

# LIVEHEALTHY LEADHEALTHY

## Policy and Advocacy Roadmap



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**Girl Scouts.**  
Where Girls Grow Strong™

# LIVEHEALTHY LEADHEALTHY

Policy and Advocacy Roadmap

A POLICY AND ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

*Created by*

GIRL SCOUTS OF THE USA

PUBLIC POLICY AND ADVOCACY OFFICE



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Inquiries related to the *Live Healthy, Lead Healthy Policy and Advocacy Roadmap* should be directed to Girl Scouts of the United States of America, Public Policy and Advocacy Office, 816 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Third Floor, Washington, DC, 20006.

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February 3, 2009

Dear Girl Scout Friends,

Throughout our almost 100-year history, Girl Scouts have accumulated a strong knowledge base and significant expertise on girls' healthy growth and development. This expertise has helped us create innovative programs that provide girls a rich and meaningful Girl Scout experience. It is not enough, however, for us to use our experience and information to benefit only the girls who become members. Girl Scouts need to share our expertise and wisdom with the larger community—locally, on a state level, federally, and globally—to help ensure that all girls have the support they need to succeed. Working in partnership with GSUSA, Girl Scout councils can use the policy and advocacy process to become the leading voice for girls.

Becoming the voice for girls is now part of our Girl Scout Constitution and a critical part of the Core Business Strategy. This is an audacious goal, but a crucial one. Success in this area will require the resources of the entire Girl Scout Movement, and you, the councils, play a crucial role in ensuring that these goals are accomplished.

*This Live Healthy, Lead Healthy Policy and Advocacy Roadmap* equips and empowers Girl Scout councils to lead efforts at the local and state level to address and ultimately change issues that impact the lives of girls in your area. The *Roadmap* offers tools and resources on effective advocacy, as well as tailored information on specific "girl policy issues." It is designed to meet the needs of all councils, irrespective of their familiarity with advocacy. You will find that success comes in many shapes and sizes— from one-time events and partnership development to state and local policy strategies. All of your advocacy efforts will help advance the Girl Scout Movement and improve girls' lives.

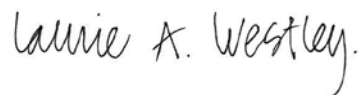
Councils may find that council-wide efforts to advocate on behalf of girls sometimes intersect with the programmatic needs and interests of girls. While girls play an important part in the advocacy process, and we highlight ways to engage girls throughout the *Roadmap*, the primary objective of our advocacy efforts is to have the Girl Scouts Movement—GSUSA, Girl Scout councils, and their volunteer leadership—be viewed as the thought leader and expert on girl policy issues. As such, the majority of activities in the *Roadmap* should be led by adult volunteers and staff.

GSUSA's Public Policy and Advocacy Office looks forward to working with councils on this effort. Together, we can use advocacy—and the *Live Healthy, Lead Healthy Policy and Advocacy Roadmap*—as a way to become the voice for girls.

Thank you for your partnership,



Kathy Cloninger  
Chief Executive Officer



Laurie A. Westley  
Senior Vice President  
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- **Executive summary** and **how-to guide** for the *Live Healthy, Lead Healthy Policy and Advocacy Roadmap*,
- **Sections A, B, and C**—The Policy Avenues with the issues, steps, and tools needed for advocacy,
  - **Policy Avenue A: Relational Aggression**
  - **Policy Avenue B: Healthy Media Images**
  - **Policy Avenue C: Eating Disorders**
- **Appendices** with resources on healthy living, relational aggression, healthy media images, and eating disorders. We also have provided beneficial advocacy tools that will strengthen your Live Healthy, Lead Healthy Action Plan.

If you need assistance along the way, just consult your GPS-Guide to Policy Solutions. We're located in the Public and Advocacy Office of GSUSA and can be reached at (202) 659-3780 or [advocacy@girlscouts.org](mailto:advocacy@girlscouts.org).



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Advocating for the Unique Policy Issues Affecting Girls

The Girl Scouts of the USA Public Policy and Advocacy Office created the *Live Healthy, Lead Healthy Policy and Advocacy Roadmap* to provide councils with the **policy examples, advocacy tools, and step-by-step processes** to successfully advocate for the healthy living issues specifically affecting girls. These three issues are:

**Relational Aggression**  
**Healthy Media Images**  
**Eating Disorders**

### How Did We Select These Issues?

The health of our youth is a high priority in the national policy conversation, although it is often discussed only as it relates to childhood obesity or increasing fitness. Girl Scouts brings a unique girl perspective to this policy debate—we know what works for girls. The GSUSA Public Policy and Advocacy Office has heard from councils that Girl Scouts can and should do more to support girls' healthy living and that councils need help in doing so. We created this toolkit to meet that need.

The Public Policy and Advocacy Office used “lessons learned” from research, public policies, and councils' best practices to provide the content of this policy and advocacy toolkit. We gathered information from councils representing different regions of the country and national staff who are knowledgeable about the work and research in this area. We sought to better understand programs, policies, and messages that have helped promote girls' healthy living.

From those conversations, we created a menu of policy and advocacy options that councils can use to create customized Live Healthy, Lead Healthy Action Plans. States and communities vary from coast to coast, and so do girls. Therefore, councils can use this toolkit to advocate for the unique health issues affecting the girls in their communities and customize it to fit the girls' needs. Councils will discover how to transform the needs of local girls into effective, powerful policy solutions, while staying true to the Girl Scout mission and program offerings.



## Why Focus on These Three Issues?

From our research process, we found that these three health issues are often absent from policymakers' agendas, even though they drastically affect girls' health. Advocacy will bring much-needed attention to these three issues and create opportunities to change the conditions in which girls live.

Adults in Girl Scouting have an important responsibility to advocate for issues and policies that uniquely impact girls' lives. Councils' advocacy efforts that are focused on these issues will help make the world a better place for girls and elevate the Girl Scout Movement as our nation's thought leader on girls' healthy growth and development.

## What Girls Say About Healthy Living: Wanting a Holistic View of Health

Since we have the research and program expertise on girls and their health, Girl Scouts is uniquely positioned to successfully advocate for policies that will support and promote girls' healthy living. Our experience and research tells us that girls define health in their own terms, placing as much emphasis on emotional and social well-being as physical health, nutrition, and physical fitness. Since this is how girls view health, healthy living policies should reflect their broader needs, or else such efforts will not be accepted by girls.

By responding to girls' beliefs about healthy living, Girl Scouts can ensure that our states and communities adopt programs, policies, and messages that are effective for girls. Consider what girls tell us from the Girl Scout Research Institute's original research reports, *The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living*<sup>1</sup> and *Feeling Safe: What Girls Say*.<sup>2</sup>

### **Girls view health holistically.** (*The New Normal?*)

- Most girls view emotional and physical health as equally important.
- Efforts to address girls' health issues that focus solely on physical health will not resonate with girls.
- Policies and practices that connect most effectively with girls are those that consider their emotional, social, and physical health.

### **Emotional safety is crucial for girls.** (*Feeling Safe*)

- Emotional safety is increasingly important—girls are most worried about being made fun of or teased.
- Forty-five percent of girls ages 13–17 consider speaking and participating in class a threat to their emotional safety, and over a third expressed concerns about being teased, bullied, or threatened.

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- A variety of negative outcomes are associated with feeling emotionally unsafe: lower academic performance, poor decision-making abilities, decreased self-confidence, and a lack of social support.

### **Media messages affect girls' self perception.** (*The New Normal?*)

- Girls are highly aware of, but also critical of, pressures from the mainstream media to have the ideal body type.
- How girls view themselves affects their self-esteem, sports participation, and overall confidence.
- Physical appearance is of greater concern to girls than what they eat or how much they exercise.

### **Normal means “healthy enough.”** (*The New Normal?*)

- Girls have a hard time gauging what “normal” weight looks like—one-third of all girls in the study had a distorted perception of their weight.
- For most girls, being healthy has more to do with appearing “normal” and feeling accepted than maintaining a healthy diet and exercise routine.
- Many normal-weight girls feel like they should lose weight—more than 30 percent of normal-weight girls ages 16 and 17 in the study were trying to lose weight through exercise, dieting, skipping meals, and eating healthier.

## From Problems to Solutions

At the 2005 National Council Session, the Girl Scouts of the USA Constitution was revised to state our aspiration that “we are a premier voice for girls and an expert on their growth and development.” Advocacy will ensure that Girl Scouts fulfills this mandate and transforms the problems girls face into solutions. Using the *Live Healthy, Lead Healthy Policy and Advocacy Roadmap*, councils and state advocacy committees can choose to address one of the following issues affecting girls at the local or state level.

**Relational aggression** encompasses behaviors that harm others by damaging, threatening, or manipulating a girl's relationship with her peers or by injuring a girl's feeling of social acceptance. Since relational aggression is not as overt as “traditional” schoolyard bullying, it has not received the same attention from policymakers. However, relational aggression (including cyberbullying) is just as harmful as physical bullying to a student's ability to learn, grow, and succeed. By using the *Roadmap*, councils will have the opportunity to educate the public and policymakers on relational aggression and to shape policies that ensure girls' emotional and physical safety.



**Healthy media images** promote girls' self-esteem and expand their choices of substantive role models. Girls can experience feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem with extended and constant exposure to media portrayals of girls and women in limited roles and with unrealistic or unattainable body types. In fact, these unhealthy media images can lower girls' self-esteem and lead to serious health consequences such as eating disorders and decreased participation in school. In the *Roadmap*, councils will find strategies for starting a conversation around healthy media images. Councils can work to raise awareness of the impact of media images in their communities and encourage policymakers, businesses, advertisers, and broadcasters to discuss the issues and consider policies and practices that foster girl-positive messages.

**Eating disorders** are serious and sometimes life-threatening conditions that may arise in a girl's adolescence. Many girls also develop unhealthy eating habits, such as eating too much or too little. Girls and adults need more resources to help prevent and address eating disorders and unhealthy eating habits. Councils will find strategies for starting a community conversation around eating disorders in the *Roadmap*. They also can take action to encourage policymakers to address eating disorders and unhealthy eating habits as a critical issue disproportionately affecting girls.

Whether it is advocating for a school board policy to address relational aggression, a county's chamber of commerce resolution to promote healthy media images among its members, or state legislation securing funding for Girl Scout programming that addresses eating disorders, councils will ensure that community and state leaders include girls' needs in policy solutions.

## Empowering Councils to Be the Voice for Girls

The *Live Healthy, Lead Healthy Policy and Advocacy Roadmap* equips and empowers councils and Girl Scout adults to become effective advocates for girls' healthy living. Along with the new Girl Scout Leadership Journeys, the *Roadmap* also offers guidance on how councils can help girls take action. The *Roadmap* points out examples of Girl Scout healthy living programs and provides suggestions of how councils can incorporate the new Girl Scout Leadership Journeys into its advocacy work. Girls know how they want their health to be addressed and should have a voice in the advocacy process. Since girls are at the center of the Girl Scout Movement, it is important that councils help ensure that girls' voices are heard.

# HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

In advancing girls' healthy living nationwide, Girl Scouts has identified three Policy Avenues. Each avenue provides a focus for your council's or state advocacy committee's efforts to educate, raise awareness, and advocate on policies to support girls' needs.

The three avenues are:

- relational aggression;
- healthy media images; and
- eating disorders.

While these three issue areas can intersect, each Policy Avenue is designed to “stand alone.” They all follow the same process and include much of the information, fact sheets, tools, and other materials that you'll need for your council's or state advocacy committee's efforts.

You'll notice that we use similar language, formatting, and headers for each Policy Avenue. While there is overlap in certain areas (for example, eating disorders and healthy media images), you should be able to find what you need within each separate avenue.

## Choosing a Policy Avenue

The first step of using this toolkit is **choosing a Policy Avenue**. The best strategy is to choose the avenue that fits your council's or state advocacy committee's capacity and the needs of your community's girls. Once your council decides, you can jump right to that Policy Avenue to get started. Disregard the remaining sections until you decide to start a new Policy Avenue.

Here are some things to consider when choosing a Policy Avenue:

- Where can your council add a unique voice to advocacy efforts already underway?
- Where can your council begin new discussions and policy initiatives?
- What issue or topic would resonate in your community and/or state? What are current “hot topics”? Which of these problems needs to be solved?
- What do your council's girl members think is important?
- Where does your council have programming or research experience?
- Where do your council's board members have expertise?
- In which area can your council—or the councils in your state—make the most positive change for girls?
- With whom do you already have partnerships?



Choosing a Policy Avenue is a great chance to involve girls. As your council weighs the options, find out what its girls need and want. Is one of these issues of particular importance to them? In the new Girl Scout Leadership Journey *Your Voice, Your World*, girls learn the power of advocacy, and they begin by investigating issues that they care about enough to speak up for and act on. Engage girls in a discussion using the reflection questions on page 47 of the *Your Voice, Your World* book. Encourage girls to complete this sentence: “My issue is \_\_\_ and I hope to \_\_\_.” (For more tips on helping girls with “Tuning In on an Issue,” see page 49 of the *Your Voice, Your World* Adult Guide).



After you choose a Policy Avenue, you may want to read through the entire avenue before you set a course of action to get a sense of the steps you might take. Don't feel the need to do everything—just employ those techniques that make sense for your council or state advocacy committee. It is possible that you may complete the steps out of order; that's fine. You may also have ideas that we didn't consider. Don't be afraid to develop your own tactics and tools, and know that we're here to help.

## Following the Road Signs

All of our research is cited in endnotes and can be found at the end of each Policy Avenue. You also will see road signs and symbols like the ones above throughout the toolkit. Click [here](#) for Appendix xiii to find the complete key.

When we introduce a new symbol, we describe its purpose. For example, when you see the pedestrian sign, look for opportunities to engage girls in advocacy and make the new Girl Scout Leadership Journeys come alive. This “Do Not Pass” sign signifies important material or information.

### Endnotes

1 Judy Schoenberg, Kimberlee Salmond and Paula Fleshman, *The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living*, A Report from the Girl Scout Research Institute (New York, NY: Girl Scouts of the USA, 2006).

2 Judy Schoenberg, Toija Riggins, and Kimberlee Salmond, *Feeling Safe: What Girls Say*, A Report from the Girl Scout Research Institute (New York, NY: Girl Scouts of the USA, 2003).



# A RELATIONAL AGGRESSION

**Congratulations!** You have chosen to advocate for solutions to relational aggression and other forms of bullying in girls' lives. Choosing this avenue shows that your council is committed to ensuring girls can live and grow up together in safe, supportive environments. Engaging the public, media, and policymakers in conversations about relational aggression ensures that girls' unique perspective is included in policy solutions. Through your council's advocacy work with community stakeholders and girls, your council will be fulfilling the Girl Scout mission to make the world a better place.

It is important to note here that every step in this process is considered advocacy. We call this a roadmap, which implies that there is a specific endpoint to reach. Every success in this toolkit is an advocacy success. Raising awareness of relational aggression in your community is advocacy. Introducing Girl Scouts to policymakers—even if it's not at an issue-specific lobbying meeting—is advocacy. **The goal here is making your council known as the expert on and voice for girls.** You don't have to complete every task in the toolkit to make a difference for girls.



## CREATING YOUR ACTION PLAN

This Policy Avenue provides a step-by-step process, full of examples and models, to help your council or state advocacy committee create and implement an action plan. Before you start, think about your advocacy goals. Then read through this avenue to understand your options before creating your action plan.

The core elements of the action plan are:

**Step 1: Evaluate.** Research the problem, determine your assets, and identify any potential opposition to fully understand your council's strengths and weaknesses.

**Step 2: Cultivate.** Cultivate the partnerships, champions, and support needed to meet your council's advocacy goals.

**Step 3: Educate and Advocate.** Use strategies and tactics that will help your council get your message out and advocate effectively to address relational aggression in girls' lives.



The following pages contain step-by-step directions for building an action plan. Each of the components should be considered for inclusion in your action plan, but don't worry if your council doesn't have the capacity, opportunity, or need to take advantage of each strategy and tactic. The best action plan is one that makes sense to you, capitalizes on your council's strengths, and can be implemented well. We encourage you to create the action plan that is best suited for your council and that will effectively address your community's needs. To find ideas on what a year-long plan could look like, click [here](#) for Appendix xiv.

**When developing an action plan, remember to include:**

- the steps needed to reach your goals;
- lists of who will be in charge of each task;
- a timeline of when the work will be completed; and
- an allocation of resources—time and person power.

Need more guidance? GSUSA's Public Policy & Advocacy Office is your Guide to Policy Solutions (GPS). Call us at (202) 659-3780 or e-mail [advocacy@girlscouts.org](mailto:advocacy@girlscouts.org).



### A.1—Understand the Issue

Aggression among children and young adults has been a national concern for years. Almost 30 percent of young people in the United States (more than 5.7 million children) are estimated to be involved in bullying, either as a bully, a target, or both.<sup>1</sup> Lately, though, many young people—especially girls—have begun engaging in a more socially and emotionally aggressive form of bullying.

Relational aggression encompasses behaviors that harm girls by damaging, threatening, or manipulating relationships with their peers, or by injuring a girl's feelings of social acceptance. Girls tend to target their bullying at other girls, often spreading gossip about their peers and encouraging others to reject or exclude another.<sup>2</sup>

This type of aggression is often tied to popularity and cliques. While the traditional bully is able to assert his or her dominance in lower grades, this more manipulative and subtle form of bullying is often found among popular girls in middle and high school.<sup>3</sup>

Nearly half of all girls (46 percent) define safety as not having their feelings hurt. Their number one concern, noted by 32 percent of girls, was being made fun of or teased.<sup>4</sup>



Nobody knows the perils of relational aggression better than the girls who experience it. Involve girls in advocacy by getting their take on the issue and how it affects them and their peers. In the new Girl Scout Cadette Leadership Journey *aMAZE: The Twists and Turns of Getting Along*, girls learn to identify bullying and cyberbullying. They develop strategies to take action, beginning with the “Peacemaker Kit”.

Use your girl members' insights to help you further understand the issue, educate others, and assess your community's needs. How do adults in Girl Scouts respond when they see girls participating in bullying or relational aggression? What do girls hear from Girl Scouting about healthy relationships and bullying? Internal policy is a great way to start working on external policy.

### A.2—Understand the Players: Internal

Those councils who choose to advocate at the state level will want to coordinate their efforts with other councils from their state. If your state currently has a **state advocacy committee/legislative task force**, the councils will want to work together on each step. Especially at the state level, presenting a united front of constituents is critical. Look for this yield sign for suggestions on how to engage Girl Scout partners at the state level.





**Network:** Develop a network of Girl Scout staff, volunteers, and girls interested in advocating for relational aggression policy. Work collaboratively with your state advocacy committee/legislative task force. Organize the contacts in such a way that you can activate them quickly at key moments to support your advocacy plan (e.g., create e-mail listserves, phone trees, etc.).

Interested in setting up a Girl Scout state advocacy committee? Consult the GPS. Call (202) 659-3780 or e-mail [advocacy@girlscouts.org](mailto:advocacy@girlscouts.org). There's also information on this process [here](#) in Appendix v.



### A.3—Understand the Players: External

An important early step in creating an action plan is to understand who supports your issue and who opposes it. This will help you not only to find champions to support your efforts, but also to build a coalition to sustain them.

**Research:** Identify elected officials who have influence over policy and who might be interested in supporting or championing your relational aggression policy.

#### NOT SURE WHO TO

**CALL?** There are many Web-based tools to help you find your elected officials. For a state-by-state guide to state legislatures, click [here](#) for Appendix iii.

- Look for policymakers who are active in youth, health, education, or safety policy—especially bullying or relational aggression-related policy.
- Consider policymakers who have a history of championing issues that are important to youth and girls.
- Pay particular attention to policymakers who serve on committees with direct control over creating these policies and/or funding them.
- Create a target list of policymakers and prioritize it according to their influence and your ability to reach them.

**Assess Connections:** Think about people throughout your state who might have ties to policymakers.

- Does anyone on your council's board, staff, or volunteer roster have connections to any elected officials? Are they willing to use those connections for the Girl Scouts' advocacy efforts?
- Work with your Girl Scout state advocacy committee/legislative task force to find out about connections.
- Place elected officials connected to the Girl Scouts on your target list.
- If your council or state has an advocacy director, coordinate with her or him as you move forward.



### A.4—Look for Partnerships

Partners in any advocacy effort might vary, depending on the type of organization or the role that they would play in your strategy. When you choose your target list of potential partners, first consider their potential role: Do you need someone with policy expertise? An organization with a vast grassroots network? Someone to sponsor an event? Make sure that you're matching your needs to the capabilities of your potential partner. For example, a nationally recognized research organization is unlikely to join your local action coalition, but they might sponsor an event or provide a quote for the press release that adds validity to your policy agenda.

Think about what motivates your potential partners. Are they looking for a platform to share their research? Are they a small organization that might gain credibility by working with a well-known, respected organization like the Girl Scouts? Are they businesses, retailers, or vendors who would benefit from reaching a new audience or bolstering their corporate image? If you can make the case that this is an important issue for partners, they'll be more willing to work with you.

#### **Some other things to remember about partners:**

- Partners will vary from state to state, community to community, and issue to issue.
- Some partners might start small and grow into a larger role.
- Some partners might support part of your agenda, but not all of it.

The following are examples of potential partners for relational aggression policy and advocacy, with suggested roles to play. Remember, this is not an exhaustive list or a guarantee of success with a given partner. And partners might play multiple roles—just because a business supports an event, that doesn't mean it can't be a coalition partner as well. These suggestions might give you ideas about potential partners in your community.

### RELATIONAL AGGRESSION—POTENTIAL PARTNERS

**NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS** *These partners might serve in a policy review, strategic support, or academic role because they have a strong organizational focus on the issue or they are considered experts in the field. They are often heavyweights who can provide credibility, data, and resources.*

Girl Scouts of the USA	<a href="http://www.girlscouts.org">www.girlscouts.org</a>
The Girl Scout Research Institute	<a href="http://www.girlscouts.org/research">www.girlscouts.org/research</a>
Fight Crime, Invest in Kids	<a href="http://www.fightcrime.org">www.fightcrime.org</a>
The Ophelia Project	<a href="http://www.opheliaproject.org">www.opheliaproject.org</a>
Strong Moms, Strong Girls	<a href="http://www.strongmomsstronggirls.org">www.strongmomsstronggirls.org</a>
The Women's Foundation of your state	

**EVENT SPONSORS** *These partners will benefit from the goodwill generated by underwriting an event, providing materials, or participating in other activities. You can help business partners connect with new audiences and improve their brand as they work on issues that families support. It's good to start where there's a direct business link (e.g., Internet service providers), but don't be afraid to get creative.*

Telecommunications companies  
Internet service providers  
Children's retailers  
Restaurants

**COALITION PARTNERS** *These partners usually are leaders in the community, have a strong focus on children and families, and support confident, healthy girls. You might want to consider those who work on similar issues, such as anti-violence, cyberbullying, drug free schools, and so on.*

Women's and girls organizations and foundations  
Parent Teacher Associations and Organizations  
Colleges and universities  
Anti-bullying organizations and task forces  
Human rights organizations  
School superintendents  
Local and state chapters of teacher organizations/unions  
School boards  
Youth groups  
Faith-based organizations  
Law enforcement groups  
Local and state chapters of social workers or school psychologists  
Local and state chapters of pediatricians and family physicians  
Children's museums  
Libraries  
State Department of Education  
State programs on safe and drug-free schools  
State Division on Civil Rights; Bureau of Prevention and Community Relations



In the new Girl Scout Leadership Journeys, girls are encouraged to understand the importance of partners and to create a plan to build their network. As your council seeks out partnerships, involve the girls by finding out who would be on their lists. Direct the girls to “Community Connections” and “Building a List of Allies” in *Your Voice, Your World* (pages 38 and 51). They’ll soon see that they already have a full list of potential partners in their family, friends, classmates, teachers, local businesses, media, and religious leaders.

### A.5—Prepare Key Messages

Develop key messages that your council can use throughout your advocacy campaign. These messages will advance your policy solutions on paper and in talking points.

**To begin preparing your message:**

- Consider what will influence your target audience of policymakers, partners, and the media.
- Remember that different messages resonate with different audiences. Tailor your remarks to the particular philosophical or ideological views of your audience.
- Consider how to gain the support of the media and the community. Avoid using charged or divisive language.
- Prepare an “elevator” speech that summarizes key points in less than 60 seconds. You won’t always have time to do a formal presentation.
- Finally, make sure that you have the research and facts to support your messages.

#### EXAMPLES OF KEY MESSAGES ON RELATIONAL AGGRESSION

- Girls bully other girls, often through relational aggression.
- Relational aggression has an impact on children of both genders but disproportionately affects girls, who are more often both the victims and perpetrators of relational aggression.<sup>5</sup> Thirty-nine percent of middle school girls polled said that they do not feel safe at school.<sup>6</sup>
- Relational aggression is just as harmful as physical bullying.
- Relational aggression does not only happen in person—cyberbullying is a growing crisis. Fifty-eight percent of kids admit that someone has said mean or hurtful things to them online.<sup>7</sup>
- All children will witness bullying at some point. Effective prevention educates youth on how to safely react when they see it. Almost 30 percent of youth in the United States are estimated to be actively involved in bullying, either as a bully, a target, or both.<sup>8</sup>
- Relational aggression can be prevented, and Girl Scouts is part of the solution. (Reference Girl Scout programs in section A.7.)

### A.6—Know Your Opposition

Even though these issues seem non-controversial to us, there is a possibility that you might encounter resistance. Don't be discouraged by opposition—it's a healthy part of the democratic process. Just make sure you're prepared. Play devil's advocate—what would an opponent say? Are there practical considerations (e.g., budget shortfalls, political dynamics) at play? Conduct research on past opposition to relational aggression in your community or in other states. Opposition might vary from council to council. Respond to opponents with facts and consistency. See the responses below to potential objections and be prepared to answer opponents when implementing your advocacy efforts. And if you encounter other roadblocks, let us know.

#### **BE PREPARED: HOW TO REBUT STATEMENTS LIKE...**

*"How is relational aggression different from bullying?"*

Relational aggression is much more subtle, and yet has just as much impact. It is also much more likely to happen to and be instigated by girls than traditional forms of bullying.

*"Our state already has strong anti-bullying policy on the books. Isn't relational aggression already covered?"*

Not necessarily. Much needs to be done to educate girls on how to respond to relational aggression and protect themselves from it. Also, parents and other adults who are around girls (teachers, afterschool providers, etc.) need to be able to identify and stop relational aggression and learn strategies to prevent it.

*"We have a tight state budget. We already support bullying prevention, and we can't afford to fund more of the same."*

By investing in programs to educate and prevent relational aggression, you are investing in the success of girls, not duplicating anti-bullying policies. Girls who are victims of relational aggression are less likely to achieve their full potential. By investing in prevention, we can help them succeed in school and life.

*"Teasing is a normal part of childhood. We can't isolate children from everything that might upset them or hurt their feelings. Children need to learn how to manage these problems on their own."*

Relational aggression is far more serious, deliberate, and hurtful than simple conflicts or personality differences. It is as serious a threat to girls' health, well-being, and development as physical bullying. Victims of relational aggression are more likely to experience loneliness, depression, anxiety, and poor school performance. The perpetrators are at higher risk for future delinquency, crime, and substance abuse. Relational aggression often escalates into physical violence, and victims of relational aggression often become perpetrators—creating a cycle of harmful behaviors.



## A.7—Show Off Your Expertise

Girl Scouts are experts on the healthy growth and development of girls. Use your experiences with girls in your community to help your council or state advocacy committee decide the specific issue you want to address in regard to relational aggression. Since Girl Scout councils are experts on the issues girls face, councils have the information leaders need to make the best possible decisions on behalf of girls. Showcase your expertise to establish credibility and gain support for your advocacy efforts.

Compile examples of successful Girl Scout programs that educate girls on the full range of healthy living issues. Click [here](#) to see a healthy living badge list in Appendix ii. Use these examples in the educational and outreach materials that you develop to support your advocacy efforts. Create an addendum to your fact sheet modeled after the list of program examples that follows. Share this information with your community, the media, and elected officials.

### GIRL SCOUT RELATIONAL AGGRESSION PROGRAMS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

**Nationwide, Girl Scout programs raise girls' awareness of and capacity to combat aggression**

SUCCESSFUL  
PROGRAM  
EXAMPLES

- Girl Scouts of Nassau County (NY) partnered with The Ophelia Project to deliver a series of workshops for girls called “Shaping Healthy Peer Relationships for Today’s Girl Scouts.” Through stories, games, role playing, creative expression, and other interactive activities, girls enhance their abilities to empathize with and support each other. The program is designed to give girls the tools they need to decide for themselves what their role and responsibility is in a healthy relationship.
- Girl Scout councils from around the country developed a multi-level patch program called “No Way R.A.,” which helps girls build friendship skills and defy “The Queen of Mean.” Partnering with an expert on relational aggression, councils collaborated to create this national patch program.

### Girl Scout Badges and Curriculum

#### *Daisy Girl Scouts*

- Learning Petals: Respect Myself and Others, Friendly and Helpful, Be a Sister to Every Girl Scout, Courageous and Strong, Responsible for What I Say and Do
- *Jasmine and the Bus Bullies*

#### *Brownie Girl Scouts*

- The Girl Scout Challenge: Brownie Girl Scouts Making the World a Better Place
- Brownie Handbook: Sections on Friendship (Page 85) and Getting Along (Page 87)
- Try-Its: People Are Talking, Caring and Sharing, Friends Are Fun, Manners, Working it Out, Point, Click, Go
- The Intergalactic Bracelet Race: A board game on how to become a good friend

SUCCESSFUL  
PROGRAM  
EXAMPLES

### *Junior Girl Scouts*

- Badges: Becoming a Teen, A Healthier You, Healthy Relationships, Lead On, The Choice Is Yours
- Junior Handbook: “Friends for Life,” “The Peer Pressure Cooker,” “Dealing with Bullies”

### *Cadette, Senior, and Ambassador Girl Scouts*

- Interest Projects: Do You Get the Message?, Understanding Yourself and Others, Conflict Resolution, Exploring the Net
- *uniquely ME!* Focus Project: “Don’t Sweat It”
- The new Girl Scout Leadership Journey, *aMAZE: The Twists and Turns of Getting Along* and *Your Voice, Your World*

## A.8—Frame the Issue

By framing an issue, you define a topic or problem along with its possible solutions. Develop an issue statement to formally describe the policy implications of promoting solutions to relational aggression. This step will help you define the goals for which your council is advocating and guide you as you navigate the policy arena.

Here’s an example:

### **SAMPLE ISSUE STATEMENT**

Relational aggression, bullying, and cyberbullying in any form is unacceptable. Girls are more likely than boys to participate in or be victims of relational aggression. Prevention and intervention strategies to address relational aggression and other forms of bullying shall be implemented to foster a positive environment for learning, teaching, leading, service, and participation for all youth, particularly girls.

## A.9—Select Your Advocacy or Policy Options

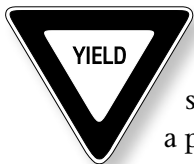
There are several options when you seek to raise awareness or influence policy on any issue. These options include all forms of active support for or against an issue, practice, or policy that impacts girls and Girl Scouting. They can range from simply raising public awareness about an issue to educating policymakers to adopting or modifying policy. For an overview of policy options, click [here](#) for Appendix vi.

The following are options for raising awareness and/or influencing policy on relational aggression. Your council can choose from and expand upon the options provided. Determine the approach that would work best in your state or community. Consider how your council



## RELATIONAL AGGRESSION—EVALUATE

can add its unique voice to efforts already underway and how your council can begin new discussions and policy initiatives.



Before you decide on your strategy and approach, coordinate with your state advocacy committee/legislative task force and other councils in your state. If this is a statewide effort, work together to determine your goals and objectives and to assemble a plan that will incorporate the talents and resources of all the councils in your state.

### EDUCATING AND RAISING AWARENESS

Whatever your level of familiarity with advocacy, raising awareness is often the first step to alerting leaders in your community that Girl Scouts is serious about this issue impacting girls' lives. We want to ensure that elected officials, the media, and other interested parties know that the problem exists. Then we want to engage the community in addressing the issue. While raising awareness will not solve the problem, your council will be laying the foundation for positively influencing policy and practices.

#### *Ideas on How to Educate and Raise Awareness about Relational Aggression*

- Develop a relational aggression awareness campaign in your community.
- Launch a relational aggression awareness month or week.
- Hold local forums with community stakeholders on the effect of relational aggression on girls.
- Testify at city council meetings, town hall meetings, in the state legislature, and other venues.

#### *Sample Questions to Stimulate the Discussion in Your Council and in Your Community*

- How does relational aggression impact girls in our community?
- What do girls think about social networking and relational aggression?
- What have girls done to prevent relational aggression in our troops, schools, and neighborhoods?
- Does our local school board have existing policies on bullying, cyberbullying, or school violence? Is there an opportunity to amend them to include relational aggression?

#### *Involving Policymakers*

One way to involve policymakers in raising awareness is to work with them to introduce a resolution. Resolutions are used by a governing body to express an opinion or identify a priority. Resolutions typically do not change the law, but are used to articulate a philosophy, recognize the importance of a certain organization or issue, prompt action by another entity, or celebrate a milestone.

#### CASE STUDY

In the fall of 2008, the Girl Scout Council of Greater Iowa testified before the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women about the critical issue of relational aggression and its impact on girls. The Commission, appointed by the Governor, held this hearing to gather information for the development of the Governor's 2009 legislative agenda. At the hearing the Girl Scouts suggested relational aggression as an important issue to be considered by the Governor for his legislative agenda.

The opportunity for the council to testify before the Iowa Commission on Women and Girls allowed the Girl Scouts to be seen as an expert on girl policy issues and successfully raised awareness for relational aggression.

The following sample resolution could be adapted for governing bodies—whether state legislatures, school boards, chambers of commerce, or others—to increase awareness about the impact of relational aggression. It also is the perfect bridge to start impacting policy because it can be used to raise awareness or request a hearing about relational aggression with policymakers.

### SAMPLE RESOLUTION

#### SAMPLE RESOLUTION

- Whereas, approximately 30 percent of American youth are involved in some form of bullying, as a bully, a target, or both;
- Whereas, not all forms of bullying involve physical contact or violence. Some forms of bullying, such as relational aggression, are more subtle. The impact, however, can be just as hurtful and damaging;
- Whereas, relational aggression encompasses behaviors that harm others by damaging, threatening to damage, or manipulating one's relationships with one's peers, or by injuring one's feelings of social acceptance;
- Whereas, girls, are more likely to engage in, and be the victim of, relational aggression. For example, girls are more likely to spread gossip or encourage others to reject or exclude another girl;
- Whereas, relational aggression has serious, significant health effects, and children who are the victims of relational aggression are more likely to experience anxiety, loneliness, low self-esteem and depression;
- Whereas, social rejection in elementary school is associated with later antisocial behavior;
- Whereas, relational aggression can interfere with a child's education, in fact, more than 160,000 students miss school days due to fear that they will be tormented by a classmate and twenty-seven percent of students do not feel emotionally safe at school<sup>9</sup>;
- Whereas, relational aggression does not, however, have to be an unfortunate part of childhood. Children who participate in relational aggression prevention programs report they are less likely to tolerate relationally aggressive behavior;
- Whereas, prevention programs have also proven effective in reducing this behavior among perpetrators of relational aggression;
- Whereas, programs, policies, and other activities have the potential to reduce the harm caused by relational aggression;

Resolved, That the House of Delegates—

- 1) Recognizes that relational aggression of school-aged children is a national concern;
- 2) Recognizes that relational aggression is unhealthy for our families and communities, especially girls and young women;
- 3) Commends the efforts of national and community organizations, schools, parents, recreation programs, and religious institutions for their efforts to promote greater public awareness about and prevention of relational aggression; and
- 4) Encourages communities to band together to combat relational aggression.

### PROGRAM AND POLICY OPTIONS

When you are working with the government, opportunities to address relational aggression typically fall into two categories: 1) public programs and 2) policies. For example, in Washington, we work hard for expanded funding of priority programs as well as for girl policy solutions.

**Programs** typically fund **activities** to address a problem. Programs are usually community based, include an education component, or are service oriented. Oftentimes, Girl Scouts can be a partner and might receive government funding to implement these programs. Although some large programs target the public as a whole, more often they are targeted to smaller populations, such as children, low-income families, or teachers.

**Policies** try to encourage, modify, or prevent certain activities or behaviors. Frequently, policies change the laws to make certain activities illegal or to create incentives or deterrents. Policies are sometimes referred to as requirements.

To use a common (non-Girl Scout) example, your local health department might have a tobacco cessation **program** that includes education campaigns, public service announcements and support groups. The American Cancer Society in your community might help run that program. On the **policy** front, however, your community might adopt a public smoking ban or increase tobacco taxes.

#### Relational Aggression Program Ideas

- Secure funding to support relational aggression prevention programs in local communities.
- Expand safe and drug-free school programs to include training for school personnel on recognizing and preventing relational aggression.
- Secure funding for demonstration projects to evaluate relational aggression policies in different schools.

#### Relational Aggression Policy Ideas

- Require school boards to develop and implement a prevention and intervention strategy to address relational aggression and bullying. (Think about school surveys, enhancing adult supervision, and individual school rules prohibiting bullying.)
- Require schools to investigate suspected relational aggression, regardless of who submits the report or whether the reporter is known or anonymous.
- Specify that each school must invite all parents of students who participate in or are victims of relational aggression or bullying to attend at least one meeting.
- Direct the Department of Education to assist schools in combating relational aggression.
- Redefine “bullying” in state law to include relational aggression and cyberbullying.

Adapted from the Connecticut Commission on Children, 2008

## RELATIONAL AGGRESSION—EVALUATE

Need more potential policy or program ideas? Click [here](#) for Appendix iii to check the various state legislatures' Web sites or the federal legislative Web site, [www.thomas.gov](http://www.thomas.gov). The National Council of State Legislatures also has an Issues Area page that might help—check the sections on education, health care, and human services. Click [here](#) for this website in Appendix ii.

Don't be afraid to model your policy proposals after draft legislation or base them on policies that are already on the books. You might find real-world examples of legislation on relational aggression, but you can also use legislation on bullying, cyberbullying, school safety, emotional wellness and other children's issues as a guide.

### SAMPLES OF POLICY LANGUAGE

From Arizona House Bill 2368: "Every public educational institution in the state must adopt, post, and enforce a relational-aggression prevention policy. The policy must be printed in every student handbook for distribution to parents and students. Relational aggression is currently defined as any intentional, knowing or reckless act committed by a student, whether individually or in concert with other persons, against another student, and in which both of the following apply:

- (a) The act was committed in order to damage, threaten to damage, or manipulate a victim's relationships with his/her peers, or by injuring one's feelings of social acceptance.
- (b) The act contributes to a substantial risk of potential physical injury, mental harm or degradation or causes physical injury, mental harm or personal degradation."

**Other real world examples:** [Maryland House Bill 199](#), [Minnesota District 77 Policy 542](#), [Vermont Bill 486](#)

### STRATEGIES FOR MOVING LEGISLATION

While it's ideal to get the spotlight on your particular issue, it's sometimes a good legislative strategy to see if you can incorporate your legislative agenda into a larger piece of legislation. Debates on education reform, school safety, violence prevention, or after-school programs might provide opportunities to "piggy back" relational aggression policies onto other bills that are moving through the legislative process.

See if there's any activity on the following types of bills, and see if you can add relational aggression policy to the debate. Check with your state legislative monitor, legislative champions, and others to find out whether any of these items are "hot topics" or "must pass" pieces of legislation.

- Education reform legislation
- After-school programs
- Teacher training requirements
- Violence prevention
- Internet safety
- Budget or appropriations bills



## A NOTE ON BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS

If you pursue programs that require government funding, you'll likely have to go through the **appropriations** process. In most states, even if a program is authorized, it will have to get funding from a separate bill.

Generally, decision-making bodies (state legislatures, counties, and city councils) draft yearly budgets that have room for funding priorities such as Girl Scout programs. Since state and local governments have different appropriations processes, you will need to do additional research to secure funding for your existing or new programs.

In Girl Scout advocacy, especially with regard to relational aggression policy, the difference between policy and program can be a fine line. If you have questions on this difference or the appropriations process, consult the GPS at (202) 659-3780 or [advocacy@girlscouts.org](mailto:advocacy@girlscouts.org).



## A.10— Prepare to Cultivate and Educate

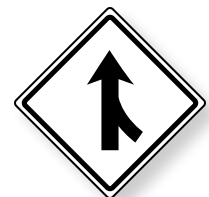
Create outreach materials that will help your council educate the public and advocate for your policy suggestions. In general, advocacy documents should be short—one or two pages long—and should build upon the key messages of your advocacy campaign.

Use the sample fact sheet on relational aggression on the next page. Copy and paste the text onto your council letterhead, edit the sample text, insert specifics about your council, and distribute it widely. This document is adapted from a GSUSA fact sheet that the Public Policy and Advocacy Office uses when engaging the public, media, and public officials.

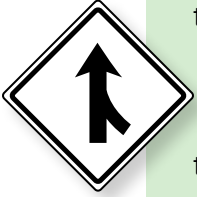
In this fact sheet, we've included a section for a girl testimonial. When people read about Girl Scouting, they expect to hear about *girls*, and this is a key area where your council can deliver. Use this opportunity to dive into the new Girl Scout *aMAZE: The Twists and Turns of Getting Along* Leadership Journey and get girls talking about their experiences with relational aggression with activities from "Caution: Bullies Straight Ahead." Include quotes from girls about their experiences with relational aggression and how they have benefited from Girl Scouting.



On the following fact sheet, underlined and <bracketed> portions represent "merge" areas—places where you should adapt the language to your council's specifications. We've used mock language for now.



SAMPLE  
FACT  
SHEET



## **GIRL SCOUTS OF THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA** **Combating Bullying and Relational Aggression**

Girl Scouts has a longstanding commitment to the well-being of girls and continues to be an authority on their healthy growth and development. As America confronts the problem of relational aggression and other forms of bullying among its youth, Girl Scouts' innovative research and programs are shedding light on the causes of this alarming behavior. As the world's premier organization dedicated solely to girls, Girl Scouts is working successfully to address relational aggression. We are looking for opportunities to assist policymakers in improving how we promote the health and safety of young people, especially girls. Because adequate progress is not being made to ensure that our young people live healthy lives, we believe all sectors must be involved in developing solutions.

### **What Is Relational Aggression?**

Bullying can take many forms, but girls are more likely to use subtle, indirect, and emotional forms of aggression than boys. Relational aggression encompasses behaviors that harm others by damaging, threatening, or manipulating one's relationship with her peers, or by injuring a girl's feeling of social acceptance. Because relational aggression is not as overt as "traditional" schoolyard bullying, it has not received the same attention from researchers, educators, and parents. However, relational aggression (including online cyberbullying) is just as harmful as physical bullying to a student's ability to learn, grow, and succeed.

### **Our Key Principles on Relational Aggression:**

Policy solutions should embrace an all-encompassing approach to ending relational aggression that includes preventative measures. Building confidence among girls is a crucial step towards empowering girls to prevent relational aggression before it starts and to stop it when they see it.

Community-based organizations that serve youth, including the Girl Scouts, should be seen as vital partners in developing and delivering solutions in the area of relational aggression. Schools, families, and communities will be most effective working in collaboration to address this issue.

<Insert issue-statement, from section A.8>

### **Girl Scouts' Research**

Our experience and research has brought much-needed attention and further understanding to the issue of relational aggression among youth. The Girl Scout Research Institute's (GSRI) report, *The Net Effect: Girls and New Media*, investigates how new technology is affecting girls' relationships and how bullying has been transformed on the Internet. Girls say the Internet allows them to treat their peers more cruelly than they would through face-to-face interactions, without having to see the immediate responses to their behavior.<sup>i</sup> Cyberbullying is a growing crisis; 49 percent of children who are frequent Internet users report using the Internet to gossip about their friends.<sup>ii</sup> This behavior

continued...



SAMPLE  
FACT SHEET  
CONT.

poses serious consequences to the health and safety of all children, considering that in according to one study, 60 percent of middle school bullies had at least one criminal conviction by age 24.<sup>iii</sup>

Our original research, *The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living*<sup>iv</sup>, tells us that girls have a view of safety and health that includes emotional and social well-being. Findings from *The New Normal?* suggest that policies solely punishing individual bullies may miss the mark with girls, yet when there is a school-wide commitment to end bullying, it can be reduced by up to 50 percent.<sup>v</sup> While about 30 percent of kids are either targets or bullies, 100 percent of kids witness bullying at some point throughout their youth.<sup>vi</sup> Comprehensive approaches that include preventative and confidence-building measures are the most effective in encouraging healthy relationships among girls. Collaboration between schools, families, and communities is most likely to successfully prevent and stop bullying.



### **Girl Scout Programming**

Throughout our history, Girl Scouts has offered innovative programs across a wide range of healthy living topics. Age-level awards (badges, patches, and charms), leadership training, and self-esteem programming all encourage girls to engage in a wide range of activities that help them develop confidence, character, and healthy relationships. The new Girl Scout Leadership Journeys develop commitments to healthy and respectful relationships in girls. The Girl Scout/Dove self-esteem program, *uniquely ME!*, helps girls feel better about themselves through proudly acknowledging their strengths and positively handling peer pressure. Girl Scouts know that when girls feel better about themselves, they are less likely to participate in harmful activities such as bullying and more likely to take a stand against such behavior.

<Insert descriptions of your council’s programming focusing on developing self-esteem and healthy relationships among girls. Include a testimonial from a local girl describing how Girl Scouting has boosted her self confidence and improved her relationships or a testimony describing how Girl Scout programming has changed the environment of a school.>

### **A Call to Action**

Because relational aggression is a wide-ranging problem, Girl Scouts believes that solutions should be developed and implemented on a community-based level. Girl Scouts can and should be considered as a resource for public officials when addressing issues related to the health and safety of young people. Establishing relational aggression and bullying policies with clear rules and preventative measures will make an impact on the health of our children, their relationships, and their future.

### **Endnotes**

<sup>i</sup> Whitney Roban “The Net Effect: Girls and New Media,” Girl Scout Research Institute (New York, NY: Girl Scouts of the USA, 2002).

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> “Bullying Facts and Statistics.” (National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center). <http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/faq/bullying.asp> (July 31, 2008).

<sup>iv</sup> Judy Schoenberg, Kimberlee Salmond, and Paula Fleshman, *The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living*, A Report from the Girl Scout Research Institute (New York, NY: Girl Scouts of the USA, 2006).

<sup>v</sup> “Bullying Facts and Statistics.”

<sup>vi</sup> Royal Weld, “Tackling Bullying,” *Girl Scouts Leader*, Fall 2008, 38-43.

## A.11—Develop Partnerships, Foster Relationships

**Reach Out:** Approach your target list of potential allies (see section A.4) to begin conversations on how you might work together to achieve your advocacy goals.

Think of individuals and organizations with which Girl Scouts shares common goals and interests. Approach this from two directions: involve partners interested in addressing relational aggression in addition to other youth- or girl-focused partners.

How do you reach out? Ask to attend a meeting of the targeted organization to discuss the issue. Talk to individuals at community events and share a copy of your fact sheet. And *never* underestimate the power of networking. Oftentimes, advocacy can be about whom you know. Use relationships to branch out. Keep apprised of events, do Internet research, and read the local newspaper.

### **Building a coalition and working effectively together:**

- Assemble a group of individuals and organizations with an interest in relational aggression that agree to work together toward a common goal.
- Convene a meeting and consider recruiting additional members who may also add value to the effort. Every organization brings different skills, experiences, and tools to the table.
- Provide clear ideas to coalition members on how they can contribute and get involved. Explain how their efforts here will help Girl Scouts and all girls.
- Commit to coming together on a regular basis to advance your issue at the state or local level. Communicate regularly with your network.
- Define the issue, develop an action plan, and set reachable goals.
- Draft a general mission statement to explain your coalition's goals and objectives. This is especially helpful when your group starts doing public outreach.
- Work through a collaborative process that determines your strategy, and assign roles and responsibilities to each coalition member.
- Be realistic about what the coalition can do. Always be clear about the Girl Scouts' expectations of the coalition and the coalition's expectations of the Girl Scouts.



Girls participating in the new Girl Scout Senior *Girltopia* Leadership Journey will begin honing their networking skills. Encourage them to use the networking skills they'll learn on page 65 from new Girl Scout *Girltopia* Leadership Journey to aid the council in cultivating relationships.

### A.12—Build Relationships with Elected Officials

#### **Get to know them before you need them**

An important step of effective advocacy is building strong relationships with your elected officials. It is through these relationships that you will be able to influence policymakers on issues of importance to the Girl Scouts. Just as with any relationship, building a strong working alliance will take time. Below are some ideas on how to expedite the process.

#### **Keep officials informed about Girl Scout activities**

- Add the names of elected officials to your distribution and mailing lists for newsletters, press releases, annual reports, and other council activities.

#### **Meet with your elected officials**

- Meet regularly with your public officials. Keep them informed about Girl Scout signature outreach programs and how they are impacting girls in your community. When a newly elected official takes office, send a welcome letter on behalf of your council and arrange a follow-up meeting.
- When meeting with your newly elected public officials, inform them about the Girl Scouts' commitment to girls' healthy living. Provide a fact sheet on relational aggression and discuss ways in which they can support you in your efforts to promote this important issue.
- Bring along a copy of the Girl Scout Research Institute report, *The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living*.

#### **Invite your elected officials to participate in Girl Scout events**

- Invite public officials to major Girl Scout council events; consider asking them to chair "Women of Distinction" and Gold Award recognition ceremonies.
- Invite public officials to any town hall meetings, public forums, or press events that focus on relational aggression. Ask a public official to be a spokesperson for the Girl Scouts on this issue.
- Invite public officials and their staff to a Girl Scout training program on relational aggression.
- Have girls from the community meet with public officials and explain firsthand the impact of relational aggression on their health and safety. Consider having them ask the public official to introduce a resolution at the local or state level.
- Invite public officials to sit on your council advisory board or board of directors.
- Ask elected officials to include links on their Web site to [girlscouts.org](http://girlscouts.org) or your local Web site.
- Offer public recognition opportunities to those officials who champion your policy agenda, including mentioning them in council newsletters and Web sites, hosting an event, or issuing a joint press release.



### **Attend community events hosted by your elected officials**

- Attend town hall meetings, press conferences, and other public events held by your elected officials.

We have created a chart with ideas on how to build relationships with public officials. Click [here](#) to see Appendix vii.

### **CASE STUDY: Vermont Legislative Internship**

The Girl Scout Council of Vermont has a program that incorporates training and experiential learning for girls to work side by side with women in leadership roles in Vermont government. The legislative internship is designed to immerse teens in the democratic process, promote leadership and team-building skills, and provide a forum to discuss ideas and issues that are important to Vermonters. The experience provides an opportunity for the girls to experience the parliamentary process in action, observe party caucuses, sit in on legislative committee meetings and listen to testimony, and experience how this dynamic process shapes the direction of Vermont for the coming years. More importantly the state legislators get to know Girl Scouts through the girls who participate in this program. Legislators gain an appreciation for the programs and leadership opportunities Girl Scouts offers to the girls in their communities.



## A.13– Get the Message Out

Invite public officials and policymakers to witness Girl Scout activities in action, especially when they relate to relational aggression. Demonstrate the importance of girl-focused and girl-led activities. Engage policymakers in discussions with girls about the importance of combating and preventing relational aggression. Some tips for hosting policymakers are located [here](#) in Appendix x.

In Step Four (page 66) of “Identify the Big Ears” of the new Girl Scout Ambassador *Your Voice, Your World* Leadership Journey, girls learn to recognize policy leaders, and zero in on the VIPs who could support their issue, such as state representatives or federal agencies. Encourage the girls to invite their VIPs to take part in their *Your Voice, Your World* Take Action efforts. While the girls have the attention of leaders, they can speak out on their own behalf. Step Five (page 72) of the Ambassador’s Journey book offers detailed activities to help prepare the “perfect pitch” to deliver to the VIPs. Invite girls to help the council publicize its advocacy efforts by using skills they learn in the Journeys.



Below is a **sample for an invitation letter**. Underlined portions indicate where you should customize the content for your council.

September 30, 2008

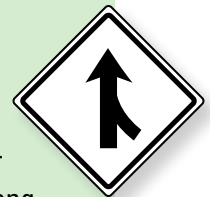
The Honorable Carolyn Jones  
900 State House Office Building

Dear Representative Jones,

During the week of November 10, 500 Girl Scout volunteers, staff, and girls will convene for our annual relational aggression awareness event, Stop R.A. Day. We will be talking about the dangers of bullying and relational aggression, as well as providing policy strategies for addressing relational aggression. It would be our honor to have you, a respected leader on the issue of relational aggression and bullying among youth, join us for Stop R.A. Day to present brief remarks on your commitment to promoting the health and safety of girls and all youth. The event will take place on November 8 at 5:00 PM at the Laurel County Public Library.

We sincerely hope your schedule will allow you to join us for these events that will celebrate Girl Scouts’ commitment to developing healthy relationships among girls. For information on other Girl Scouts events taking place, please see the attached flyer or visit our Web site at www.rockymountaingirlscouts.org. We would be delighted to discuss this invitation further, and we will be following up with your office in the near future. If you

continued...



SAMPLE  
INVITATION  
LETTER  
CONT.

have any questions or concerns, please contact me at [555-6780](tel:555-6780) or [jodip@rockymountain-girlscouts.org](mailto:jodip@rockymountain-girlscouts.org).

Sincerely,  
Jodi Peterson  
CEO, Girl Scouts of the Rocky Mountains



## A.14– Inform the Public

**Public Forums:** Host public forums, town-hall meetings, discussions, or Girl Scout Days at the State Capitol to discuss relational aggression issues and Girl Scouts' solutions to them. Invite coalition partners to co-host or participate to widen the reach of the message. Distribute the fact sheet on relational aggression and highlight key messages.

Public forums could serve as a great setting for girls to complete the Take Action project for the new Girl Scout *aMAZE* Leadership Journey on relationships. On page 117 of the *aMAZE* book, there are ideas about how girls can raise awareness of their issue with adults and peers. The girls could share the public forum time to make a presentation highlighting their tips and concerns about relational aggression, or put on a skit to illustrate to the community the problems of bullying behavior. For more information about helping girls to plan their Take Action project, see page 73 of the *aMAZE* Adult Guide.



Hold an all-girl leadership summit or a girl congress on relational aggression. Girls can share their experiences, express feelings, and talk about ways they could advocate or partner with adults to create change in their communities. Summits or girl congresses could be held in conjunction with a council annual meeting, a legislative day, or as an annual gathering.

**Get Press:** Inform the media by sharing stories about the Girl Scouts' historic commitment to healthy living and your Live Healthy, Lead Healthy Action Plan. Within that context, emphasize the importance of combating and preventing relational aggression. Share a copy of *The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living* with members of the press.

Create the opportunity for a girl to talk about her experiences with relational aggression and the proposed policy solutions. Senior Girl Scouts on their Leadership Journey might use the tips on page 96 of the new Girl Scout *Girlltopia* Leadership Journey to inform the media about the council's advocacy efforts.



When you hold events, write and distribute press releases, like the one included here.

PRESS RELEASE  
IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jackie Brown  
(303) 555—4321  
jbrown@rockymountaingirlscouts.org

SAMPLE  
PRESS  
RELEASE

## STATE REPRESENTATIVE CAROLYN JONES SPEAKS AT “STOP R.A. DAY”

### Girl Scouts talk tough about bullying

Paradox, CA—State Representative Carol Jones will give an evening address on relational aggression to the Girl Scouts of the Rocky Mountains this November 8<sup>th</sup>, at 5:00 p.m. in the Laurel County Public Library.

This is an annual event for the Girl Scouts to raise awareness about relational aggression and to champion HR 815, the Relational Aggression and Cyberbullying Prevention Act, which would require all public schools to create, implement, and enforce policies regarding relational aggression and cyberbullying. An estimated 500 volunteers, staff, and girls will attend. How girls are bullied and bully each other is one of the key concerns behind the Girl Scouts of the Rocky Mountains’ Healthy Living advocacy efforts. Carolyn Jones, a representative to the California state legislature, is passionate about ending bullying among youth.

Jodi Peterson, CEO of Girl Scouts of the Rocky Mountains, said “we are grateful to Representative Jones for speaking on this very important issue. We all need to be aware of the negative consequences of relational aggression.”

The event begins at 5:00 p.m. and is open to the press. It will include the talk by Representative Jones and then a discussion with the Girl Scouts regarding policy solutions to relational aggression.

Space is limited, so please RSVP to Jackie Brown at (303) 555-4321.

###



**Write-in:** Submit letters to the editor and op-eds to newspapers on behalf of girls (or, better yet, ask girls to write them!) to educate the public about your policy advocacy work. Determine strategic opportunities to submit an op-ed, such as when a bill is being introduced in the legislature or when a local board is deciding on ratifying a new relational aggression policy.



In the new Ambassador Girl Scout Leadership Journey *Your Voice, Your World*, girls are shown various ways to raise awareness about issues. If your council is considering taking action by writing to a local newspaper, consider that girls may want to write the letter. “Write it Right” on page 76 of *Your Voice, Your World* explains that words can give powerful voice to an issue and provides examples of how girls can raise their voices through writing.

What’s the difference between a letter to the editor and an op-ed? Need some suggestions about formatting, length, and content? Check out the samples on the following pages or click [here](#) to head to Appendix xii for tips and guidelines.

**The Web:** Incorporate your Live Healthy, Lead Healthy Action Plan and related public materials into your council Web site. Consider whether there are regular updates to be posted about the issue or if the Web site can be used to activate or organize your coalition, activists, or champions. You may want to add an advocacy tab on your Web site if you do not already have one. Ask partner organizations to link to your Web site.

The Girl Scouts of Robin's Nest would like to see the Robin's Nest County School Board take a step further with its new bullying prevention policy. We praise the school board for its commitment to providing a safer environment for children in and outside of school. Bullying can take many forms, but girls are more likely than boys to use this subtle, indirect, and emotional form of aggression. Relational aggression, including online cyberbullying, is just as harmful as physical bullying to a student's ability to learn, grow, and succeed. Our kids deserve to live and grow into adulthood without the fear of bullying. However, the school board's new policy cannot fully protect all of Robin's Nest's children because it does not include a measure on preventing relational aggression.

This new policy does not fully address and prevent all forms of relational aggression because our policymakers are focusing more on traditional bullying, such as physical fights, rather than all forms of bullying that damage girls' and boys' lives. Since most girls use more subtle and indirect forms of aggression than boys, this policy does not fully protect girls' health and safety. Girl Scouts of Robin's Nest encourages the school board to include a provision on preventing relational aggression when developing the new bullying policy so that Robin's Nest's girls and boys are protected and ensured a healthy community in which they can grow and develop.

SAMPLE  
LETTER TO THE  
EDITOR



### **GIRLS ARE SAYING "WORDS CAN HURT ME"**

It is one of the most common childhood sayings: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." However common it may be, what is this cliché response to teasing and bullying really saying? That our children are impenetrable to bullying as long as it is not physical? Certainly, all of us know (often through experience) that verbal and other non-physical forms of bullying can hurt the most. Girl Scouts of Robin's Nest knows that the pain and damage from relational aggression is the reality for far too many girls today. We are asking the community to help us promote better policies that wholly and effectively address this serious issue in girls' lives.

Relational aggression encompasses behaviors that harm others by damaging, threatening, or manipulating a child's relationship with her peers or by injuring a peer's feeling of social acceptance. Bullying can take many forms, but girls are more likely to use this subtle, indirect, and emotional form of aggression than boys. Relational aggression, including online cyberbullying, is just as harmful as physical bullying to a student's ability to learn, grow, and succeed. Relational aggression like cyberbullying has increased among kids because they can treat their peers more cruelly than they usually would without having to see the immediate responses to their behavior. Therefore, it is imperative that we as a community address all forms of relational aggression if we wish to promote the health and safety of all our children.

SAMPLE  
OP-ED



continued...



SAMPLE  
OP-ED



Make no mistake, relational aggression—the teasing, exclusion, and gossip among peers and cliques—poses serious consequences to the health and safety of all children. Over 5 million youth in the United States are estimated to be involved in bullying, as a bully a target, or both.<sup>10</sup> Targets of cyberbullying are found to be eight times more likely than other students to report bringing weapons to school.<sup>11</sup> In one study, 60 percent of those characterized as bullies in grades six through nine had at least one criminal conviction by age twenty-four.<sup>12</sup>

Girls deserve to learn and grow in physically and emotionally safe environments, and Girl Scouts helps guarantee that this ideal becomes a reality. <Insert the description of a council program that addresses relational aggression and highlight its success stories, possibly adding a testimonial from a local Girl Scout>.

Our community has not been taking relational aggression as seriously as it should. Even though relational aggression is not as overt as “traditional” schoolyard bullying, it should receive the same attention from researchers, educators, and parents. School and community policies do not fully address and prevent all forms of relational aggression because policymakers tend to focus more on traditional bullying, such as physical fights, rather than all forms of bullying that damages girls’ and boys’ lives. Since most girls use more subtle and indirect forms of aggression than boys, these policies are not fully protecting girls’ health and safety.

Bullying policies should be inclusive of all forms of bullying—whether physical or emotional—so we can guarantee that all children develop healthy relationships and feel safe in their schools and communities. Policy solutions will be more successful if they embrace an all-encompassing approach to ending relational aggression and other forms of bullying that includes preventative measures. Girl Scouts of Robin’s Nest supports School Board Resolution #195 in an effort to make Robin’s Nest a better place for girls, and all children, to live and learn. <Insert short description and importance of legislation or policy>.

Approaches that simply crack down on individual bullies are seldom effective. Building confidence among girls and boys is a crucial step towards empowering them to prevent relational aggression before it starts and stopping it when they see it.

Girl Scouts has been successful in producing girls of courage, confidence, and character who develop and promote healthy, caring relationships among their peers. For this reason, community-based organizations that serve youth, including the Girl Scouts, are vital partners in creating and delivering solutions in the area of relational aggression. Schools, families, and communities will be more successful in addressing relational aggression if they work together.

Our goal is to help public officials develop policies that protect all children and prevent all forms of relational aggression, not just traditional schoolyard bullying. The problem of bullying, teasing, and other harmful relational behaviors cannot end without the full support of families, schools, and policymakers. Girls deserve better than a worn-out phrase to help them deal with this serious issue in their lives. We at the Girl Scouts have an important role to play, but we cannot do it alone. Let’s make a commitment as a community to encourage healthy relationships among our children. Their future depends upon it.

## A.15—Meet with Policymakers



Does your state advocacy committee or legislative task force have a Girl Scout Day at the State Capitol?

If not, consider launching this type of event to highlight relational aggression and include girls in your advocacy efforts. Include girls when you meet with your public officials and discuss Girl Scout programs that address relational aggression. Click [here](#) for strategies for hosting an Advocacy Day in Appendix viii.



Alternatively, reach out to members of the city council or state legislature and request a meeting. Discuss the issues, including your policy solutions, and gauge their support. They may be willing to champion the policy. Use the template letter below as a model and click [here](#) for Appendix xi to find strategies for carrying out successful meetings.

This meeting should be the culmination of a significant amount of preparation. Take the time to formulate a strategy for your meeting. Decide who will speak (and in what order) and make sure everyone involved is “on message,” making a cohesive statement that is hard-hitting, informative, and polite. Make sure you have a specific “ask,” such as a resolution for the policymaker to cosponsor, an event to speak at, or a bill to support or oppose. This is a great opportunity to get girls involved—take them along and have them tell their stories to the policymaker. Make sure to stay in touch!

### Case Study: How Vermont Girls Took Action

The Girl Scout Council of Vermont conducted an in-depth research project that surveyed over 200 young women ages 11-18 for a report entitled *What Teen Girls Say About Bullying and Harassment*. Teen girl members designed and conducted the survey themselves. The girls also presented their findings to the Vermont Commission on Women, the state’s Department of Education, and state legislators during the state Teen Advocacy Day. A month after their release of the study, a bill related to cyberbullying and bullying in school, Bill H.486, was introduced in the Vermont legislature.



SAMPLE  
MEETING  
REQUEST

September 19, 2008

The Honorable Megan Edwards  
515 State House Office Building

Dear Representative Edwards:

On behalf of Girl Scouts of the Grand Canyon, I would like to meet with you regarding a very serious issue girls are facing today, relational aggression and other forms of bullying. Bullying can take many forms, but girls are more likely to use subtle, indirect, and emotional forms of aggression than boys. Relational aggression encompasses behaviors that harm others by damaging, threatening, or manipulating one's relationship with her peers, or by injuring a girl's feeling of social acceptance. Because this problem is not as overt as "traditional" schoolyard bullying, it has not received the same attention from researchers, educators, and parents. However, relational aggression (including online cyberbullying) is just as harmful to a student's ability to learn, grow, and succeed. It would be my pleasure to update you on the programs and activities of Girl Scouts, in particular, as they relate to relational aggression among our nation's youth and girls.

As you may know, our Stop R.A. Now program provides girls with the tools to prevent and end relational aggression and promote healthy relationships among their peers. Nevertheless, policy is needed to ensure that girls can feel emotionally and physically safe with their peers. During our meeting I hope to discuss your possible support for HR 815, the Relational Aggression and Cyberbullying Prevention Act, which would require all public schools to create, implement, and enforce policies regarding relational aggression and cyberbullying.

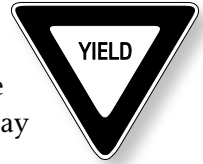
I would be delighted to meet with you and thank you for assisting Girl Scouts of the Grand Canyon in empowering girls to grow strong. I appreciate your commitment and support for Girl Scouts, and if there is anything we can do as you pursue your agenda, please do not hesitate to contact me at 555-0142 or vlakewood@gsgc.org.

Sincerely,  
Valerie Lakewood  
CEO, Girl Scouts of the Grand Canyon

## A.16—Influence the Legislative Process

**Monitor Legislation:** Identify legislation that could address relational aggression at the state or local level. Every state legislature has a Web site that tracks legislation moving through the legislature. For a list of these sites, click [here](#) Appendix iii.

- If your state advocacy committee has hired a legislative monitor, ask that she or he keep the committee apprised of legislation moving through the state house that may impact relational aggression.
- Ask the legislative monitor to look for opportunities for the Girl Scouts to provide testimony on relational aggression at committee hearings or at state commissions or task forces.
- Reach out and join forces with other advocates of the policies that advance your goals relating to relational aggression.



**Organize to Advocate:** Use your coalition partners as well as Girl Scout volunteers, staff, girls, and parents to support your efforts.

- Start a **letter-writing or call-in campaign**. Provide individuals with a sample letter or talking points so they can easily contact their policymakers to weigh in on a piece of legislation.

Below is a sample letter of support, which can be modified and used by stakeholders. As always, underlined portions should be customized for your council. For additional suggestions on developing letters, click [here](#) to see Appendix ix.

March 19, 2009

The Honorable Clare Smith  
412 State House Office Building

Dear Representative Smith:

On behalf of Girl Scouts of Mt. Rushmore Troop 1213, I urge you to support HR 815, the Relational Aggression and Cyberbullying Prevention Act, which would require all public schools to create, implement, and enforce policies regarding relational aggression and cyberbullying.

Bullying can take many forms, but girls are more likely to use subtle, indirect, and emotional forms of aggression than boys. Relational aggression encompasses behaviors that

*continued...*



SAMPLE  
LETTER OF  
SUPPORT  
CONT.

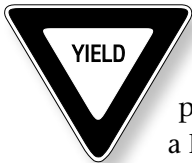
harm others by damaging, threatening, or manipulating one's relationship with her peers, or by injuring a girl's feeling of social acceptance. Because relational aggression is not as overt as "traditional" schoolyard bullying, it has not received the same attention from researchers, educators, and parents. However, relational aggression (including online cyberbullying), is just as harmful as physical bullying to a student's ability to learn, grow, and succeed.



As you may know, our R.A. Is Not O.K Girl Scout program provides girls with the tools to prevent and end relational aggression and promote healthy relationships among their peers. Nevertheless, policy is needed to ensure that girls can feel emotionally and physically safe with their peers. As a longtime champion of initiatives to improve the health and safety of young people, we hope you will agree that we must do more to stop relational aggression. Please support HR 815.

If you have questions about this legislation, please contact Mary Smith, CEO of Girl Scouts of Mt. Rushmore at advocacy@girlscouts.org or 201-123-4567. Thank you for your commitment and support for Girl Scouts and for helping girls live in a healthy and safe environment.

Sincerely,  
Catherine Miller  
Brownie Troop Leader, Troop 1213



**Speak Up:** Consider submitting written or oral testimony. You, a member of your Girl Scout state advocacy committee and, perhaps a girl can draft and present testimony at a hearing in the state legislature or a meeting in front of a local decision-making body to influence policies on relational aggression.



Here are step-by-step instructions for drafting hard-hitting relational aggression testimony.

## STEPS TO DRAFTING QUALITY TESTIMONY

1. Start with an introduction thanking the decision-making body for allowing you to testify. Provide a brief, general overview of the Girl Scouts' mission, research, and programming, focusing on its commitment to addressing relational aggression. Include personal experiences—state how your council and Girl Scouts have addressed relational aggression. Find unique girl voices and suggest policy solutions.
2. Explain why policymakers should incorporate these policy solutions when drafting policies on relational aggression. Discuss why these policy priorities are relevant and important. You can reuse

continued...

language from materials you have already created, such as key messages and fact sheets.

3. Discuss the research. You can use research from the Girl Scout Research Institute, contact the GSUSA Public Policy and Advocacy Office for any research we have gathered on this topic, or gather or conduct your own research. Try to gather information about your state or local community to show the committee or board how relational aggression is affecting local children. It is also important to cite all resources.
4. Highlight your expertise on and experience with addressing relational aggression. Explain that Girl Scouts adds an important and unique perspective to the policy discussion on relational aggression.
5. In the conclusion, restate your council's overall suggestions on how to address relational aggression in policy. Emphasize why it is important that your council be included in the policy-making process and thank the committee or board for the opportunity to testify.

### THINGS TO REMEMBER!

- Contact the GSUSA Public Policy and Advocacy Office at (202) 659-3780 or [advocacy@girlscouts.org](mailto:advocacy@girlscouts.org) and let us know about this opportunity. We can also provide you with examples of testimony we have written for the U.S. Congress.
- You do not have to start completely from scratch! Build your testimony from the advocacy materials you have already created, such as your key messages and talking points, research, program examples, and fact sheets.
- Include the girl voice. Promote Girl Scouts as a leader for girls in addressing and preventing relational aggression throughout the testimony.
- Check with the decision-making body to find out when you have to submit the testimony.
- Find out how long your oral and written testimony is expected to be and stick to the guidelines.
- Inquire as to whether a Girl Scout could join you and present part of the testimony, giving girls a voice in the process.
- Prepare a communications strategy to publicize your testimony. This strategy can include reaching out to the media, preparing a press release, alerting your partners and other policymakers, updating your Web site, and inviting girls and volunteers to watch your testimony in person.
- Follow up on any connections you make with the policymakers and their staff. This will be an excellent opportunity to build stronger relationships with public officials.



## A.17—Celebrate, Debrief, and Thank

**Great job!** Now it's time to assess your accomplishments, celebrate your success, learn from your mistakes, and thank the people who helped make your initiative possible. Then you can move on to other Policy Avenues or take further steps in addressing relational aggression.

Policy advocacy is not a quick fix. It's often a slow process, but it can be an effective and long-term solution to an issue impacting girls in your community. It's not easy to be successful in influencing a legislating body. If you weren't successful on the first try, don't be discouraged. Continue to look for opportunities to deliver your message and gather support. Who knows? With a few more meetings, a new influential partner, or a majority-changing election, your initiative could see new light.

### Endnotes

- 1 "Bullying Facts and Statistics." National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center. <http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/faq/bullying.asp> (July 31, 2008).
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 "Mean Girls and Bullies: Research Sheds Light on School Cliques," University of Alabama Birmingham Press Release, March 7, 2008.
- 4 Judy Schoenberg, Toija Riggins, and Kimberlee Salmond, *Feeling Safe: What Girls Say*, A Report from the Girl Scout Research Institute (New York, NY: Girl Scouts of the USA, 2003).
- 5 Royal Weld, "Tackling Bullying," *Girl Scouts Leader* (Fall 2008), 38-43.
- 6 Judy Schoenberg, Toija Riggins, and Kimberlee Salmond, "Feeling Safe: What Girls Say," A Report from the Girl Scout Research Institute (New York, NY: Girl Scouts of the USA, 2003).
- 7 "What Parents Need to Know About Cyberbullying," *ABC News*.
- 8 "Isn't Relational Aggression Just Normal Behavior?" The Ophelia Project. [http://www.opheliaproject.org/main/ra\\_faq4.htm](http://www.opheliaproject.org/main/ra_faq4.htm) (September 1, 2008).
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 "Bullying Facts and Statistics." National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center. <http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/faq/bullying.asp> (July 31, 2008).
- 11 T. J. Billitteri, "The Issues" CQ Researcher (May 2008).
- 12 "Bullying Facts and Statistics." National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center. <http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/faq/bullying.asp> (July 31, 2008).





# BHEALTHY MEDIA IMAGES

**Congratulations!** You have chosen to advocate for healthy media images. Choosing this avenue shows that your council is committed to ensuring girls see positive images of their peers and women in the media. Engaging the public, media, and policymakers in conversations about healthy media images ensures that the unique girl perspective is included in policy solutions. Through your council's advocacy work with community stakeholders and girls, your council will be fulfilling the Girl Scout mission to make the world a better place.

It is important to note here that every step in this process is considered advocacy. We call this a roadmap, which implies that there is a specific endpoint to reach. Every success in this toolkit is an advocacy success. Raising awareness of media images in your community is advocacy. Introducing Girl Scouts to policymakers—even if it's not at an issue-specific lobbying meeting—is advocacy. **The goal here is making the Girl Scouts known as the expert on and voice for girls.** You don't have to complete every task in the toolkit to make a difference for girls.



## CREATING YOUR ACTION PLAN

This Policy Avenue provides a step-by-step process, full of examples and models, to help your council or state advocacy committee create and implement an action plan. Before you start, think about your advocacy goals. Then read through this avenue to understand the options before creating your action plan.

**The core elements of the action plan are:**

**Step 1: Evaluate.** Research the problem, determine your assets, and identify any potential opposition to fully understand your council's strengths and weaknesses.

**Step 2: Cultivate.** Cultivate the partnerships, champions, and support needed to meet your council's advocacy goals.

**Step 3: Educate and Advocate.** Use strategies and tactics that will help your council get your message out and advocate effectively to promote healthy media images for girls.



The following pages contain step-by-step directions for building an action plan. Each of the components should be considered for inclusion in your action plan, but don't worry if your council doesn't have the capacity, opportunity, or need to take advantage of each strategy and tactic. The best action plan is one that makes sense to you, capitalizes on your council's strengths, and can be implemented well. We encourage you to create the action plan that is best suited for your council and that will effectively address your community's needs. To find ideas on what a year-long plan could look like, click [here](#) for Appendix xiv.

**When developing an action plan, remember to include:**

- the steps needed to reach your goals;
- lists of who will be in charge of each task;
- a timeline of when the work will be completed; and
- an allocation of resources—time and person power.

Need more guidance? GSUSA's Public Policy & Advocacy Office is your Guide to Policy Solutions (GPS). Call us at (202) 659-3780 or e-mail [advocacy@girlscouts.org](mailto:advocacy@girlscouts.org).



## B.1—Understand the Issue

Many of us—young and old—are unaware of how much the media affects our perceptions of ourselves and others. It is a powerful tool for influencing impressionable minds, especially those of children, who don't always notice the messages behind their favorite TV shows, video games, or commercials. By the time adolescents graduate from high school, they will have spent 15,000 hours with the media and 12,000 hours in school.<sup>1</sup> The media is often used to spread positive and important messages to youth, but there is growing concern about the potential negative impact of certain media images on girls. Too often, the messages girls receive from the media tell them that their worth is based on their physical appearance and sex appeal. Many female characters in the media are passive, submissive to men, and have limited aspirations. These images leave girls without active, ambitious female role models.

Girls may experience feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem after being bombarded with negative messages. One study found that teens who watched soap operas and TV shows that emphasized the stereotypical thin body type reported a higher sense of body dissatisfaction. This was also true for girls who watched music videos.<sup>2</sup> In fact, these unhealthy media images can lead to serious health consequences for girls such as lower self-esteem. This can lead to eating disorders, depression, and decreased participation in school. On the other hand, girl-positive media images can reinforce a healthy and realistic body image, help instill high expectations in girls, and also entertain them.

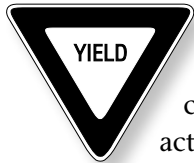
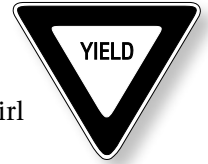
Girls can make great contributions to a discussion about media images. Involve them in advocacy by getting their take on the issue and how it affects them and their peers. In *aMAZE*, the Leadership Journey for Cadette Girl Scouts, girls are encouraged to identify stereotypes present in television shows and to take action against those images. Involve girls in advocacy by adding this activity to your avenue. Ask girls to share their opinions not only of television shows, but also of movies, music, and other forms of media.



Use your girl members' insights to help you further understand the issue, educate others, and assess your community's needs. How do adults in Girl Scouts respond when they see unhealthy media images in the community? What do girls hear from Girl Scouting about body image and media literacy? What parameters do you set for images you put on your council's Web site or in marketing materials? Girl Scouts materials set an excellent standard of successful media image use. Internal policy is a great way to start working on external policy.

## B.2—Understand the Players: Internal

Those councils who choose to advocate at the state level will want to coordinate their efforts with other councils from their state. If your state currently has a **state advocacy committee/legislative task force**, the councils will want to work together on each step. Especially at the state level, presenting a united front of constituents can make a huge difference. Look for this yield sign for suggestions on how to engage Girl Scout partners across the state.



**Network:** Develop a network of Girl Scout staff, volunteers, and girls interested in advocating for healthy media images policy. Work collaboratively with your state advocacy committee/legislative task force. Organize the contacts in such a way that you can activate them quickly at key moments to support your advocacy plan (e.g., create e-mail listserves, phone trees, etc.).

Interested in setting up a Girl Scout state advocacy committee? Consult the GPS. Call (202) 659-3780 or e-mail [advocacy@girlscouts.org](mailto:advocacy@girlscouts.org). There's also information on this process [here](#) in Appendix v.



## B.3—Understand the Players: External

An important early step in creating an action plan is to understand who supports your issue and who opposes it. This will help you not only to find champions to support your efforts, but also to build a coalition to sustain them.

**Research:** Identify elected officials who have influence over policy and who might be interested in supporting or championing your healthy media images advocacy efforts.

**NOT SURE WHO TO CALL?** There are many Web-based tools to help you find your elected officials. For a state-by-state guide to state legislatures, click [here](#) for Appendix iii.

- Look for policymakers who are active in youth, media, education, or safety policy. You might also approach policymakers who are concerned about violence, obscenity, smoking, and other risky behaviors in the media.
- Consider policymakers who have a history of championing issues that are important to youth and girls.
- Pay particular attention to policymakers who serve on committees with direct control over creating these policies and/or funding them.
- Create a target list of policymakers and prioritize it according to their influence and your ability to reach them.



**Assess Connections:** Think about people throughout your state who might have ties to policymakers.

- Does anyone on your council’s board, staff, or volunteer roster have connections to any elected officials? Are they willing to use those connections for the Girl Scouts’ advocacy efforts?
- Work with your Girl Scout state advocacy committee/legislative task force to find out about connections.
- Place elected officials connected to the Girl Scouts on your target list.
- If your council or state has an advocacy director, coordinate with her or him as you move forward.



### B.4—Look for Partnerships

Partners in any advocacy effort might vary, depending on the type of organization or the role that they would play in your strategy. When you choose your target list of potential partners, first consider their potential role: Do you need someone with policy expertise? An organization with a vast grassroots network? Someone to sponsor an event? Make sure that you’re matching your needs to the capabilities of your potential partner. For example, a nationally recognized research organization is unlikely to join your local action coalition, but they might sponsor an event or provide a quote for the press release that adds validity to your policy agenda.

Think about what motivates your potential partners. Are they looking for a platform to share their research? Are they a small organization that might gain credibility by working with a well-known, respected organization like the Girl Scouts? Are they businesses, retailers, or vendors who would benefit from reaching a new audience or bolstering their corporate image? If you can make the case that this is an important issue for partners, they’ll be more willing to work with you.

#### **Some other things to remember about partners:**

- Partners will vary from state to state, community to community, and issue to issue.
- Some partners might start small and grow into a larger role.
- Some partners might support part of your agenda, but not all of it.

The following are examples of potential partners for healthy media images policy and advocacy, with suggested roles to play. Remember, this is not an exhaustive list or a guarantee of success with a given partner. And partners might play multiple roles—just because a business supports an event, that doesn’t mean it can’t be a coalition partner as well. These suggestions might give you ideas about potential partners in your community.

## HEALTHY MEDIA IMAGES—POTENTIAL PARTNERS

**NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS** *These partners might serve in a policy review, strategic support, or academic role because they have a strong organizational focus on the issue or they are considered experts in the field. They are often heavyweights who can provide credibility, data, and resources.*

Girl Scouts of the USA	<a href="http://www.girlscouts.org">www.girlscouts.org</a>
The Girl Scout Research Institute	<a href="http://www.girlscouts.org/research">www.girlscouts.org/research</a>
The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media	<a href="http://www.thegeenadavisinstitute.org">www.thegeenadavisinstitute.org</a>
Girls, Women + Media Project	<a href="http://www.mediaandwomen.org">www.mediaandwomen.org</a>
American Psychological Association	<a href="http://www.apa.org">www.apa.org</a>
YWCA	<a href="http://www.ywca.org">www.ywca.org</a>
Girls, Inc.	<a href="http://www.girlsinc.org">www.girlsinc.org</a>
American Academy of Pediatrics’ Media Matters Campaign	<a href="http://www.aap.org/advocacy/mediamatters.htm">www.aap.org/advocacy/mediamatters.htm</a>
The Women’s Foundation of your state	

**EVENT SPONSORS** *These partners will benefit from the goodwill generated by underwriting an event, providing materials, or participating in other activities. You can help business partners connect with new audiences and improve their brand by working on issues that families support, such as portraying positive, healthy images of girls:*

- Local athletic retailers
- Local women’s professional and amateur athletic franchises
- Local women-owned businesses
- Local media: newspaper, television, and radio
- Chambers of commerce and other business associations
- Internet service providers
- Community service organizations (e.g., Kiwanis, Rotary Club)

**COALITION PARTNERS** *The following organizations are leaders in the community, have a strong focus on children and families, and support positive images of girls.*

- Parent Teacher Associations and Organizations
- Local colleges or universities
- Children’s museums
- Local libraries
- Women’s social and business organizations
- Interscholastic athletic associations
- Consumer advocacy groups
- Local youth-serving organizations
- Local clothing retailers
- Local athletic retailers



In the new Girl Scout Leadership Journeys, girls are encouraged to understand the importance of partners and to create a plan to build their network. As your council seeks out partnerships, involve the girls by finding out who would be on their lists. Direct the girls to “Community Connections” and “Building a List of Allies” in *Your Voice, Your World* (pages 38 and 51). They’ll soon see that they already have a full list of potential partners in their family, friends, classmates, teachers, and religious leaders.



### B.5—Prepare Key Messages

Develop key messages that your council can use throughout your healthy media images campaign. These messages will advance your advocacy efforts on paper and in talking points.

**To begin preparing your message:**

- Consider what will influence your target audience of policymakers, partners, and the media.
- Remember that different messages resonate with different audiences. Tailor your remarks to the particular philosophical or ideological views of your audience.
- Consider how to gain the support of the media and the community. Avoid using charged or divisive language.
- Prepare an “elevator” speech that summarizes key points in less than 60 seconds. You won’t always have time to do a formal presentation.
- Finally, make sure that you have the research and facts to support your messages.

#### EXAMPLES OF KEY MESSAGES ON HEALTHY MEDIA IMAGES

- As a leading voice for girls, Girl Scouts calls on policymakers and communities to explore ways to support and promote positive media images for girls, and to educate girls, families, communities, and businesses about the impact of media on girls.
- Children are increasingly exposed to the media. The American Academy of Pediatrics reports that by the time adolescents graduate from high school, they will have spent 15,000 hours watching television and 12,000 hours in school.<sup>3</sup> This does not include the hours spent surfing the Internet, playing video games, listening to the radio, or reading magazines.
- The media targets advertising to children in specific age groups — often displaying unhealthy products or images.
- Too often, media images perpetuate unrealistic expectations about girls’ appearances and responsibilities. Fifty percent of commercials aimed at girls refer to physical attractiveness, while almost no commercials aimed at boys reference appearance.<sup>4</sup>

continued...

- At the same time, girls and women are underrepresented in leadership roles in the media. Fewer than one out of three speaking characters on film and television (28 percent) is female.<sup>5</sup>
- Being unable to meet expectations fostered by the media creates unnecessary stress in girls' lives and greatly affects their self-esteem. Girls' low self-esteem often leads to unhealthy eating habits, depression, and skipping school. Although about two-thirds of girls (65 percent) correctly identify themselves as being normal weight or overweight, one-third have a distorted idea about their weight.<sup>6</sup>
- Research shows that girls use media images to measure their own character and physical appearance and are left feeling inadequate after doing so. Feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem lead to serious consequences for girls' health, such as disordered eating, dieting as young as eight or nine years old, decreased participation in school, and unhealthy and unsafe relationships with boys and men.
- Girls are bombarded with media images each day. Images from television, the Internet, music, and magazines strongly impact girls and their physical, emotional, and social health. Unfortunately, most media images endorse negative messages that damage girls' self-esteem and limit their choices of substantive role models.
- Unhealthy media images repeatedly imply that girls' physical appearances define their worth, and that they should have limited goals. Girls and women are often depicted as sexualized objects valued only for physical perfection, according to a recent study by the Geena Davis Institute.<sup>7</sup>
- The same report shows that most female characters and models are still restricted to passive, submissive, and secondary roles compared to male peers. These unrealistic and limiting expectations damage and distort both girls' and boys' perceptions of female beauty and value.

### B.6—Know Your Opposition

Even though these issues seem non-controversial to us, there is a possibility that you might encounter resistance. Don't be discouraged by opposition—it's a healthy part of the democratic process. Just make sure you're prepared. Play devil's advocate—what would an opponent say? Are there practical considerations (e.g., budget shortfalls, political dynamics) at play? Conduct research on past opposition to media awareness campaigns in your community or in other states. Opposition might vary from council to council. Respond to opponents with facts and consistency. See the responses below to the potential objections and be prepared to answer opponents when implementing your advocacy efforts. And if you encounter other roadblocks, let us know.



### BE PREPARED: HOW TO REBUT STATEMENTS LIKE...

*“We are immune to the media.”*

It is unlikely that children are immune to the media considering its prevalence in our culture. By the time adolescents graduate from high school, they will have spent more hours watching TV, browsing the Internet, and reading magazines, than attending school.<sup>8</sup>

*“This is a parent issue, not a policy issue. Parents have the responsibility to teach girls to be good consumers of media. It is not the government’s job to force businesses to act in a certain way.”*

Parent education and engagement is part of the solution, but it is not the whole solution. State and local communities have a role to play in ensuring the strength of their future leaders and workforce. Healthy, smart, and successful girls are part of that future vision.

*“Girl Scouts is blowing the issue out of proportion; advertising and the media do not drastically influence girls’ self image.”*

As avid consumers of a variety of media, young girls often feel dissatisfied with themselves in comparison to the images of females they see in the media.<sup>9</sup> Studies show that girls who consume media with unhealthy media images of females experience lower self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, decreased confidence, and potential eating disorder symptoms.<sup>10</sup> Girls should have media images in their lives that do not damage their self-worth or their ability to succeed.

*“Most shows I see focus on girls. Isn’t the media already taking a girl-centric approach?”*

Studies actually have shown that males disproportionately have the main, speaking roles in films and television programming. When female characters do have main roles, they are more likely to be portrayed as hyper-sexualized characters whose physical appearance and aspirations for love are their only attributes.<sup>11</sup> With so few healthy and substantive images of females in the media, it is important that we encourage the media to support high and positive expectations for girls and women.

*“Girl Scouts is attacking a long-standing tradition of girls preferring fairy tales.”*

Girl Scouts is committed to building girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place. We believe part of building girls’ confidence means ensuring they see healthy media images of female characters. We support media images that foster girls’ self confidence and encourage unlimited possibilities for girls. We believe that girls deserve to consider many options for the kinds of stories, role models, and goals that they have.

*“Girl Scouts is not supportive of businesses.”*

Girl Scouts has a longstanding commitment to entrepreneurship and partnerships with businesses. We strongly believe that businesses can and want to be part of the solution. We call upon businesses to join us in claiming shared responsibility for ensuring that girls grow up seeing media images that inspire them to become women of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place.

## B.7—Show Off Your Expertise

Girl Scouts are experts on the healthy growth and development of girls. Use your experiences with girls in your community to help your council or state advocacy committee decide the specific issue you want to address in regard to healthy media images. Since Girl Scout councils are experts on the issues girls face, councils have the information leaders need to make the best possible decisions. Showcase your expertise to establish credibility and gain support for your advocacy efforts.

Compile examples of successful Girl Scout programs that educate girls on the full range of healthy living issues. Click [here](#) to see a healthy living badge list in Appendix ii. Use these examples in the educational and outreach materials that you develop to support your advocacy efforts. Create an addendum to your fact sheet modeled after the list of program examples that follows. Share this information with your community, the media, and elected officials.

### SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM EXAMPLES

#### GIRL SCOUT SELF-ESTEEM AND MEDIA AWARENESS PROGRAMS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

##### National Girl Scout Programs and Resources

*uniquely ME!* is a program GSUSA developed with the Dove Self-Esteem Fund to help girls feel better about themselves, both physically and emotionally. The *uniquelyME!* topics below can be used to help girls develop media literacy and healthy perceptions of their bodies.

- “Mirror, Mirror”
- “The Real Deal”
- “Inside and Out”
- “The Way to Be”

*TV Smarts for Kids* is a video produced by the Cable Television Industry and GSUSA about how television affects children from different age groups.

##### Girl Scout Badges and Curriculum

###### *Junior Girl Scouts*

- “Becoming a Teen” Badge
- “Liking Yourself” Badge

###### *Cadette, Senior, and Ambassador Girl Scouts Interest Projects*

- “Do You Get the Message?”
- “Media Savvy”
- “Public Relations”

###### *Studio 2B*

- “Couch Potato” Interest Project



### Girl Scout Councils Teaching Media Literacy to Girls

Girl Scouts in Minnesota partnered with Intermedia Arts to showcase *Project Girl: A Multimedia Exhibition & Guide to Un-Mediafying Your Life*. The exhibit included visual, literary, digital, and video art by professional artists as well as by adolescent artists. *Project Girl* tours nationally as a visual arts exhibition with hands-on events and workshops. The goal is to provide young girls with the foundation for long-term change in the way that they consume media. Learn more at <http://www.girlscoutsrv.org/index.html>.

Senior Girl Scouts in Ohio led peer discussions called *Media Magic or Madness?* The girls viewed clips from *Slim Hopes: Advertising and the Obsession with Slimness* and an episode of Joan Lunden's "Behind Closed Doors," which shows a fashion shoot for *Cosmopolitan* magazine, as well as the airbrushing of supermodel Cindy Crawford's image. After the video, the girls practiced critical analysis of several forms of media that are popular with adolescent girls. Finally, there was a discussion of the implications of the discrepancy between real girls' bodies and the "perfect" images in magazines and on TV.

## B.8—Frame the Issue

By framing an issue, you define a topic or problem along with its possible solutions. Develop an issue statement to formally describe the policy implications of promoting healthy media images. This step will help you define the goals for which your council is advocating and guide you as you navigate the policy arena.

Here's an example:

### SAMPLE ISSUE STATEMENT

Girls are bombarded with media images each day, which can impact their physical, emotional, and social health. Unfortunately, many media images endorse negative messages that damage girls' self-esteem and limit their choices of substantive role models. Girl Scouts seeks to raise awareness about and explore options for reducing that negative impact and expanding girl-positive media images.

Healthy media images are an emerging policy topic. Girl Scouts therefore has an opportunity to set policy priorities and standards for media images that are girl-positive. Combine the following standards with your issue statement to help you identify the advocacy and policy options you want to pursue.

### GIRL SCOUT HEALTHY MEDIA IMAGE STANDARDS

#### To Promote Healthy Body Images, the Media Should

- Feature and value girls and women with varying body types and ethnicities
- Portray realistic, unaltered images of females with natural physical imperfections
- Show girls in age-appropriate attire
- Not use or sexualize female bodies to sell products or amuse male consumers

#### To Develop Positive and Active Role Models, the Media should

- Include a diverse cast of female characters in active and ambitious roles
- Feature females in traditionally male roles, such as CEOs or action heroes
- Feature girls and women who have confidence in their abilities and appearances
- Include more girls and women in leadership positions and as the main characters

#### To Portray Equal and Healthy Relationships, the Media Should

- Show equality and mutual respect between female and male characters
- Feature positive relationships between girls and women, showing them cooperating with each other
- Feature realistic and substantive courtships between characters that fall in love
- Feature male characters who value female characters for their talents, intelligence, and overall personalities, not just their appearances

## B.9—Select Your Advocacy or Policy Options

There are several options when you seek to raise awareness or influence policy on any issue. These options include all forms of active support for or against an issue, practice, or policy that impacts girls and Girl Scouting. They can range from simply raising public awareness about an issue to educating policymakers to adopting or modifying policy. For an overview of policy options, click [here](#) for Appendix vi.

The following are options for raising awareness and influencing policy on healthy media images. Your council can choose from and expand upon the options provided. Determine the approach that would work best in your state or community. Consider how your council can add its unique voice to efforts already underway and how your council can begin new discussions and policy initiatives.



Before you decide on your strategy and approach, coordinate with your state advocacy committee/legislative task force and other councils in your state. If this is a statewide effort, work together to determine your goals and objectives, and to assemble a plan that will incorporate the talents and resources of all the councils in your state.



## EDUCATING AND RAISING AWARENESS

Whatever your level of familiarity with advocacy, raising awareness is often the first step to alerting leaders in your community that Girl Scouts is serious about this issue impacting girls' lives. We want to ensure that elected officials, the media, and other interested parties know that the problem exists. Then we want to engage the community in addressing the issue. While raising awareness will not solve the problem, your council will be laying the foundation for positively influencing policy and practices.

### *Ideas on How to Educate and Raise Awareness of Media Images*

- Develop a media images awareness campaign in your community.
- Launch a media images awareness month or week.
- Hold local forums with community stakeholders on the media's effect on girls and boys.
- Testify at city council/town hall meetings.

### *Sample Questions to Stimulate the Discussion—In Your Council and in Your Community:*

- What types of positive and negative media images exist in our community? What messages do you see or hear on billboards, public broadcasts, local radio, or advertising? How do they stack up against the GSUSA healthy media image standards on page 54?
- Has the local chamber of commerce addressed media images? If so, how?
- Does our community or state have existing policies on media images? What are they?
- How do negative media images affect the girls in our state or community?
- What do girls in our council think about how girls are portrayed in the media?
- How can Girl Scouts minimize negative media images in the community? What might be the result?
- Are there rating systems that can inform consumers about negative images? How might such a system be implemented in our community?

### *Involving Policymakers*

One way to involve policymakers in raising awareness is to work with them to introduce a resolution. Resolutions are used by a governing body to express an opinion or identify a priority. Resolutions typically do not *change* the law but are used to articulate a philosophy, recognize the importance of a certain organization or issue, prompt action by another entity, or celebrate a milestone.

### CASE STUDY

In the fall of 2008, the Girl Scout Council of Vermont advocated for healthy media images when they raised awareness about two new lines of snowboards— one that displayed images of scantily clad *Playboy* models and another with graphics depicting self-mutilation. The council board felt it was crucial to take a stand on this issue, especially since girls in their community felt powerless to change the situation. The council board chair utilized the local television news stations, to ask members of the community to oppose the two lines of snowboards. The council encouraged parents to engage their children in conversations about how the images create an unwelcoming and unkind environment for girls. Other organizations such as the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence have since joined the effort to raise awareness about these unhealthy media images.

The following sample resolution could be adapted for governing bodies—whether state legislatures, school boards, chambers of commerce, or others—to increase awareness about the impact of media images. The underlined sections represent “merge” areas—places where you should adapt the language to your council’s specifications. It is also the perfect bridge to start impacting policy because it can be used to raise awareness or request a hearing about media images with policymakers.



SAMPLE  
RESOLUTION

## **GREATER SUNNYTOWN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE** **Resolution in Support of Healthy Media Images for Girls**

Whereas, today’s children are increasingly exposed to, and strongly influenced by media, whether on the Internet, in printed materials, on radio and television, at the movies, or in public settings;

Whereas, these media images do not always have a positive effect on our children, especially girls;

Whereas, many media images reinforce gender stereotypes, emphasize unrealistic female body images, or show women in passive roles;

Whereas, these images can cause significant harm to girls’ self-esteem, and can cause girls to develop unhealthy eating habits, become depressed, and stop attending school;

Whereas, it is in the business community’s interest to ensure that girls grow into healthy, educated, informed, and empowered consumers, employees, and community leaders;

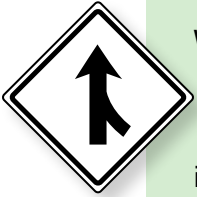
Whereas, the Greater Sunnyside Chamber of Commerce can ensure that girls in our community are exposed to healthy, balanced, and positive media images of girls and women;

Therefore be it resolved that the Greater Sunnyside Chamber of Commerce encourages its member companies to utilize, encourage, and promote healthy media images of girls and women in their company advertising, publications, and communications;

Be it further resolved that the Greater Sunnyside Chamber of Commerce urges its members to consult with Girl Scouts of the San Fernando Valley to prevent their use of negative media images and promote girl-healthy images;

Be it further resolved that the Greater Sunnyside Chamber of Commerce commends the Girl Scouts of the Sunshine Valley for its efforts to raise awareness about this issue and its mission to raise girls of courage, confidence and character who make the world a better place.

Approved and adopted by the Greater Sunnyside Chamber of Commerce on this day, the 14<sup>th</sup> of March, 2009



### PROGRAM AND POLICY OPTIONS

When working with the government, opportunities to address negative media images typically fall into two categories: 1) public programs and 2) policies. For example, in Washington, we work hard for expanded funding of priority programs as well as for girl policy solutions.

**Programs** typically fund **activities** to address a problem. Programs are usually community based, include an education component, or are service oriented. Oftentimes, Girl Scouts can be a partner and might receive government funding to implement these programs. Although some large programs target the public as a whole, more often they are targeted to smaller populations, such as children, low-income families, or teachers.

**Policies** try to encourage, modify, or prevent certain activities or behaviors. Frequently, policies change the laws to make certain activities illegal or to create incentives or deterrents. Policies are sometimes referred to as requirements.

To use a common (non-Girl Scout) example, your local health department might have a tobacco cessation **program** that includes education campaigns, public service announcements, and support groups. The American Cancer Society in your community might help run that program. On the **policy** front, however, your community might adopt a public smoking ban or increase tobacco taxes.

#### Media Image Program Ideas

- Secure funding to create or expand programs designed to educate businesses and community partners about the importance of this issue and how to promote positive images for girls
- Create or expand programs to educate parents, girls, and boys about how to be informed consumers of media
- Develop a voluntary ratings system in coordination with local media and businesses

#### Media Image Policy Ideas

- Require schools to develop curriculum that promotes healthy media images
- Modify laws to limit girls' exposure to negative media on billboards, bus signs, subway ads, and public television

Need more potential policy or program ideas? Click [here](#) for Appendix iii to check the various state legislatures' Web sites or the federal legislative Web site, [www.thomas.gov](http://www.thomas.gov). The National Council of State Legislatures also has an Issues Area page that might help—check the sections on education, health care, and human services. Click [here](#) for this website in Appendix iii.

Don't be afraid to model your policy proposals after draft legislation or base them on policies that are already on the books. You might find some real-world examples of legislation on media images, but you can also use legislation on profanity, violence, and smoking in the media as a guide.

### SAMPLES OF POLICY LANGUAGE

- (a) This Legislature requests that the California Children and Families Commission partner with the Girl Scouts of the USA to work with the entertainment industry in an effort to change cultural attitudes, perceptions, and portrayals of girls and women, with the goals of creating more girl-positive media images, heightening girls' self-esteem and self-worth, and eradicating sexism in the media.
- (b) It is the intent of the Legislature, in enacting this act, to generate pervasive, profound, and positive changes in our culture, vision, and attitudes toward women and girls.

*-Adapted from California Welfare and Institutions Code §9665*

- (a) Standard K: Recognize that media messages may be misleading.
- (b) Performance Standard 1–2: Recognize that media messages may be misleading; recognize the goals of media (i.e. sell, entertain, etc.); recognize media messages that may contain both healthy and unhealthy messages in the areas related to sexuality, . . . mental, social, and emotional well-being.
- (c) Performance Standard 3–4: Identify media messages that may be misleading; identify the goals of media (i.e. sell, entertain, etc.); identify media messages that may contain both healthy and unhealthy messages in the areas related to sexuality, . . . mental, social, and emotional well-being.

*-Excerpted from New Mexico's Public School Physical Education Curriculum (2005)*



### STRATEGIES FOR MOVING LEGISLATION

While it's ideal to get the spotlight on your particular issue, it's sometimes a good legislative strategy to incorporate your legislative agenda into a larger piece of legislation. For example, when governing bodies tackle telecommunications regulations, child violence prevention, or child health legislation, there may be opportunities to “piggy back” girl-positive, media image policies onto other bills that are moving through the legislative process.

See if there's any activity on the following types of bills, and see if you can add media images policy to the debate. Check with your state legislative monitor, legislative champions, and others to find out whether any of these items are “hot topics” or “must pass” pieces of legislation.

- State or local telecommunication regulation, especially anything related to obscenity or profanity
- State or local anti-smoking campaigns
- Violence prevention legislation
- School-based health policy or legislation
- Eating disorder policies
- Health insurance reform legislation
- Budget or appropriations bills

### A NOTE ON BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS

If you pursue programs that require government funding, you'll likely have to go through the **appropriations** process. In most states, even if a program is authorized, it will have to get funding from a separate bill.

Generally, decision-making bodies (state legislatures, counties, and city councils) draft yearly budgets that have room for funding priorities such as Girl Scout programs. Since state and local governments have different appropriations processes, you will need to do additional research to secure funding for your existing or new programs.

In Girl Scout advocacy, especially with regard to media image policy, the difference between policy and program can be a fine line. If you have questions on this difference or the appropriations process, consult the GPS at (202) 659-3780 or [advocacy@girlscouts.org](mailto:advocacy@girlscouts.org).



## B.10— Prepare to Cultivate and Educate

Create outreach materials that will help your council educate the public and advocate for your policy suggestions. In general, advocacy documents should be short—one or two pages long— and should build upon the key messages of your advocacy campaign.

Use the sample fact sheet on healthy media images below. Copy and paste the text onto your council letterhead, edit the sample text, insert specifics about your council, and distribute it widely. This document is adapted from a GSUSA fact sheet that the Public Policy and Advocacy Office uses when engaging the public, media, and public officials.



In this fact sheet, we've included a section for a girl testimonial. When people read about Girl Scouting, they expect to hear from *girls*, and this is a key area where your council can deliver that.

With all tools, like the following fact sheet, underlined and <bracketed> portions represent “merge” areas—places where you should adapt the language to your council's specifications. We've used mock language for now.

SAMPLE  
FACT  
SHEET

### **GIRL SCOUTS OF THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA** **Promoting Healthy Media Images**

Girl Scouts has a longstanding commitment to the well-being of girls and continues to be an authority on their healthy growth and development. As America confronts the need to present healthy media images to our youth, Girl Scouts' innovative research and programs are shedding light on the impact of the media on girls. As the world's premier organization dedicated solely to girls, Girl Scouting is working to address the importance of the relationship between girls and the media. We want to assist policymakers in improving how we promote the physical, emotional, and social health of young people, especially girls, because we believe that all sectors must be involved in developing solutions.

#### **What Are Healthy Media Images?**

Children are increasingly exposed to the media. By the time students graduate from high school, they will have spent 15,000 hours with the media but only 12,000 hours in school.<sup>1</sup> The media has a huge impact on children, and it is our hope to increase the number of healthy, positive media messages. Healthy media images feature girls and women who have healthy body image and high self-esteem, act as positive role models, and participate in respectful and healthy relationships.

continued...

Girls tell us that the media is the most important source of the pressure to be thin.<sup>iii</sup> Being unable to meet these unrealistic expectations can create unnecessary stress in girls' lives and greatly affect their self-esteem. This can lead to unhealthy eating habits, depression, and social disengagement.<sup>iv</sup> And this pressure is by no means trivial—in many cases, it can be debilitating. More than seven in ten girls and young women avoid certain activities when they feel bad about their looks, including going to the doctor and attending school.<sup>v</sup>

### What We Say

Girls need to see healthy, realistic images of girls and women in the media to foster high self-esteem and positive body image. We support educating girls and adults about media images so that families can seek out girl-positive images and recognize problematic messages. We are also working for a heightened awareness of media images in the greater community, and we encourage businesses, advertisers, and broadcasters to use girl-positive messages. We support policies that promote healthy media images and take action to educate girls, boys, and adults on the impact of unhealthy images.

### Our Key Principles on Healthy Media Images

1. Policy solutions should encourage girl-positive, healthy media images and educate girls, boys, and adults on the impact of unhealthy images.
2. Community-based organizations that serve youth, including the Girl Scouts, should be seen as vital partners in developing and delivering solutions in the area of healthy media images. Schools, families, and communities will be most effective working together to address this issue.

<Insert Issue statement from section B.8>

### Why Girl Scouts?

Our experience and research has brought much-needed attention to the issue of healthy media images among youth. Our original research, *The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living*, tells us that girls have a view of health that includes emotional and social well-being.<sup>vi</sup> Findings from *The New Normal?* suggest that girls struggle with self-esteem and body image issues from a young age. We want to ensure that the images girls receive from the media promote positive self-esteem.

Throughout our almost 100-year history, Girl Scouts has offered innovative programs across a wide range of healthy-living topics. Age-level awards (badges, patches, and charms), leadership training, and self-esteem programming all encourage girls to engage in a wide range of activities that help them develop confidence, character, and healthy relationships. The new Girl Scouts Leadership Journeys develop within girls a commitment to healthy and respectful relationships. The Girl Scout/Dove self-esteem program *!* helps girls feel better about themselves by acknowledging their strengths and positively handling peer pressure. Girl Scouts knows how to boost girls' awareness of the media and can help policymakers identify changes that need to be made.

continued...

SAMPLE  
FACT SHEET  
CONT.



SAMPLE  
FACT SHEET  
CONT.

<Insert descriptions of your council's programming of work on developing self-esteem and healthy media images for girls.>

<Insert a testimonial from a local girl describing the issue and how Girl Scouting has helped.>



### A Call to Action

Girl Scouts believes that every child deserves to live in an environment that fosters confidence and character. We can work with our community leaders to ensure that our children receive girl-positive media images. Raising awareness about media portrayals and establishing policies to promote healthy media images will positively impact the health of our children, their relationships, and their future.

### Endnotes

- i. Victor Strasburger, *Adolescent Medicine* (University of Michigan UP, 1993), 1:479-93.
- ii. Stacy L. Smith, Crystal Allene Cook, "Gender Stereotypes: An Analysis of Popular Films and TV" (The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, 2008), <http://www.thegeenadavisinstitute.org/research.php>.
- iii. "Shocking Facts," (Mind on the Media), <http://www.mindonthemedia.org/index.php?type=static&page=shocking>.
- iv. APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls "Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls," (American Psychological Association, 2007), <http://www.apa.org/pi/wpo/sexualization.html>.
- v. "Seventeen/Dove Body Image Survey," 2007.
- vi. Judy Schoenberg, Kimberlee Salmond and Paula Fleshman, *The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living*, A Report from the Girl Scout Research Institute (New York, NY: Girl Scouts of the USA, 2006).

## B.11—Develop Partnerships, Foster Relationships

**Reach Out:** Approach your target list of potential allies (see section B.4) to begin conversations on how you might work together to achieve your advocacy goals.

Think of individuals and organizations with which Girl Scouts shares common goals and interests. Approach this from two directions: involve partners interested in promoting health media images in addition to other youth- or girl-focused partners.

How do you reach out? Ask to attend a meeting of the targeted organization to discuss the issue. Talk to individuals at community events and share a copy of your fact sheet. And never underestimate the power of networking. Oftentimes, advocacy can be about whom you know. Use relationships to branch out. Keep apprised of events, do Internet research, and read the local newspaper.

### **Building a coalition and working effectively together:**

- Assemble a group of individuals and organizations with an interest in the issue who agree to work together toward a common goal.
- Convene a meeting and consider recruiting additional members who may also add value to the effort. Every organization brings different skills, experiences, and tools to the table.
- Provide clear ideas to coalition members on how they can contribute. Explain how their efforts will help Girl Scouts and all girls.
- Commit to coming together on a regular basis to advance your issue at the state and local level. Communicate regularly with your network.
- Define the issue, develop an action plan and set reachable goals.
- Draft a general mission statement to clearly explain your coalition's goals and objectives. This is especially helpful when your group starts doing public outreach.
- Work through a collaborative process that determines your strategy, and assign roles and responsibilities to each coalition member.
- Be realistic about what the coalition can do. Always be clear about the Girl Scouts' expectations of the coalition and the coalition's expectations of the Girl Scouts.

Girls participating in the new Girl Scout Senior *Girltopia* Leadership Journey will begin honing their networking skills. Encourage them to use the networking skills they'll learn on page 65 of the new Girl Scout *Girltopia* Leadership Journey to aid the council in cultivating relationships.



## B.12—Build Relationships with Elected Officials

### Get to know them before you need them

An important step of effective advocacy is building strong relationships with your elected officials. It is through these relationships that you will be able to influence policymakers on issues of importance to the Girl Scouts. Just as with any relationship, building a strong working alliance will take time. Below are some ideas on how to expedite the process.

### Keep officials informed about Girl Scout activities

- Add the names of elected officials to your distribution and mailing lists for newsletters, press releases, annual reports, and other council activities.

### Meet with your elected officials

- Meet regularly with your public officials. Keep them informed about Girl Scout signature outreach programs and how they are impacting girls in your community. When a newly elected official takes office, send a welcome letter on behalf of your council and arrange a follow-up meeting.
- When meeting with your newly elected public officials, inform them about the Girl Scouts' commitment to girls' healthy living. Provide a fact sheet on healthy media images and discuss ways in which they can support you in your efforts to promote this important issue.
- Bring along a copy of the Girl Scout Research Institute report, *The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living*.

### Invite your elected officials to participate in Girl Scout events

- Invite public officials to major Girl Scout council events; consider asking them to chair “Women of Distinction” and Gold Award recognition ceremonies.
- Invite public officials to any town hall meetings, public forums, or press events that focus on healthy media images. Ask a public official to be a spokesperson for the Girl Scouts on this issue.
- Invite public officials and their staff to a Girl Scout training program on media literacy.
- Have girls from the community meet with public officials and explain firsthand the impact of negative media on their health and safety. Consider having them ask the public official to introduce a resolution at the local or state level.
- Invite public officials to sit on your council advisory board or board of directors.
- Ask elected officials to include links on their Web sites to [girlscouts.org](http://girlscouts.org) or your local Web site.
- Offer public recognition opportunities to those officials who champion your policy agenda, including mentioning them in council newsletters and Web sites, hosting an event, or issuing a joint press release.

### **Attend community events hosted by your elected officials**

- Attend town hall meetings, press conferences, and other public events held by your elected officials.

We have created a chart with ideas on how to build relationships with public officials. Click [here](#) to see Appendix vii.

### **CASE STUDY: Vermont Legislative Internship**

The Girl Scout Council of Vermont has a program for girls that incorporates training and experiential learning. These girls work side by side with women in leadership roles in Vermont government. The legislative internship is designed to immerse teens in the democratic process, promote leadership and team-building skills, and provide a forum to discuss ideas and issues that are important to Vermonters. The experience provides an opportunity for the girls to experience the parliamentary process in action, observe party caucuses, sit in on legislative committee meetings and listen to testimony, and experience how this dynamic process shapes the direction of Vermont for the coming years. More importantly the state legislators get to know Girl Scouts through the girls who participate in this program. Legislators gain an appreciation for the programs and leadership opportunities Girl Scouts offers to the girls in their communities.



## B.13— Get the Message Out

Invite public officials and policymakers to witness Girl Scout activities in action, especially when they relate to healthy media images. Demonstrate the importance of girl-focused and girl-led activities. Engage policymakers in discussions with girls about the importance of promoting positive media images. Some tips for hosting policymakers are located [here](#) in Appendix x.



In the *Your Voice, Your World* new Girl Scout Leadership Journey, girls are asked to zero in on VIPs who could act on their issues. As girls participate with the council in this effort to promote girl-positive media images, encourage them to consider inviting policymakers to take part in their healthy media images efforts. While the girls have the attention of leaders, they can speak out on their own behalf. Step 5 (page 72) of the Ambassador's Journey book offers detailed activities to help prepare the "perfect pitch" to deliver to the VIPs. Invite girls to help the council publicize its advocacy efforts by using the skills they learn in the Journeys.

Below is a **sample invitation letter** to send to public officials. Underlined portions indicate where you should customize the content for your council.

### SAMPLE INVITATION LETTER

September 30, 2008

The Honorable Carolyn Jones  
900 State House Office Building

Dear Representative Jones,

During the week of November 10, 500 Girl Scouts of the Rocky Mountains volunteers, staff, and girl members will convene for our annual Go Girls! event. We will be talking with girls about being an educated media consumer, as well as providing local businesses and supporters with strategies for promoting healthy media images of and for girls. It would be our honor to have you, a respected leader on girls' issues and a supporter of Girl Scouts of the Rocky Mountains, join us to present brief remarks on your commitment to promoting the health and well-being of girls. The event will take place on November 8 at 5:00 p.m. at the Laurel County Public Library.

We sincerely hope your schedule will allow you to join us for these events that will celebrate Girl Scouts' commitment to promoting healthy media images for girls. For information on other Girl Scout events taking place, please see the attached flyer or visit our Web site at [www.rockymountaingirlscouts.org](http://www.rockymountaingirlscouts.org). We would be delighted to discuss this invitation further, and we will be following up with your office in the near future. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 555-6780 or [jodip@rockymountaingirlscouts.org](mailto:jodip@rockymountaingirlscouts.org).

Sincerely,  
Jodi Peterson  
CEO, Girl Scouts of the Rocky Mountains



## B.14— Inform the Public

**Public Forums:** Host public forums, town-hall meetings, or Girl Scout Days at the State Legislature to discuss how the community can support girl-positive media images. Invite coalition partners to co-host or participate to widen the reach of the message. Distribute the fact sheet on healthy media images and highlight key messages. Provide copies of the Girl Scout Research Institute report *The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living* to supplement your discussion on healthy media images.

Public forums can serve as a great setting for girls to complete the Take Action Project for the new *aMAZE* Girl Scout Leadership Journey on relationships. See page 117 of the *aMAZE* book for ideas about how girls can raise awareness of their issue with adults and peers. Suggest that girls share the public forum time to make a presentation to the community. For more information about helping girls plan their Take Action Project, see page 73 of the *aMAZE* Adult Guide.



Hold an all-girl leadership summit or girl congress on media images. Girls can share ways they could advocate to create change in their communities. Summits or girl congresses could be held in conjunction with a council annual meeting, a legislative day, or as an annual gathering.

**Get Press:** Inform the media by sharing stories with them about the Girl Scouts' historic commitment to healthy living and your Live Healthy, Lead Healthy Action Plan. Within that context, emphasize the importance of championing healthy media images for girls and providing alternatives to problematic ones. Share a copy of *The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living* with members of the press.

Have a girl talk on camera about her experiences with the media, her reactions to it, and her proposed policy solutions. Senior Girl Scouts on their leadership journey might use the tips on page 96 of the *Girltopia* Girl Scout Leadership Journey to inform the media about the council's advocacy efforts.



When you hold events, write and distribute press releases, such as the one here.

SAMPLE  
PRESS  
RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE  
IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jackie Brown  
(303) 555—4321

[jbrown@rockymountaingirlscouts.org](mailto:jbrown@rockymountaingirlscouts.org)



## STATE REPRESENTATIVE CAROLYN JONES SPEAKS AT MEDIA IMAGES AWARENESS EVENT

Girl Scouts reflect on unhealthy media images

Paradox, CA—State Representative Carol Jones will discuss with local Girl Scouts the impact of unhealthy media images this November 8<sup>th</sup>, at 5:00 p.m. in the Laurel County Public Library.

This event is hosted by the Girl Scouts of the Rocky Mountains to raise awareness about the media's effect on girls and to champion HR 815, the Healthy Media Standards Act, which sets girl-positive standards for the portrayal of girls and women in public television programming. An estimated 500 volunteers, staff, and girls will attend. How girls and women are portrayed in the media, and how that affects girls' self-esteem is one of the key concerns behind the Girl Scouts of the Rocky Mountains' Healthy Living advocacy efforts. Carolyn Jones, a representative to the California state legislature, is a passionate supporter of healthy media images.

Jodi Peterson, CEO of Girl Scouts of the Rocky Mountains, said, "Representative Jones understands the price our girls pay for the negative media images of girls and women. We all need to be aware of the positive and negative consequences the media has on our society, especially youth."

The event begins at 5:00 p.m. and is open to the press. It will include remarks by Representative Jones, followed by a discussion with Girl Scouts regarding policy solutions to media images.

Space is limited, so please RSVP to Jackie Brown at (303) 555-4321.

# # #

**Write-in:** Submit letters to the editor and op-eds to newspapers on behalf of girls (or, better yet, ask girls to write them!) to educate the public about the issues and your policy advocacy work. Determine strategic opportunities to submit an op-ed, such as when a bill is being introduced in the legislature or when a local board is deciding on ratifying a new media-image policy.

In the new Ambassador Girl Scouts Leadership Journey *Your Voice, Your World*, girls are shown various ways to raise awareness about issues. If your council is considering writing to a local newspaper, consider that girls may want to write the letter. “Write it Right” on page 76 of *Your Voice, Your World* explains that words can give powerful voice to an issue and provides examples of how girls can raise their voices through writing letters.



What’s the difference between a letter to the editor and an op-ed? Need some suggestions about formatting, length, and content? Check out the samples on the following pages or click [here](#) to head to Appendix xii for tips and guidelines.

**The Web:** Incorporate your Live Healthy, Lead Healthy advocacy plan and related public materials into your council Web site. Consider whether regular updates can be posted about the issue and if the Web site can be used to activate or organize your coalition, activists, or champions. You may want to add an advocacy tab on your Web site if you do not already have one. Ask partner organizations to link to your Web site.

Media images have a huge influence on girls. The pressure to be thin in order to be beautiful is lowering the age at which many girls begin dieting and increasing the number of girls suffering from eating disorders.<sup>12</sup> Studies show that low self-esteem contributes to risky behavior, such as girls’ decreased success in school and extracurricular activities, premature sexual activity, and unhealthy or unsafe relationships with boys.<sup>13</sup> Here in Robin’s Nest, girls say that they are affected by what they watch on television, and they often make decisions based on what their favorite characters do.

The Girl Scouts of Robin’s Nest would like to see the Robin’s Nest City Council encourage girl-positive media images with its new telecommunications policy. Girls deserve healthy media images that inspire confidence and provide positive role models. Media images could help teach boys to respect girls’ and women’s bodies and to value women for more than their looks. Healthy media images could help girls have a positive body image, high aspirations, and healthy relationships. Our children deserve to learn, thrive, and lead in an environment full of positive images of girls.

We are encouraged by more girl-focused programming on television; we hope that the images depicted are girl-positive. Girl Scouts of Robin’s Nest encourages the City Council and our whole community to support girl-positive media standards for local programming. Girl Scouts wants to ensure that Robin’s Nest’s girls and boys can grow and develop in a healthy and encouraging community.

SAMPLE  
LETTER TO THE  
EDITOR



SAMPLE  
OP-ED



## GIRLS AND THE MEDIA

From television and the Internet to music and magazines, the media strongly impacts girls' physical, emotional, and social health. For girls, these three facets of health are interrelated. Self-esteem and body image are a critical part of girls' health and can often be manifested socially and physically. Right now, girls are struggling with media images, which, as a constant presence in their lives, can hurt their self-esteem and limit their choices of substantive role models. At Girl Scouts of Robin's Nest, we are addressing the effects of media images on girls. Our programs help to educate girls on the positive and negative aspects of their interactions with the media, but we cannot solve the problem alone. The entire Robin's Nest community can help promote healthy media images for all of our children.

Even though we have seen the rise of "girl power" and a more girl-centric media, some media images continue to send girls the wrong message. Even media images directed at children reinforce stereotypes that girls and women must achieve physical perfection to be valued. Too often, girls and women are depicted as sexualized objects valued only for their appearance and sex appeal, according to a recent study by the Geena Davis Institute. The same study notes that most female media characters are still passive and submissive to men and have limited aspirations, leaving girls without active, ambitious female role models.<sup>14</sup>

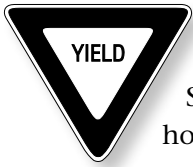
The Girl Scouts of Robin's Nest Council can attest to the fact that girls use media images of females to measure their own character and physical appearance. They are often left feeling inadequate. These feelings can lead to serious consequences for girls' physical, emotional, and social health. For example, the pressure to be thin in order to be beautiful is lowering the age at which girls begin dieting to as low as eight. It is increasing the number of girls suffering from eating disorders.<sup>15</sup> Low self-esteem contributes to decreased success in school and extracurricular activities, premature sexual activity, and unhealthy or unsafe relationships with boys.<sup>16</sup> However, healthy media images help girls have a positive body image, high aspirations, and healthy relationships. Our children should be able to learn, thrive, and lead in an environment full of positive images of girls and women.

We at the Girl Scouts of Robin's Nest provide a safe place for girls to grow into women of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place. <Insert example of successful programs your council uses to build self-esteem and address the negative messages girls receive from the media.> However, it will take the support and effort of our entire community to ensure that our kids are receiving healthy media images.

We are asking the community to join us in promoting policies and practices among our local government and businesses that provide healthy media images of girls and women. All children should be surrounded by images that inspire confidence and provide substantive role models. It is time we make a strong commitment towards creating a community truly invested in girls' success and health. Together we can ensure that Robin's Nest creates an environment that fosters its children's health and well-being.

## B.15—Meet with Policymakers

Does your state advocacy committee or legislative task force have a Girl Scout Day at the State Capitol?



If not, consider launching this type of event to highlight healthy media images. Include girls when you meet with your public officials and discuss those Girl Scout programs that address healthy media images. Click [here](#) for strategies for hosting an Advocacy Day in Appendix viii.



Alternately, reach out to members of the city council or state legislature and **request a meeting**. Discuss the issues, including your policy solutions, and gauge their support. They may be willing to champion the policy. Use the template letter below as a model and click [here](#) for Appendix xi to find strategies for carrying out successful meetings.

This meeting should be the culmination of a significant amount of preparation work. Take the time to formulate a strategy. Decide who will speak (and in what order) and make sure everyone involved is “on message,” making a cohesive statement that is hard-hitting, informative, and polite. Make sure you have a specific request, such as a resolution for the policymaker to cosponsor, an event for him or her to speak at, a bill to support or oppose, or an amendment to sponsor. This is a great opportunity to get girls involved—take them along and have them talk to the policymaker about their perception of media images. Make sure to stay in touch!

**SAMPLE  
MEETING  
REQUEST**

March 19, 2008

Councilwoman Megan Edwards  
515 Madeira City Council Office Building

Dear Councilwoman Edwards:

On behalf of Girl Scouts of the Grand Canyon, I would like to meet with you regarding the Healthy Media Images Resolution coming before the city council this spring. This resolution addresses a very serious issue girls are facing today, the effect of media images on their health and well-being. It encourages a shared responsibility for local businesses to produce and promote healthy media images of girls and women. Girl Scouts have developed healthy media images standards as an example for this resolution.

*continued...*



SAMPLE  
MEETING  
REQUEST  
CONT.



Girls deserve healthy media images that inspire confidence and provide active, ambitious role models. Images in the media should teach boys to respect girls' and women's bodies and to value women for more than their looks. Our children deserve to learn, thrive, and lead in an environment full of positive images.

After working closely with girls from Madeira and surrounding communities, I can attest to the fact that girls use media images of females to measure their own character and physical appearance. Their feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem can lead to serious health consequences. These feelings contribute to decreased success in school, premature sexual activity, and an increasing number of girls suffering from eating disorders or unhealthy eating habits. Girl Scout programs help to educate girls on the positive and negative aspects of the media, but we cannot solve the problem alone.

I would be delighted to meet with you regarding this important resolution affecting girls in Ma-  
deira. I appreciate your commitment and support for Girl Scouts, and if there is anything we can do as you pursue your agenda, please do not hesitate to contact me at 555-0142 or vlakewood@gsgc.org.

Sincerely,  
Valerie Lakewood  
CEO, Girl Scouts of the Grand Canyon

## B.16—Influence the Legislative Process

**Monitor Legislation:** Identify current legislation that addresses healthy media images at the state and local level. Every state legislature has a Web site that tracks legislation moving through the legislature. For a list of these sites, click [here](#) for Appendix iii.



- If your state advocacy committee has hired a legislative monitor, ask that she or he keep the committee apprised of legislation moving through the state house that may impact healthy media images.
- Ask the legislative monitor to look for opportunities for the Girl Scouts to provide testimony on healthy media images at committee hearings or at state commissions or task forces.
- Reach out and join forces with other advocates of the policies that could advance your goals.

**Organize to Advocate:** Use your coalition partners as well as Girl Scout volunteers, staff, girls, and parents to take a position on issues with policymakers.



- Start a **letter-writing or call-in campaign**. Provide individuals with a sample letter or talking points so they can easily contact their policymakers to weigh in on an issue.
- Start a **petition** drive if you want to garner more support from your community. Ask your partners and businesses, families, organizations, and community members to join you in promoting healthy media images. Make sure those signing the petition include their addresses or the petition will be invalid.

Below is a sample letter of support and a sample petition. Both can be modified to meet your needs. For additional suggestions, click [here](#) to see Appendix ix.

March 19, 2009

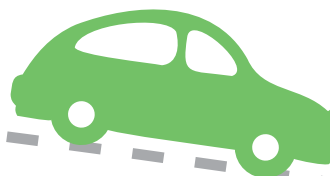
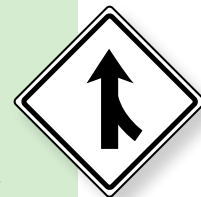
Councilwoman Clare Smith  
412 Mountain Oaks City Office Building

Dear Councilwoman Smith:

On behalf of Girl Scouts of Mt. Rushmore Troop 1213, I urge you to support the Healthy Media Images Resolution coming before the City Council this spring. It addresses a very serious issue girls are facing today, the effect of media images on their health and well-being. From television and the Internet to music and magazines, the media strongly impacts girls and their physical, emotional, and social health. For girls, these three facets of health are largely interrelated. Self-esteem and body image are a critical part of girls' health and can often be manifested socially and physically. Media images, a constant presence in girls' lives, have the power to damage self-esteem and limit choices of substantive role models.

After closely watching my daughter and her friends in our troop, I can attest to the fact that girls use media images of females to measure their own character and physical appearance. Feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem brought on by these unrealistic images can lead to serious health consequences. These feelings may contribute to decreased success in school, premature sexual activity, and an increasing number of girls suffering from eating disorders. Girl Scout programming helps to educate girls on the positive and negative aspects of the media, but we cannot solve the problem alone.

continued...



SAMPLE  
LETTER OF  
SUPPORT  
CONT.



Troop 1213 enthusiastically urges you to support the Healthy Media Images Resolution. This resolution establishes a shared responsibility for local businesses to produce and promote healthy media images of girls and women as outlined by the Girl Scout Healthy Media Images Standards. By signing onto this resolution, the Mountain Oaks local government and businesses are showing their commitment to creating a community truly invested in girls' success and health. All children deserve to see images that inspire confidence and promote limitless goals. With your and local businesses' help, we can ensure Mountain Oaks protects and fosters its children's health and well-being.

I have included a copy of the Healthy Media Images Resolution and a draft of standards for healthy media images our community has discussed. If you have any questions regarding either, please contact Susan McMahon, Girl Scouts of Mt. Rushmore Chief Executive Officer, at [smcmahon@mtrgirlscouts.org](mailto:smcmahon@mtrgirlscouts.org) or 514-347-9881. Thank you for your longstanding support for the Girl Scouts and your dedication to promoting girls' health.

Sincerely,  
Catherine Miller  
Brownie Troop Leader, Troop 1213

SAMPLE  
PETITION



Girls are bombarded with media images every day. From television and the Internet to music and magazines, these images strongly impact girls and their physical, emotional, and social health. Unfortunately, many media images endorse negative messages that damage girls' self-esteem and limit their choices of substantive role models.

Research shows girls use media images to measure their own character and physical appearance. Their feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem lead to serious consequences for girls' health, such as unhealthy eating, dieting at as young an age as eight or nine years old, decreased participation in school, and unhealthy and unsafe relationships with boys and men.

Unhealthy media images repeatedly imply that girls' physical appearances define their worth and that girls should limit themselves and their goals to stereotypical ideals. Girls and women are often depicted as sexualized objects valued only for physical perfection, according to a recent study by the Geena Davis Institute. The same report finds that most female characters and models are still restricted to passive, submissive, and secondary roles compared to male peers. These unrealistic and limiting expectations damage and distort both girls' and boys' perceptions of female beauty and value.

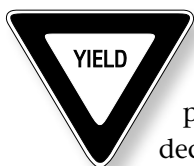
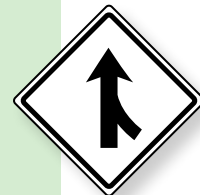
continued...

Our children deserve better. Girls deserve healthy media images that inspire confidence and provide active, ambitious role models. Images should teach boys to respect girls' and women's bodies and to value women for more than their looks. Girls should not have to be consumed by anxiety over body image, lack of aspirations, and fear of unhealthy relationships. Our children deserve to learn, thrive, and lead in an environment full of positive images of girls.

We strongly encourage the acceptance of the [Healthy Media Images Resolution](#). Girl Scout programs help prevent the damaging problems unhealthy media images create, but we cannot do it alone. By supporting this resolution, you will be promoting healthy media images that ensure that our community's girls will grow to be women of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place.

Signed,

SAMPLE  
PETITION  
CONT.



**Speak-up:** Consider submitting written or oral testimony. Work with a member of your Girl Scout state advocacy committee and perhaps a girl to draft and present testimony at a hearing in the state legislature or a meeting of a local decision-making body.



Follow these step-by-step instructions to draft testimony.

### STEPS TO DRAFTING QUALITY TESTIMONY

1. Start with an introduction thanking the decision-making body for allowing you to testify. Provide a brief, general overview of the Girl Scouts' mission, research, and programming, focusing on its commitment to addressing healthy media images. Include personal experiences – state how your council and Girl Scouts have addressed healthy media images. Find unique girl voices and suggest policy solutions.
2. Explain reasons why policymakers should incorporate these policy solutions when drafting policies on healthy media images. Discuss why these priorities are relevant and important. You can reuse language from materials you have already created, such as key messages and fact sheets.
3. Discuss the research. You can use research from the Girl Scout Research Institute, contact the GSUSA Public Policy and Advocacy Office for any research we have gathered on this topic, or gather or conduct your own research. Try to gather information about your state or local community to show the committee or board how media images are affecting local children. It is also important to cite all resources.

continued...



4. Highlight your expertise and experience with the effect of media images on girls. Explain that Girl Scouts has an important and unique perspective on the policy discussion on healthy media images.
5. In the conclusion, restate your council's overall suggestions on how to address healthy media images in policy. Emphasize why it is important that your council be included in the policy-making process and thank the committee or board for the opportunity to testify.

### Things to Remember!

- Contact the GSUSA Public Policy and Advocacy Office at (202) 659-3780 or [advocacy@girlscouts.org](mailto:advocacy@girlscouts.org) and let us know about this opportunity. We can provide you with examples of testimony we have written for the U.S. Congress.
- You do not have to start completely from scratch! Build your testimony from the advocacy materials you have already created, such as your key messages and talking points, research, program examples, and fact sheets.
- Include the girl voice and promote Girl Scouts as a leader for girls in addressing and preventing unhealthy media images throughout the testimony.
- Check with the decision-making body to find out when you have to submit the testimony.
- Find out how long your oral and written testimony is expected to be and stick to the guidelines.
- Inquire as to whether a Girl Scout could join you and present part of the testimony, giving girls a voice in the process.
- Prepare a communications strategy to publicize your testimony. This strategy can include reaching out to the media, preparing a press release, alerting your partners and other policymakers, updating your Web site, and inviting girls and volunteers to watch your testimony in person.
- Follow up on any connections you make with the policymakers and their staff. This will be an excellent opportunity to build stronger relationships with public officials.

## B.17—Celebrate, Debrief, and Thank

**Great job!** Now it's time to assess your accomplishments, celebrate your success, learn from your mistakes, and thank the people who helped make your initiative possible. Then you can move on to other Policy Avenues or take further steps in addressing media images.

Policy advocacy is not a quick fix. It's often a slow process, but it can be an effective and long-term solution to an issue impacting girls in your community. It's not easy to be successful in influencing a legislating body. If you weren't successful on the first try, don't be discouraged. Continue to look for opportunities to deliver your message and gather support. Who knows? With a few more meetings, a new influential partner, or a majority-changing election, your initiative could see new light.

### Endnotes

- 1 Victor Strasburger, *Adolescent Medicine* (University of Michigan UP, 1993), 1:479-93.
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- 3 Lori O'Keefe, "Pediatrics Should 'Tune In' to Patients' Media Habits," *AAP News* (January 2001), <http://www.aap.org/advocacy/OKeefemediahabits.htm> (September 14, 2008).
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Stacy L. Smith and Crystal Allene Cook, "Gender Stereotypes: An Analysis of Popular Films and TV" (The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, 2008), <http://www.thegeenadavisinstitute.org/research.php> (August 30, 2008).
- 6 Judy Schoenberg, Kimberlee Salmond, and Paula Fleshman, *The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living*, A Report from the Girl Scout Research Institute (New York, NY: Girl Scouts of the USA, 2006).
- 7 Smith and Cook, "Gender Stereotypes: An Analysis of Popular Films and TV."
- 8 Strasburger, *Adolescent Medicine*.
- 9 "Shocking Facts" (Mind on the Media), <http://www.mindonthemedia.org/index.php?type=static&page=shocking> (August 15, 2008).
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Smith and Cook, "Gender Stereotypes: An Analysis of Popular Films and TV"
- 12 "Statistics: Eating Disorders and their Precursors" (National Eating Disorders Association, 2006), <http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org> (August 5, 2008).
- 13 Kristen Harrison and Veronica Hefner, "Media Exposure, Current and Future Body Ideals, and Disordered Eating Among Preadolescent Girls: A Longitudinal Panel Study," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 35 (2006), 153-63.
- 14 Smith and Cook, "Gender Stereotypes: An Analysis of Popular Films and TV."
- 15 "Shocking Facts."
- 16 Harrison and Hefner, "Media Exposure, Current and Future Body Ideals, and Disordered Eating Among Preadolescent Girls: A Longitudinal Panel Study."



# EATING DISORDERS

**Congratulations!** You have chosen to advocate for raising awareness of and addressing eating disorders. Choosing this avenue shows that you are committed to ensuring girls can live and grow in a community that inspires confidence, promotes limitless goals, and is truly invested in girls' healthy living. To help inspire girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place, we can act to engage the community in addressing eating disorders and fostering girls' healthy eating habits.

It is important to note here that every step in this process involves advocacy. We call this a roadmap, which implies that there is a specific endpoint to reach. Every success in this toolkit is an advocacy success. Raising awareness of eating disorders and unhealthy eating habits in your community is advocacy. Introducing Girl Scouts to policymakers and talking about healthy living for girls is advocacy. **The goal here is making the Girl Scouts known as the expert on and voice for girls.** You don't have to complete every task in the toolkit to make a difference for girls.



## CREATING YOUR ACTION PLAN

This Policy Avenue provides a step-by-step process, full of examples and models, to help your council or state advocacy committee create and implement an action plan. Before you start, think about your advocacy goals. Then read through this avenue to understand the options before creating your action plan.

**The core elements of the action plan are:**

**Step 1:** Evaluate. Research the problem, determine your assets, and identify any potential opposition to fully understand your council's strengths and weaknesses.

**Step 2:** Cultivate. Cultivate the partnerships, champions, and support needed to meet your council's advocacy goals.

**Step 3:** Educate and Advocate. Use strategies and tactics that will help your council get your message out and advocate effectively to address eating disorders and promote healthy eating for girls.



The following pages contain your step-by-step directions for building an action plan. Each of the components below should be considered for inclusion in your action plan, but don't worry if your council doesn't have the capacity, opportunity, or need to take advantage of each strategy and tactic. The best action plan is one that makes sense to you, capitalizes on your council's strengths, and can be implemented well. We encourage you to create the action plan that is best suited for your council and that will effectively address your community's needs. To find ideas on what a year-long plan could look like, click [here](#) for Appendix xiv.

**When developing an action plan, remember to include:**

- the steps needed to reach your goals;
- lists of who will be in charge of each task;
- a timeline of when the work will be completed; and
- an allocation of resources—time and person power.

Need more guidance? GSUSA's Public Policy & Advocacy Office is your Guide to Policy Solutions (GPS). Call us at (202) 659-3780 or e-mail [advocacy@girlscouts.org](mailto:advocacy@girlscouts.org).



## C.1—Understand the Issue

Lately, policymakers have devoted much attention to children’s unhealthy eating habits. As childhood obesity rates skyrocket, policymakers are taking an interest in strategies to promote healthy eating. Currently, obesity is dominating the conversation while an issue primarily affecting girls—eating disorders—has been largely ignored. About 90 percent of people with anorexia and bulimia are female.<sup>1</sup>

The lack of discussion is in part because eating disorders have a shameful stigma. Many girls, both those who have suffered from eating disorders and those who haven’t, do not like talking about this subject. Families, girls, and educators often prefer to keep this conversation personal. While eating disorders can be a very personal subject for individuals, it is a serious public health problem that is disproportionately and seriously affecting girls.

Eating disorders have quietly tormented girls throughout the country. More than ten percent of adolescent girls binge eat and/or purge at least once a week.<sup>2</sup> Many more feel the pressure to be thinner. More than half of teenaged girls either are or think they should be on diets.<sup>3</sup> Fifty-one percent of 9- and 10-year-old girls feel better about themselves when dieting.<sup>4</sup> And 81 percent of ten-year-olds are afraid of being fat.<sup>5</sup>

Girls can make great contributions to a discussion about eating disorders and unhealthy eating habits. Consider how to involve girls in advocacy by soliciting their views on the issue. Ask them to share their stories on how eating disorders are affecting girls in your community.

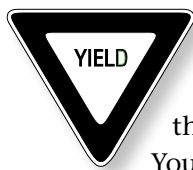


Use your girl members’ insights to help you further understand the issue, to assess your community’s needs, and to educate others on the topic. Ask girls how adults in Girl Scouts respond when they suspect a girl isn’t eating healthfully? What do girls hear from Girl Scouts about healthy eating? (Take a look at Girl Scout programs in C.7) Internal policy is a great way to start working on external policy.

## C.2—Understand the Players: Internal

Those councils who choose to advocate at the state level will want to coordinate their efforts with other councils from their state. If your state currently has a **state advocacy committee/legislative task force**, the councils will want to work together on each step. Especially at the state level, presenting a united front of policymakers can make a huge difference. Look for this yield sign for suggestions on how to engage Girl Scout partners across the state.





**Network:** Develop a council network of Girl Scout staff, volunteers, and girls interested in advocating for eating disorder policies. Work collaboratively with your state advocacy committee/legislative task force. Organize the contacts in such a way that you can activate them quickly at key moments to support your advocacy plan. You may want to create e-mail list-serves or phone trees.

Interested in setting up a Girl Scout state advocacy committee? Call the GPS at (202) 659-3780 or e-mail [advocacy@girlscouts.org](mailto:advocacy@girlscouts.org) There's also information on this process [here](#) in Appendix v.



An important resource within Girl Scouts might be volunteer leaders. Many volunteers are mothers who lead their own daughters. Mothers can be great advocates for their daughters. Your council may be able to tap into these women's natural skills and help them move to a greater role as advocates for *all* girls. In every council and community, there are volunteers who may have their own disordered eating issues and who might be hesitant to engage with this avenue. Therefore, when choosing the issue of eating disorders as your focus, it will be important to your success to help volunteers see themselves as viable partners and role models for girls. It may help these adults to hear perfection is *not* a requirement of advocacy! As adults, our demonstration of a willingness to tackle our own challenges while we work to change the world is a powerful model for girls! These volunteers can be effective advocates for girls because of their experiences and understanding of this issue.

### C.3—Understand the Players: External

An important early step in creating an action plan is to understand who supports your issue and who opposes it. This will help you not only to find champions to support your efforts, but also to build a coalition to sustain them.

**NOT SURE WHO TO CALL?** There are many Web-based tools to help you find your elected officials. For a state-by-state guide to state legislatures, click [here](#) for Appendix iii.

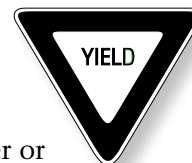
**Research:** Identify elected officials who have influence over policy and who might be interested in supporting or championing eating disorder advocacy efforts.

- Look for policymakers who are active in youth, nutrition, education, or mental health policy.
- Consider policymakers who have a history of championing issues that are important to youth and girls.
- Pay particular attention to policymakers who serve on legislative committees with direct control over creating these policies and/or funding them.
- Create a target list of policymakers and prioritize it according to their influence and your ability to reach them.



**Assess Connections:** Think about people in your council and throughout your state who might have ties to policymakers.

- Does anyone on your council’s board, staff, or volunteer roster have connections to elected officials? Are they willing to use those connections for Girl Scout advocacy efforts?
- Work with your Girl Scout state advocacy committee/legislative task force to identify connections.
- Place elected officials connected to the Girl Scouts on your target list.
- If your council or state has an Advocacy Director, make sure to coordinate with her or him as you move forward.



### C.4—Look for Partnerships

Partners in any advocacy effort might vary, depending on the type of organization or the role that they would play in your strategy. When you choose your target list of potential partners, first consider their potential role: Do you need someone with policy expertise? An organization with a vast grassroots network? Someone to sponsor an event? Make sure that you’re matching your needs to the capabilities of your potential partner. For example, a nationally recognized research organization is unlikely to join your local action coalition, but they might sponsor an event or provide a quote for the press release that adds validity to your policy agenda.

Think about what motivates your potential partners. Are they looking for a platform to share their research? Are they a small organization that might gain credibility by working with a well-known, respected organization like the Girl Scouts? Are they businesses, retailers, or vendors who would benefit from reaching a new audience or bolstering their corporate image? If you can make the case that this is an important issue for partners, they’ll be more willing to work with you.

#### **Some other things to remember about partners:**

- Partners will vary from state to state, community to community, and issue to issue.
- Some partners might start small and grow into a larger role.
- Some partners might support part of your agenda, but not all of it.

The following are examples of potential partners for eating disorders policy and advocacy, with suggested roles. Remember, this is not an exhaustive list or a guarantee of success with a given partner. These suggestions might give you ideas about potential partners in your community.

## EATING DISORDERS—POTENTIAL PARTNERS

**NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS** *These partners might play a role in policy review, strategic support, or as validation for your agenda. They usually have a strong organizational focus on the issue or are considered experts on the issue. These are also great places to get research data to support your effort.*

Girl Scouts of the USA	<a href="http://www.girlscouts.org">www.girlscouts.org</a>
The Girl Scout Research Institute	<a href="http://www.girlscouts.org">www.girlscouts.org</a>
National Eating Disorders Association	<a href="http://www.neda.org">www.neda.org</a>
Eating Disorders Coalition	<a href="http://www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org">www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org</a>
Alliance for Eating Disorder Awareness	<a href="http://www.eatingdisorderinfo.org">www.eatingdisorderinfo.org</a>
American Association of Health Education	<a href="http://www.aahperd.org">www.aahperd.org</a>
American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance	<a href="http://www.aahperd.org">www.aahperd.org</a>
American Psychological Association	<a href="http://www.apa.org">www.apa.org</a>
American Academy of Pediatrics	<a href="http://www.aap.org">www.aap.org</a>
Kids Health	<a href="http://www.kidshealth.org">www.kidshealth.org</a>

**EVENT SPONSORS** *These partners will benefit from the goodwill generated by underwriting an event, providing materials, or participating in other activities. You can help business partners connect with new audiences and improve their brand by working on issues that families support, such as preventing and treating eating disorders:*

Local grocery stores  
Local health clubs  
Hospitals and health clinics  
Chain or independent restaurants  
Farmers' markets  
Organic grocers  
Yoga/dance studios  
Athletic retailers  
Community health centers  
Local pediatricians/family practitioners

**COALITION PARTNERS.** *These organizations are leaders in the community, have a strong focus on children and families, and in particular, eating disorder awareness and prevention:*

Local youth-serving organizations	Physician's/pediatric associations
Parent teacher Associations or Organizations	Faith-based organizations
Nurses and school nurse associations	Childhood obesity groups
Hospitals	Recreation centers
Local mental health associations	
Local counseling and social work associations	



In the new Girl Scout Leadership Journeys, girls are encouraged to understand the importance of partners and to create a plan to build their network. As your council seeks out partnerships, involve the girls by finding out who would be on their lists. Direct the girls to the “Community Connections” and “Building a List of Allies” sections (pages 38 and 51) in *Your Voice, Your World* for Ambassadors. They’ll soon see that they already have a full list of potential partners in their family, friends, classmates, teachers, local businesses, media, and religious leaders.



### C.5—Prepare Key Messages

Develop key messages that your council can use throughout your eating disorders awareness campaign. These messages will advance your advocacy efforts on paper and in talking points.

**To begin preparing your message:**

- Consider what will influence your target audience of policymakers, partners, and the media.
- Remember that different messages resonate with different audiences. Tailor your remarks to the particular philosophical or ideological views of your audience.
- Consider how to gain the support of the media and the community. Avoid using charged or divisive language.
- Prepare an “elevator” speech that summarizes key points in less than 60 seconds. You won’t always have time to do a formal presentation.
- Finally, make sure that you have the research and facts to support your messages.

#### EXAMPLES OF KEY MESSAGES ON EATING DISORDERS

- In the United States, as many as ten million females are struggling with an eating disorder.<sup>6</sup> Though the more extreme eating disorders, like anorexia and bulimia, are well known, many girls participate in some kind of disordered eating, such as eating too much or too little. The number one wish of girls 11–17 years old is to lose weight.<sup>7</sup> Fifty-one percent of 9- and 10-year-old girls feel better about themselves when dieting.<sup>8</sup> Over half of the teenage girls in the United States use unhealthy weight control behaviors such as skipping meals, fasting, smoking cigarettes, vomiting, and taking laxatives.<sup>9</sup>
- Girls with eating disorders are less likely to have a positive self-image, create healthy relationships, or do well at school. They are also at risk of developing dangerous health problems that could affect them through adulthood.
- Eating disorders are more prevalent than many people think, especially for girls. About 90 percent of people with anorexia and bulimia are female.<sup>10</sup>

continued...

- Girls are particularly concerned about their appearance and weight, but they are not always aware of realistic healthy norms. One-third of all girls have a distorted idea about their weight—either perceiving themselves as too heavy when they are of normal weight, or feeling their weight is “about right” when they actually are too heavy. Specifically, 45 percent of overweight girls see themselves as normal weight, while 14 percent of normal weight girls believe they are overweight.<sup>11</sup>
- Many girls are not educated on the best ways to exercise and eat healthfully. Many girls see healthy eating more as avoiding unhealthy or fattening foods rather than including healthy foods in their diets. For this reason, girls may not regard skipping meals as unhealthy behavior as long as they avoid foods that they consider unhealthy. One-third of all girls 13 and older say they skip breakfast at least several times a week. One-quarter of all 13- to 15-year-olds skip lunch at least once or twice a week.<sup>12</sup>
- Eating disorders are undertreated and research is underfunded.<sup>13</sup> For example, ten million “baby boomers” will develop Alzheimer’s in their lifetime.<sup>14</sup> Though eating disorders affect the same number of females, funding for research is approximately 75% less than what is spent on researching Alzheimer’s.<sup>15</sup> Girls need our help to prevent and treat all types of eating disorders.

### C.6—Know Your Opposition

Even though these issues seem non-controversial to us, there is a possibility that you might encounter resistance. Don’t be discouraged by opposition—it’s a healthy part of the democratic process. Just make sure you’re prepared. Play devil’s advocate—what would an opponent say? Are there practical considerations (e.g., budget shortfalls, political dynamics) at play? Conduct research on past opposition to eating disorder policies in your community or in other states. Opposition might vary from council to council. Respond to opponents with facts and consistency. See the responses below to some potential objections and be prepared to answer opponents when implementing your advocacy efforts. And if you encounter other roadblocks, let us know.



### BE PREPARED: HOW TO REBUT STATEMENTS LIKE...

*“There is so much obesity legislation out there, aren’t eating disorder policies already in place at the state and local level?”*

No. Most anti-obesity legislation and policies focus on the singular issue of combating obesity. Too often, eating disorders are overlooked. Yet, they impact a large number of youth. For example, one out of every 100 adolescent girls develops anorexia nervosa.<sup>16</sup> In addition, 10-15 percent of mildly obese people have binge eating disorder.<sup>17</sup> Eating too much and eating too little are all part of the spectrum of disordered eating, and obesity can be one result. If we want children to be healthy and better able to succeed, we need policies that prevent eating disorders as much as we need policies that prevent obesity.

*“This is just a girl issue, boys aren’t affected by eating disorders. I can’t promote policies that just affect girls.”*

Girl Scouts advocates for girls, and believes the needs of girls should be front and center in any discussion of youth policy. But in promoting policies to support girls, boys often benefit too. In the case of eating disorders, one out of every ten diagnosed cases of eating disorders occurs in males. Hundreds of thousands of young men have eating disorders that cause serious health issues.<sup>18</sup> Our policies help all youth become healthier.

*“Girl Scouts can’t possibly promote healthy eating habits while also selling Girl Scout Cookies!”*

Girl Scouts promotes comprehensive health and teaches girls the importance of making healthy, balanced choices early in life and into adulthood. Our renowned Girl Scout cookie program occurs once a year in each council. All of our cookies are trans fat free, and some locations offer sugar free cookies. We emphasize that Girl Scout cookies are to be enjoyed as an occasional snack, not as a staple of one’s daily diet. Moreover, the cookie program teaches girls important financial management skills as well as the basics of entrepreneurship.

## C.7—Show Off Your Expertise

Girl Scouts are experts on the healthy growth and development of girls. Use your experiences with girls in your community to help your council or state advocacy committee decide the specific issue you want to address in regard to eating disorders. Since Girl Scout councils are experts on the issues girls face, councils have the information leaders need to make the best possible decisions on behalf of girls. Showcase your expertise to establish credibility and gain support for your advocacy efforts.

Compile examples of successful Girl Scout programs that educate girls on the full range of healthy living issues. Click [here](#) to see a healthy living badge list in Appendix ii. You can use these examples in the educational and outreach materials that you will develop to support

your advocacy efforts. Create an addendum to your fact sheet modeled after the list of program examples that follows. Share this information with your community, the media, and elected officials.

With many of the girl policy issues you will bring to policymakers, you'll find girls willing to testify about their experiences. However, in many communities, eating disorders is an exception. While girls are often keen to discuss the social pressures they experience, there remains a stigma of secrecy and shame attached to eating disorders. As such, this avenue may be best suited for councils with a strong adult capacity for advocacy. That said, every council is different and girl involvement is always a plus. Only you can know which issues your girls are ready and willing to take on.

### GIRL SCOUT PROGRAMS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO EATING DISORDERS

#### National Girl Scout Programs and Resources

- Fits' Inn: Supporting a Lifetime of Healthy Eating and Fitness For Girl Scouts Brownies and Juniors
- What GSUSA says about eating disorders: [http://www.girlscouts.org/for\\_adults/volunteering/articles/fickle\\_behavior.asp](http://www.girlscouts.org/for_adults/volunteering/articles/fickle_behavior.asp)
- *Girls Are Great*, a series of age-level booklets that help girls feel good about themselves and focus on topics relevant to growing up female in today's society
- Studio 2B has resources on eating disorders for girls, including this fact sheet: [http://www.studio2b.org/life/advice/fact\\_sheets/eating\\_disorders.asp](http://www.studio2b.org/life/advice/fact_sheets/eating_disorders.asp)

#### Girl Scout Badges and Curriculum

##### *Daisy Girl Scouts*

- Purple Petal

##### *Brownie Girl Scouts*

- "Take Care of Yourself" section of the Brownie Handbook
- "Eat Right, Stay Healthy" Try-It

##### *Junior Girl Scouts*

- "Becoming a Teen" Badge
- "Food Power" Badge
- "A Healthier You" Badge
- "Stress Less" Badge

##### *Cadette, Senior, and Ambassador Girl Scouts*

- "The Food Connection" Badges
- "Women's Health" Badge
- The Real Deal
- Inside and Out
- Express It!

SUCCESSFUL  
PROGRAM  
EXAMPLES



### Examples of Girl Scout Councils Teaching Girls About Healthy Eating

Girl Scouts of Colorado teamed up with the Children’s Hospital in Aurora to host a badge workshop on body image. The medical director of the hospital’s eating disorder program spoke to over 100 girls on the importance of healthy body image and good nutrition. Adult volunteers were also trained to identify and respond to eating disorders in girls. The event has been held annually since 2004. Learn more at: [http://www.thechildrenshospital.org/news/inthenews/2007/body\\_image\\_workshop.aspx](http://www.thechildrenshospital.org/news/inthenews/2007/body_image_workshop.aspx).

Girl Scouts of Broward County in Florida created “Uniquely U,” a full-day, self-esteem program for girls, where a former Miss Florida spoke about her battle with an eating disorder. To learn more about this program, contact the Broward County Council at: <http://www.browardgirlscouts.org/index.html>.

## C.8—Frame the Issue

By framing an issue, you define a topic or problem along with its possible solutions. Develop an issue statement to formally describe the implications of promoting solutions to eating disorders. This step will help you define the goals for which your council is advocating, and guide you as you navigate the policy arena.

Here’s an example:

### SAMPLE ISSUE STATEMENT

Eating disorders are a serious problem affecting today’s youth, especially girls. Obesity rates among youth are skyrocketing, while another aspect of the healthy eating discussion is largely ignored. In order to prevent or minimize the harm caused by eating disorders, it is imperative that decision-making bodies support programs and adopt policies to increase public awareness about eating disorders and help adults and children successfully address eating disorders. These programs and policies would help educate girls about healthy nutrition, as well as ways to prevent eating disorders. They would help adults recognize the signs of eating disorders, and ensure that individuals with eating disorders receive appropriate treatment and services.

## C.9—Select Your Advocacy or Policy Options

There are several options when you seek to raise awareness or influence policy on any issue. They can range from raising community awareness about the issue to educating policymakers to adopting or modifying policy. For a grid of different policy options and examples, click [here](#) for Appendix vi.

The following are options for raising awareness and influencing policy on eating disorders. Your council can choose from and expand upon the options provided. Determine the approach that would work best in your state or community. Consider how your council can add a unique voice to efforts already underway and how your council can begin new discussions and policy initiatives.



Before you decide on your strategy and approach, coordinate with your state advocacy committee/legislative task force, and other councils in your state. If this is a statewide effort, work together to determine your goals and objectives, and to assemble a plan that will incorporate the talents and resources of all the councils in your state.

### EDUCATING AND RAISING AWARENESS

Whatever your level of familiarity with advocacy, raising awareness is often the first step to alerting leaders in your community that Girl Scouts is serious about this issue impacting girls' lives. We want to ensure that elected officials, the media, and other interested parties know that the problem exists. Then we want to engage the community in addressing the issue. While raising awareness will not solve the problem, your council will be laying the foundation for positively influencing policy and practices.

#### *Ideas on How to Educate and Raise Awareness of Eating Disorders*

- Promote and enlist the community and its leaders to participate in “National Eating Disorders Awareness Week.” Coordinate public outreach awareness campaigns, and education activities. For ideas and suggestions, visit the National Eating Disorder Association Web site: [www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org)
- Create a coalition committed to addressing eating disorders and identify specific advocacy activities for the coalition, such as advocacy trainings, days at the State Capitol, and public education and outreach. (See the list of potential partners in section C.4.)
- Advocate for policies that address eating disorders for girls.

#### *Sample Questions to Stimulate the Discussion—In Your Council and in Your Community:*

- How do eating disorders affect the girls in our state or community?
- Do some research on the history of health policy in your community. What does the local department of health or the medical director from the local hospital say?
- Are there any state laws that address youth and nutrition? Does it include eating disorders?
- If a girl needs treatment to address an eating disorder, are there services in our community?
- Are adults in our community, such as teachers, coaches, and volunteers, trained to refer girls with eating disorders or unhealthy eating habits to the appropriate services?



## *Involving Policymakers*

One way to involve policymakers in raising awareness is to work with them to introduce a resolution. Resolutions are used by a governing body to express an opinion or identify a priority. Resolutions typically do not change the law, but they are used to articulate a philosophy, recognize the importance of a certain organization or issue, prompt action by another entity, or celebrate a milestone.

The following sample resolution could be adapted for governing bodies—whether state legislatures, school boards, or chambers of commerce—to increase awareness about the impact of eating disorders. It also is the perfect bridge to start impacting policy because it can be used to raise awareness or request a hearing about eating disorders. With all the tools, like the following resolution, the merge sign means you should adapt the language to council’s specifications.

### **House of Delegates**

#### **Resolution in Support of Healthy Eating Habits in Girls**

(Adapted from U.S. House of Representatives, House Resolution 88)

Whereas, an estimated 5,000,000 to 10,000,000 people in the United States suffer from eating disorders, including anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge eating disorder;

Whereas, eating disorders are more common among women, but an increasing number of men also suffer from these disorders;

Whereas, an estimated 0.5 to 3.7 percent of women in the United States will suffer from anorexia nervosa in their lifetimes, an estimated 1.1 to 4.2 percent of women in the United States will suffer from bulimia nervosa, and an estimated 2 to 5 percent of people in the United States experience binge eating disorder during any given 6-month period;

Whereas, anorexia nervosa has the highest premature mortality rate of any mental illness;

Whereas, eating disorders are associated with serious physical health consequences, including irregular heartbeats, heart disease and heart failure, kidney failure, osteoporosis, gastric rupture, peptic ulcer, tooth decay, obesity, gall bladder disease, diabetes, and death;

Whereas, eating disorders are also associated with serious psychological problems, including depression, substance abuse, and suicide; and

Whereas, shame, guilt, and misunderstanding often afflict a person who suffers from an eating disorder, and prevent the treatment of the disorder: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the House of Delegates encourages—

- (1) increasing public awareness of eating disorders;
- (2) expanding research for treatment and cures;
- (3) broadening access to programs that address the causes and provide treatment; and
- (4) promoting healthful eating habits and a healthy body image.

SAMPLE  
RESOLUTION



### PROGRAM AND POLICY OPTIONS

When working with the government, opportunities to address eating disorders typically fall into two types of categories: 1) public programs or 2) policies. For example, in Washington, we work hard for expanded funding of priority programs as well as for girl policy solutions.

**Programs** typically fund **activities** to address a problem. Programs are usually community based, include an education component, or are service oriented. Oftentimes, Girl Scouts can be a partner and might receive government funding to implement these programs. Although some large programs target the public as a whole, more often they are targeted to smaller communities and populations, such as children, low-income families, or teachers.

**Policies** try to encourage, modify, or prevent certain activities or behaviors. Frequently, policies change the laws to make certain activities illegal or to create incentives or deterrents. Policies are sometimes referred to as requirements.

To use a common (non-Girl Scout) example, your local health department might have a tobacco cessation **program** that includes education campaigns, public service announcements, and support groups. The American Cancer Society in your community might help run that program. On the **policy** front, however, your community might adopt a public smoking ban or increase tobacco taxes.

#### Eating Disorder Program Ideas

- Develop a program with the local health department to incorporate eating disorder messages into their obesity and nutrition programs
- Create state or local programs for training youth-serving, community-based organizations to identify youth with eating disorders and refer them to appropriate treatment and services

#### Eating Disorder Policy Ideas

- Require physicians, teachers, athletic trainers, nutritionists, and others to receive continuing education in the prevention, recognition, and referral of eating disorders
- Integrate eating disorder prevention and awareness into physical education, the health curriculum, and after-school programs at the state or local level.
- Mandate that insurers cover medically necessary treatment of eating disorders.



Need more potential policy or program ideas? Click [here](#) for Appendix iii to check the various state legislatures' Web sites or the federal legislative Web site, [www.thomas.gov](http://www.thomas.gov). The National Council of State Legislatures also has an Issues Area page that might help—check the sections on education, health care, and human services. Click [here](#) for this website in Appendix iii.

Don't be afraid to model your policy proposals after draft legislation or base them on policies that are already on the books. You might find real-world examples of legislation on eating disorders, but you can also use legislation on obesity, nutrition, physical education, and other children's health issues as a guide.

### **SAMPLE POLICY LANGUAGE**

Maryland House Bill 1346: "Each school shall have a program of physical education that is given in a planned and sequential manner to all students, kindergarten through grade 12, to develop their good health and physical fitness and improve their motor coordination and physical skills. Each public secondary school shall offer information about the dangers of anorexia and bulimia as part of the school's comprehensive health education program."

### **STRATEGIES FOR MOVING LEGISLATION**

While it's ideal to get the spotlight on your particular issue, it's sometimes a good legislative strategy to see if you can incorporate your legislative agenda into a larger piece of legislation. For example, with the increased focus on childhood obesity, mental health parity, and health reform, there may be opportunities to "piggy back" policies regarding eating disorders onto other bills that are moving through the legislative process.

See if there's any activity on the following types of bills, and see if you can add eating-disorder policy to the debate. Check with your state legislative monitor, legislative champions, and others to find out whether any of these items are "hot topics" or "must pass" pieces of legislation.

- State or local mental health policy or legislation
- State or local obesity policy or legislation
- Mental health or obesity awareness days or prevention campaigns
- School-based health policy or legislation
- Physical education and physical activity policy or legislation
- Health insurance reform legislation
- Budget or appropriations bills

## A NOTE ON BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS

If you pursue programs that require government funding, you'll likely have to go through the **appropriations** process. In most states, even if a program is authorized, it will have to get funding from a separate bill.

Generally, decision-making bodies (state legislatures, counties, and city councils) draft yearly budgets that have room for funding priorities such as Girl Scout programs. Since state and local governments have different appropriations processes, you will need to do additional research to secure funding for your existing or new programs.

In Girl Scout advocacy, especially with regard to eating disorder policy, the difference between policy and program can be a fine line. If you have questions on this difference or the appropriations process, consult the GPS at (202) 659-3780 or [advocacy@girlscouts.org](mailto:advocacy@girlscouts.org).



## C.10— Prepare to Cultivate and Educate

Create outreach materials that will help your council or state advocacy committee educate the public and advocate for your policy suggestions. In general, advocacy documents should be short—one or two pages long—and should build upon the key messages of your advocacy campaign.

Use the sample fact sheet on eating disorders below. Copy and paste the text onto your council letterhead, edit the sample text, insert specifics about your council, and distribute it widely. This document is adapted from a GSUSA fact sheet that the Public Policy and Advocacy Office uses when engaging the public, media, and public officials.



In this fact sheet, we've included a section for a girl testimonial. When people read about Girl Scouting, they expect to hear from girls, and this is a key area where your council may be able to deliver.

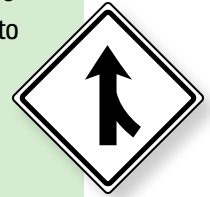


## GIRL SCOUTS OF THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA

### Addressing Eating Disorders

SAMPLE  
FACT SHEET

Girl Scouts has a longstanding commitment to the well-being of girls and continues to be an authority on their healthy growth and development. As America confronts the problem of eating disorders among its youth, Girl Scouts' innovative research and programs are shedding light on the causes and consequences of these harmful disorders. As the world's premier organization dedicated solely to girls, Girl Scouts is working successfully to address eating disorders. We are looking for opportunities to assist policymakers in improving how we promote the health and safety of young people, especially girls, because we believe that all sectors must be involved in developing solutions.



### What Are Eating Disorders?

Eating disorders are serious and sometimes life-threatening conditions that often arise in adolescence and disproportionately affect women and girls. There are three main eating disorders: anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder. About 6 percent of young women have one of these three eating disorders.<sup>i</sup> Anorexia nervosa is a disorder marked by low body weight (less than 85 percent of expected weight), extreme fear of weight gain, and an inaccurate perception of body weight or shape. Binge-eating disorder is a newly recognized condition that involves uncontrolled eating without compensatory behavior, such as vomiting, to avert weight gain. Bulimia, in contrast, is characterized by both binge-eating behavior and compensatory behaviors.

Though the eating disorders anorexia and bulimia are the most well-known, many girls participate in some kind of disordered eating, such as eating too much or too little. Over half of teenage girls in the United States report that they use unhealthy weight control behaviors such as skipping meals, fasting, smoking cigarettes, vomiting, and taking laxatives.<sup>ii</sup>

### Our Key Principles on Eating Disorders Policy

Policy solutions should encourage healthy eating for girls. These solutions should also support programs and policies that prevent eating disorders, raise awareness, identify youth with eating disorders, and refer them to the appropriate health professionals.

Community-based organizations that serve youth, including the Girl Scouts, should be seen as vital partners in developing and delivering solutions in the area of eating disorders. Schools, families, and communities will be most effective working in collaboration to address this issue.

<Insert issue statement from section C.8>

### Girl Scouts' Research

Our experience and research has brought much-needed attention and further understanding to the issue of unhealthy eating habits among youth. The Girl Scout Research Institute's (GSRI) report *The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living* tells us that girls are particularly concerned about their appearance and weight, but they are not always aware of realistic healthy norms.

continued...

SAMPLE  
FACT SHEET.  
CONT.



Although girls demonstrate a basic knowledge about healthy-eating behaviors, they are often not putting this knowledge into practice. Many girls see healthy eating more as *avoiding* unhealthy or fattening foods rather than *including* healthy foods in their diets. For this reason, girls may not regard eating unbalanced meals (e.g., a piece of fruit or snack in lieu of a full meal) or skipping meals as unhealthy behavior—as long as they avoid foods that they consider unhealthy in the process.<sup>iii</sup> For older girls, skipping breakfast and lunch is fairly common behavior. One-third of all girls 13 and older say they skip breakfast at least several times a week. One-quarter of all 13- to 15-year-olds skip lunch at least once or twice a week.<sup>iv</sup>

Girls are particularly concerned about their appearance and weight, but they are not always aware of realistic healthy norms. One-third of all girls have a distorted idea about their weight. They may perceive themselves as too heavy when they are of normal weight or feel their weight is “about right” when they are overweight. Specifically, 45 percent of overweight girls see themselves as normal weight, while 14 percent of normal weight girls believe they are overweight.<sup>v</sup>

### Girl Scouts Programming

Throughout our almost 100-year history, Girl Scouts has offered innovative programs across a wide range of healthy-living topics. Age-level awards (badges, patches, and charms), leadership training, and self-esteem programming all encourage girls to engage in a wide range of activities that help them develop confidence, character, and healthy relationships. The new Girl Scout Leadership Journeys develop within girls a strong sense of self and the skills to lead healthy lives. The Girl Scout/Dove self-esteem program *uniquely ME!* helps girls feel better about themselves through proudly acknowledging their own strengths and positively handling peer pressure.

<Insert descriptions of your council’s programming focusing on developing self-esteem and healthy eating habits.>

<Insert a testimonial from a local girl describing how Girl Scouting has boosted her self confidence and improved her eating habits and well-being.>

### A Call to Action

Eating disorders are undertreated; research is underfunded. Because eating disorders affect girls and youth across all sectors of society, Girl Scouts believes that solutions should be developed and implemented on a community and state level. Girl Scouts should be considered as a resource for public officials when addressing issues related to the health and safety of young people. Establishing eating-disorder policies with clear definitions, data, and preventative measures, such as awareness campaigns and self-esteem programming, will provide support and protection for all children. It is through strong partnerships between multiple sectors of society and a commitment to eating disorder prevention and treatment policies that we can make an impact on the health of our children.

### Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> “Statistics” (Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy, and Action), <http://www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org/reports/statistics.html> (August 5, 2008).

<sup>ii</sup> “Statistics: Eating Disorders and their Precursors” (National Eating Disorders Association), <http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org> (August 5, 2008).

<sup>iii</sup> Judy Schoenberg, Kimberlee Salmond, and Paula Fleshman, *The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living*, A Report from the Girl Scout Research Institute (New York, NY: Girl Scouts of the USA, 2006).

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid.

## C.11—Develop Partnerships, Foster Relationships

**Reach Out:** Approach your target list of potential allies (see section C.4) to begin conversations on how you might work together to achieve your advocacy goals.

Think of individuals and organizations with which Girl Scouts shares common goals and interests. Approach this from two directions: involve partners interested in addressing eating disorders in addition to other youth- or girl-focused partners.

How do you reach out? Ask to attend a meeting of the targeted organization to discuss the issue. Talk to individuals at community events and share a copy of your fact sheet. And *never* underestimate the power of networking. Oftentimes, the advocacy business can be about whom you know. Use these relationships to branch out. Keep apprised of events, do Internet research, and read the local newspaper.

### **Building a coalition and working effectively together:**

- Assemble a group of individuals and organizations with an interest in the issue who agree to work together toward a common goal.
- Convene a meeting and consider recruiting additional members who may also add value to the effort. Every organization brings different skills, experiences, and tools to the table.
- Provide clear ideas to coalition members on how they can contribute. Explain how their efforts will help Girl Scouts and all girls.
- Commit to coming together on a regular basis to advance your issue at the state and local level. Communicate regularly with your network.
- Define the issue, develop an action plan, and set reachable goals.
- Draft a general mission statement to clearly explain your coalition's goals and objectives. This is especially helpful when your group starts doing public outreach.
- Work through a collaborative process that determines your strategy and assign roles and responsibilities to each coalition member.
- Be realistic about what the coalition can do. Be clear about the Girl Scouts' expectations of the coalition and the coalition's expectations of the Girl Scouts.
- Provide clear ideas to coalition members on how they can contribute. Explain how their efforts will help Girl Scouts and all girls.

Girls participating in the new Girl Scout Senior *Girlltopia* Leadership Journey will begin honing their networking skills. Encourage them to use the networking skills they'll learn on page 65 of the new Girl Scout *Girlltopia* Leadership Journey to aid the council in cultivating relationships.



## C.12—Build Relationships with Elected Officials

### Get to know them before you need them:

An important step of effective advocacy is building strong relationships with your elected officials. It is through these relationships that you will be able to influence policymakers on issues of importance to the Girl Scouts. Just as with any relationship, building a strong working alliance will take time. Below are some ideas on how to expedite the process.

### Keep officials informed about Girl Scout activities

- Add the names of elected officials to your distribution and mailing lists for newsletters, press releases, annual reports, and other council activities.

### Meet with your elected officials

- Meet regularly with your public officials. Keep them informed about Girl Scout signature outreach programs and how they are impacting girls in your community. When a newly elected official takes office, send a welcome letter on behalf of your council and arrange a follow-up meeting.
- When meeting with your newly elected public officials, inform them about the Girl Scouts' commitment to girls' healthy living. Provide a fact sheet on eating disorders and discuss ways in which they can support you in your efforts to promote this important issue.
- Bring along a copy of the Girl Scout Research Institute report, *The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living*.

### Invite your elected officials to participate in Girl Scout events

- Invite public officials to major Girl Scout council events; consider asking them to chair "Women of Distinction" and Gold Award recognition ceremonies.
- Invite public officials to any town hall meetings, public forums, or press events that focus on eating disorders and healthy eating habits. Ask a public official to be a spokesperson for the Girl Scouts on this issue.
- Invite public officials and their staff to a Girl Scout training program on children with eating disorders.
- Have girls from the community meet with public officials and explain firsthand the impact of eating disorders on girls in the community. Consider having them ask the public official to introduce a resolution at the local or state level.
- Invite public officials to sit on your council advisory board or board of directors.
- Ask elected officials to include a link on their Web site to [girlscouts.org](http://girlscouts.org) or your local Web site.
- Offer public recognition opportunities to those officials who champion your policy agenda, including mentioning them in council newsletters and Web sites, hosting an event, or issuing a joint press release.

### **Attend community events hosted by your elected officials**

- Attend town hall meetings, press conferences, and other public events held by your elected officials.

We have created a chart with ideas on how to build relationships with public officials. Click [here](#) to see Appendix vii.

### **CASE STUDY: Vermont Legislative Internship**

The Girl Scout Council of Vermont has a program for girls that incorporates training and experiential learning. These girls work side by side with women in leadership roles in Vermont government. The legislative internship is designed to immerse teens in the democratic process, promote leadership and team-building skills, and provide a forum to discuss ideas and issues that are important to Vermonters. The experience provides an opportunity for the girls to experience the parliamentary process in action, observe party caucuses, sit in on legislative committee meetings and listen to testimony, and experience how this dynamic process shapes the direction of Vermont for the coming years. More importantly the state legislators get to know Girl Scouts through the girls who participate in this program. Legislators gain an appreciation for the programs and leadership opportunities Girl Scouts offers to the girls in their communities.



## C.13— Get the Message Out

Invite public officials and policymakers to witness Girl Scout activities, especially when they relate to healthy living. Demonstrate the importance of girl-focused and girl-led activities. Engage policymakers in discussions with girls about the importance of promoting healthy eating. Some tips for hosting policymakers are located [here](#) (see Appendix x).



In the *Your Voice, Your World*, the new Girl Scout Leadership Journey for Ambassadors, girls are asked to zero in on VIPs who could act on their issues. As girls participate with the council in this effort to address eating disorders, encourage them to consider inviting policymakers to take part in their healthy living efforts. Step 5 (page 72) of the Ambassador’s Journey book offers detailed activities to help prepare the “perfect pitch” to deliver to the VIPs. Invite girls to work with the council to publicize its advocacy efforts by using the skills they learn in the Journeys.

Below is a **sample invitation letter** to send to public officials. Underlined portions indicate where you should customize the content for your council.



SAMPLE  
INVITATION  
LETTER

September 30, 2008

The Honorable Carolyn Jones  
900 State House Office Building

Dear Representative Jones,

During the week of November 10, 500 Girl Scouts of the Rocky Mountains volunteers, staff, and girl members will convene for our annual Free to Be Me event. We will be talking to girls about healthy living and discovering their inner beauty, as well as providing a session for adults on strategies for girls with eating disorders. It would be our honor to have you, a respected leader on girls’ issues, join us for a Free to Be Me event to present brief remarks on your commitment to promoting the health and well-being of all youth. The event will take place on November 8 at 5:00 p.m. at the Laurel County Public Library.

We sincerely hope your schedule will allow you to join us for these events that will highlight the Girl Scouts’ commitment to promoting healthy living. For information on other Girl Scout events taking place, please see the attached flyer or visit our Web site at [www.rockymountaingirlscouts.org](http://www.rockymountaingirlscouts.org). We would be delighted to discuss this invitation further, and we will follow up with your office in the near future. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at [555-6780](tel:555-6780) or [jodip@rockymountaingirlscouts.org](mailto:jodip@rockymountaingirlscouts.org).

Sincerely,

Jodi Peterson

CEO, Girl Scouts of the Rocky Mountains

## C.14— Inform the Public

**Public Forums:** Host public forums, town-hall meetings, or Girl Scout Days at the State Capitol to discuss how the community and policymakers can address eating disorders and promote healthy eating habits. Invite coalition partners to co-host or participate to broaden your reach. Distribute the fact sheet on eating disorders and highlight key messages. Provide copies of the Girl Scout Research Institute report *The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living* to supplement your discussion on eating disorders.

Public forums can serve as a great setting for girls to complete the Take Action Project for *aMAZE*, the new Girl Scout Leadership Journey on relationships. See page 117 of the *aMAZE* book for ideas about how girls can raise awareness of their issue with adults and peers. Suggest that girls share the public forum time to make a presentation to the community about the problem. For more information about helping girls to plan their Take Action Project, see page 73 of the *aMAZE* Adult Guide.



Hold an all-girl leadership summit or girl congress on eating disorders. Girls can share their experiences, express feelings, and talk about ways they could advocate to create change in their communities. Summits or girl congresses could be held in conjunction with a council annual meeting, a legislative day, or as an annual gathering.

**Get Press:** Inform the media by sharing information with them about the Girl Scouts' historic commitment to healthy living. Explain your Live Healthy, Lead Healthy Action Plan and emphasize the importance of addressing eating disorders. Provide them with a copy of *The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living*.

Create opportunities for girls to share their experiences. Senior Girl Scouts might use the tips on how to inform the media from page 96 of *Girlltopia*, the new Girl Scout Leadership Journey for Seniors.



When you hold events, write and distribute press releases, like the one included here.

SAMPLE  
PRESS  
RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE  
IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jackie Brown  
(303) 555—4321

[jbrown@rockymountaingirlscouts.org](mailto:jbrown@rockymountaingirlscouts.org)

## STATE REPRESENTATIVE CAROLYN JONES ENCOURAGES FOCUS ON EATING DISORDERS

Girl Scouts supports healthy girls

Paradox, CA—State Representative Carol Jones will discuss with local Girl Scouts the impact of unhealthy eating habits this November 8<sup>th</sup>, at 5:00 p.m. in the Laurel County Public Library.

This event is hosted by the Girl Scouts of the Rocky Mountains to raise awareness about the healthy and unhealthy eating practices of girls and to champion the new Eating Right Resolution coming before the city council next week. An estimated 500 Girl Scout volunteers, staff, and girls will attend. How girls and women perceive themselves and their eating habits is one of the key concerns behind the Girl Scouts of the Rocky Mountains' Healthy Living advocacy efforts. Carolyn Jones, a representative to the California state legislature, is a passionate supporter of healthy eating habits.

Jodi Peterson, CEO of Girl Scouts of the Rocky Mountains, said "Representative Jones understands the price our girls pay when they don't take care of what and how they eat. We all need to be aware of what comprises a healthy and balanced diet, and the negative consequences when young women are afflicted with an eating disorder."

The event begins at 5:00 p.m. and is open to the press. It will include the talk by Representative Jones, followed by a discussion with Girl Scouts regarding policy solutions to eating disorders.

Space is limited, so please RSVP to Jackie Brown at (303) 555-4321.

# # #

**Write-in:** Submit letters to the editor and op-eds to newspapers on behalf of girls (or, better yet, ask girls to write them!) to educate the public about the issues and your advocacy work. Determine strategic opportunities to submit an op-ed, such as when a bill is being introduced in the legislature, or when a local board is deciding on ratifying a new eating-disorders policy.

In the new Ambassador Girl Scout Leadership Journey, *Your Voice, Your World*, girls are shown various ways to raise awareness about issues. If your council is considering writing in to a local newspaper, consider that girls may want to write the letter. “Write it Right” on page 76 of *Your Voice, Your World* explains that words can give powerful voice to an issue. It provides examples of how girls can raise their voices through writing letters.



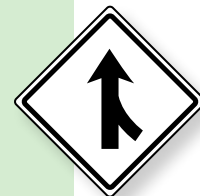
What’s the difference between a letter to the editor and an op-ed? Need some suggestions about formatting, length, and content? Check out the samples on the following pages or click [here](#) to head to Appendix xii for tips and guidelines.

**The Web:** Incorporate the high points of your Live Healthy, Lead Healthy Action Plan and related public materials into your council Web site. Consider whether regular updates can be posted about the issue. Can the Web site be used to activate or organize your coalition, activists, or champions? You may want to add an advocacy tab on your Web site if you do not already have one. Ask partner organizations to link to your Web site.

The Girl Scouts of Robin’s Nest would like to see the Michigan State Legislature take a step further with its new childhood health and obesity policy. We praise the legislature for promoting healthy lifestyles for our children. Our kids deserve the resources and education to make the right decisions about diet and exercise. However, the legislature’s new policy cannot fully protect all of Michigan’s children because it does not include a measure on preventing eating disorders.



Our state has not been taking eating disorders as seriously as it should be. The number one wish of girls 11–17 years old is to lose weight.<sup>19</sup> 51 percent of 9- and 10-year-old girls feel better about themselves when dieting.<sup>20</sup> Although children demonstrate a basic knowledge about healthy eating behaviors, they are often not putting this knowledge into practice. The majority of girls evaluate their eating habits as “healthy” as long as their overall health and appearance remain within a perceived norm. As a result, they tend to see healthy eating more as *avoiding* unhealthy or fattening foods rather than as *including* healthy foods in their diets.



This new policy does not fully address and prevent all forms of unhealthy eating behaviors because our policymakers have not included measures addressing eating disorders. The Girl Scouts of Robin’s Nest encourage the state legislature to include a provision on preventing eating disorders when developing the new childhood health and obesity policy so that Michigan’s girls and boys receive the necessary support to live in a healthy manner.



SAMPLE  
OP-ED



## GIRL SCOUTS ARE SOUNDING THE ALARM

The Girl Scouts of Robin's Nest are sounding the alarm on a grave and dangerous health risk that is increasingly common among girls. Eating disorders and unhealthy eating habits hurt and even kill girls across the nation. Girl Scouts offers programming that addresses a comprehensive range of health issues including eating disorders and unhealthy eating habits, but we cannot do it alone. When our community's schools, families, government, health professionals, and youth-serving organizations all work together, Robin's Nest will ensure that its youth attain physical and emotional wellness.

Our community needs greater awareness and increased education on these health risks that endanger our children's lives. The three main eating disorders anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder often arise in adolescence. While, hundreds of thousands of young men also have eating disorders that cause serious health issues, girls remain disproportionately affected.<sup>21</sup>

Even if a girl does not suffer from an eating disorder, she may be participating in practices that involve unhealthy eating. Young people know about healthy eating behaviors, but they often don't put this knowledge into practice. Girls, particularly, tend to be more concerned about their appearance and weight, and the pressure to be thin can create alarming consequences for them. For example, the number one wish of girls ages 11–17 is to lose weight.<sup>22</sup> Fifty-one percent of 9- and 10-year-old girls feel better about themselves when dieting.<sup>23</sup>

Girls deserve to have a childhood free from worries about dieting and eating disorders. We at the Girl Scouts of Robin's Nest provide a safe place for girls to grow into women of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place. <Insert example of successful programming your council uses to build self-esteem and address eating disorders and unhealthy dieting.> However it will take the support and effort of our entire community to ensure our kids are receiving the education and support needed to curb this disturbing trend.

Eating disorders and unhealthy dieting habits will continue to be a serious problem facing today's youth, especially girls, unless we take action. It is critical to implement education, prevention, and treatment policies. Together, we can ensure Robin's Nest creates an environment that fosters its children's physical and emotional health. Their future depends upon it.

## C.15—Meet with Policymakers

Does your state advocacy committee or legislative task force have a Girl Scout Day at the State Capitol?



If not, consider launching this type of event to highlight eating disorders. Include girls when you meet with public officials, unless this issue makes them uncomfortable. Discuss with policymakers the Girl Scout programs that address comprehensive health, social and emotional well-being, eating disorders, and healthy eating habits. Click [here](#) for strategies for hosting an Advocacy Day in Appendix viii.



Alternately, reach out to members of the city council or state legislature and request a meeting. Discuss the issues, including your policy solutions, and ask for their support. They may be willing to champion the policy. Use the template letter below, and click [here](#) for Appendix xi to find strategies for carrying out successful meetings.

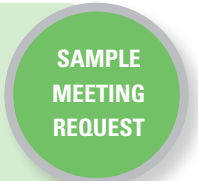
This meeting should be the culmination of a significant amount of preparation. Take the time to formulate a strategy. Decide who will speak (and in what order), and make sure everyone involved is “on message,” making a cohesive statement that is hard-hitting, informative, and polite. Make sure you have a specific request, such as a resolution for the policymaker to cosponsor, an event invitation to speak, a bill to support or oppose, or an amendment to sponsor. If they are comfortable discussing the issue, get girls involved. Have them share their experiences about how eating disorders and unhealthy eating habits affect their lives. Stay in touch with the policymakers after the meeting to send any information requested and a note of appreciation.

March 19, 2008

Councilwoman Megan Edwards  
515 Madeira City Council Office Building

Dear Councilwoman Edwards:

On behalf of Girl Scouts of the Grand Canyon, I would like to meet with you regarding the Eating Disorders Awareness Resolution coming before the city council this spring. This resolution addresses a very serious issue girls are facing today, eating disorders and unhealthy dieting habits. The resolution designates September as Eating Disorders Awareness Month and supports the development of programs and policies to educate youth, parents, teachers, and the public about this health and wellness issue in girls’ lives.



continued...



SAMPLE  
MEETING/  
REQUEST  
CONT.



Eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa are serious, even life-threatening diseases facing today's youth, especially girls. In order to raise awareness and reduce the rates of eating disorders, it is critical to implement educational and prevention policies, as well as policies to help communities accurately identify eating disorders in youth and refer those youth to appropriate services. With this resolution, the Madeira community will be taking an important step toward ensuring that the adults in girls' lives are equipped to help girls who are developing unhealthy eating habits.

After working closely with girls from Madeira and surrounding communities, I can attest to the fact that girls are developing eating disorders at alarming rates. Girl Scouts works hard to address these health issues, but we cannot do it alone. When our community's schools, families, government, health professionals, and youth-serving organizations all work together, Madeira will ensure its youth lead healthy lives that include physical and emotional wellness.

I would be like to meet with you regarding this important resolution affecting girls in Ma-  
deira. Please contact me at 555-0142 or vlakewood@gsgc.org. I look forward to meeting with you soon.

Sincerely,  
Valerie Lakewood  
Chief Executive Officer  
Girl Scouts of the Grand Canyon

## C.16—Influence the Legislative Process

**Monitor Legislation:** Identify current legislation that addresses eating disorders at the state and local level. Every state legislature has a Web site that tracks legislation through the process. For a list of these web sites, click [here](#) to see Appendix iii.



- If your state advocacy committee has hired a legislative monitor, ask that she or he keep the committee apprised of legislation that could impact eating disorders.
- Ask the legislative monitor to look for opportunities for the Girl Scouts to provide testimony on eating disorders at committee hearings or at state commissions or task forces.
- Reach out and join forces with other advocates of bills that could advance your goals.

**Organize to Advocate:** Mobilize your coalition partners as well as Girl Scout volunteers, staff, girls, and parents to support your efforts.



- Start a **letter-writing or call-in campaign**. Provide individuals with a sample letter or talking points so they can easily contact their policymakers to address the issue.

Below is a sample letter of support, which can be modified for your use. For additional suggestions on developing letters, click [here](#) to see Appendix ix.

March 19, 2009

Councilwoman Clare Smith  
412 Mountain Oaks City Office Building

Dear Councilwoman Smith:

On behalf of Girl Scouts of Mt. Rushmore Troop 1213, I ask for your support of the Eating Disorders Awareness Resolution coming before the City Council this spring. This resolution addresses a very serious issue girls are facing today, eating disorders and unhealthy eating habits. It designates September as Eating Disorders Awareness Month and supports the development of programs and policies to educate youth, parents, teachers, and the public about this serious health and wellness issue in girls' lives.

Eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia nervosa are serious, life-threatening diseases facing today's youth, especially girls. In order to raise awareness and reduce the rates of eating disorders, we must implement educational and prevention policies. We need policies to help communities identify eating disorders and refer those youth to appropriate services. With this resolution, the Mountain Oaks community will be taking an important step towards ensuring that our adults are equipped to support girls who are developing damaging eating habits.

After working closely with girls from Mountain Oaks and surrounding communities, I can attest to the fact that girls are developing eating disorders or unhealthy dieting habits at alarming rates. Girl Scouts works hard to address these health issues, but we cannot do it alone. When our community's schools, families, government, health professionals, and youth-serving organizations all work together, Mountain Oaks will ensure that its youth lead healthy lives of physical and emotional wellness.

continued...

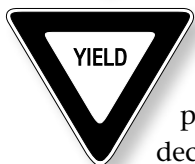


SAMPLE  
LETTER OF  
SUPPORT  
CONT.

Thank you for your longstanding support of the Girl Scouts of Mt. Rushmore and your dedication to promoting girls' health. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Susan McMahon, Girl Scouts of Mt. Rushmore Chief Executive Officer, at smcmahon@mtrgirlscouts.org or 514-347-9881.



Sincerely,  
Lauren Goldman  
Junior Girl Scouts Troop Leader, Troop 1213



**Speak-up:** Consider submitting written or oral testimony. Work with a member of your Girl Scout Advocacy Committee and perhaps a girl to draft and present testimony at a hearing in the state legislature or a meeting of a local decision-making body.



Follow these step-by-step instructions to draft testimony.

## STEPS TO DRAFTING QUALITY TESTIMONY

1. Start with an introduction thanking the decision-making body for allowing you to testify. Provide a brief, general overview of the Girl Scouts' mission, research, and programming, focusing on its commitment to addressing eating disorders. Include personal experiences – state how your council and Girl Scouts have addressed eating disorders. Find unique girl voices and suggest policy solutions.
2. Explain reasons why policymakers should incorporate these policy solutions when drafting policies on eating disorders. Discuss why these priorities are relevant and important. You can reuse language from materials you have already created, such as key messages and fact sheets.
3. Discuss the research. You can use research from the Girl Scout Research Institute, contact the GSUSA Public Policy and Advocacy Office for any research we have gathered on this topic, or gather or conduct your own research. Try to gather information about your state or local community to show the committee or board how eating disorders are affecting local children. It is also important to cite all resources.
4. Highlight your expertise and experience with healthy nutrition. Explain that Girl Scouts has an important and unique perspective on the policy discussion centering on eating disorders.
5. In the conclusion, restate your council's suggestions on how to address eating disorders in policy. Emphasize why it is important that your council be included in the policy-making process and thank the committee or board for the opportunity to testify.

continued...

### Things to Remember!

- Contact the GSUSA Public Policy and Advocacy Office at (202) 659-3780 or [advocacy@girlscouts.org](mailto:advocacy@girlscouts.org) and let us know about this opportunity. We can provide you with examples of testimony we have written for the U.S. Congress.
- You do not have to start completely from scratch! Build your testimony from the advocacy materials you have already created, such as your key messages and talking points, research, program examples, and fact sheets.
- Promote Girl Scouts as a leader in addressing unhealthy eating habits throughout the testimony.
- Check with the decision-making body to find out when you have to submit the testimony.
- Find out how long your oral and written testimony is expected to be and stick to the guidelines.
- Inquire as to whether a Girl Scout could join you and present part of the testimony, giving girls a voice in the process.
- Prepare a communications strategy to publicize your testimony. This strategy can include reaching out to the media, preparing a press release, distributing the written testimony to your partners and other policymakers, updating your Web site, and inviting girls and volunteers to watch your testimony in person.
- Follow up on any connections you make with the policymakers and their staff. This will be an excellent opportunity to build stronger relationships with public officials.



## C.17—Celebrate, Debrief, and Thank

**Great job!** Now it's time to assess your accomplishments, celebrate your success, learn from your mistakes, and thank the people who helped make your initiative possible. Then you can move on to other Policy Avenues or take further steps in addressing media images.

Policy advocacy is not a quick fix. It's often a slow process, but it can be an effective and long-term solution to an issue impacting girls in your community. It's not easy to be successful in influencing a legislating body. If you weren't successful on the first try, don't be discouraged. Continue to look for opportunities to deliver your message and gather support. Who knows? With a few more meetings, a new influential partner, or a majority-changing election, your initiative could see new light.

### Endnotes

- 1 "Statistics: How Many People Have Eating Disorders?," Anorexia Nervosa and Related Eating Disorders, Inc., <http://anred.com/stats.html> (August 5, 2008).
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 "Statistics," Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy, and Action, <http://www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org/reports/statistics.html> (August 5, 2008).
- 5 "Statistics: Eating Disorders and their Precursors," National Eating Disorders Association, [http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/p.asp?WebPage\\_ID=286&Profile\\_ID=41138](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/p.asp?WebPage_ID=286&Profile_ID=41138) (August 5, 2008).
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 "Statistics: Eating Disorders and their Precursors," National Eating Disorders Association.
- 10 "Statistics: How Many People Have Eating Disorders?," Anorexia Nervosa and Related Eating Disorders, Inc.
- 11 Judy Schoenberg, Kimberlee Salmond, and Paula Fleshman, *The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living*, A Report from the Girl Scout Research Institute (New York, NY: Girl Scouts of the USA, 2006).
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 "Alzheimer's Facts and Figures," Alzheimer's Association, [http://www.alz.org/alzheimers\\_disease\\_facts\\_figures.asp](http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_facts_figures.asp) (December 16, 2008).
- 15 "Statistics: Eating Disorders and their Precursors," National Eating Disorders Association.
- 16 "Statistics," Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy, and Action.
- 17 "How Common Is Binge Eating Disorder, and Who Is at Risk?" (Washington, DC: US. Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2001), [http://www.wrongdiagnosis.com/artic/binge\\_eating\\_disorder\\_niddk.htm](http://www.wrongdiagnosis.com/artic/binge_eating_disorder_niddk.htm) (December 11, 2008).
- 18 "Food for Thought: Prevention of Eating Disorders in Children" (Center for the Advancement of Health, 2002), <http://www.cfah.org/factsoflife/vol7no11.cfm> (August 23, 2008).
- 19 "Statistics," Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy, and Action.
- 20 "Statistics: Eating Disorders and their Precursors," National Eating Disorders Association.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 "Statistics," Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy, and Action.
- 23 "Statistics: Eating Disorders and their Precursors," National Eating Disorders Association.





# APPENDIX I

## From Research to Action: Developing the *Roadmap*

The Girl Scout Research Institute's (GSRI) original research report, *The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living*, tells us that many girls view being healthy as a combination of good nutrition, physical fitness, and emotional and social well-being. Moreover, communities need policies and practices that support girls' healthy living. With over 60 badges related to healthy living, Girl Scout programs positively address health issues in a girl-centered way that reflects girls' needs and views. Since we have the research and expertise on girls and their health, Girl Scouts is uniquely positioned to successfully advocate for policies that will support and promote positive choices among girls. This *Live Healthy, Lead Healthy Policy and Advocacy Roadmap* was created to enable councils to eliminate barriers to girls' healthy living and to fulfill the Girl Scout mission to make the world a better place. With this toolkit, councils will be better equipped to partner with girls as they become educated and empowered to strengthen their physical and emotional well-being and to take action to positively impact their communities.

Girl Scouts believes that all sectors must be involved in developing solutions to the health issues facing girls today. We are seeking **opportunities to assist policymakers in promoting and supporting legislation that will bring about these solutions**. The health of our youth is a high priority in the national policy conversation, although it is often discussed only as it relates to childhood obesity or increasing fitness. Girl Scouts brings a unique perspective to this policy debate—we know what works for girls.

At the 2005 National Council Session, our Constitution was revised to state our aspiration, that “we are a premier voice for girls and an expert on their growth and development.” Since then, Girl Scouts at the national and council levels have increasingly lobbied on girl policy issues. Councils have put *The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living* to good use, looking into healthy living locally. Several councils have found policy and research niches in specific areas like relational aggression, healthy media images, and eating disorders.

Girl Scouts across the country have embraced the notion that girls need more support to ensure their healthy living. The GSUSA Public Policy and Advocacy Office has heard from councils across the country that Girl Scouts can and should do more to support healthy living. But need help in doing so. This toolkit is meant to fill that need.

The Public Policy and Advocacy Office gathered information from councils representing different regions of the country and from national staff who are knowledgeable about the work and research in this area. Through the process, the Public Policy and Advocacy Office sought to better understand what programs, policies, and messages would advance healthy living.

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We wanted to understand the policy areas that would have the greatest impact on the health of the girls of this nation, while staying true to our mission and program offerings. Additionally, we sought to gather and clarify ideas for advancing a healthy living policy and advocacy agenda at the national, state, and local levels.

**From our conversations with councils, the Public Policy and Advocacy Office synthesized the information into a menu of policy and advocacy options that councils can use to create customized Live Healthy, Lead Healthy Action Plans that best fit their needs and goals.** States and communities vary from coast to coast, and so do girls. This toolkit will help councils discover how to put the concerns of local girls into effective, powerful, localized policy solutions.



## APPENDIX II

### Healthy Living, Relational Aggression, Healthy Media Images, and Eating Disorders Resources

#### GIRL SCOUTS OF THE USA RESOURCES

- **The Girl Scout Research Institute:**
  - <http://www.girlscouts.org/research/>
  - [http://www.girlscouts.org/research/facts\\_findings/safety.asp](http://www.girlscouts.org/research/facts_findings/safety.asp)
  - [http://www.girlscouts.org/research/what\\_girls\\_say/body\\_image.asp](http://www.girlscouts.org/research/what_girls_say/body_image.asp)
  - [http://www.girlscouts.org/research/facts\\_findings/physical\\_and\\_mental\\_health.asp](http://www.girlscouts.org/research/facts_findings/physical_and_mental_health.asp)
- ***The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living and Additional Resources:*** [http://www.girlscouts.org/research/publications/original/healthy\\_living.asp](http://www.girlscouts.org/research/publications/original/healthy_living.asp)
- ***Feeling Safe: What Girls Say:*** [http://www.girlscouts.org/research/publications/original/feeling\\_safe.asp](http://www.girlscouts.org/research/publications/original/feeling_safe.asp)
- ***The Net Effect: Girls and New Media:*** [http://www.girlscouts.org/research/publications/original/net\\_effect.asp](http://www.girlscouts.org/research/publications/original/net_effect.asp)
- **GSRI research review: *Weighing In: Helping Girls Be Healthy Today, Healthy Tomorrow*** [http://www.girlscouts.org/research/publications/reviews/weighing\\_in.asp](http://www.girlscouts.org/research/publications/reviews/weighing_in.asp)
- **Healthy Living badges:** [http://www.girlscouts.org/research/publications/original/g\\_s\\_awards.pdf](http://www.girlscouts.org/research/publications/original/g_s_awards.pdf)
- **Healthy Living e-newsletter:** <http://www.girlscouts.org/research/enewsletters/>
- **Leader magazine, bullying and teen advocacy articles:** <http://am3.olivesoftware.com/Olive/AM3/GirlScoutsLeader/> (Fall 2008)

#### GIRL SCOUT COUNCIL RESOURCES

- **Girl Scouts of Nassau County address relational aggression:** <http://www.gsnc.org/criticalissues/>
- **Girl Scout Council of Vermont survey: *What Teen Girls Say about Bullying and Harassment:*** <http://www.girlscoutsvt.org/documents/WhatGirlsSayaboutBullyingandHarrassment.pdf>
- **Girl Scout Council of Vermont board chair advocates for healthy media images:** <http://www.wptz.com/video/17610909/index.html>

#### OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS RESOURCES

- **National Conference of State Legislatures, bill tracking:** <http://www.ncsl.org/index.htm?tab=issues>
- **National League of Cities:** <http://www.nlc.org/>
- **National League of Cities Institute on Youth, Education, and Families:** <http://www.nlc.org/iyef/>
- **Dove Self-Esteem Fund:** <http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.com/dsef07/t5.aspx?id=7315>

- **Self-esteem/body image/healthy living awareness-raising:** <http://loveyourbody.nowfoundation.org/index.html>
- **Partnership for Play Every Day:** <http://www.playeveryday.org/about/members.html>
- **Afterschool Alliance:** <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/>

### RELATIONAL AGGRESSION RESOURCES

- **“Bullying Facts and Statistics.” (National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center)** <http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/faq/bullying.asp> (July 31, 2008)
- **“Isn’t Relational Aggression Just Normal Behavior?” (The Ophelia Project)** [http://www.opheliaproject.org/main/ra\\_faq4.htm](http://www.opheliaproject.org/main/ra_faq4.htm) (September 1, 2008)
- **A report on how states are reacting to school bullying: “Bullying.” (Lamar Bailey, The National Conference of State Legislatures)** [http://www.ncsl.org/magazine/articles/2008/08sloctnov08\\_bullying.htm](http://www.ncsl.org/magazine/articles/2008/08sloctnov08_bullying.htm)(October/November 2008)
- **“Bullies.” (The Dr. Phil Show)** <http://www.drphil.com/shows/show/115> (December 2008)
- **“Girl Bullies - Causing Extreme Emotional Anxiety To Their Victims.” (Mandy-Jane Clarke, stop-bullies.com)** <http://stop-bullies.com/bullying-children/Girl-Bullies-Causing-Extreme-Emotional-Anxiety-To-Their-Victims.html>

### CYBERBULLYING RESOURCES

- **Advocacy organizations: Stop Cyberbullying Now** ([stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov](http://stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov)), **Wired Safety** ([wiredsafety.org](http://wiredsafety.org))
- **Study shows: “Kids Keep Parents in the Dark About Cyberbullying.”** (CNET News) [http://news.cnet.com/8301-1023\\_3-10058444-93.html](http://news.cnet.com/8301-1023_3-10058444-93.html) (October 4, 2008)
- **Legal background on cyberbullying:** <http://www.cyberbully.org/cyberbully/docs/cblegislation.pdf>
- **“What Parents Need to Know About Cyberbullying.”** (ABC News) <http://abcnews.go.com/primetime/story?id=2425023>

### MEDIA IMAGES RESOURCES

- **Center on Media and Child Health:** <http://www.cmch.tv/>
- **Media Awareness Network:** <http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/index.cfm>
- **American Academy of Pediatrics’ Media Matters Campaign:** [www.aap.org/advocacy/mediamatters.htm](http://www.aap.org/advocacy/mediamatters.htm)
- **Media Advocacy Organizations:**
  - **Media Education Foundation**  
<http://www.mediaed.org/cgi-bin/commerce.cgi?display=home>
  - **About-Face** <http://www.about-face.org>
- **Helpful research on girls and women’s portrayal in popular media: “Gender Stereotypes: An Analysis of Popular Films and TV.”** ( Stacy L. Smith and Crystal Allene Cook, The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media) <http://www.thegeenadavisinstitute.org/research.php> (2008)

- **“Media’s Effect On Girls: Body Image And Gender Identity.”** (National Institute on Media and the Family) [http://www.mediafamily.org/facts/facts\\_mediaeffect.shtml](http://www.mediafamily.org/facts/facts_mediaeffect.shtml)(September 3, 2008).
- **“Shocking Facts.”** (Mind on the Media) <http://www.mindonthemedia.org/index.php?type=static&page=shocking>
- **“Statistics: Eating Disorders and their Precursors.”** (National Eating Disorders Association) [http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/p.asp?WebPage\\_ID=286&Profile\\_ID=41138](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/p.asp?WebPage_ID=286&Profile_ID=41138)
- ***Killing Us Softly* study guide for Jean Kilbourne’s documentary on images of women in advertising** [http://www.mediaed.org/assets/products/206/studyguide\\_206.pdf](http://www.mediaed.org/assets/products/206/studyguide_206.pdf)
- ***Slim Hopes* study guide for Jean Kilbourne’s documentary on advertising and the obsession with thinness** [http://www.mediaed.org/assets/products/305/studyguide\\_305.pdf](http://www.mediaed.org/assets/products/305/studyguide_305.pdf)
- **Report on the media and children: “Media Bombardment Is Linked to Ill Effects During Childhood.”** (Donna St. George, *The Washington Post*) <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/01/AR2008120102920.html>(December 2, 2008)
- **Report on video games and their effect on children: “Uninformed Game Givers.”** (NetFamilyNews.org) <http://www.netfamilynews.org/2007/11/uninformed-game-givers.html> (November 30, 2007)
- **Parental controls: Do you know how they work? “MediaWise® Parental Controls Guide.”** (National Institute on Media and the Family) [http://www.mediafamily.org/network\\_pdf/Parent\\_Controls\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.mediafamily.org/network_pdf/Parent_Controls_Guide.pdf)(2006)
- **Media self-regulation: “Self-Regulatory Program for Children’s Advertising.”** (Children’s Advertising Review Unit, Council of Better Business Bureaus, Inc.) <http://us.bbb.org/WWWRoot/storage/16/documents/ForBusinesses/CARUguidelines.pdf>(2006)

### EATING DISORDERS RESOURCES

- **National Eating Disorders Association:** <http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org>
- **Advocacy organization:** <http://www.mirror-mirror.org/eatdis.htm>
- **Report on “Wannarexia.”** (Valerie Bauman, Associated Press) [http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2007-08-04-wannarexic\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2007-08-04-wannarexic_N.htm) (2007)
- ***Slim Hopes* study guide for Jean Kilbourne’s documentary on advertising and the obsession with thinness** [http://www.mediaed.org/assets/products/305/studyguide\\_305.pdf](http://www.mediaed.org/assets/products/305/studyguide_305.pdf).
- **Study shows “Eating Disorders Different in Girls Than Boys.”** (Elizabeth Cooney, *boston.com*) [http://www.boston.com/news/health/blog/2008/06/risk\\_factors\\_st.html](http://www.boston.com/news/health/blog/2008/06/risk_factors_st.html) (June 3, 2008)
- **How some schools have combated eating disorders: “Taking on the Thin Ideal.”** (Sanjay Gupta, M.D., *Time.com*) [http://www.time.com/time/specials/2007/article/0,28804,1703763\\_1703764\\_1810730,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/specials/2007/article/0,28804,1703763_1703764_1810730,00.html) (December 2008)
- **“Statistics: Eating Disorders and Their Precursors.”** (National Eating Disorders Association) [http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/p.asp?WebPage\\_ID=286&Profile\\_ID=41138](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/p.asp?WebPage_ID=286&Profile_ID=41138) (August 5, 2008)



## APPENDIX III

### Legislative Resources and 2009 State Legislative Sessions

**Federal Legislative Information** <http://www.thomas.gov/>

**Executive Branch Information** <http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/>

#### **National Conference of State Legislatures**

The National Conference of State Legislatures is a good source of information for research and overviews of state and federal issue areas, state and federal relations, and general information on state legislatures. The Web site can be found at [www.ncsl.org](http://www.ncsl.org).

- Alabama** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.legislature.state.al.us/](http://www.legislature.state.al.us/).  
Alabama's State Legislature meets from February 3 to May 14, 2009.
- Alaska** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.legis.state.ak.us/index.php](http://www.legis.state.ak.us/index.php).  
Alaska's State Legislature meets from January 12 to May 12, 2009.
- Arizona** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.azleg.gov/](http://www.azleg.gov/).  
Arizona's State Legislature meets from January 12 to May 9, 2009.
- Arkansas** The General Assembly's Web site is [www.arkleg.state.ar.us/](http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/).  
Arkansas's General Assembly meets from January 12 to March 20, 2009.
- California** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.leginfo.ca.gov/](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/).  
California's State Legislature meets from December 1, 2008, to September 14, 2009.
- Colorado** The General Assembly's Web site is [www.leg.state.co.us](http://www.leg.state.co.us).  
Colorado's General Assembly meets from January 7 to May 6, 2009.
- Connecticut** The General Assembly's Web site is [www.cga.ct.gov/](http://www.cga.ct.gov/).  
Connecticut's General Assembly meets from January 7 to June 3, 2009.
- Delaware** The General Assembly's Web site is [legis.delaware.gov/](http://legis.delaware.gov/).  
Delaware's General Assembly meets from January 6 to June 30, 2009.
- District of Columbia** The City Council's Web site is [www.dccouncil.washington.dc.us/](http://www.dccouncil.washington.dc.us/).  
D.C.'s City Council meets from January 6 to December 31, 2009.

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- Florida** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.leg.state.fl.us/](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/).  
Florida's State Legislature meets from March 3 to May 1, 2009. **Georgia**  
The General Assembly's Web site is [www.legis.state.ga.us/](http://www.legis.state.ga.us/).  
Georgia's General Assembly meets from January 12 to April 3, 2009.
- Hawaii** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.capitol.hawaii.gov/](http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/)  
Hawaii's State Legislature meets from January 21 to May 7, 2009.
- Idaho** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.legislature.idaho.gov/](http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/).  
Idaho's State Legislature meets from January 12 to April 8, 2009.
- Illinois** The General Assembly's Web site is [www.ilga.gov/](http://www.ilga.gov/).  
Illinois's General Assembly meets from January 14 to January 7, 2010.
- Indiana** The General Assembly's Web site is [www.ai.org/legislative/](http://www.ai.org/legislative/).  
Indiana's General Assembly meets from November 18, 2008, to April 29, 2009.
- Iowa** The General Assembly's Web site is [www.legis.state.ia.us/](http://www.legis.state.ia.us/).  
Iowa's General Assembly meets from January 12 to May 1, 2009.
- Kansas** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.kslegislature.org](http://www.kslegislature.org).  
Kansas's State Legislature meets from January 12 to May 6, 2009.
- Kentucky** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.lrc.ky.gov](http://www.lrc.ky.gov).  
Kentucky's State Legislature meets from January 6 to March 30, 2009.
- Louisiana** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.legis.state.la.us](http://www.legis.state.la.us).  
Louisiana's State Legislature meets from April 27 to June 25, 2009.
- Maine** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.maine.gov/legis](http://www.maine.gov/legis).  
Maine's State Legislature meets from December 3, 2008, to June 17, 2009.
- Maryland** The General Assembly's Web site is [www.mlis.state.md.us](http://www.mlis.state.md.us).  
Maryland's General Assembly meets from January 14 to April 13, 2009.
- Massachusetts** The General Court's Web site is [www.mass.gov/legis](http://www.mass.gov/legis).  
Massachusetts's General Court meets from January 7, 2009, to January 5, 2010.
- Michigan** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.legislature.mi.gov](http://www.legislature.mi.gov).  
Michigan's State Legislature meets from January 14 to December 31, 2009.
- Minnesota** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.leg.state.mn.us](http://www.leg.state.mn.us).  
Minnesota's State Legislature meets from January 6 to May 18, 2009.

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- Mississippi** The State Legislature's Web site is [billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/](http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/).  
Mississippi's State Legislature meets from January 6 to April 5, 2009.
- Missouri** The General Assembly's Web site is [www.moga.mo.gov/](http://www.moga.mo.gov/).  
Missouri's General Assembly meets from January 7 to May 30, 2009.
- Montana** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.leg.mt.gov](http://www.leg.mt.gov).  
Montana's State Legislature meets from January 5 to April 28, 2009.
- Nebraska** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.unicam.state.ne.us](http://www.unicam.state.ne.us).  
Nebraska's State Legislature meets from January 7 to June 5, 2009.
- Nevada** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.leg.state.nv.us](http://www.leg.state.nv.us).  
Nevada's State Legislature meets from February 2 to June 1, 2009.
- New Hampshire** The General Court's Web site is [www.gencourt.state.nh.us](http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us).  
New Hampshire's General Court meets from January 7 to July 3, 2009.
- New Jersey** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.njleg.state.nj.us/](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/).  
New Jersey's State Legislature meets from January 13, 2009, to January 11, 2010.
- New Mexico** The State Legislature's Web site is [legis.state.nm.us/lcs/](http://legis.state.nm.us/lcs/).  
New Mexico's State Legislature meets from January 20 to March 21, 2009.
- New York** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.nysl.nysed.gov/ils/legislature/legis.html](http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/ils/legislature/legis.html).  
New York's State Legislature meets from January 7, 2009, to January 6, 2010.
- North Carolina** The General Assembly's Web site is [www.ncga.state.nc.us/](http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/).  
North Carolina's General Assembly meets from January 21 to August 7, 2009.
- North Dakota** The Legislative Branch's Web site is [www.legis.nd.gov/](http://www.legis.nd.gov/).  
North Dakota's Legislative Branch meets from January 6 to April 30, 2009.
- Ohio** The General Assembly's Web site is [www.legislature.state.oh.us/](http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/).  
Ohio's General Assembly meets from January 5 to December 31, 2009.
- Oklahoma** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.lsb.state.ok.us/](http://www.lsb.state.ok.us/).  
Oklahoma's State Legislature meets from February 2 to May 29, 2009.

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- Oregon** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.leg.state.or.us/](http://www.leg.state.or.us/).  
Oregon's State Legislature meets from January 12 to June 30, 2009.
- Pennsylvania** The General Assembly's Web site is [www.legis.state.pa.us/](http://www.legis.state.pa.us/).  
Pennsylvania's General Assembly meets from January 6 to January 6, 2010.
- Rhode Island** The General Assembly's Web site is [www.rilin.state.ri.us/](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/).  
Rhode Island's General Assembly meets from January 6 to June 26, 2009.
- South Carolina** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.scstatehouse.net/](http://www.scstatehouse.net/).  
South Carolina's State Legislature meets from January 13 to June 4, 2009.
- South Dakota** The State Legislature's Web site is [legis.state.sd.us/index.aspx](http://legis.state.sd.us/index.aspx).  
South Dakota's State Legislature meets from January 13 to March 30, 2009.
- Tennessee** The General Assembly's Web site is [www.legislature.state.tn.us/](http://www.legislature.state.tn.us/).  
Tennessee's General Assembly meets from January 13 to May 29, 2009.
- Texas** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.capitol.state.tx.us/](http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/).  
Texas's State Legislature meets from January 13 to June 1, 2009.
- Utah** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.le.state.ut.us/](http://www.le.state.ut.us/).  
Utah's State Legislature meets from January 19 to March 4, 2009.
- Vermont** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.leg.state.vt.us/](http://www.leg.state.vt.us/).  
Vermont's State Legislature meets from January 7 to May 31, 2009.
- Virginia** The General Assembly's Web site is [legis.state.va.us/](http://legis.state.va.us/).  
Virginia's General Assembly meets from January 14 to March 1, 2009.
- Washington** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.leg.wa.gov/](http://www.leg.wa.gov/).  
Washington's State Legislature meets from January 12 to April 26, 2009.
- West Virginia** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.legis.state.wv.us/](http://www.legis.state.wv.us/).  
West Virginia's State Legislature meets from January 14 to March 14, 2009.
- Wisconsin** The State Legislature's Web site is [www.legis.state.wi.us/](http://www.legis.state.wi.us/).  
Wisconsin's State Legislature meets from January 5 to January 12, 2010.
- Wyoming** The State Legislature's Web site is [legisweb.state.wy.us/](http://legisweb.state.wy.us/).  
Wyoming's State Legislature meets from January 13 to March 10, 2009.

For updated information, go to [www.statenet.com](http://www.statenet.com).



## APPENDIX IV

### Can the Girl Scouts Lobby?

Is it legal for GSUSA staff, Girl Scout council staff, and board members to lobby federal elected officials? The answer is yes! Lobbying is legal and, in fact, it is your right and responsibility to advocate for girls and Girl Scouting. For years many nonprofit organizations were hesitant to lobby because of vague regulations and laws that failed to clearly define the types of advocacy activities permitted by the staffs of nonprofit organizations. In 1976, however, Congress clarified the legal limits of advocacy for nonprofit organizations. Today, more and more nonprofit organizations are becoming skilled in advocacy in order to ensure that their interests are heard in Congress.

Again, simply stated, GSUSA staff, Girl Scout council staff, and board members are permitted to engage in lobbying their elected federal officials. However, there are certain limitations on lobbying expenditures and activities that must be respected. Disregarding these restrictions may result in the imposition of certain taxes, or it may even jeopardize the tax exempt status of the Girl Scout council that conducts the activity.

The laws governing nonprofit organizations draw a distinction between lobbying activities and electioneering activities. For organizations like GSUSA and the councils, lobbying activities are permissible, while electioneering activities are not. Lobbying on behalf of Girl Scouts means taking a stance on a particular issue or piece of legislation and voicing an opinion that reflects the interests of Girl Scouts. In other words, lobbying involves influencing elected officials who are already in office.

Nonprofit organizations are allowed to educate elected officials or other government officials about issues that are important to them. In your capacity as a Girl Scout representative, you may communicate with elected officials and their staff members in order to influence action on specific legislation, encouraging them either to enact it or defeat it. As a Girl Scout representative, you can write letters to members of Congress and their staffs, visit them, send e-mails, and make phone calls about their legislative interests or pending legislation. However, if you are in communication with an elected official during his or her re-election campaign, you must be very careful that your actions aren't misconstrued as an endorsement. Please contact the GSUSA Public Policy and Advocacy Office and/or your local legal counsel for guidance, should such a situation arise.

## APPENDIX IV

The tax law prohibits GSUSA and any council from electioneering. Electioneering is participating in the electoral process by promoting particular candidates for office. In your capacity as a Girl Scout representative, you may not endorse the candidacy of any political figure for public office or for office in any political party or organization. Any effort to influence the nomination or election of someone to a federal, state, or local public office, or to an office in a political organization, is prohibited. Likewise, you may not mobilize constituents to support or defeat a candidate when you are acting on behalf of Girl Scouts. Moreover, nonprofit organizations, like GSUSA and the councils, are prohibited from participating in any election-related events or activities. This prohibition included the making of financial contributions to candidates or political parties including payments, loans, deposits, gifts, or the transfer of anything of value. In addition, as a Girl Scout representative, you must avoid being partisan. That is, you cannot align with or endorse a particular political party. Similarly, you may not campaign in opposition to any candidate or political party on behalf of Girl Scouts.

If you have questions about your advocacy rights and responsibilities as a nonprofit organization, please contact your local legal counsel or the GSUSA Public Policy and Advocacy Office.

Girl Scouts of the United States of America and any Girl Scout council or other organization holding a Girl Scouts of the United States of America credential may not, nor may they authorize anyone on their behalf to, participate or intervene directly or indirectly in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office; or participate in any legislative activity or function which contravenes the laws governing tax-exempt organizations.



# APPENDIX V

## GIRL SCOUT STATE ADVOCACY COMMITTEES

The purpose of the state advocacy committee is to support the efforts of all Girl Scout councils within a state, as Girl Scouts becomes the thought leader and voice for and of girls.

It is important when developing the committee that there be representation from all of the councils in the state, and that it include both volunteers and paid staff. Consider including board members or staff who have knowledge or experience in the legislative process or have relationships with government officials.

The state advocacy committee may want to meet at least three times a year—before, during, and after the state legislative session. It is important that the committee communicate the advocacy activities with all of the councils in the state.

**The state advocacy committee is encouraged to:**

- Support all of the councils in the state in developing and achieving the state advocacy goals each year.
- Establish the Girl Scouts as the thought leader as well as the voice for girls with policy makers and community leaders.
- Determine if the state needs to hire a contract lobbyist to monitor state legislation important to Girl Scouts.
- Encourage councils to build and strengthen relationships with elected officials at the federal, state, and local levels.
- Work with councils in the state to build partnerships and coalitions with other non-profit and community organizations committed to similar policy agendas for youth and girls.
- Identify and develop strategies on how to act on legislation and be the voice for girls on girl policy issues that impact the Girl Scouts.
- Hold a Girl Scouts Day at the State Capitol to educate state legislators on Girl Scout programs and research that impact girls in their communities.
- Involve girls in advocacy to make the world a better place.



# APPENDIX VI

## Policy Options Grid and Examples

Policy Options	Definition	When/how to use	Examples
Resolutions/ Proclamations	Resolutions are used by a governing body to express an opinion or identify a priority. Resolutions typically do not <i>change</i> the law, but are used to articulate a philosophy, recognize the importance of a certain organization or issue, prompt action by another entity, or celebrate a milestone.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) When you're trying to introduce an issue into the public policy arena</li><li>2) When you still haven't reached consensus on a solution</li><li>3) When you're celebrating a milestone or event</li><li>4) When laws or regulations are not appropriate or feasible</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) A school board resolution recognizing September as "Relational Aggression Prevention Month"</li><li>2) A chamber of commerce resolution urging its members to use healthy media images in their advertising</li><li>3) A city council resolution urging the governor to require insurers to cover treatment for eating disorders</li><li>4) A proclamation by the mayor celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of your council</li></ol>
Pilot/ Demonstration Projects	Pilot and demonstration projects are usually short-term efforts to explore policy problems and identify solutions. Pilots or demonstrations are great ways to test theories or develop ideas.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) When several potential solutions might address a problem</li><li>2) When you need to do additional research on a policy or program</li><li>3) To help build your case for a longer term, more substantive policy solution</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) A pilot to test different anti-relational aggression policies at three different schools: for example, you might fine-tune policies to meet the demographic, socio-economic, or cultural differences among schools.</li><li>2) A demonstration program to expand eating disorder treatment and prevention at the community level</li></ol>

continued...

## APPENDIX VI

Policy Options	Definition	When/how to use	Examples
Government Sponsorships/ Partnerships	Building partnerships with or securing financial support from government entities is the next step following a demonstration project. If you have a proven track record, you can make the case for longer term, government-supported, sustained efforts to address a problem at the community or state level.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) When you have a tested, proven approach that can be replicated across many communities</li> <li>2) When a state or local agency could help you expand your capacity or expertise</li> <li>3) When you have a strong champion who can help you be successful</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Authorized state funding that helps Girl Scout Councils to train all teachers in a school district to recognize and prevent relational aggression</li> <li>2) A memorandum of understanding with your state health department in which they help you distribute information about eating disorders</li> <li>3) Creation of an advisory board within the chamber of commerce (including representatives from your council) to advise businesses on girl-friendly media images</li> </ol>
Incentives	Incentive-based approaches make it easier for entities (individuals, or private or public institutions) to take action, adopt certain policies, or initiate programs. Incentives do not typically force or require a certain action, but rather encourage and facilitate certain outcomes. Incentive approaches are the proverbial “carrot.”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) When political support is not strong enough to adopt a more stringent policy</li> <li>2) As a compromise with opponents</li> <li>3) When this approach would likely be more effective in reaching the desired outcome</li> <li>4) Where a test-run might help build the case for a stronger policy</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) A state law that provides matching funds for school districts that implement eating disorder programs</li> <li>2) A provision in the tax code that allows businesses to get tax credits if they use girl-friendly advertising</li> </ol>
Laws and Policies	Law and policy changes are perhaps the most effective—and sometimes most difficult—ways to get what you want. These changes to the law ensure that entities take certain actions. There are sometimes penalties associated with them, and if an organization <i>doesn't</i> act appropriately, it will cost them.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) When other approaches have not proven successful</li> <li>2) When a problem is so serious that nothing short of a law or policy will be effective</li> <li>3) When there is strong public support for a law or policy change</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) A district-wide, zero-tolerance policy on relational aggression</li> <li>2) A state law requiring insurance companies to cover treatment for eating disorders</li> <li>3) Zoning laws that make it illegal to construct billboards that contain negative media images</li> </ol>



# APPENDIX VII

## Building Relationships with Public Officials

Public Officials	Purpose for 1 <sup>st</sup> Meeting	Follow-up Opportunities
<p><b>Federal:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Members of Congress</li></ul>	<p><b>Please work with the GSUSA Public Policy and Advocacy Office:</b></p> <p>Describe Girl Scout programs and the impact on girls. Emphasize some of your signature and outreach programs such as Girl Scout Beyond Bars.</p> <p>Brief them on the Girl Scouts congressional agenda. Let them know about the bills/appropriations moving through Congress that Girl Scouts support.</p> <p>Invite them to be the keynote speaker at an upcoming Girl Scout Gold Awards ceremony.</p>	<p>Add official to VIP mailing list.</p> <p>Ask official to highlight a Girl Scout story about local troop on the House/ Senate floor, in their newsletter or on their Web site.</p> <p>Ask official to attend and host a volunteer/ donor recognition event.</p> <p>Encourage web link from member's site to <b><a href="http://www.girlscouts.org">www.girlscouts.org</a></b>.</p>

continued...

Public Officials	Purpose for 1 <sup>st</sup> Meeting	Follow-up Opportunities
<p><b>State:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governor*</li> <li>• Statewide officials*</li> <li>• State Legislators Senators and Representatives</li> </ul> <p>*coordinate with all of the councils in the state</p>	<p>Describe Girl Scout programs and the impact on girls. Emphasize some of your signature and outreach programs such as Girl Scout Beyond Bars</p> <p>Deliver and describe GSRI research reports.</p> <p>Describe the work of the Girl Scout Gold Awards and ask them to honor Gold Award recipients in state capitol or governor’s mansion.</p> <p>Ask to post information about upcoming training on their Web site or in their newsletter. Highlight a recent Girl Scout event or training in their community</p> <p>Ask to be appointed to state task forces/ commissions addressing youth or girl policy issues.</p>	<p>Invite official to be an honorary Girl Scout troop member.</p> <p>Ask official to chair council wide events, including “Women of Distinction” and Gold Award recognition.</p> <p>Invite official to visit a Girl Scout summer camp in their area.</p> <p>Invite official or staff member to participate in a Girl Scout training course.</p> <p>Ask official to testify at state legislative hearings about issues important to girls and Girl Scouting.</p> <p>Add official to council newsletters/ mailing list for council activities.</p> <p>Ask official to promote a Girl Scout program statewide (i.e. serve as the spokesperson for Live Healthy, Lead Healthy).</p> <p>Add official to distribution list of Girl Scout GSRI Research Reports and e-newsletter.</p> <p>Ask official to host a briefing, hearing, or press conference on the release of a recent Girl Scout research report.</p> <p>Invite official to sit on council advisory board or board of directors.</p> <p>Encourage link from governor/state legislator Web site to <b>www.girlscouts.org</b>.</p>

continued...

## APPENDIX VII

Public Officials	Purpose for 1 <sup>st</sup> Meeting	Follow-up Opportunities
<p><b>Local:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mayors</li> <li>• City Council</li> <li>• County Commissioners</li> <li>• County Judges</li> <li>• School Board members</li> </ul>	<p>Describe Girl Scout programs and their impact on girls. Emphasize some of your signature and outreach programs such as Girl Scout Beyond Bars.</p> <p>Deliver and describe GSRI research reports.</p> <p>Describe the work of the Girl Scout Gold Awards and ask them to consider ways to honor them.</p> <p>Ask to be appointed to local task forces/commissions addressing youth or girl policy issues.</p> <p>Ask official to attend/chair an upcoming Girl Scouting event.</p>	<p>Add official to council newsletters/ mailing list for council activities.</p> <p>Invite official to attend a council event.</p> <p>Invite official to participate in a Girl Scout training course.</p> <p>Invite official to sit on council advisory board or board of directors.</p> <p>Add official to distribution list of Girl Scout GSRI Research Reports and e-newsletter.</p> <p>Invite official to visit a Girl Scout Summer Camp in their area.</p>

Please share your ideas and successes with the GSUSA Washington, DC office at [advocacy@girlscouts.org](mailto:advocacy@girlscouts.org) or fax 202-331-8065.



## APPENDIX VIII

### Hosting a Legislative Advocacy Day in Nine Easy Steps

A State Legislative Advocacy Day can present an opportunity for Girl Scout councils to educate members of their state legislature about the work we do on behalf of girls; to demonstrate that Girl Scouts is the preeminent organization for girls and an expert on girls' issues; and to advocate for or against a piece of legislation.

**Here are nine easy steps that can guide you in planning and executing a successful Legislative Advocacy Day in your state.**

- 1) *Pick a date to hold your Legislative Advocacy Day.* Typically, this date should coincide with a legislative session, so that you will be able to meet with your state legislators and not just their staff.
- 2) *Determine your agenda for the day.* What will your key message(s) be? What do you want members of your state legislature to know about girls and Girl Scouts in your state? What do you want them to do? This agenda should be clear and concise and, most importantly, unified — all council representatives should be delivering the same messages. The agenda does not have to focus specifically on a piece of legislation, but if appropriate, incorporate some of the Live Healthy, Lead Healthy messages described in the Policy Avenues. You can link these issues to the work of Girl Scouts in your state.
- 3) *Make appointments with your state legislators.* It is best to have meetings with your state legislators in small teams. Moreover, a constituent should always be present in the meeting. You should strive to have a visit scheduled with the office of every legislator.
- 4) *Develop and host a legislative training session.* The session should be held either the day before or the morning of your Legislative Advocacy Day. This step is critical to ensure that your Legislative Advocacy Day is a success. The training can help to ease any tensions that first-time advocates may be experiencing, clarify message points, ensure that all Girl Scout representatives are delivering the same message(s) to your state legislators, and help your advocates feel prepared for their meetings. You should also make time for Girl Scout representatives to gather in their meeting teams to determine who will be the lead in your various meetings and who will be responsible for conveying the message(s) you want to deliver.
- 5) *Invite a guest speaker.* Preferably you should invite an elected official who has been a champion of your issues to address the council representatives during the training session and provide inspiration.

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6) *Compile materials you will need for your Legislative Advocacy Day.* These materials should include a one-page fact sheet on your key message points; leave-behind materials including contact information for your council; information about Girl Scouting in your state; and a meeting summary form, which will help you capture important information from your legislative meetings.

7) *Attend your Legislative Advocacy Day meetings.*

- Research your state legislator's background, committee assignments, and voting records on issues pertaining to girls, Girl Scouting, and Girl Scout interests before the meeting.
- Limit your presentation to 5–10 minutes. Your state legislator expects to spend about 15 minutes with your group.
- Be concise and focus on your agenda. Come prepared with talking points so that you can stay focused. Remember that your state legislator may have no understanding of your issue, so be prepared to educate her/him.
- Whenever possible, speak from personal experience and provide examples of how this issue affects your council.
- Ask directly for your state legislator's support. If your state legislator is supportive, ask her/him to speak with other state legislators to rally their support for your position as well. If your state legislator disagrees with you, listen to her/him, rebut her/his argument if you have facts to do so, and express respectful disappointment. Be courteous and respectful, as you will have other issues to take up in the future.
- Provide your state legislator and her/his staff with a concise, one-page fact sheet or letter describing your program and position on an issue. If possible, include data from evaluations of the programs you discussed.
- If you are asked a question that you do not know the answer to, be honest and offer to follow up with the state legislator with the answer.
- At the end of the meeting, thank the state legislator for meeting with you and leave your business card so he/she can contact you in the future.
- If staff is in attendance, get their contact information as well. Be sure to include staff in any future follow-up activities.

8) *After Legislative Advocacy Day, be sure to follow up.* Send thank-you notes to your state legislators and send any information that they may have requested during your meeting.

9) *Call the GSUSA Public Policy and Advocacy Office if you have questions or need assistance in putting together a Legislative Advocacy Day.*



# APPENDIX IX

## Writing Effective Letters to Public Officials

Personal, thoughtful letters to policymakers have a considerable impact. Keep in mind that security measures may slow the delivery of U.S. Mail. If the issue you are writing about is pressing, e-mail or fax the letter in addition to sending a copy through the mail.

When sending a meeting request, call the policymaker's office to find out how he/she prefers to take meeting requests. You may have to e-mail or fax a request, in addition to sending the request through regular mail.

**When writing a letter to a policymaker, keep the following in mind:**

- Focus on one issue or bill per letter, and identify the bill by name and number, if available.
- Express your point of view succinctly, and explain why the legislator should be supportive of your position. Be brief and courteous.
- Explain the local impact of the legislation.
- Request that the legislator take a specific position on the bill or issue. If you want him or her to support a bill, ask him or her to cosponsor it or to vote for its passage.
- Ask for a response.
- Make sure your contact information is on the letter so that he or she can respond. Use Girl Scout council letterhead.
- If possible, keep the letter to one page.
- Fax a copy to the Public Policy and Advocacy Office at (202) 331-8065 or e-mail it to [advocacy@girlscouts.org](mailto:advocacy@girlscouts.org). We love knowing about your advocacy efforts!

Adapted from "Advocacy in Girl Scouting," March 2002



# APPENDIX X

## Hosting Policymakers at an Event

When policymakers attend Girl Scout events, there are certain things you can do to make sure you get the most out of the visit.

- Inform them of the event early on. Involve them in the planning stage, so you have a better chance of making your event a priority on their calendar. When making contact, be sure to make it personal; let them know that their participation is important to you. Send background materials in advance (such as the fact sheets you've created!). Remember that even if the policymakers don't attend, you've made contact and created a connection.
- Invite those you have invited to make a presentation of some kind. Ask them to present a keynote or public address at the event. Policymakers are overscheduled; if they have to choose between stopping by one event and speaking at another, they'll usually choose the one that involves them tangibly. Offer to write their talking points or a press release on their behalf; try to do everything you can to facilitate their participation.
- Set a time frame and keep the event brief. Policymakers are much more likely to attend a short stop-by than a two-hour visit.
- Always follow up with a phone call and be sure to confirm their participation. Make a friendly reminder call just prior to the event. (You can never be too sure!)
- Plan in advance for their attendance by coordinating logistics and other details with their staff.
- Make certain that legislators are recognized publicly and seated at a head table if appropriate. A Girl Scout representative should greet them at the door and introduce them to VIPs. Acknowledge their participation publicly at the event.
- Assign one Girl Scout representative to be the point of contact for the legislator.
- Highlight participation in your newsletter, on your Web site, and in other public venues. Be sure to send a copy of that information with your thank-you note.
- Send a thank-you note immediately after the event.

Adapted from "Advocacy in Girl Scouting," March 2002



# APPENDIX XI

## Successful In-Person Meetings with Policymakers MAKING THE MOST OF VISITS

When personal contacts with policymakers become necessary, it can be daunting to plan and execute a successful meeting. Here are some tips for preparing (and excelling at!) in-person meetings.

### Preparing the Meeting

- To schedule a meeting, send a request in writing to the policymaker's scheduler and follow up within a few days by phone. (See custom samples in Policy Avenues.)
- When you are scheduled to visit with your elected official, make a clearly defined agenda so that you can be knowledgeable and articulate about your issues.
- Do your homework. Research the background, committee assignments, and voting records of your legislator on issues pertaining to girls, Girl Scouting, and Girl Scouts' interests. Many policymakers have Web sites with useful information about their work, so be sure to do a quick search for that.
- Hold a pre-meeting or conference call with everyone who will attend the visit to make certain that your message is unified and clear. Create talking points and decide who will facilitate the meeting. Decide in advance who will discuss which points so that your visit runs smoothly.

### Holding the Meeting

- Your presentation should be short—about 5–10 minutes. Most state legislators expect to spend about fifteen minutes with you, although it varies with different governmental bodies.
- Be concise and focus on your agenda. Remember that the policymaker may have no understanding of your issue, so be prepared to educate.
- Whenever possible, speak from personal experience. Provide brief anecdotal evidence of how this issue affects your council, and therefore, the policymaker's constituents.
- Develop a specific "ask." Whenever possible, try to be as precise as possible—ask her or him to cosponsor a specific bill, send a letter, vote in a particular fashion, or take a specific action. Vague or innocuous requests ("support Girl Scouts"), are missed opportunities.
- If she or he is supportive, ask her/him to speak with colleagues to rally support for your position. If the policymaker disagrees with you, listen, rebut if you have facts to do so, and express respectful disappointment. Be courteous; you'll have other issues in the future.

## APPENDIX XI

- Always provide policymakers and staffs with a concise, one-page fact sheet describing your program and position on an issue (see sample fact sheets in Policy Avenues). Provide other relevant materials such as sample legislative language, GSRI research, and news articles.
- If you are asked a question that you don't know the answer to, be honest and offer to follow up.

### **Following Up**

- Write a thank-you letter to thank the policymaker for her/his time, reinforce your position, reiterate the request, and answer any questions you were unable to answer during the meeting.
- Follow up in a timely manner on any promises made or questions left unanswered.



# APPENDIX XII

## Getting in Print

### WELL-WRITTEN LETTERS TO THE EDITOR AND OP-EDS

#### Letters to the Editor

- Respond to an article printed recently in the newspaper.
- Are generally quite brief, (about 150–200 words), but that will vary by paper.
- Should follow the advice of the editor of The New York Times letters page: “Write quickly, concisely and engagingly. We’re in an age of fast-moving news and virtually instant reaction; letters about an especially timely topic often appear within a day or two (and almost always within a week).”
- Often have length requirements. Check the paper’s Web site or editorial page for specifics.
- Are most often submitted via e-mail or fax. Check the paper’s Web site or editorial page for contact information.
- May be edited by newspaper staff for brevity, clarity, or civility.

#### Op-Eds

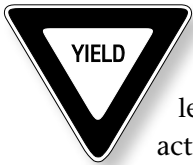
- Are longer than letters to the editor—usually about 500–750 words.
- Should follow the guidance of the editor of The New York Times Op-Ed section: “Among other things, we look for timeliness, ingenuity, strength of argument, freshness of opinion, clear writing and newsworthiness. Personal experiences and first-person narrative can be great, particularly when they’re in service to a larger idea. So is humor, when it’s funny.”
- Sometimes are compensated.
- Are usually printed after further discussion between the writer and the newspaper.
- Often have length requirements. Check the paper’s Web site or editorial page for specifics.
- Are most often submitted via e-mail or fax, these days. Check the paper’s Web site or editorial page for contact information.
- May be edited by newspaper staff for brevity, clarity, or civility.



# APPENDIX XIII

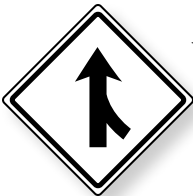
## Graphics Key

This one means “There’s more to know about this concept, if you’d like to pursue it!” If you want more information, call the GPS (your Guide to Policy Solutions) at (202) 659-3780 or e-mail us at [advocacy@girlscouts.org](mailto:advocacy@girlscouts.org)



The yield sign says “See what other councils in your state think about this.” If there are other councils in your state or, better yet, a state advocacy committee/ legislative task force, you’ll probably want to consult with them before this particular activity.

“Do Not Pass” means to be sure not to skip this. This graphic indicates a particularly important topic that shouldn’t be overlooked.



When we introduce new tools, we’ve filled them with mock places and people. When you see the merge sign, underlined and <bracketed> portions represent places where you should adapt the language to your council’s specifications.

The crosswalk sign says, “Here’s your chance to involve girls!” These activities represent opportunities to engage girls in the advocacy process.





# APPENDIX XIV

## Ideas for One-Year Action Plan EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS OF YOUR ISSUE

### OVERALL GOALS:

- Educate your community or state about an issue and provide solutions to the problem
- Elevate Girl Scouts as the leading voice on this issue
- Create a baseline of knowledge and support that can be built upon in the future

### 1<sup>st</sup>-Quarter Benchmarks

- Choose your Healthy Living Policy Avenue
- Build a coalition and collaborate on a strategy to educate the community or state on your issue
- Identify spokesperson(s) to champion your issue
- Develop materials to educate the community or state

MONTH	
1	<p><b>Make a plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose a Healthy Living Avenue (relational aggression, healthy media images, or eating disorders)</li> <li>• Understand the issue and conduct research: gather statistics, data, and examples related to your issue</li> <li>• Identify ways to educate and promote the issue in your local community or at the state level. If you take on a statewide public awareness effort, make sure to include all of the councils in your state as well as your state advocacy committee/legislative task force</li> </ul> <p><b>Build a coalition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and reach out to potential external partners</li> <li>• Assemble a group of individuals or organizations with an interest in your issue who will work together towards a common goal</li> </ul>
2	<p><b>Define a plan to educate and raise awareness for the issue in your community or state</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with your coalition partners on goals and objectives; develop a timeline and accountability measures</li> <li>• Decide who will be your group’s spokesperson on the issue, or reach out to a respected local expert to be the face of your coalition with the community</li> <li>• Determine who opposes this issue and consider communicating why this issue is important to girls and the Girl Scouts</li> </ul>

continued...

MONTH	
3	<p><b>Develop materials to educate the community or state</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect existing research and materials from the toolkit, from within Girl Scouts and from external sources</li> <li>• Refine or draft new materials, such as a fact sheet, key messages, FAQ, and talking points with ideas and solutions to educate the community or state. Look to the toolkit for samples</li> <li>• Discuss policy options</li> </ul>
<p><b>2<sup>nd</sup>- and 3<sup>rd</sup>-Quarter Benchmarks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch a public awareness and education campaign around the issue</li> <li>• Look for opportunities to inform the community and state through the media</li> <li>• Educate state and local policymakers about the issue</li> </ul>	
4	<p><b>Launch your education campaign</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold public forums, town hall meetings and other events to educate public about the issue. Invite subject matter experts to explain the issue and its impact on girls. Make sure to invite both the media and policymakers to these events</li> </ul>
5	<p><b>Engage the media</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pitch your issue to the media and encourage them to write articles about the impact of the issue on girls. Alert the media when you are hosting public forums and ask them to cover your outreach and education campaign. Make sure the media interviews girls about the issue and its effect on them</li> </ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit letters to the editor and op-eds from council leadership, coalition partners, and girls</li> <li>• Consider developing a Web site about the issue or developing a part of your Web site to keep the public and media informed. Include the fact sheets and key messages you developed and invite girls to explain how the issue impacts their lives</li> </ul>
7	<p><b>Educate your state and local policymakers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage public officials who can champion your issue and support your education campaign</li> </ul>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with policymakers within your community or at the state level and educate them about the issue, why it is important to girls, and your proposed solutions</li> </ul>
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlight the GSRI research report <i>The New Normal? What Girls Say about Healthy Living</i> and distribute copies</li> <li>• Consider bringing girls along to the meetings to discuss how the issue impacts their lives</li> <li>• Invite elected officials to participate in Girl Scout programs related to the issue</li> </ul>

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**4<sup>th</sup>-Quarter Benchmarks**

- Assess your efforts to educate and promote the issue in your community or state
- Consider implementing policy solutions with your coalition as a next step

MONTH	
10	<p><b>Assess and move forward</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze success of education and awareness campaign. Consider collaborating with your coalition on policy options as a next step</li> <li>• Identify policymakers who have been interested in this issue to potentially become policy champions</li> </ul>
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold educational meetings with policymakers to discuss policy options</li> </ul>
12	<p><b>Prepare to advocate for policy solutions at the state or local level</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host an internal debrief session to assess the accomplishments of the coalition in educating and raising awareness for the issue</li> <li>• Celebrate your success and thank the people who helped support your efforts</li> <li>• Begin collaborating with your coalition partners on the steps to implementing policy solutions</li> </ul>

## Ideas for One-Year Action Plan

### IMPLEMENT POLICY SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR ISSUE

#### OVERALL GOALS

- Educate your community or state about an issue and provide solutions to the problem
- Elevate Girl Scouts as the leading voice on this issue
- Create and implement a policy agenda and related advocacy strategy

#### 1<sup>st</sup>-Quarter Benchmarks

- Choose your Healthy Living Policy Avenue
- Research existing policies and determine where Girl Scouts can make an impact
- Build a coalition to support your policy agenda and collaborate on strategy
- Assess current relationships with elected officials

MONTH	
1	<p><b>Make a plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose a Healthy Living Policy Avenue (relational aggression, healthy media images or eating disorders)</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct research: cull statistics, data, and examples related to your issue</li> <li>• Identify potential policy solutions and frame the issue</li> <li>• Create a broad statement about the issue</li> <li>• Coordinate all policy efforts at the state level with your state advocacy committee/ state legislative network</li> </ul> <p><b>Build a coalition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and reach out to potential external partners to support your issue</li> <li>• Assemble a group of individuals or organizations with an interest in your issue who will work together towards a common goal</li> <li>• Hold a kick-off planning session and develop an action plan. Collaborate on a strategy for your policy solution and develop a rough timeline</li> <li>• Work with your coalition to finalize the plan and assign roles and responsibilities</li> </ul>
3	<p><b>Assess relationships with elected officials</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify Girl Scout council staff and volunteer leadership who have relationships with policymakers at the state and local level</li> <li>• Look to coalition partners who may already have contacts with elected officials at the state or local level</li> </ul>

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**2<sup>nd</sup>- and 3<sup>rd</sup>-Quarter Benchmarks**

- Develop educational materials to advance policy solutions
- Educate your community or state about the issue
- Identify policymakers who can be champions of your policy agenda at the state or local level

MONTH	
4	<p><b>Develop supporting materials to educate community and policymakers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect existing research and materials from the toolkit, Girl Scouts, and external sources</li> <li>• Develop fact sheet, FAQ, key messages, and talking points with a focus on your policy solutions. Look to toolkit for samples</li> </ul>
5	<p><b>Educate community or state about the issue</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold public forums, town hall meetings, and other events to educate the community about the issue. Invite subject matter experts to explain the issue and its impact on girls. Consider inviting both public policymakers and media to these events</li> <li>• Pitch your policy agenda to the media and encourage them to include stories about the impact of the issue on girls. Submit letters to the editor and op-eds to support the issue</li> </ul>
6	<p><b>Secure legislative champions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask interested policymakers to champion your policy agenda. Consider asking them to introduce a bill, amend legislation, or support funding for a program</li> </ul>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer elected officials public recognition for championing your public policy agenda. Consider mentioning these public officials in your council newsletter or on your Web site. Invite them to host a Girl Scout event or issue a joint press release about the issue</li> <li>• Consider meeting with those state and local officials who oppose your policy direction and discuss alternative language before introducing a bill</li> </ul>

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**4<sup>th</sup>-Quarter Benchmarks**

- Introduce bill or amendment
- Ask policymakers to support your bill or amendment
- Hold an event when bill is signed into law
- Assess your accomplishments and thank your supporters

MONTH	
8	<p><b>Introduce bill or amendment through your legislative champion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with legislative sponsor to draft specific policy language for a bill or amendment</li> <li>• Consider holding a press conference with your coalition to introduce the bill at the state house or city hall</li> </ul>
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send the previously developed letter of support for the policy from all of the coalition members to members of the state legislature or city council</li> <li>• Send thank-you letters to the legislative champions and their staff</li> </ul> <p><b>Lobby on the issue with your coalition partners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate with coalition members in contacting elected officials to ask for support of your bill/amendment</li> <li>• Meet with legislative committees and ask for a hearing on the issue. Consider having girls testify along with subject matter experts and coalition members</li> <li>• Offer to support the champion in moving the bill forward through the legislative process</li> </ul>
10	<p><b>Keep the legislative process moving forward</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with legislative champions and their staff to ensure that the bill or amendment is enacted</li> </ul>
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When bill is signed into law, celebrate your victory by thanking all of your supporters</li> <li>• Hold a bill-signing event with the governor, mayor, or other public officials</li> </ul>
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host an internal debrief session with the coalition and assess your accomplishments, celebrate your success, and learn from your mistakes. Consider other opportunities to make an impact</li> </ul>

