

# Inclusion

## An equal experience for all girls.

GSBDC values inclusiveness and is committed to serving a diverse membership that reflects the girl population of communities in the council's jurisdiction.

### What is "inclusion?"

Inclusion is "an attitude and approach that seeks to ensure that every person regardless of ability or background can meaningfully participate in all aspects of life." It also involves making reasonable or respectful accommodations that allow persons with disabilities access to learning, recreation, leisure and work.

### Why is inclusion important?

- About 50 million Americans have some form of disability
- 75% of youth have hidden disabilities

### In addition, inclusion:

- Upholds civil rights
- Promotes acceptance
- Embraces differences
- Welcomes all
- Requires flexibility
- Facilitates relationships

Girls will learn about inclusion through the three keys to leadership present in every Girl Scout Leadership Experience: Discover, Connect, and Take Action.

### What are "hidden disabilities?"

Hidden or invisible, disabilities are certain kinds of disabilities that aren't immediately apparent to others. This definition encompasses neurological and mental disorders, as well as chronic illness. In children, this would include ADHS, epilepsy, severe food allergies, autism spectrum disorders, brain injuries and more.

### Did you know...

Juliette Gordon Low, founder of Girl Scouts, suffered from severe hearing loss. An experimental treatment for a severe ear infection caused her to become deaf in one ear at age 25. When Juliette was 26, a grain of rice became lodged in her ear on her wedding day and the eardrum of her good ear was punctured

when doctors removed it. However, she refused to be marginalized for this disability and her own experiences helped her frame Girl Scouts as an institution free from discrimination. This attitude of inclusion persists to this day.

## **Inclusion Etiquette in Girl Scout Settings**

- First and foremost, treat everyone with dignity and respect
- Focus on the individual as a person first, regardless of ability, background, race, ethnicity or culture
- Provide a welcoming attitude - children of all ages can sense whether they are welcome or not
- Practice flexibility - acknowledge individual differences of the girls in our programs by considering the various energy levels, interests, skills and plan activities accordingly

The adult companions to almost every National Leadership Journey also include useful information on welcoming girls with disabilities under the head:

**"Health, Safety and Well Being."**

## **To learn more about disabilities and inclusion, visit:**

- American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD): <https://www.aapd.com>
- American Disability Association (ADA): <https://www.ada.gov>
- Kids Included Together (KIT): <https://kit.org>

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