always first, always by phone, never by group message. Send someone to the hospital if girls were transported.
CEO	Staff, by all-staff email and a meeting, with clear instruction on how to handle questions. Sensitive news face to face.
CEO	Board chair, then the full board. GSUSA if it may draw media attention or spread beyond our area. Insurers and risk advisors.
COMMS	Volunteers and members, using the notification matrix (Appendix C) to decide who hears what, when, and from whom.
COMMS	Cancel all scheduled social posts. Assign one person to monitor channels. Respond first where it broke.
COMMS	Respond to media; do not initiate unless we need public help. Log every inquiry (Appendix D). A comms staff member sits in on every interview.
COMMS	Publish a media-update schedule and hold to it. If there is no update, say so.
OPS	Change the outgoing phone message via Saralux if needed. Preserve records for any post-event investigation.

PHASE 3 — SUSTAIN AND CLOSE

CEO	Stand-up with the team at a fixed cadence until stood down. Say out loud when the crisis is over.
ALL	Decide whether counselors or additional support are needed — for girls, volunteers, and staff.
COMMS	Track sentiment and correct misinformation. Capture posts from closed groups the team cannot see.
ALL	Debrief within 30 days using Appendix E. Update this plan with what you learned.
CEO	Thank the people who carried it — staff, volunteers, responders, neighbors. Specifically and personally.

MESSAGES, SPOKESPERSONS, AND MEDIA

MESSAGE ONE

Compassion

Care for the people affected, without admitting or assigning fault.

"Our thoughts are with the families and their sister Girl Scouts. We are doing everything we can to support them."

MESSAGE TWO

Plan

We are not improvising. Name the steps briefly.

"We activated our crisis response plan immediately and are working alongside local authorities."

MESSAGE THREE

Investigation

Buys time, protects accuracy, protects us legally.

"I don't have full details and I won't give you bad information. Senior staff are on scene and we will update you shortly."

Key messages are internal working documents for the Core Crisis Response Team. Do not circulate them beyond it.

SPOKESPERSON RULES

- The spokesperson is the CEO, or the Board Chair when the CEO is unavailable or personally involved. If neither is available, the Sr. Director of Marketing serves as spokesperson. No one else speaks for the council.
- Confirmed facts only. If you do not know, say so and promise a callback — then deliver.
- Safety is our first priority; say it, and mean it.
- Confine the story to this incident and this location. No comparisons to other councils or organizations.
- Instead of "no comment": *"We have nothing further to add at this time."*
- Nothing is off the record. Assume the microphone is live.
- Record sensitive or potentially litigious interviews, and tell the reporter you are doing so.

IF A REPORTER REACHES YOU

- Be pleasant. Take their name, outlet, number, topic, and deadline.
- Refer them to the CEO. Forward emails to marketing@girlscoutscoc.org.
- Never speculate, never speak off the record, never place blame.
- Log the call (Appendix D) and report it the same day.

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Only the CEO decides whether something is a genuine social media crisis.
- Acknowledge quickly even without answers, and name the channel where updates will come.
- Respond first where it broke. Cancel scheduled posts. Point everyone to one FAQ page.
- A third reply is an argument — take it to a direct message or a phone call.
- Archive everything before it is deleted, and thank those who defended us.

POST-CRISIS EVALUATION

Review this plan after every crisis, after every drill, once a year, and whenever staffing, roles, or buildings change. Assess honestly what worked and what did not, then change the plan — a plan that survives a crisis unedited was not read. Do a final check on public and member sentiment, tell the community how the situation was resolved and what we are changing, and recognize everyone who carried it. Use Appendix E.

APPENDIX A

Crisis Incident Report

Complete within 24 hours of the incident. One form for every level. Submit to your Program Center Manager; copy to info@girlscoutscoc.org. If you left yourself a voicemail in the field, play it back as you fill this in — or forward it to your Program Center Manager now and complete the form when you can.

DATE OF REPORT	TROOP / SERVICE UNIT	PROGRAM CENTER MANAGER CONTACTED	LEVEL AGREED 1 2 3 ☐ ☐ ☐
REPORTING LEADER — NAME AND PHONE NUMBER		CO-LEADER PRESENT — NAME AND PHONE NUMBER	
DATE AND TIME OF INCIDENT		LOCATION — PHYSICAL ADDRESS	
GIRLS INVOLVED OR IMPACTED — NAME, PARENT OR GUARDIAN, CONTACT			
OTHERS INVOLVED — ADULTS, WITNESSES, OUTSIDE AGENCIES, SCHOOLS			
WHAT HAPPENED — FACTS ONLY, IN ORDER. USE HER EXACT WORDS WHERE THEY MATTER.			
ACTIONS TAKEN — AND BY WHOM, WITH TIMES			
911 OR OUTSIDE AGENCY CALLED? WHO, WHEN		PARENTS OR GUARDIANS NOTIFIED? WHO, WHEN, BY WHOM	
FOLLOW-UP STILL NEEDED — WHAT, WHO OWNS IT, BY WHEN			

Keep reports by date. Record every follow-up call on this form. Medical and personnel details are confidential and shared strictly on a need-to-know basis.

APPENDIX B

After-hours call flow

Answering Service Care (ASC) answers every call to 800-340-7179 outside office hours. ASC texts everyone on the relevant list at once, then calls down the list every eight minutes until someone acknowledges.

STEP 1 · NOTIFY

ASC calls the staff according to the matrix provided.

STEP 2 · CALL DOWN

No response? ASC calls each person in order, every eight minutes, until reached.

STEP 3 · OWN IT

Acknowledging means you own the situation to completion, or you hand it to a named colleague immediately.

IF THE CALL IS ABOUT	ASC CONTACTS, IN THIS ORDER
Major emergency	Dr. Tammie Helmuth → Summer Helmuth → Michele Lofte → Dianelli Gomez
Program or event	Summer Helmuth → Michele Lofte
Camp Arnaz	Summer Helmuth → Lexi Cross
Product program or program centers	Michele Lofte → Summer Helmuth → the site manager: Oxnard: Michelle Aliano Thousand Oaks: Summer Helmuth Santa Barbara: Gina Silva San Luis Obispo: Lauren Carroll Castroville: Colleen Abbinanti
Spanish-language call	Dianelli Gomez

Within three days, the person who acknowledged creates a Salesforce case recording how the caller was helped, then closes it. To withhold your number when calling a member back, dial *67 first.

Who tells whom

Before you write anything, answer: who needs to know, what exactly, when, from whom, and what happens if they hear it somewhere else first.

AUDIENCE	OWNER	CHANNEL	TIMING
Families directly involved	Crisis Team Leader	Phone, in person	First, before anyone else
Staff	CEO	All-staff email, then meeting	Before external release
Board chair, then board	CEO	Call, then email	Level 2 and 3, same day
Troop volunteers and leaders	Program Center Manager	Call, then written follow-up	Same day
Members and families	Communications	Email via SFMC, website	Once facts are confirmed
Donors and partners	CEO with Communications	Personal call, then letter	Before it reaches media
GSUSA and sister councils	CEO	Phone, hotline	If media or spread is likely
Emergency responders, agencies	Crisis Team Leader	Direct	Immediately
Media and public	Spokesperson only	Statement, conference	On the published schedule
Vendors, neighbors, officials	Operations	Call	As operations require
Insurance Company	CEO	Phone, email	As operations require

APPENDIX D

Media log sheet

Reception, Customer Care, and anyone contacted by a reporter completes a row. The live version is the Crisis Response Plan workbook in Teams — Core Crisis Team → Crisis Communication Plans → topic folder — with a new tab per topic, e.g. *PP — Cookies Heavy Metals_25*.

DATE / TIME	OUTLET	REPORTER & TITLE	EMAIL / PHONE	DEADLINE	INQUIRY	RESPONDER & RESPONSE	ACTION NEEDED

APPENDIX E

Post-crisis debrief

Within 30 days of standing down. Facilitated by someone who did not lead the response.

INCIDENT & DATE	LEVEL	DEBRIEF DATE & FACILITATOR
WHAT WORKED — KEEP DOING IT		
WHERE WE WERE SLOW, UNCLEAR, OR DUPLICATED EFFORT		
WAS THE LEVEL RIGHT? DID ESCALATION HAPPEN FAST ENOUGH?		
WHO STILL NEEDS SUPPORT — GIRLS, VOLUNTEERS, STAFF		
CHANGES TO THIS PLAN — PAGE, CHANGE, OWNER, DUE DATE		

APPENDIX F

Volunteer emergency card

Print double-sided, cut along the border, and carry it in your first aid kit. One card per adult on every outing.

FRONT

Emergency Action Plan

Girl Scouts of California's Central Coast

1. Administer first aid.
2. Call 911 — police, fire, or medical.
3. Move uninjured girls away, with an adult.
4. Let no one disturb the victim or scene until authorities take over.
5. A responsible adult stays at the scene.
6. Speak only to police or appropriate authorities.
7. Do not discuss the incident, release names, place or accept blame.
8. Refer all media to the council CEO.
9. Always notify police of vehicle accidents, serious accidents, or fatalities.

BACK

Numbers & kit

Emergency	911
Council, 24/7	800-340-7179
Suicide & Crisis Lifeline	988
Poison Control	800-222-1222
Childhelp (advice only)	800-422-4453
My Program Center Manager	

BRING ON EVERY OUTING

This card · health history forms · signed permission slips with parent/guardian contacts · directions to the nearest hospital · a charged phone

Submit an Incident/Injury Report to info@girlscoutsgccc.org within 24 hours. Forms at girlscoutsgccc.org/forms.

APPENDIX G

Spokesperson quick guide

Condensed from GSUSA's *A Spokesperson's Guide* (© Girl Scouts of the USA). Internal use only — do not post publicly or distribute in full. The complete guide and GSUSA's *What We Stand For* live in the Core Crisis Team folder in Teams.

THREE WAYS A REPORTER REACHES YOU

- **Arranged interview.** You know the topic. Prepare three messages and two stories that bring them alive.
- **Unsolicited call or email.** Never answer cold. Say you are mid-something, take their details and deadline, and call back prepared.
- **In person, unannounced.** Thank them, take their details, promise a callback at a mutually convenient time. Same script works with a parent/guardian who corners you.

Who this is for: The CEO, or the Board Chair as backup, are the only ones who speak for the council. If a reporter or a worried parent/guardian reaches you instead, be pleasant, take their details, and refer them to the CEO.

BRIDGE AND FLAG

Every question is a chance to deliver a message. Bridge with “Let me put this in perspective...”, “What’s important to remember is...”, “What this means is...”. Flag with “The key thing is...”, “What’s at the heart of this is...”. Answer the question you wish you had been asked — people remember answers, not questions.

GSUSA handles national outlets; we handle local and regional. If a national outlet calls you, loop in GSUSA Media Relations before responding.

DO

- Release only confirmed facts.
- Show genuine concern.
- Update key contacts before they have to ask.
- Bridge to your key messages, whatever the question.
- Defuse hostility by bridging, not matching it.
- Stay calm — preparation is the whole game.
- Keep the line to the CEO open.

DON'T

- Arrive unprepared, or speak off the record.
- Repeat a reporter's negative phrasing.
- Answer hypothetical or speculative questions.
- Place blame or accept "either/or" framing.
- Become defensive, hostile, or argumentative.
- Let the interviewer set the agenda.
- Say "no comment."

APPENDIX H

Keeping this plan alive

A crisis plan is only as good as the last time someone practiced it.

WHEN	WHO	WHAT
Annually	Core Crisis Response Team	Tabletop exercise on a realistic scenario — run the whole escalation, including the after-hours call.
Annually	Team with managers	Walk through situations likely in their area and confirm who leads each.
May or June	Board of Directors	Review the plan, the levels, and the board’s own role and restraint.
At hire, at role change, annually	All staff	Staff procedures, the response checklist, the roster, and the media log.
At onboarding and age-level training	All volunteers	Part One of this plan, the five steps, and the emergency card. Also in Volunteer Essentials.
January and July	EA to the CEO	Refresh every roster: staff, board, service unit managers, county hotlines, after-hours lists.
After every crisis and drill	Whoever led	Debrief (Appendix E) and edit this document. Record the revision date on the cover.

If you remember nothing else

- Make it safe, then call. 911 first if anyone is in danger; 800-340-7179 any hour of any day.

You never decide the level alone, and you never carry a crisis alone.

Write it down within 24 hours. Then let someone look after you, too.

APPENDIX I

How to file a written report

Staff who suspect abuse or neglect make a phone report right away, then file a written report on the state form within 36 hours. The form goes to the agency, not to Council.

STEP 1 · CALL

Call the child protective services hotline or law enforcement for the county where the child lives, right away. County hotline numbers are listed below. If a girl is in immediate danger, call 911.

STEP 2 · GET THE FORM

Use the state's Suspected Child Abuse Report, Form BCIA 8572 (formerly SS 8572). Download it from oag.ca.gov/node/271 each time so you always have the current version.

STEP 3 · WRITE FACTS ONLY

Complete the form yourself. Give the child's name and age, what you saw or heard in her own words, when and where it happened, and who else knows. Do not investigate and do not wait for proof.

STEP 4 · SEND IT

Send the completed form to the agency you called within 36 hours of your phone call, the way that agency directs.

STEP 5 · TELL COUNCIL

Notify your Council Contact when you make the phone report. Council cannot decide whether you report; only you can. Keep the details out of group messages and texts.

GOOD TO KNOW

Reporting in good faith protects you from liability, even if the suspicion is unfounded. The Childhelp hotline (800-422-4453) offers advice only; it does not take reports.

COUNTY CHILD ABUSE HOTLINES

Ventura County

805-654-3200

San Luis Obispo County

805-781-5437 · 800-834-5437

Santa Cruz County

831-454-2273 · 877-505-3299

Santa Barbara County

800-367-0166

Monterey County

800-606-6618 · 831-755-4661

San Benito County

831-636-4190 · after hours 831-636-4330 (police)