

Parent/Guardian Involvement



General Tips

- Make sure to be straightforward with the parents/guardians about what your needs are and how they can specifically help with the troop duties. It will make a big difference in how much help you get and if you get them involved initially, they will usually continue helping through the years.
- The more personal contact with parents/guardians, the better. It will create good communication and a team atmosphere (working together for the benefit of the girls). You can talk to parents/guardians at troop meetings, send home newsletters with updates/reminders, etc.

Parent/Guardian Meetings

- Getting parents/guardians to a meeting can be challenging. Here are some tips for getting them there:
 - Potlucks work extremely well!
 - Plan the meeting at the end of the girls meeting. It may be necessary to shorten the girls meetings a bit, but the parents/guardians are coming to get them anyway so you are likely to have good attendance. To keep the girls engaged one person (parent, co-leader, older Girl Scout) should do an activity with the girls--maybe ask older or more experienced girls to plan this for the new girls.
 - Have a ceremony and then host the parent meeting afterwards. The ceremony will depend on the age level and whether it is a new troop or continuing troop (investiture, rededication, etc.)
 - Host a family BBQ with everyone pitching in (potluck, cooking, clean-up). This is fun for everyone. The parents/guardians are more relaxed, ready to listen and ready to help.
 - Have the girls plan at least one event each year that parents/guardians attend – a dinner, play, presentation, etc. Let the girls plan it and show off things they've done. Parents/Guardians love to watch their girl "perform" and are more likely to attend something that their girl invites them to, rather than the leader. This is a great opportunity to show them the value of Girl Scouting and it's a lot easier to make a pitch for more help when they see how much their girl is getting out of Girl Scouting.
 - Make sure it is during a time when working parents/guardians can attend.
 - Make sure the location is easy to find and convenient.
 - Send a flyer home with the girl, mail a postcard or call parents/guardians personally to invite them to the meeting. If you mail or send something home, you may need to call each of them to reiterate the importance of the meeting and verify that at least one parent/ guardian will be in attendance.
 - Make sure to let them know the time, date, location of the meeting & what they need to bring (checkbook, shot/health records, emergency contact #'s, a list of who can pick up their daughter, picture, etc.). Make sure they also bring their personal calendar so you can get them to commit to helping out! Let them know that if possible, it would be great if they could make arrangements for other siblings so they can focus on the meeting.
- Here's some things to cover during your meeting:
 - Provide information on Girl Scouts (Mission, Promise & Law, Program Goals, value of Girl Scouting, etc.)
 - Regular troop meeting time, date & location
 - If applicable, discuss car pooling to & from meetings
 - Give examples of past successes, if applicable
 - Let them know how you plan to communicate with them (email, newsletter or verbal)

- Let them know your expectations and set any necessary rules (i.e. plan for when parent is late to pick-up girl, etc.)
- Have them share their expectations & clarify any misconceptions
- Talk about the importance of their involvement and describe the help needed (see 'Recruiting Parent/Guardian Help' below)
- Explain all paperwork and have them fill it out during the meeting (registration forms, health histories, permission slips, etc.)
- Familiarize parents/guardians with *Safety-Wise* & let them know the training the leader/co-leaders are required to take
- Talk about any necessary/recommended purchases : Handbooks, uniforms & insignia
- Talk about troop dues, financing activities & Opportunity Fund (form #114)
- Give them leader/co-leader's contact information; collect parent info (email, best time to call, various phone numbers, etc.)
- Get permission for phone contact list (just for troop business)
- Q&A session / other important information
- Closing Idea: Thank everyone for coming/stand in a circle and pass around a friendship squeeze; remember to retrieve paperwork from the parents before they leave

Recruiting Parent/Guardian Help

- You will tend to be most successful when you request help for a specific task and indicate the time commitment (once a week, 4 hours a month, etc.). For all those who love email, it may take a personal phone call to seal the deal! Here are some ideas, but you'll need to tweak these based on the leaders' needs and the age level of the girls:
 - Co-leader – Assists troop leader (must be willing to complete volunteer application process & training)
 - Telephone Parent – Establish phone tree, passes on messages to parents/guardians, serves as emergency contact, etc.
 - Craft Coordinator – Helps plan crafts and activities, purchases necessary supplies (budget provided), etc.
 - Snack Coordinator – Arrange snack rotation with parents/guardians & make reminder phone calls
 - Troop Finance Coordinator – Track expenses (data entry) & other financial duties
 - Childcare – Care for Girl Scout Leader's children during meeting
 - Cookie Manager – Attends meetings & plans/runs cookie sale for troop (should already know parent for this role)
 - Paperwork Coordinator – Makes necessary copies, fills out forms required for troop, makes sure girl packets are in appropriate cars (has girl picture, permission form, emergency contact, etc)
 - Chaperone/Driver Coordinator – Arranges chaperones and drivers for field trips & special events
 - Chaperone/Driver – Drive to & from events (must be willing to have background check)
 - Newsletter Designer – Design & send to parents/guardians
 - Badge Planner – Help girls to accomplish activities (buy supplies, plan outings, get expert to speak/assist at a meeting, etc.)
 - Service Project Coordinator – Helps leaders & girls plan & complete service projects
 - Camp Planner – Helps plan for camp (with girl input), attends campout, may take First Aid/CPR training
 - Picture Taker – Take pictures throughout the year and put them into an album for the troop

- Skill Sharer– Come & share a skill with the girls (sewing, photography, woodworking, scrapbooking, healthy eating habits – parent is nurse, advises girls on finances – parent accountant, etc.)
- Other tips:
 - Be direct! It's harder to say no when you are specific and most people will fit in one task! (Example: Can you get some glue and markers for the meeting in two weeks?)
 - Set-up a Troop Committee: Ask 2-5 parents/guardians who are the most interested in troop activities to meet with you a few times a year. Everyone should come out of the meeting with an assignment or two (tasks the girls have not progressed to take on).
 - Assign each parent a badge (girl's brainstormed list ahead of time). Have them come to the meeting with her and help teach it. Both the girls and the parents/guardians learn valuable skills & enjoy time together.
 - Ask parents/guardians to fill out the 'Ways parents can get involved form' for the troop. Let parents/guardians know ahead of time that you expect to get one form back from every family. When leader gets them back, assign parents to the tasks they wish to perform throughout the year.
 - If you want, set up the parent meeting like a troop meeting, just first few minutes. It gives the adults a feel of how much work goes into just the first 15 minutes. Then the leaders can go through the preparation they had to go through for every step (nametags, songs, snacks, calling everyone to get to the meeting, coordinating schedules, etc.) and have the adults talk about how to help.
 - Kaper Charts are another great way to get adults to commit (you'll learn about these in Program Age Level training). Come up with tasks that need to be done, ask each parent what their strengths are, and have them sign up accordingly.
 - Put the tasks in a bag, have each adult draw out one, then that's their task for the month or quarter.
 - You can also spin a wheel, pick post-it notes with tasks, or send a sign-up sheet around the room.
 - If you need something very specific to be done, it is wise to talk directly to one of the parents/guardians about helping with it. This way you get a positive response from them because it is for their daughter.
 - Every parent/guardian has something special to contribute. Make it a challenge to find out what it is and ask them to share/show it with the troop
- Give clear expectations. Here's an example – it's the role of extra adults on an outing:
 - Take off mom and dad hat and put on "helper, patrol leader, etc." hat
 - Treat all girls in troop equal (example: If a girl needs to have her hair braided then "be prepared" to help all girls braid their hair).
 - When girls are given tasks, they need to "do" the job; parent should not do for her.
 - Parents/guardians will be placed in a different patrol/ group than their daughter.
 - They must follow agenda/program plan that girls and their leaders have planned. (Leaders can decide if they would like the parents attending the outing to sit in on some of the planning meetings.)
 - If driving, vehicle must meet the Safety-Wise requirements (Licensed, insurance coverage, seatbelts/booster seats for all riders, enough space to carry luggage, etc.) and driver is background checked
 - If spending the night, make sure parents/guardians know the policy regarding male adults attending overnights (appropriate sleeping areas, bathrooms, being alone with girls etc.).
 - If adult is part of the adult/girl ratio, explain this policy so parent knows this is part of their responsibility & they don't just disappear.
 - Be clear about what it will be like for them on the outing (coffee won't be served to them, won't be personal time beside the lake, won't be able to sleep in, etc.)
 - Make sure to cover any rules regarding smoking and alcohol use.