



# Troop and Service Unit Authorized Account Signer Responsibilities & Financial Best Practices

## Troop and Service Unit Authorized Account Signer Responsibilities

Thank you for expressing an interest in being an authorized account signer on a troop or service unit (group) checking account. As an authorized account signer on a group account, you are agreeing to work with your Girl Scout troop to plan and finance its own activities, coach your girls as they earn and manage troop funds and guide girls as they learn key money skills that will serve them throughout their lives. You will do this by complying with [Girl Scouts Dakota Horizons \(GSDH\) Troop and Service Unit Funds Policies](#) and complying with the Troop and Service Unit Authorized Account Signer Responsibilities outlined below. Being an authorized account signer is never “on paper only”.

### Membership Responsibilities

Each account shall have two (2) registered and approved Girl Scout adults registered within the service unit, not of the same family or living in the same household, as signers on the account at all times. Signer requirements:

1. Be a registered Girl Scout adult, renewing your GSUSA membership annually by October 1.
2. Be an approved Girl Scout volunteer by submitting an initial criminal background check and renewing your criminal background check every three years. If your criminal background check is up for renewal, you will receive instructions on how to renew it via email.
3. Hold the Troop Treasurer role. Troop Treasurer roles should be added through MYGS for all group authorized account signers.
4. Remain free of any financial restrictions.

### Account Management Responsibilities

Upon forming a troop or service unit, a checking account shall be opened for funds to be used for the purpose of supporting Girl Scout activities. All group funds generated and all group expenses incurred must run through the group bank account. Funds should not remain outside of the group bank account. Day-to-day custodianship of group funds is delegated to the authorized account signers.

1. Request to open or make changes to a group checking account by submitting the [Bank Account Authorization Request Form](#) found on the GSDH website under Forms. You will need to obtain a Bank Account Authorization Letter from the Council office before going to your financial institution. The Bank Account Authorization Letter will be emailed to everyone listed on the Bank Account Authorization Request Form.

Reference [How to Open a New Troop/Service Unit Checking Account](#) found on the GSDH website under Volunteer Resources/ Finances for more information regarding opening a group checking account.

2. Maintain two (2) registered and approved Girl Scout adults registered within the Service Unit, not of the same family or living in the same household, as signers on the account at all times.
3. Obtain two signatures for any expenditure in excess of \$500.00.
4. Maintain the GSDH recommended Check Register throughout the year. The GSDH recommended Check Register is updated annually and made available on the GSDH website under Volunteer/Volunteer Resources/Finances annually on July 1.
5. Decide as a group how its money will be used for well-balanced program activities, keeping the following in mind:
  - Group funds may not be used for any non-Girl Scout purpose.
  - Under no circumstances shall the money be divided among members of the group for personal use, used by the authorized account signers for her/his personal use, or donated to another organization.
6. Pay group bills in a responsible, timely manner. Groups may not under any circumstances issue NSF (non-sufficient funds) checks. Authorized account signers who overdraw their account can be dismissed.
7. Ensure your group has a system of checks and balances in place. It is recommended that one authorized account signer be responsible for making the deposits and purchases while the second authorized account signer be responsible for validating the deposits and purchases are for well-balanced Girl Scout activities, recording them in the check register and balancing the check register to the bank statement each time it is produced by the bank.

## **Account Reporting Requirements**

1. Submit the [Bank Account Confirmation / ACH Form](#), found on the GSDH website under Forms, within ten (10) business days of opening or making changes to your group bank account.
2. Report the group finances to the girls, parents and sponsors regularly using the Monthly Financial Summary Tab of the GSDH provided Check Register workbook. How frequently is regularly? Ideally, after each time the bank statement is produced by the bank, but at a minimum three (3) times a year, when you host your Fall Back to Troop meeting, your Cookie Planning meeting and your Spring Troop Wrap-Up meeting.
3. Complete the Annual Finance Report in its entirety by June 15. A copy of the current year May bank statement and the check register must be attached to the Annual Finance Report as well.
  - Explain, on the Annual Finance Report, how funds in excess of \$400 will be spent. If funds over \$400 are not going to be used or an adequate reason is not submitted, the troop may be asked to submit the funds to the council. This will be up to the discretion of the Controller or Chief Financial Officer.
4. Retain bank statements and receipts on the account for two reporting years

## Troop & Service Unit Financial Best Practices

You have agreed to be an authorized account signer on a group account and have been added as an authorized account signer at the bank. Now what? Follow these troop and service unit financial best practices to help get you start on the right foot.

### Submitting the Bank Account Confirmation/ACH Form

GSDH [Troop and Service Unit Funds Policy](#) states within ten (10) business days of opening or making changes to your group bank account the account signers must complete the [Bank Account Confirmation / ACH Form](#), which is found on the GSDH website under Forms.

- ✓ Submitting after opening your account confirms to council that your account is opened, where you are banking and what the bank routing and account number are so council can conduct financial transactions with each group via ACH.
- ✓ Submitting after making changes to the authorized account signers confirms to council that you have taken the Bank Account Authorization Letter to the bank and made the requested changes at the bank.

### Maintain a System of Checks and Balances

GSDH [Troop and Service Unit Funds Policy](#) states that each account shall have two (2) registered and approved Girl Scout adults registered within the service unit, not of the same family or living or in the same household, as signers on the account at all times. This is so groups can maintain a system of checks and balances.

How? Divide responsibilities. One account signer should be responsible for making the deposits and purchases while the second account signer should be responsible for validating the deposits and purchases are for well-balanced Girl Scout activities, recording them in the check register and balancing the check register to the bank statement each time it is produced by the bank. Troop finances should never be handled by just one of the authorized account signers.

Authorized account signers are typically the Troop Co-Leaders. Did you know they do not have to be? Get a troop parent involved to serve as a Troop Treasurer. Another way to maintain a system of checks and balances is to have a Troop Treasurer team of three.

The two Troop Co-Leaders can be responsible for making the deposits and purchases. A third authorized account signer, a troop parent, can be the checks and balances by validating the deposits and purchases and recording/balancing the check register to the bank statement each time it is produced by the bank. Just make sure the parent is a registered and approved Girl Scout volunteer.

## **GSDH Check Register**

GSDH has developed an Excel workbook that is designed to make managing the group checking account and fulfilling many of the GSDH [Troop and Service Unit Funds Policies](#) quick and easy.

- ✓ **Check Register Tab**—provides a check register that can be maintained throughout the year and attached to the Annual Finance Report that is due on June 15 each year.
- ✓ **Monthly Financial Summary Tab**—summarizes the group income and expenses by category by month based on what you enter into the Check Register Tab. This is a good tool to report to your girls, parents and sponsors so they all know where group funds came from and how they are spent. The money belongs to the girls, and they should know how much they have and how it has been spent.
- ✓ **Annual Finance Report Guide Tab**—formatted to match the Annual Finance Report making it easy to fill out and submit the Annual Finance Report by June 15 each year.

The check register is updated annually and posted to [Volunteer Essentials](#) on July 1 of each year and allows council to make any necessary updates based on recommendations provided by our volunteers during the prior reporting period.

## **Create a Plan or Budget**

GSDH [Troop and Service Unit Funds Policy](#) states funds are to be used for the purpose of supporting Girl Scout activities. Furthermore, the funds belong to the **GIRLS**; they earned the funds and they decide how their funds are spent. Helping girls decide what they want to do and coaching them as they earn and manage money to pursue their goals is an integral part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE). Your Girl Scout group plans and finances its own activities, with your guidance. At the same time, the girls learn many valuable skills that serve them throughout their lives.

## **Girl Balances within Troop Funds**

**Girls earn money only for the group, never for themselves. Groups may not track individual girl balances within the group account.** Girls may not receive individual credit for the amount of funds or the portion of the group account that resulted from their contributed group dues, or their money earned on product program group proceeds. The IRS has issued an advisory that non-profit organizations may **NOT** track individual “girl accounts”. Per the IRS, “a section 501(c) (3) organization must not be organized or operated for the benefit of private interests. No part of the net earnings of a section 501(c) (3) organization may inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.”

## Be Transparent

Report the group finances to the girls, parents and sponsors regularly using the Monthly Financial Summary Tab of the GSDH provided Check Register workbook. This allows girls, parents and sponsors to know where group funds came from and how they are spent while eliminating the need to ask questions. How often is regularly? Ideally, after each bank statement is reconciled to the bank account, but at a minimum three times a year.

- ✓ **Back to Troop:** This is when you can create or review your plan or budget for the year or years to come. What do the girls want to do? Do they have the funds to do that? What Fall Product Program/Cookie Program goals do they need to set to financially be able to execute their plan?
- ✓ **Pre-Cookie Program:** Has your group's plan or budget changed? Did you meet your Fall Program goal? Are you still on track to execute the girls plan? Do you need to update your Cookie Program goal?
- ✓ **Post Cookie Program:** Has your group's plan or budget changed? Did you meet your Cookie Program goal? Are you still on track to execute the girls plan? Although this meeting is towards the end of the active Girl Scout year, this is probably the most important because most of our group finance issues arise when a group is unable to pay for the cookies they took from council.

If your group is not sharing information about its finances, ask questions either to the group leadership or to council.

### **Keep good financial records by maintaining a troop finance binder.**

In your binder have three tabs, current year, prior year one, and prior year two. At the end of each month, after reconciling the check register to the bank statement, add a copy of the Monthly Financial Summary Tab and the bank statement with deposit slips and receipts to support each transaction for the month attached. You can bring the troop finance binder to your groups meetings and report the group finances to the girls, parents and sponsors.

At the end of the year add a copy of the submitted Annual Finance Report and move the reporting year's (June – May) activity back a tab. This ensures you are able to report on the current status of your groups finances at any time and are maintaining two years' worth of records in the event of an account audit.

## Product Programs

Product Programs are a busy time for troops. Girls are setting goals and making decisions on how to reach their goals both individually and as a group. Troop Co-Leaders and Product Program Coordinators need work together to decide who will continue leading troop meetings and/or activities, who will be getting supplies, who will be managing troop cookie inventory, who will be managing troop booths, do you need additional helpers? Follow these helpful hints when it comes to managing troop finances

- ✓ Troops should collect money often throughout the program to minimize risk of loss or outstanding balances. Troops should also deposit money frequently to avoid leaving funds in convenient, but unsafe locations. Try making Monday known as Money Monday's. Collect funds from girls over the weekend and deposit their funds and the troop booth funds into the troop bank account on Monday's. This will also help minimize the number of checks from customers that are returned from the bank for Non-Sufficient Funds.

- ✓ To help aid in keeping good financial and inventory records for your troop, have all parents/girls sign receipts when checking out product and turning in funds for their sales. This will help to avoid any confusion over financial responsibility of product. Don't forget to update the Product Program Systems (M2 & eBudde) with this information.
- ✓ Deposit each girl's funds and troop booth funds using a separate deposit slip. This will help identify whose funds were deposited in the troop bank account if there is ever a question.

## **Annual Finance Reports**

Make completing your group's Annual Finance Report quick and easy by completing these three simple steps throughout the year.

- ✓ Use the council provided [Check Register](#) workbook to track group funds all year long.
- ✓ Reconcile your check register to your bank statement each time a bank statement is produced.
- ✓ Use the Annual Finance Report Guide tab in the GSDH provided Check Register workbook to complete the Annual Finance Report.

## **Additional Resources**

Money is one of those areas that can cause a lot of bad feelings and ill will among girls, parents and sponsors if people suspect mishandling of funds. In addition to the items already detailed above, avoid the possibility of having your financial practices called into question by following these simple practices:

- ✓ All group money (income and expenses) must flow through the group account. Use a debit card or checks for all transactions. Petty cash and cash transactions are not recommended.
- ✓ Keep good financial records, including receipts of all transactions, for a minimum of two years.
- ✓ Checks may not be made out to cash.
- ✓ When reimbursing purchases made with personal money, provide all receipts and have a co-signer issue the reimbursement.
- ✓ Submit the annual finance report by June 15 each year.

It is important to remember that all volunteers listed on the group bank account are ultimately responsible for the group's finances. Pay attention to and follow all financial guidelines. They are there to protect you, and help keep you in compliance with various laws and IRS regulations. Misuse of group funds is a serious offense and will be treated as such. If you suspect misuse of group funds please reach out to council for guidance.

## **Still have Questions?**

If you still have questions, additional resources are available on the website under [Volunteer Essentials](#) or you can reach out to our Member Services Center at [help@gsdakotahorizons.org](mailto:help@gsdakotahorizons.org) or 800-666-2141. If you have a question they cannot answer, they can connect you to your Member Support Specialist or a member of our Finance team. We are all here to help.