



THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION FOR NEAR WEST HOMESCHOOLERS



HANDBOOK

(Revised 1-6-2023)

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I. Policies and Procedures

Mission Statement

Our mission is to create an environment for educational enrichment where homeschooling families can work cooperatively in an atmosphere of mutual respect, organized structure with flexibility, and interest driven exploration.

Not-for-Profit

We are a not-for-profit, 501(c)3 organization. Keeping costs low while offering interesting, well-run classes is a high priority.

Diverse Spectrum of Homeschoolers

The Community Organization of Near West Homeschoolers membership includes diverse homeschooling families in the Chicagoland area. We represent the full spectrum of those who would identify themselves as homeschoolers. A wide variety of homeschooling definitions, methodologies, and philosophies are represented. All are welcome. Members agree to be tolerant of one another.

Non-discrimination

The Community Co-op does not discriminate based upon race, color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, nor physical or mental disability unrelated to one's ability to participate and enjoy the full benefits of our program or facilities.

Parent Attendance and Participation

Parents participate by volunteering in various roles throughout the day. This makes our low cost co-op possible and

helps build our cooperative community. While remaining in the building, parents are also scheduled for "time off."

Priority Placement

Families with an oldest child who is 5 years old or older have priority placement in the co-op. (See page 7 "Ages of Participants" for important details.)

Web Address

nearwesthomeschoolers.org

Inclement Weather (Delayed Start/ Cancellation)

The board will determine if co-op will be closed or delayed due to inclement weather. The decision will be made by 7:30 a.m., and parents will be notified by email through the mailing list. If there is a delay, co-op start time will be 10:00 a.m, and the class schedule will be adjusted accordingly. Due to cancellation policies of Thatcher Woods Pavilion, there will be no make-up days and no fees returned if days are canceled. Thus, days will only be canceled when weather makes travel unsafe.

Calendar

A calendar of all scheduled vacations, holidays, session dates, special events and membership fee due dates is included in the registration packet and posted in Members area of the website. The calendar is subject to change with reasonable notice.

Membership Fees/ Deposits

The Board will publish the dates each session by which registration is due and when registration fees are due. In

order to reserve your spot(s), you must pay in full by the due date. If custom payment terms are required for your family, please speak with the Board to make arrangements. Financial aid is available to families that need it and is based on the published median income of the area.

The fee per session, per child is listed on the registration page and on the website.

All children must be registered by and attend with their own parent or guardian. All children whom a parent will be bringing to the co-op must be registered.

All children 5 years old and up are charged full membership.

Children younger than 5 years old may not be attending formal classes and so are charged a nominal Junior Membership fee which provides them access to the building when in attendance with their own parent or guardian, as needed.

Membership fees can be paid via Zelle, by Credit Card/Debit Card via PayPal, in cash, or by check.

Refund Policy

If, after you register, you determine that you will not be participating in the co-op, you may withdraw and receive a refund of your membership fees, minus \$50.00, by the Monday after the second class of each session.

Contact the Board President or Treasurer no later than 8:00 p.m. Withdrawals after this date of each session will not generate a refund. This refund is available only to new

members during their first session of attendance.

Morning Arrival

We look forward to seeing each family as they arrive together in the morning. Due to our insurance requirements, parents may not drop children off, even briefly.

Please arrive by 9:30am. 9:30-10am will be social time / outdoor play / club meetings.

Leaving the Premises

The co-op is designed with the understanding that parents stay on the premises with their children. If you choose to step out briefly with one of your own children, you need to sign yourself and your child out and designate (through a private arrangement) another parent to be responsible for any of your children who remain at co-op. In addition, the remaining children need to be in a designated area with at least two supervising adults (such as in class or the gym, according to that child's schedule). This cannot be a regular, ongoing arrangement.

Shoes

Children and adults should wear comfortable, weather proof shoes. On wet, muddy, or snowy days, two pairs of shoes may be needed – one for outdoors and one for indoors. Please plan accordingly.

Lunch

WE ARE A PEANUT FREE

CO-OP. We strive to be allergy friendly and ensure the health and safety of all of our members. Thus, we have a no-peanuts policy. If your child has other

allergies, please discuss them with a member of the board if you feel additional accommodations may be needed.

Families need to bring their lunches (there isn't enough time to go out). Please bring covered drinking containers to reduce spills. Opened, disposable drinking containers such as juice boxes should be thrown away by the end of the lunch break.

The lunch period is an open lunch. During this time, each family can eat in the manner and location they feel most comfortable in.

Snacks/Water

Families may bring snacks to eat at their discretion. Snacks are not allowed to be consumed while in a class; students may step away from their class and sit with parent if needed.

Snacks must be consumed outdoors during weeks there is an indoor mask requirement.

Everyone should bring a water bottle with an attached lid for drinking throughout the day. There is a water fountain outside the kitchen as well.

Health

Please keep your family home in the event of any illness. Your child should be fever, diarrhea, medication, and vomiting-free for at least 24 hours before coming to co-op. Parents, please follow the same guidelines for yourselves.

Please follow all CDC and AAP guidelines related to Covid safety and mitigation measures. We ask that all

families behave in accordance with such policies.

Sick Parent / Sick Child

In the case where you are sick or you must stay home yourself with a sick child, you may make private arrangements with someone else who will be staying on the premises throughout the day to bring your other child(ren). This is only allowed if a physician has cleared the child to attend and has confirmed the sick individual is negative for Covid.

In the unlikely event that the child becomes sick, injured, or needs some kind of private attention while at co-op, two adults must attend to these needs if the parent is not available.

If you will be unable to attend co-op, please find substitutes for your lead/assistant periods, or contact the President for substitute assignment.

Injuries

The co-op provides band aids and ice packs. If your child is injured and needs any type of medical attention, you will be called upon to tend to these needs.

Safety

For the safety of our children and volunteers, all classrooms have at least two supervising adults in the room at all times.

Adults attending co-op are not allowed to assist in bathroom duties with children that are not their own.

In the case of bathroom use monitored by adults other than the child's parent, the adults will wait in the outer doorway of the bathroom, oriented to allow for the child's

privacy, while the child uses the facilities. Whether children 4 and 5 years old may leave the classroom for bathroom use independently will be based on the child's individual level of independence. It is best to send young children with clothing they can manage independently in the bathroom. For any child who requires assistance in the bathroom, the parent will be called to assist the child. The parent will also be called for diaper changes.

Older children may tend to such matters unaccompanied and return directly to their class.

Anti-Harassment

The co-op is committed to maintaining an environment that is free from all forms of harassment by or towards adults or children.

Harassment based on race, color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, physical or mental disability or other legally protected characteristic is prohibited.

Harassment is defined as unwanted physical contact or sexual advances; use of epithets, inappropriate jokes, comments or innuendos; obscene or harassing telephone calls, emails, letters, other forms of communication and any other conduct which is so severe that it interferes with an individual's performance or creates a hostile environment.

Parent Breaks

We are all dedicated parents who love to spend time with our children. Parents volunteer throughout the day, interacting with their own and other children. However, each parent will

have break time during the day, where they are not leading or assisting any class sessions.

Parents that are on their break time may sit in the hallway entrance, sit on the patio, take a call in their car, etc. Parents must remain on site during their break.

Grievance Procedures

Should anyone experience a disagreement within the co-op, please follow these steps for resolving the conflict. Please uphold confidentiality.

- Go to the person with whom you have a disagreement at a time when you can have a private conversation. Hopefully, most issues can be resolved this way as both parties listen to each other. It may be very helpful to remember that we're all on a team, working together to make co-op the best experience possible for all involved.
- If the conflict is not resolved, parties involved should meet with a board member.
- If the issue cannot be resolved, it should be presented to the entire board. The board will make a final decision at their discretion.

Parent and Student Agreements

In order that everyone understands our commitments, the co-op has written agreements for students, parents, classroom team members, and board members. These are located in this in section Member Agreements Member Agreements and copies to sign are included in the orientation packet.

Background Checks

Because each parent is a volunteer working directly with other people's children, we require that each parent has a formal background check.

The background check will include a full report run via IntelliCorp.net. Members may be required to pay for their background check.

Second adult: Each parent or other adult who will attend the co-op more than 2 times per year must complete background check forms and receive safety training.

Written permission will be obtained from each participating parent and hired staff person (if any) before a background check is conducted. The information obtained in the background check will be kept in a secure location and strictly confidential, accessible only to board members assigned to conduct the background check process.

Safety Training

Adults: Each adult who will be attending co-op two or more times per year will have training in child protection procedures. The training will include the information in the Child Protection Guide (required by insurance) including appropriate adult/child ratios, bathroom procedures, and what to do if an incident of abuse were to occur.

Confidentiality

In all matters regarding children or in matters regarding disagreements or other private matters among adults,

we have an understanding of trust and confidentiality.

Ages of Participants

There is something for everyone ages 5 years old through teens. Teens who are as old as 18 in the fall may participate. Classes are broken into general age ranges. See 2022-2023 Age Grouping in this Handbook for a detailed explanation of age ranges and where they are flexible.

Families whose oldest child is 4 on or before September 30 of the Co-op year (i.e. "school year") have priority placement in the Co-op. If your oldest child is younger than 4, you may ask to be placed on a waiting list.

Advancements

Our groups are designed to create a year (or more) of connection to other kids in the group. Children ages 5 and up in the fall will stay in their original group placements throughout the Co-op ("school") year.

Children who turn 5 on or before the spring session's beginning date may be able to join the Quarks for the Spring Session. This would represent a change in group and a change in membership level from Junior Membership to Full Membership and the corresponding fee.

Being Green

We strive to reduce, reuse, and recycle. You can help us achieve this goal by using documents in electronic format whenever possible, adding them to your mobile devices, smart phones, laptops, or home computers whenever possible.

II. Gentle Discipline

Purpose

We believe the best way for all to enjoy their time at The Community Co-op is for children to be engaged in inviting activities. So the best “discipline” is a well-run class. However, in the event that a child needs assistance with his or her behavior, we have set these guidelines.

Guidelines

Leaders have a menu of options to try. They may try other similar ideas, as well, as long as they are in the same spirit of treating children with respect and guiding them gently towards their best behavior.

1. Leaders are asked to plan their classes well so children are busy (even when self-directed).
2. Leaders are asked to have predictable expectations for behavior and recognizable routines so children know things like when it’s time to listen to someone else talk or when it’s time to clean up and how to help.
3. If after expectations are explained, a child needs help following them, the child may be:
 - 1st: redirected to the appropriate activity.
 - 2nd: asked directly to stop the inappropriate behavior.
 - 3rd: given a logical consequence.

We believe that in most cases, this is all that will be necessary.

4. However, if a child escalates the behavior to highly disruptive misbehavior after repeated attempts by the leader or assistants to correct the behavior, the child’s parent will be called to the room to address the behavior.

The purpose of the parent intervention is to obtain the parent’s assistance in reinforcing that the leader is in charge and that the child must follow the rules. The goal is to convey to the child that the adults, including the parent, are working as a team in supporting the child’s ability to use self-control. We ask that the parent convey this if/when they are called to address their child. The parent may need to

consider the option of removing the child for a brief time until he or she is ready to participate in class appropriately.

5. If parental intervention is repeatedly necessary, the parent may be asked to attend the class with the child (and participate as an engaged assistant for all the children).
6. If the child is not able to bring the behavior under control with a parent regularly in the room, the child may be asked to no longer attend the class.
7. If the child is having severe trouble bringing his or her behavior under control in several classes, he or she may be asked not to attend co-op.
8. If a child engages in bullying or any form of verbal abuse, physical fighting, brings a weapon to co-op, engages in theft, or willfully destroys property, the child will be subject to disciplinary action.

Unacceptable Corrective Methods

Yelling, humiliating, and physical punishment by any adult are unacceptable at co-op.

Conclusion

As children engage in activities that interest them, leaders set up well organized classes, and leaders and assistants use our gentle discipline guidelines if/when necessary, we believe The Co-op is a pleasant place to learn, explore, and grow together.

III. 2022-2023 Age Grouping

The goal of the Co-op is to create manageably sized groups of similarly-aged students. Since new students join the group and existing students grow, age groupings are re-evaluated each year. The groupings included here are for reference purposes and reflect the age ranges used for groups in the 2022-2023 co-op year.

Junior Members

Under 5 Years Old

- Not included in structured group activities

Quarks

5-7 Years Old

- Ready to participate consistently in structured classes
- Can sit quietly and listen while a leader gives instructions
- Can follow age appropriate instructions

Neutrons

8-9 Years Old

- Enjoys playing with kids in this age range or younger
- Can sit quietly and listen while a leader gives instructions
- Can follow age appropriate instructions fairly independently
- Can be self- directed when given options

Electrons

10-11 Years Old

- Can sit quietly and listen while a leader gives instructions
- Can follow age appropriate instructions fairly independently
- Can be self- directed with more advanced tasks

Muons

12 Years Old and Up

- Enjoys being with kids in this age range
- Is ready to take initiative in planning and carrying out their program
- Works collaboratively with peers and adult mentors

Additional Information

Co-op groups are designed to last a full year. However, if a Junior Member turns 5 before the start of the Spring Session, they may join Quarks and become full member.

IV. Class Structure and Leads

Class Structure

Classes are designed to accommodate a dynamic and multi-faceted approach to group learning which best incorporates the various teaching styles of all families participating in Co-op. Co-op classes are intended to be a social, group-oriented, cohesive effort including both "free-form" or "play-based" learning models, as well as more "structured" and "formal" learning methods. Class Leads, and Class Assistants work together to determine which style best suits their particular class in a given situation.

Class Leads

Each class has a designated "Lead" who will devise the planning and implementation of the class. Class Leads are asked to share a short, one paragraph written summary each week, detailing the activities of each Co-op class they led, which will be added to the Co-op blog.

Class Assistants

The Class Assistants help the children and the Class Lead as needed. If

necessary, Class Assistants may be called upon to substitute for the Class Lead, following either a planned Special Project or Activity String for the given class.

Class Materials

Co-op has a ready supply of general materials that may be needed for classes (paper, scissors, glue, pencils, tape, etc). Class Leads are also welcome to purchase supplies for their classes and be reimbursed for those costs. Purchases must be approved by a Board member before being made.

Physical Education Leads

Gym Coordinators lead the P.E. sessions, taking responsibility for planning and preparing sporting activities, physical games, drills, exercises, stretches, and other physical fitness related projects at the discretion of the children in the class. Gym classes will be held outdoors so coordinators are expected to help plan and supervise outdoor activities, and to come prepared for weather clothing-wise.

V. Class Descriptions

Hands-On Learning

The Co-op currently features the following classes: Writer's Workshop, Art, PE/Gym, STEM, Nature Study, and special session-long classes for the Muons group (i.e. Psychology or Personal Finance). All Co-op classes are designed to allow the children to experience learning in a creative, play-based, hands-on environment.

Classroom materials, equipment, and other related games and activities are provided to allow parent volunteers and class leads to facilitate various problem-solving / learning activities which incorporate both gentle direction as well as free form activities.

Group Gathering

In an effort to create a cohesive, group-oriented atmosphere, the co-op as implemented a short, 30 minute, "Group Gathering" session wherein the entire co-op will gather together to briefly share announcements, birthdays, special projects, and other items of business. Student-led clubs, Student Council, and other "extracurriculars" may also take place during this time.

This provides the older and younger children with the opportunity to get to know one another, ensures information is disseminated to all, and gives all the children a platform to voice opinions relating to co-op activities.

Writer's Workshop (Electrons and Muons)

In Writer's Workshop, the children are provided with instruction on essential writing techniques designed to explore the craft of creative writing, by modeling materials written by some of the great prolific authors, poets, novelists, reporters, and non-fiction writers of our day.

Writer's Workshop functions as a broad-based introduction to various forms of writing, such as short fiction, poetry, expository, and drama. The children experiment with these writing styles in journals which archive their work. The class incorporates technique and style discussions, which are carried into the writing exercises. The children are introduced to the concept of a true "workshop" wherein they share pieces with their peers in order to give and receive positive and useful feedback which will contribute to the development of these vital skills.

STEM Activities (Quarks, Neutrons, Electrons)

In STEM, the children participate in activities which highlight and display various scientific, mathematical, engineering, or technology principles. Children are encouraged to apply logic and problem-solving while engaging hands-on activities.

Art (all age groups)

The Art classes put a plethora of materials at the children's fingertips, each designed to allow them to explore the medium by modeling their art based on historical techniques and methods of the masters, while experimenting with unique innovation all their own.

Nature Study (Quarks, Neutrons)

The Co-op has elected to integrate Nature Study, to allow the members a way to explore the outdoors and make the most of our setting at Thatcher Woods. The children have an opportunity to explore the natural world around them with hands-on activities such as hikes in the woods to listen, touch, and see the nature surrounding them.

Physical Education/Gym (all age groups)

In order to encourage optimal health and physical fitness, each age group has one period of Physical Education / Gym activities. These sessions incorporate a warm-up and stretching period, wherein the children may have the opportunity to share a stretch or calisthenic exercise they have learned, before moving on to sport, games, or physical challenges designed to encourage sportsmanship and gentle competition. P.E./Gym classes are outdoors except in unsafe weather conditions.

Special Rotating Classes (Muons)

The oldest students at Co-op are provided different classes each semester, depending on the skills of the adults that session. Past special classes have included age-appropriate Psychology, Photography, and Personal Finance.

VI. Sample Daily Schedule

	Quarks	Neutrons	Electrons	Muons
9:30-10:00	Arrival / Outdoor Social Time			
10:00-10:45	Nature Study <i>(Large Room)</i>	Art <i>(Large Room)</i>	P.E./Gym <i>(Outdoors)</i>	Personal Finance
10:45-11:30	Art <i>(Large Room)</i>	Gym P.E./Gym <i>(Outdoors)</i>	Writing / Drama	Art / Photography
11:30-12:00	Group Gathering			
12:00- 12:45	Lunch			
12:45-1:30	STEM	STEM	Art	P.E./Gym
1:30-2:15	P.E./Gym <i>(Outdoors)</i>	Nature Study	STEM	Writing / Drama
2:15 – 2:30	Clean Up / Dismissal			

VII. What To Bring

Everyone:

- Water bottle or sippy cup with an attached lid
- Lunch (peanut free)
- Optional snacks (peanut free)
- Weather-appropriate clothing, shoes, coats, etc.

Everyone Taking Classes:

- Backpack with the following supplies:
- Pencils
- Eraser(s)
- Marker, colored pencils, or crayons
- White paper
- Notebook
- Scissors (appropriate for your child's age)
- Tape
- Glue Stick
- 3-ring binder or Folder

Class leaders may specify additional supplies once the session begins.

VIII. Board of Directors

All Board Members

- Positions are volunteer.
- Guide and direct the co-op.
- Are active volunteers within the co-op.
- Uphold the standards of the co-op.
- Conduct themselves appropriately.
- Represent the co-op to the wider world.
- Perform other duties as assigned.

President / Vice President

General: Ensure the effective action of the board in governing and supporting the co-op, and oversee board affairs. Act as the representatives of the board as a whole.

Community: Speak to the media and the community on behalf of the co-op; represent the co-op in the community.

Meetings: Develop agendas for meetings in concert with other board members and committee chairs. Preside at board meetings. Determine whether executive committee meetings in addition to quarterly board meetings are necessary and convenes the committee accordingly.

Committees: Recommend to the board which committees are to be established. Seek volunteers for committees and coordinates individual board member assignments. Makes sure each committee has a

chairperson, and stays in touch with chairpersons to be sure that their work is carried out. Identifies committee recommendations that should be presented to the full board.

Secretary

General: Records, manages and distributes board meeting minutes. Manages general board correspondence. Is sufficiently familiar with legal documents (articles of incorporation, by-laws, etc.) to note their applicability during meetings. Creates and maintains periodic print materials such as co-op directory, calendar, and overall schedule.

Record-keeping: Maintains and manages all co-op and board records, including founding and legal documents, financial reports, minutes, and membership information.

Treasurer

General: Manages the board's review of, and action related to, the board's financial responsibilities. Acting as bookkeeper, develops and implements financial procedures and systems. May work with other volunteers in carrying out these duties.

Reports: Ensures that appropriate financial reports are made available to the board. Regularly reports to the board on key financial events, trends, concerns, and assessment of fiscal health.

IX. Team Leading

What is team-leading?

Simply put, it is an all-around supportive style of running a class. A team is made up of the following:

- Class Lead
- Class Assistant
- Additional Volunteers or Helpers (as necessary)

The number of adults needed beyond the Class Lead and Class Assistant is based on the size of the class, the structure of the class, and what the Class Lead and Class Assistant need to run their class well.

Benefits:

- Children benefit from leaders and assistants and the various strengths each brings.
- Children get a better ratio of adults to children.
- In the rare case where one team member must be absent, the class still has continuity with the other team member(s).
- Class Leads and Class Assistants share the work load for their given class.
- Working with other adults provides an opportunity for mutually supportive feedback, creative brainstorming together, and a greater pool of resources.

“Wouldn't it just be more efficient for me to lead a class alone? I already know what I want to do.”

We think you will find that the classes run more smoothly with multiple adult volunteers present. Leads may take on the challenge of planning each

week, but additional sets of hands is very useful during the class period. Furthermore, if the Lead and Assistant(s) agree, weekly planning can also be shared between adults, giving each an opportunity to bring their skills into the mix while also not carrying the full burden of class planning.

“I might like to be a leader, but I've never done this before.”

We anticipate that several of our leaders will be new to leading/teaching. Team-leading is a great way to get your feet wet. Because you are working with another team member, you can develop your skills in the context of a team. Also, we try to pair new adults with established volunteers to ease into the role by watching somebody that's done it before.

“What if working with my co-leader doesn't work out very well?”

We hope that our teams will work well together. But we're all human; personalities and styles may clash every now and then. One of the benefits of co-leading will also help you avoid these kinds of clashes. By dividing up the work, you can each focus on your part. So while in situations where a team really clicks, there may be a lot of sharing of ideas and mutual support, in the case where a team doesn't click as well, co-leaders can still focus on their own parts and the class can still be very well-run.

X. Parent-Child Relations

Helping Your Child Separate from You When the Time Is Right

Purpose: We believe that it is wise for each parent to determine what is best for his or her children. If you believe it would be best for your child to spend some time away from you during co-op but he or she needs an adjustment period, below are some suggestions that might help your child make this transition.

Scheduling: If you believe that it is likely this transition will be very gradual, taking more than a few weeks, please schedule your volunteer time for the same classes your child will be taking. We will consider you an "extra" volunteer, so that if/when your child is ready for you to leave, you can freely leave the class and later be rescheduled elsewhere. However, while you are in the class, please fully engage with your child in the activities of the class and/or gradually move on to engage with other children. If you are a volunteer in the class (even an extra one) we want/need your help with the class activities.

If you anticipate that a transition period will be fairly brief, please volunteer elsewhere in the co-op. Notify us that you do anticipate a brief transition period so that we can schedule you in a flexible position which will allow for you to arrive late for your volunteer job or only after several Thursdays. We schedule all parents for a period off in the Parents' Room. We will likely schedule your period off for the first class period, which might be the more significant transition time.

Come a few minutes early to co-op: Come early enough to allow for some time for you to be in the first class

with your child before it begins. This is important for conveying a relaxed feeling to your child. We hope to have at least one team leader ready before class who can greet children who arrive a few minutes early, can welcome them warmly and begin to engage them. We believe this calm, relaxed time can be a key transition time. Please be sure adults are present before you leave.

Show that you really like the leaders: Our leaders will be expecting some very warm greetings from parents. They will understand that this is your way of showing your child that you very much like the leaders (it's OK if you don't already know each other well). When your face lights up and your voice sounds warm, this helps your child know that this leader is OK with you.

Stay in the class area as long as you need to: When your child is engaged in the class activities and you are ready to try a little space between the two of you, spend some time across the room. Unless you are an "extra" volunteer (see above), take the time you and your child need to be apart from each other but with you still in the room. You can just watch the class.

Become an extra volunteer: After several attempts to separate over several Thursdays, if you decide you will need to spend time with your child in his or her classes on a regular basis, please see the volunteer coordinator to schedule you as a regular volunteer in those classes. In this case, plan to assist the leaders

and be fully engaged in the class activities.

Reschedule Yourself after Transition

Period: If you are a parent not scheduled elsewhere in the co-op in order to allow for an adjustment period for a child, once the child is adjusted and you can leave him or her regularly, please see the volunteer coordinator so you can be

scheduled as a volunteer elsewhere in the co-op.

With these tips, your own awareness of what works best with your child, and the help and understanding of the leaders and assistants, we believe you and your child can make a gentle transition to time away from you if and when the time is right.

XI. Member Agreements

Why Agreements?

We have written agreements for co-op participants in their various roles as students, parents, class team members, and board members.

Following are brief descriptions of these agreements. Copies to sign are included in the orientation packet.

Also note, class leader orientation and sexual abuse prevention training for adults (as required by our insurance) will be provided in shortly before the beginning of the upcoming co-op year (see calendar for details).

Student Agreement

The Student Agreement is designed to inform the children as to what their rights, responsibilities, and obligations are to the co-op. It encourages honor, respect, and consideration for others, in order to foster a productive learning environment.

Parent Agreement

The Parent Agreement is designed to inform the parents as to what their rights, responsibilities, and obligations are to the co-op. It encourages honor, respect, and consideration for others, as well as providing some accountability on attendance, commitments, supervision, safety, and training.

Volunteer Class Team Agreement

The Volunteer Class Team Agreement is designed to inform the Class Leads and Class Assistants as to what their rights, responsibilities, and obligations are to the co-op, and specifically, the children in their given class. It encourages honor, respect, and

consideration for others, as well as providing some accountability on leadership, teamwork, gentle discipline, organization, budgets and substitutions.

An Additional Note to Class Team Members

We highly recommend that Class Leads and Assistants communicate openly and honestly with each other about issues that may arise in making their classes work well for everyone. We encourage you to be open to feedback from each other and actively ask for it.

With an atmosphere of mutual encouragement, constructive criticism, and positive problem solving, we believe team-leading can be a wonderful experience for the adults and the students involved.

Rights and Responsibilities Agreement

The Rights and Responsibilities Agreement was written by the kids at Co-op in order to outline what they believe their rights and responsibilities are at Co-op.

Outside Activities Agreement

The Outside Activities Agreement governs all activities which occur outside of Co-op.

Photography, Directory & Background Check Releases

The Photography, Directory, & Background Check Releases govern the use of photographic imagery, contact information, and background checks at Co-op.

STUDENT AGREEMENT

In order that we understand and agree to the same general expectations to help ensure the best experience for us all, I agree:

- to be honest, courteous and patient with others. I will use respectful and polite language.
- to honor the time and effort of the class leaders and other class members by giving them my attention and respect.
- to treat our meeting place with respect at all times.
- to help clean up in class, after class, and after lunch.
- to remain with my class, unless I obtain permission from my leader to leave, and to be in the appropriate areas at all times- not roaming the building or property.
- that if I pack my own lunch or snack, not to bring any food that contains peanuts or peanut butter (due to possible allergies).
- not to bring electronic devices of any kind to co-op (music, game boys, etc.) except where such devices relate to a class activity.
- never to bring weapons, including pocketknives, onto the property.
- I understand that the following conduct will not be allowed while participating in The Community Organization for Near West Homeschoolers and is subject to disciplinary action:
 - theft or destruction of public or private property
 - physical fighting or other acts of violence
 - any form of bullying or verbal abuse
- I understand that the purpose of this agreement is to help ensure the best experience for us all at The Community Organization for Near West Homeschoolers.

PARENT AGREEMENT

In order that we understand and agree to the same general expectations to help ensure the best experience for us all, I agree:

- to treat all children with kindness.
- to directly supervise my children during lunch and to participate with my family in the clean-up of the space.
- to strive to regularly attend co-op. I understand that if we sign up for co-op, we are taking a slot for the classes being offered. I understand that the class leaders have planned for my child with time and in some cases materials and intend to honor their efforts.
- to honor my volunteer commitments. If I must be absent, I will arrange for a substitute for my duties. I agree not to overburden parents by getting substitutes too often. If a long term situation arises, I will talk to the volunteer coordinator to have my duties temporarily or permanently reassigned.
- to consider the distraction of cell phone use while attending to children, and model good technology behavior.
- not to bring snacks or lunches which contain peanuts or peanut butter for me or my family (due possible peanut allergies).
- that whenever my children are present and participating in co-op activities, I must remain on the property and be available for emergencies, and that I am fully responsible for my children regardless of their age. However, in a special circumstance, I may
 - send my child(ren) to co-op with another adult who will remain in the building and be responsible for my child(ren) (only those who are Quarks and older).
 - sign out one or more of my children and designate another adult who has agreed to be responsible for any remaining children. This is only if the child(ren) need(s) time away from the building.

(Neither option can be a regular, ongoing arrangement.)

- that I am fully liable for my child's safety, well being, and behavior.
- that because I am also a volunteer, to participate in sexual abuse prevention training, as may be required by our insurance.
- that if my child's other parent/guardian will be participating more than two times throughout the co-op year, to have him or her read and sign this parent agreement, participate in sexual abuse prevention training, and have a background check as part of our registration process.
- that I have read and agree with the information in The Community Organization for Near West Homeschoolers' Handbook and registration packet including the refund policy, gentle discipline policy, payment schedule, and parking designations.

CLASS LEAD AGREEMENT

So that class volunteers have a sense of mutual agreement and to help ensure that classes are well-run, I agree:

- to fulfill the aspects of preparing for and running the class to which I have agreed.
- to actively engage in the team-leading model during class time, participating in the class fully as assistant, small group leader, or class leader; mixing with the students or in another engaged role.
- to use the gentle discipline policy when/if needed.
- to make sure the co-op space where I work is left in excellent condition, cleaning up and returning items to their original places. Where possible, to have children participate in this duty.
- to provide to parents (and older students) a general plan for the class I will run.
- to turn in receipts for reimbursement which are within my class budget on a timely basis.
- to prepare a plan for the event of my absence before the session begins. If my absence would leave the class with only one adult or otherwise short-handed (check with leader), this would include finding a substitute so there are two or more adults present. If I am a class leader or small group leader, I will provide my sub with my plans and needed materials.
 - to strive to call on substitutes as little as possible so as not to place an undue burden on other parents.
- to complete sexual abuse prevention training, as may be required by our insurance.
- to attend the annual leader training.

An additional note: We highly recommend that leaders and assistants communicate openly and honestly with each other about issues that may arise in making their classes work well for everyone. We encourage you to be open to feedback from each other and actively ask for it. With an atmosphere of mutual encouragement, constructive criticism, and positive problem solving, we believe team-leading can be a wonderful experience for the adults and the students involved.

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

I have a right to PLAY, and a responsibility to BE KIND when playing.

I have a right to SPEAK, and a responsibility to LISTEN when others wish to speak.

I have a right to SHARE things that are special to me, and a responsibility to RESPECT the things that are special to others.

I have a right to BE CREATIVE, and a responsibility to ENCOURAGE the creativity of others.

I have a right to BE HELPED when I need it, and a responsibility to HELP OTHERS when they need it.

I have a right to USE Thatcher Woods Pavilion, and a responsibility to keep the space CLEAN.

I have a right to be with my FRIENDS at Co-op, and a responsibility to BE FRIENDLY with everyone at Co-op.

I have a right to my own PERSONAL SPACE when I need it, and a responsibility to respect the PERSONAL SPACE of others when they need it.

I have a right to TAKE A BREAK when I need it, and a responsibility to WORK TOGETHER with the group when I can.

I have a right to CONTRIBUTE to the rules at Co-op, and a responsibility to FOLLOW the rules at Co-op.

OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES AGREEMENT

Outside Activities

Occasionally the Community Organization for Near West Homeschoolers does meet outside of the designated weekly sessions, in order to socialize and meet informally at various locations in the area. These outside activities are not officially sponsored by the Organization, do not utilize Organization funds, and may not be covered under the Organization's insurance policy. Rather, the activities are informal gatherings of like minded families, designed to allow our families to meet at mutually agreed locations outside of our official meeting dates which are designated in the official Session Calendar. Therefore, we kindly ask that all families wishing to participate in these activities, review and sign the following release form before attending any of these events.

Field Trips

Occasionally the Community Organization for Near West Homeschoolers organizes Field Trips for the group to participate in. These Field Trips will always require each family to provide their own transportation, each family to have an adult present, each family to cover the cost associated with the field trip (if any). Families that elect to join field trips do so at their own risk and agree not to hold the Community Organization for Near West Homeschoolers liable for any injury, death, or loss sustained during such trip.

Release and Waiver

I am the legal guardian for the family registered for attendance at the Community Organization for Near West Homeschoolers, and will periodically be attending informal activities and/or field trips organized outside of the standard meeting dates designated in the current Session Calendar. I understand that I am taking responsibility for my family and their actions at these activities. This is a liability release statement signed by me as a parent or legal guardian of children under my direction and supervision. I acknowledge this and I take full responsibility for these children and my family members. I understand that I am responsible for my family's activities at these activities and their safety and well being during the activities should we participate. I also understand that the Organization and its volunteer board of directors and its associated parent members are not responsible for my family's safety and well being while they are attending any

informal outside activities or field trips, even if such events are organized for and/or paid for by the organization. I further understand that if my family chooses to attend any of such, they do so under my direction and supervision. Therefore, my family will not hold the Community Organization for Near West Homeschoolers or its volunteer board of directors or associated member parents liable for any injury these children or family members may incur during these outside activities at any given location and does waive any claims of liability in connection with these activities.

PHOTOGRAPHY, DIRECTORY & BACKGROUND CHECK RELEASES

Photography Release

By registering with the Community Organization for Near West Homeschoolers, I give permission to use photographs of my child, children, or myself on their website or in their printed materials both of which are available to the general public. I understand that neither my children's names nor my name will be used on the website or in printed materials and that if I do not wish for photos of my family to be used, I will place the Organization on notice in writing asking that my family not be included in such photos.

Member Directory Release

I give The Community Organization for Near West Homeschoolers permission to print my family's names and our contact information in the Member Directory. I understand that the directory will be given out only to other co-op participants, and that if I do not wish to be included in the directory, I will place the co-op on notice in writing asking that my family not be included in such directory.

Background Check Permission

I hereby authorize the Community Organization for Near West Homeschoolers to complete a background check on me (participating parent) involving the following components: an SSN verification, a validated Criminal Super Search including Nationwide Sex Offender Registry, and an extensive search of government exclusion databases that identify individuals who have been involved in activities such as fraud, terrorism, narcotics trafficking, and those related to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Background checks will be performed utilizing the website and service of IntelliCorp.net.

I understand that I may be required to cover the full charge of the background fee and that this charge is separate and in addition to co-op membership fees.

XII. Child Protection Guide

Introduction

The Community Organization for Near West Homeschoolers has in place procedures to help ensure the safety of all children and adults participating in our organization. The guidelines in this guide address specifically those procedures which are designed to prevent physical abuse; emotional abuse; and sexual abuse, molestation, and misconduct and the procedures for reporting such incidents.

Terms

- The Community Organization for Near West Homeschoolers may be referred to in this guide as "the co-op".
- Staff refers to all paid and unpaid adults who work or otherwise interact directly with children in the co-op on a regular basis.
- Regular basis is defined as an adult who participates in the co-op day 3 or more meeting days in a co-op year (i.e. school year).
- The board refers to the co-op Board of Directors.

Declaration

It is the express policy of the co-op that staff shall not engage in any abusive behavior: physical, emotional, or sexual in nature.

Staff shall not engage in sexually oriented activity, including sexual conversations with children, nor allow such conduct to exist among the children themselves.

Staff shall not develop sexual relationships with children or family members of children during and following services provided to such children and their families by the co-op.

Staff shall not engage in non-erotic activities for which the true intended result is sexual arousal or gratification.

Violation Procedure

Any person associated with the co-op who violates the policy stated in the declaration above will be discharged, reported to the proper authorities and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, molestation and misconduct are crimes. Any adult participating (volunteer or paid staff) in the co-op who fails to report such activity will be discharged and where possible, prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Definition

Child abuse is the mistreatment of a child under the age of 18 by a parent, caretaker, someone living in their home or someone who works with or around children. The mistreatment must cause injury or put the child at risk of physical injury. Child abuse can be physical (such as burns or broken bones), sexual (such as fondling or incest), or emotional [such as cruel name calling, punishment to terrorize, and corruption such as causing a child to witness criminal acts or violence] (Helpguide)] (IL DCFS).

Sexual abuse and molestation include any conduct or activity leading to, or resulting in, sexual arousal or gratification of one, or all, of the parties involved. It includes, but is not limited to, inappropriate touching,

inappropriate physical contact, and/or titillating or romantic conversations (Carlsen 4).

Protection Rules

General: Staff should not be alone with other people's children. Each class is staffed with two or more adults. If an adult must be absent from the co-op or leave the classroom, two adults must remain in the classroom with children at all times. If a child must be accompanied out of a room or away from the rest of the group, such as when outdoors, two adults must accompany him or her.

Special Circumstances: If a situation arises where only one adult is present with other people's children, activities should take place in an open-door, well-lit, easily accessible setting. In this case, the one adult should remain in the presence of several children.

Private Conversations: If a private conversation is necessary with another person's child, where possible, the child's parent should also be present. If the parent is not present, the conversation should take place in an open-door, well-lit, easily accessible setting and kept to a minimum.

Closed Door Procedure: A private, closed door consultation with one adult and another person's child should not take place at the co-op. If such a closed door consultation is necessary, the parent must be present during the consultation.

Child Bathroom Use: In the case of bathroom use monitored by adults other than the child's parent (such as if a Quark needs to leave a nature walk to use the restroom), the adult will wait in the outer doorway of the bathroom, oriented to allow for the

child's privacy, while the child uses the facilities. Whether children 4 and 5 years old may leave the classroom for bathroom use independently will be based on the child's individual level of independence. It is best to send young children with clothing they can manage independently in the bathroom. For any child who requires assistance in the bathroom, the parent will be called to assist the child.

Older children may tend to such matters unaccompanied and return directly to their classrooms.

Adult Bathroom Use: Because there are two bathrooms available, one set of bathrooms will become designated as "adults only". The doors will have a stop sign attached which is a reminder to children that the bathroom is for adults only.

Adult Taking His or Her Own Child to the Bathroom: An adult in this situation should use the adult bathroom to avoid inadvertently being present in the children's bathroom alone with other people's children while attending to his or her own child.

Junior Members

- *Bathroom Use:* Junior Members are required to have their parent or guardian assist with all bathroom use.
- *Diapering and toileting:* All diaper changes and assisted toileting must be attended to by the parent (or in the case where a parent has made a private arrangement for another adult to supervise his or her child in his or her absence from the co-op, the designated

adult must attend to diapering and toileting). If a child is able to manage his own toileting, the above "bathroom use" procedure will be used.

- *Other Physical Contact:* Physical contact with children in this age range is a normal, healthy, necessary element of child care. Sexual contact with children's genitals, including through clothing is forbidden. Patting children on the buttocks is forbidden.

However, staff may interact with children in non-sexual, nurturing ways such as hugging, comforting, carrying and rocking children when their parents are unavailable. As with all classrooms there should always be two or more adults present when adults are caring for younger children.

Full Member Age Groups

- *Toileting:* See "Child Bathroom Use" above.
- *Other physical contact:* Staff should generally avoid touching other people's children in this age range, particularly initiating contact. Patting children on the genitals or buttocks or touching breasts is forbidden. If a child hugs a staff member, he or she should divert the contact so it becomes shoulder-to-shoulder rather than pelvis-to-pelvis.

Procedure for Documentation and Reporting

Physical; Emotional; or Sexual Abuse, Molestation, or Misconduct: Every adult at the co-op is asked to consider themselves and treat situations as though they are a mandated reporter.

Adults must immediately report suspected abuse or neglect to both DCFS and the co-op board. Department of Children and Family Services hotline: (1-800-25-ABUSE)

Contact a board member by phone or in person (**not** by email).

The board member will have the reporter immediately complete an Abuse; Sexual Abuse, Molestation, and Misconduct Incident form, available from each board member which may be hand delivered, emailed, or faxed to the reporter.

The reporter will directly acknowledge receipt of the form in person or by phone (**not** email), complete it immediately, and arrange for the original, completed copy to be returned to the board member for immediate follow-up.

Where the board member is not the board president, the board member will immediately inform the board president of the report in person or by phone (**not** email) and in written form on the Abuse; Sexual Abuse, Molestation, or Misconduct Incident form.

The board president will immediately contact the other board members in person or by phone (**not** email) in order to notify them of the reported incident.

The board president will immediately contact the proper police authorities as well as the Department of Children and Family Services at the hotline (1-800-25-ABUSE). The call to DCFS is to ensure that the incident was reported to DCFS by the original reporting adult and to establish proper

direct communication with DCFS regarding the incident.

The board president will immediately contact the proper police authorities as well as the Department of Children and Family Services at the hotline (1-800-25-ABUSE). The call to DCFS is to ensure that the incident was reported to DCFS by the original reporting adult and to establish proper direct communication with DCFS regarding the incident.

The person reported as engaging in abuse, molestation or misconduct will be confronted by the board president and the next ranking board member in a compassionate manner. The accused person will be suspended from the co-op, pending investigation by the proper authorities. The suspension is to protect all parties involved. This suspension does not imply a presumption of guilt.

The board president will contact the insurance carrier to notify them of the allegations and obtain advice in immediate handling of the situation.

The board president will obtain a lawyer on behalf of the co-op for legal advice regarding handling of the situation.

The next ranking officer will monitor the child and family, including positive support.

The board president will keep in touch with the accused staff member to confirm whereabouts and response activities that are detrimental and unauthorized by the co-op.

The results of the police and/or DCFS investigation will determine whether the suspended staff person will be reinstated or permanently dismissed and whether or not criminal charges

will be filed.

The board will establish and implement additional preventive procedures to eliminate a reoccurrence of the event.

Note: Failure of the board or board members to perform prompt and required reporting may be determined to be additional misconduct resulting in additional liability independent of the original incident.

Board Communication to Staff

The board will communicate to appropriate staff the existence of the reported incident and steps being taken in response.

Communication to the Press

No board member or co-op member other than the president of the board should speak to the press or general public regarding the reported incident. The board with the guidance of legal council will determine what, if anything, the president will state to the press or general public.

Board and Co-op Member Responses to Accused Staff Member

During an investigation and/or in the case where criminal charges are filed, the following procedures should be followed:

- Board members and co-op members should not have unauthorized contact with the accused person regarding the incident.
- The only contact regarding the incident should be in cooperation with DCFS and as advised by legal counsel.

- In the case where an accused person contacts a board member or co-op member regarding the incident outside of official, monitored DCFS proceedings, the board member or co-op member should state clearly that he or she cannot discuss the situation until the proceedings are concluded. Then terminate the contact by saying good-bye and walking away or hanging up the phone. Email or other electronic contact regarding the incident should not be acknowledged.
- Anyone contacted thus inappropriately should document the incident and report it to the board president immediately in person or by phone (not email). The documentation should be filed with the board.

Protection Rule Violation (Not Incident of Abuse)

If a staff member becomes aware (either through a child reporting or through direct observation) of an adult who appears to inadvertently fail to follow a protection rule, yet has not perpetrated an incident of abuse, molestation, or misconduct, the staff member should verbally remind the adult of the appropriate rule.

If the adult continues to violate the rule, the staff member must verbally report the incident(s) to a board member.

The board member will document a report of an incident of failure to follow a protection rule. The board member will document persons involved, the time of the incident, and the board member recording the incident.

The board member will immediately report and file the documentation with the co-op board president.

The board president will contact the

adult who has violated a protection rule by phone or in person (not by email) before the next co-op meeting day or event and discuss the matter, clarifying the rule. The president will document this conversation.

If an adult is cited for rule violation a second time (over the course of their participation in the co-op), the board will meet with the individual before the next co-op meeting day or event to determine the cause of the violation. The board will determine whether dismissal from the co-op is appropriate at such time.

If an adult is cited for rule violation a third time (over the course of their participation in the co-op), the board will meet with the individual before the next co-op meeting day or event to inform him or her of the report and the individual will be immediately dismissed from the co-op. Such dismissal will be documented by the board.

In the case of rule violation and/or dismissal only (no actual report of abuse, molestation or misconduct), no report to authorities will be made by the board.

In-service Prevention Training

Each regularly participating co-op parent must attend annual in-service child protection training and sign that they have received such training. Training includes all information in this guide. The board will maintain records of training dates and attendance.

Screening - Background Checks

Because each regularly participating parent is a volunteer working directly

with other people's children, our insurance requires that each Participating parent has a formal background check.

This is also becoming more and more common among all volunteer organizations who work with children. The background check will include a multi-state criminal background check. The board will also monitor convicted sex offender lists provided by state police.

Written permission will be obtained from each adult before a background check is conducted. The information obtained in the background check will be kept in a secure location and strictly confidential, accessible only to board members assigned to conduct the screening process.

Monitoring

Board members will monitor co-op activities, staff (including other board members), and the facility regularly as follows:

- Classroom doors will usually remain open unless they have glass windows. However, they may be closed for short periods when necessary for noise control and **only** if two or more adults are present.
- Closed bathroom doors, while appropriate under the circumstances described under "bathroom use," are subject to random checks.
- Random checks will be made on activities to "see how things are going." These checks should be viewed as safety checks for all adults and children as well as opportunities for general support.

A log will be kept of these monitoring activities including the date and time of each check.

Adult Child Ratios

In addition to the requirements listed in the "Rules" section, the co-op will comply with the following State of Illinois Child Care Center guidelines for adult- child ratios: (In most cases, our ratios will be even better.)

Age	Adult to Child Ratio	Max Group Size
4-5 years old	1 adult to 20 children	20
6 years old (first grade) and older	1 adult to 30 children	30

Symptoms in Children Sexual Abuse

The following are general behavior changes that may occur in children who have been sexually abused. These changes may also occur when there is physical or emotional abuse, or during stressful life circumstances, such as divorce or the death of a loved one:

- physical complaints
- fear and dislike of certain people or places
- sleep disturbances
- headaches
- school problems
- withdrawal from family, friends, or usual activities
- excessive bathing or poor hygiene
- return to younger, more babyish behavior
- depression
- anxiety
- discipline problems
- running away
- eating disorders
- passive or overly pleasing behavior
- delinquent acts
- low self-esteem
- self-destructive behavior
- hostility or aggression
- drug or alcohol problems

- sexual activity or pregnancy at an early age
- suicide attempts

Additional symptoms for children who have been abused more frequently:

- copying adult sexual behavior
- persistent sexual play with other children, themselves, toys or pets
- displaying sexual knowledge, through language or behavior, that is beyond what is normal for their age.
- unexplained swelling, bleeding or irritation of the mouth, genital or anal area, urinary infections, sexually transmitted diseases
- hints, indirect comments, or statements about abuse (The Sexual Assault Crisis Center)

Physical Abuse

- visible marks of maltreatment such as cuts, bruises, welts, or well-defined burns
- reluctance to go to location of abuse

Emotional Abuse

- apathy
- depression
- hostility (Helpguide)

Teaching Children

It is the responsibility of parents to teach their children at a developmentally appropriate level how to recognize and report to a trusted adult (such as the parent or other adult) physical; emotional; or sexual abuse, molestation, or misconduct.

Why Children Don't Report

Often children do not tell anyone about sexual abuse because they:

- are too young to put what has happened into words.

- were threatened or bribed by the abuser to keep the abuse a secret.
- feel confused by the attention and feelings accompanying the abuse.
- are afraid no one will believe them.
- blame themselves or believe the abuse is punishment for being "bad."
- feel too ashamed or embarrassed to tell.
- worry about getting into trouble or getting a loved one into trouble.

Silence enables abuse to continue. Silence protects offenders and hurts children who are being abused. All abuse, including sexual abuse, is an extremely difficult and damaging experience. Today there are many resources to help victims and their families. Children no longer need to suffer in silence.

Protection of Children from Sexual Abuse

As concerned parents, we want to protect children from sexual abuse, but we can't always be there to do that. We can, however, teach children about sexual abuse in order to increase their awareness and coping skills. Without frightening children, we can provide them with appropriate safety information and support at every stage of their development.

We can provide personal safety information to children in a matter-of-fact way, with other routine safety discussions about fire, water, health, etc. Although even the best educated child cannot always figure out sexual abuse, children who are well prepared will be more likely to tell you if abuse has occurred.

This is a child's defense. In order to protect children teach them:

- to feel good about themselves and know they are loved, valued, and deserve to be safe.
- the difference between safe and unsafe touches.
- the proper names for all body parts, so they will be able to communicate clearly.
- that safety rules apply to all adults, not just strangers.
- that their bodies belong to them and nobody has the right to touch them or hurt them.
- that they can say “no” to requests that make them feel uncomfortable- even from a close relative or family friend.
- to report to you if any adult asks them to keep a secret (explain the difference between a surprise, like a birthday gift, and a secret).
- that some adults have problems.
- that they can rely on you to believe and protect them if they talk to you about abuse.
- that they are not bad or to blame for sexual abuse.
- to tell a trusted adult about abuse even if they are afraid of what may happen.

DO:

- Keep calm. It is important to remember that you are not angry with the child, but at what happened. Children can mistakenly interpret anger or disgust as directed towards them.
- Believe the child. In most circumstances children do not lie about abuse.
- Give positive messages such as, “I know you couldn’t help it,” or “I’m proud of you for telling.”
- Explain to the child that he or she is not to blame for what happened.
- Listen to and answer the child’s questions honestly.

- Respect the child’s privacy. Be careful not to discuss the abuse in front of people who do not need to know what happened.
- Be responsible. Report the incident to the Department of [Children and Family Services]. They can help protect the child’s safety and provide resources for further help.
- Arrange a medical exam. It can reassure you that there has been no permanent damage and may verify important evidence.
- Get help. Get competent professional counseling, even if it’s only for a short time.

DO NOT:

- Panic or overreact when the child talks about the experience. Children need help and support to make it through this difficult time.
- Pressure the child to talk or avoid talking about the abuse Allow the child to talk at his or her own pace. Forcing information can be harmful.
- Silence the child. This will not help her or him to forget.
- Confront the offender in the child’s presence. The stress may be harmful. This is a job for the authorities.
- Blame the child

SEXUAL ABUSE IS NEVER THE CHILD’S FAULT!!! (The Sexual Assault Crisis Center)

Works Cited

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- Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. "Child Protection." [Online] Available <http://www.state.il.us/dcf/child/index.shtml>, June 17, 2008.
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XIII. Miscellaneous

Non-Profit Status

The Community Organization for Near West Homeschoolers is a non-profit organization and all of the board members, team members, and supporting staff are volunteers. As a non-profit organization, our funds are of course limited and the co-op as a whole benefits from in kind donations, gifts, and good ol' hard work which helps to ensure we are staying within our budget restraints.

Therefore, Class Leads and Assistants are encouraged to supply their activities as wisely as possible, by using renewable materials, and inexpensive everyday household items in order to facilitate a creative and frugal learning environment.

Where Does My Money Go?

The board of The Community Organization for Near West Homeschoolers works to ensure that your dollar stretches far. But specifically, where does it go?

The list includes:

- Space Rental
- Insurance
- Supplies
- P.O.Box
- Filing Fees for Non-Profit/501©3 Annual Forms

XIV. Feedback

The co-op is always interested in hearing your feedback, comments, questions, and concerns. There are a variety of ways to share this with the group. One way is simply to bounce ideas off fellow co-op members. Another way is to contact a Class Lead, or Class Assistant to discuss action items. Yet another way to communicate these things is by contacting a board member directly. Or, for a more discreet approach, you can simply send a detailed email to contact@nearwesthomeschoolers.org or board@nearwesthomeschoolers.org, and the board will be happy to hear to your thoughts and take the appropriate action.

Thank You

Lastly, we would like to thank you for having the courage and dedication to contribute to co-op, as each of you make up a vital part of the group which undoubtedly contributes to our overall success.