

# **REACH Handbook**

## **Policies and Best Practices**

### **Goals for REACH**

REACH is an acronym for Resources, Encouragement and Activities for Columbia Homeschoolers. REACH was started with the goals of offering resources that enhance homeschooling, providing encouragement and support for homeschooling parents, and promoting activities for all homeschool families. REACH is open to all homeschoolers, regardless of religious preference, national/ethnic background, political affiliation, lifestyle choice or educational philosophy.

### **How to Join: REACH support group**

If you would like to join us, please print out these pages before submitting the form for your records. REACH membership is a flat fee available any time during the year- it is never "too late" to join. Membership is for the homeschool parent, no matter how many children you have. It's your support. However, no matter when you join REACH this year, your membership will expire June 30<sup>th</sup> of that school year.

Email and Internet access are essential to our communication. Registration and payment is entirely online. Annual fees cover overhead costs of REACH and go toward groupwide activities.

### **Accountability Information:**

REACH is a support group only. Joining REACH does NOT make you legal. You must be registered with an accountability organization for your homeschool to be legal.

There are 3 options for doing this:

1. The school district
2. SCAIHS
3. A third-option group under SC code 59-65-47, such as REACH the TOP (RTT)  
Upgrade the basic REACH membership with the Third Option Participant (TOP) application.

We recommend adding on REACH the TOP as your accountability option. Our director is actively involved in REACH support group. If you should ever need RTT to vouch for you, we can speak more authoritatively because we know each other.

## **REACH Policies**

**Fostering a Community of Support :** We are support group. We work together to build the REACH community and help each other. Each member should be willing to

offer support to others. In order to get the most out of your REACH membership, you must be willing to give support too.

**Volunteer Responsibilities:** REACH is organized by a team of volunteers. We rely on members to contribute as a part of this team effort. The more volunteers we have, the more variety of activities and resources we can offer. Health issues, work schedules, and interests change from time to time. Every member should contribute to REACH in some way.

Member responsibilities and involvement vary. Some members serve on an event committee to plan and implement a one-time event, such as: holiday party, field day, art show, end of the year celebration, Homeschool Expo. Other members may choose an ongoing, regular basis activity, such as: Co-ops, Green Steps projects, Teen Leadership Council, park day contact or admin team. Volunteers are also needed to help with group communications, public PR, and social media management.

**Communications:** REACH maintains a **calendar of events** organized by REACH and also activities that are open to the public. We send out weekly emails and text alerts to remind members to check the calendar. Members should also regularly check into the online discussion forum and calendar of events.

REACH also maintains a **private discussion forum** online where we relay calendar events and information. The forum is also a great place to share personal struggles and successes in our homeschooling journeys. Members can also contact each other privately through the discussion forum.

REACH members may contact any of the admin team for support, encouragement or advice. Everyone should participate in the online community, giving and receiving ongoing support.

**Sales and Self-promotions:** Refrain from using the roster and discussion board to solicit business contacts. We would be happy to post an ad for your business on our website. Periodically a discussion thread will be posted to help support each other's businesses. REACH also hosts a Homeschool Expo in June where you can promote your business.

Please do not post affiliate links in the discussion groups without prior authorization. Affiliate links are provided by some companies so that purchases made thru the link pays referral commissions. FCC requires that any such links be disclosed each time the link is shared. Any links shared in REACH forums/emails/website are approved by REACH admin team and will be identified as affiliate links.

**Participation Expectations:** We believe that personal interaction fosters a sense of community. We are not a program—we are a support group. Members are asked to participate and supervise their own children at REACH activities. Most activities are not designed for drop-offs. REACH volunteers cannot assume responsibility for the safety of

children who we do not know.

Homeschool families often have various age groups, ability levels and interests. Sometimes, members will be permitted to include all of their students, sometimes not. Our ultimate concern is keeping participants safe during REACH activities; therefore we rely on parental supervision.

Age inclusive activities: REACH hosts several groupwide activities that aim to include all ages and interests. Groupwide activities are open to an unlimited number of participants. Individual members may also organize an activity that would be appropriate for a wide range of ages, but may offer limited amount of spaces for participants.

Age specific activities: Some field trips are age specific due to the requirements of the venue. Individual hosts may also specify age-specific activities due to limited spaces available.

**Buddy System:** Cases will arise where a parent is unable to supervise their own student, if a parent has a scheduling conflict for an age-inclusive activity or if a family has students who are outside of the age-specific range. REACH members may buddy up with another group member who will accept the supervision of their student. The host volunteer may be occupied with host duties declining to supervise additional students. Designated supervisors must be adults that are members of REACH. We do not permit students to babysit while attending REACH activities.

For example: a museum may prohibit toddlers or preschoolers from a group tour or a factory tour may only allow participants over 12 years old. Student council activities are also for the specific age/grades, not older or younger participants.

This problem can be solved when 2 members agree to buddy up for supervising each other's children. One member supervises the age-specific participants at the activity, while another member supervises the non-participants outside the activity or at another location.

Non-members may visit one REACH activity with a REACH member. Groupwide activities are a great opportunity for members to invite their friends to visit REACH. Other activities may be exclusive for REACH members only. Hosts/Volunteers will specify the limitations of their activity.

**Host a Field Trip or Activity:** If you wish to host a REACH event, contact [reach@reachgroup.org](mailto:reach@reachgroup.org) with your idea. We have some orientation information to help insure a successful event. We will help promote your activity on REACH calendar, emails, text alerts and discussion forum.

**Drop-off policy:** High School Student Leadership (9-12<sup>th</sup>) activities are often organized by students and advertised among the teens. Students may be allowed to drive themselves to the activities. In order to ensure a safe and secure environment, the

following procedure will improve our communication practices for all Teen Activities. Please remember that RSVP's need to be registered on main discussion forum so hosts know who is coming.

REACH teens may attend without parent with prior permission from the host/chaperone directly. Student Council bylaws state that they will have 2 chaperones. However, the Host may desire more chaperones or decline drop-offs.

1. The Host must have emergency contact numbers for the REACH parent. Should the event end early or medical emergency or behavior issue arise, the REACH parent will need to come pick up the participant. Adults need to communicate directly; do not relay messages thru the teen participant.
2. Chaperones must provide their contact number in case the parent has unforeseen circumstances or delayed return.
3. If parents carpool teens to activities, each parent must give the host their emergency contact number and the driver's emergency contact number. The host needs to know how many students are coming to the event and who is authorized to pick up the teen from the activity.
4. Non-REACH members are allowed to visit REACH organized activities. However, the REACH parent who invited the visitor must supervise the visitor. Non-REACH teens should not be dropped off.
5. Student Council activities are designated for REACH teens, 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade. Younger siblings attending public Teen Night Out activities must be accompanied by their REACH parent. Teens cannot participate and be responsible supervisors for their younger siblings. REACH alumni may obtain permission from the Admin Team to participate without parent supervision, by contacting [reach@reachgroup.org](mailto:reach@reachgroup.org)

**Code of Conduct:** Safety and kindness are the guiding factors. We promote safety for the property and safety for the people. Therefore, parents are expected to comply with the following to ensure acceptable behavior during activities and field trips:

- Parents and children are to be appropriately attired for all group events.
- Children and adults are expected to treat each other respectfully at all times.
- Parents are expected to enforce the appropriate conduct of children under their supervision.
- Children must not disrupt activities/field trips or behave aggressively at any time. Use the buddy system to help supervise children for a parent who has to step away to manage a disruptive child.
- Members must be sensitive to the values and differences of others. This includes the use of language or behavior that others may view as offensive. Kindness is the rule of thumb.
- Teens and adults are expected to abide by the same code of conduct online and in private messages. Kindness and safety are guiding factors.

- Personal issues with another member should be handled privately first. Any problems affecting your enjoyment or ability to participate in REACH activities should be brought to the attention of an admin team member.
- The Admin team is available to assist in handling REACH-specific problems between members.
- Case by Case problems that occur outside of REACH activities and forums will be considered by the Admin Team as issues arise. Please provide proof (ie: screenshots) of anything that affects a safe environment for our members.

**Conflict Resolution Policy:** Start with the “Golden Rule” or “Good Karma”: Members agree to treat one another with respect and encouragement they wish to have returned to themselves. Give the benefit of the doubt, rather than jump to conclusions about another’s motives. Strive to offer encouragement instead of judgment.

Even so, conflict will arise from time to time. When conflicts arise:

1. Members should make every effort to resolve the matter with each other first. Pick up the phone or write a private email that opens the opportunity for communication and explanation of each participant. Be willing to offer reasonable compromise.
2. Members may report conflict issues to an Admin Team representative. All Admin Team members will agree to refrain from gossip. Gossip is defined as sharing information with individuals who are neither part of the problem nor part of the solution.
  - a. A-Team Rep will encourage the members to resolve the issue privately with each other and offer counsel and mediation toward a desirable resolution.
  - b. A-Team Rep may contact the other conflict participants to obtain a fuller perspective on the situation and offer counsel/encouragement to bring resolution. A-Team Rep may involve additional board members for the quickest and simplest resolution.
  - c. A-Team Rep will report conflict issues to the Admin Team. The admin team needs to be aware of all conflict issues, so that future issues can be handled similarly or improved upon.
  - d. Should the issue continue to escalate, the Admin Team will work together to bring resolution, including but not limited to amending group policies and/or revoke individual membership privileges.

Conflict resolution makes us stronger and better as individuals and as a group. We believe that our different opinions, ideas and perspectives are among our greatest RESOURCES in REACH.

Questions regarding these policies and best practices:  
please contact A-team at [reach@reachgroup.org](mailto:reach@reachgroup.org)

Thanks for choosing REACH. We look forward to getting to know you this year.  
~REACH A-team