



LOVE FIRST

Homeschool Inc.

**Club & Event
Participant Handbook**

2023 - 2024

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Who We Are

Mission

The mission of Love First Homeschool Inc. is to support and encourage families in the homeschool community to foster academic, emotional, and spiritual growth from a biblical perspective, so children become self-directed learners and servant leaders who understand that, as Christ followers, we must love first.

1 John 4:19 We love because He first loved us.

Statement of Faith and Community

We are a body of homeschoolers from various Christian traditions, believing in one triune God—the Father, His Son and Our Savior, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. We are comfortable praying together, discussing God, and sharing scripture. As parents, we prayerfully and joyfully accept the responsibility of educating our children. Our instruction reflects a Christian worldview solidly rooted in the Bible. We acknowledge that denominational differences exist. We choose to concentrate on our spiritual unity as believers through our common faith in Jesus Christ and will not allow doctrinal differences to hinder our cooperation as Christian home educators.

Purpose

Love First Homeschool Inc. is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Leadership Team

Melody Gowman, melody.lovefirst@gmail.com
Kara Strouth, kara.lovefirst@gmail.com
Brenda DiEugenio, brenda.lovefirst@gmail.com
Devon Greathouse, devon.lovefirst@gmail.com
Shannon Chilcote, shannon.lovefirst@gmail.com

Anti-Discrimination Policy

Love First Homeschool Inc. is committed to fulfilling its mission without discrimination, including discrimination based on race, color, national origin, ancestry, age, gender, familial status, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability or handicap, veteran status, economic status, or religion.

Anti-Harassment and Anti-Bullying Policy

Love First Homeschool Inc. is committed to providing all members with a safe and supportive environment. Members are expected to treat each other with respect. Teachers and other attending adults are expected to teach and to demonstrate by example that all members of the community are entitled to respect. Harassment or bullying of any member, adult or child, is a violation of this policy. This includes, but is not limited to, harassment or bullying based on political preferences, political beliefs, socioeconomic status, race, color, national origin, ancestry, age, gender, familial status, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression,

disability or handicap, veteran status, economic status, or religion.

Examples of harassment / bullying by any person, adult or child, may include, but are not limited to:

Verbal Bullying

- Direct Bullying: Taunting, teasing, name calling, put downs, racial remarks, threats
- Indirect Bullying: Spreading rumors, gossiping

Physical Bullying

- Direct Bullying: Hitting, kicking, tripping, punching, using any sort of violence and any unwanted physical contact, theft of property or taking anything that does not belong to you without permission
- Indirect Bullying: Enlisting a friend to assault someone

Nonverbal/Non-physical Bullying

- Direct Bullying: Threatening or obscene gestures
- Indirect Bullying: Being deliberately unkind, excluding others from a group, manipulation of friendships, threatening email, setting someone up to be humiliated

Cyberbullying

- Direct Bullying: Cyberbullying occurs through the use of technology. This can include the use of any electronic devices using social networks, text messaging, instant messaging, websites, e-mail or other electronic means. A person participates in direct cyberbullying if he or she directly carries out the behavior.
- Indirect Bullying: Indirect cyberbullying is carried out by those who assist, encourage, or fail to report the bullying behavior in any way. It is often the virtual bystanders who are responsible for the repeated humiliation felt by victims.

Any person who believes he or she has been subject to harassment, bullying (including verbal, physical, nonverbal/nonphysical, and cyber) or a hostile environment, or has observed this conduct based on one or more of the characteristics noted above— whether such harassment, bullying or hostile environment is created by a fellow student, teacher, or parent/guardian—is encouraged to report the conduct to the leadership team. If a person is found to have engaged in acts of bullying, harassment or other acts that create a hostile environment, the person may be subject to discipline, including but not limited to removal from the organization without refund or, in extreme cases, legal action may be taken.

Membership Availability

Membership for Club/Event members is valid July 1 through June 30 of each year; grade advancements in the organization occur at this time.

Membership will be available to families who are current in the payment of all required fees and who have satisfied such other duties and responsibilities as have been set by the Participant Handbook.

Membership may be revoked at the discretion of the leadership team when the duties and responsibilities as outlined in the Participant Handbook are deemed not compliant.

When membership capacity has been reached, applicants will be placed on a waiting list for consideration by the leadership team.

Attendance

General Attendance

When you register for a club/event, attendance is expected for the benefit of all students. Contact the club/event coordinator promptly if you signed up for an event but can no longer attend.

Sign-Ups

All participants for an event/activity must sign up through the website. For safety concerns and to ensure supervision, enough space, and adequate materials/supplies, sign-ups are required. If a participant would like to sign-up for an event after it has been closed, he or she needs to contact the event/activity coordinator.

No-Shows

A no-show is an absence without any communication. Except in an emergency situation, like a car accident, no-shows are unacceptable, as they create chaos and disruption to the children's activities, and may result in a loss of membership without refund.

Withdrawals

Please let the leadership team know if your plans change and you will no longer be attending. Because fees are paid in order to have a spot in the organization and pay for expenses, all fees paid are nonrefundable. Withdrawals that result in failure to uphold commitments may prohibit future participation in the organization for the family.

Arrival

We look forward to seeing each family as they arrive together. Due to our insurance requirements, you must accompany your children, regardless of age, into the building. Parents may not drop children off, even briefly, unless otherwise specified by the leadership team or event/club coordinator. Sign-in your family at the welcome table or with the club/event coordinator. Please arrive on time.

Absences

In order to remain an active member, families must consistently attend the activities they signed-up to attend. Frequent absences may result in the loss of membership in the group in order to make room for members who are waiting for an opportunity to attend. This does not include extended illnesses, births, deaths, or other extenuating circumstances. In order to remain a member in good standing, please communicate with the leadership team if you have extenuating circumstances. If you must be absent, communicate this absence to the activity leader as soon as possible.

Member Requirements and Expectations

Cleaning

- Every family is responsible to clean up after themselves.
- Cleaning is a great opportunity to encourage your child to help in the organization and teach them to be servant leaders. We want to respect our host location and leave it better than when we came.
- Please see attached Rules and Facility Use Checklist for our host location.

Adult Responsibilities.

- A. Check email and website calendar at least weekly and read the weekly newsletter to ensure you are aware of all opportunities.
- B. Clearances
 - Child Abuse History Clearance, PA State Police Criminal History Clearance, and FBI Criminal History Clearance (if you have lived outside of PA in the last 10 years) are required for all adults participating in the organization.
 - There is no cost for volunteers to get these clearances.
 - Instructions on obtaining required clearances are on the website.
 - Submit required clearances to Kara Strouth, at kara.lovefirst@gmail.com, provide a hard copy in person, or place them in her mailbox.

Payments

Family Registration Fee

There is a non-refundable yearly registration fee of \$100, including those who join mid-year. The registration fee is not prorated. Registration fees are due at registration. For families who join mid-year, the full registration fee is due at the time of registration. The registration fee helps cover the cost of renting the facility, liability insurance, website fees, and professional fees. The registration fee covers the period of July 1 - June 30.

Fundraising

Our group is relying on fundraising participation from each family to help keep costs as low as possible. We will strive to provide a variety of fundraising opportunities so that each family can participate in the group fundraisers. Due to the nonprofit nature of our organization, all funds raised will go towards the benefit of the entire group. Funds raised will help reduce or potentially eliminate fees.

All fundraisers held or endorsed at Love First Homeschool Inc. must be Love First Homeschool Inc. sanctioned fundraisers. No other outside fundraisers, or other business transactions, are permitted unless explicit approval has been given by the leadership team.

Fundraising questions or suggestions can be sent to fundraising@lovefirsthomeschool.org.

Rebate Program

Love First Homeschool Inc. participates in the RaiseRight (formerly Scrip) rebate program. Using this rebate program, families can reduce their fees by purchasing gift cards for stores where they normally shop. Families receive the full amount of the gift card to use at the given store. The company gives a percentage of the purchase back to the purchaser in the form of a rebate which can be applied to the family's Love First account or "cashed out" in the form of a check from Love First. To learn more about RaiseRight, visit <https://www.shopwithscrip.com/how-to-earn>.

Financial Aid

When possible, financial aid is available on a limited basis and is needs-based. Financial aid is at the discretion of the leadership team. Please inquire with leadership if costs prohibit you from participating in the organization.

Club and Event Membership Participation and Supply Fees

Most clubs/activities/events/outings will have an associated fee. This fee and its due date will be determined per club/activity/event/outing and should be paid in full by the given deadline. Associated fees are nonrefundable unless otherwise stated by the leadership team. Refunds will be considered only prior to clubs/events starting and if materials/tickets have not already been purchased but are not guaranteed. Additional sign ups after registration has closed for an event may not be honored.

Communication

Website

www.lovefirsthomeschool.org

Our website has a public side and private side that is accessible only through logging in. Information, forms, and schedules are available for you to access on the private side of the website. Sign ups for events should be done through the website calendar.

Newsletter

A newsletter will be emailed weekly on Friday morning. Please send any information to be included to lovefirsthomeschoolinc@gmail.com by Thursday at noon. Please include "newsletter" in the subject line.

Facebook

There is a private Facebook group for current members only. This group is used to share information and build community, but please keep in mind that it is not the primary source of communication as some members are not a part of Facebook. Facebook should not be used as the only means to inform of absences or important events.

Remind App

Text @LFHinc to the number 81010 to be added to the group in Remind. This group will be used to send a text in case of last-minute cancellations or to alert members of an urgent message during a regular meeting day.

Club/Activity Leaders Requirements and Expectations

General Expectations

- Be prepared. Advanced preparation will make all the difference in any class.
- Take attendance or have a helper do this.
- Have an emergency back-up plan to share in the event you are unexpectedly unable to attend.
- All communications should be sent through the website.
- Be familiar with the *Gentle Discipline Policy* listed in this Participant Handbook.
- Support any child with special needs in the least restrictive manner so that every club/event runs smoothly and provides the maximum learning opportunity possible for every child in the group. Any teacher or helper needing support in managing an inclusive classroom should promptly communicate that need with the leadership team.
- All adults should be familiar with the fire evacuation route for each location where he/she has responsibilities and know the location of fire extinguishers. A fire drill may be practiced during the school year.
- For pick up, children in grade 3 and below may only be released to their parent/guardian.

Class Supply Reimbursement

This reimbursement policy enables best practices for sound bookkeeping, expedited reimbursement, and safeguards volunteers against unintentionally creating taxable income.

- Club and Event Teachers/Leaders must have preapproval before making purchases for reimbursement.
- Reimbursement requests for class supplies and materials must be used for and be relevant to the class. Extra materials become the property of the organization.
- All expenses require a receipt for reimbursement.
- All requests for reimbursement should be submitted through the parent account on the Expense Reimbursement Request tab of the website.
- An option for reimbursement for copies is provided in the online Expense Reimbursement Request at a price of \$.05 per page. Reimbursement for copies is part of the total allotted expense amount.
- Reimbursement requests should be submitted within two months of the purchase date.
- For questions or concerns, email treasurer@lovefirsthomeschool.org.

Helper Responsibilities

The role of the helper is to assist the teacher however needed including but not limited to helping maintain order, handle disruptions, work with students individually, and check homework so that the teacher may continue teaching.

Helpers/Chaperones should communicate with the teacher/leader to find out how to best help during the club/event and be aware of and know how to implement a back-up plan if needed.

The helper must be fully present and committed to the club/event when helping. Please have access to phones in the event of an emergency Remind App message being sent. Otherwise, adults should not be using their phones during clubs/events.

Subcontractor Responsibilities

At times, the organization may choose to hire a subcontractor to provide a service to students. The following guidelines will apply:

- In addition to the fee charged by the subcontractor, a class supply fee may still apply in order to cover the cost of using the room in our host location and will be determined by the leadership team.
- The subcontractor determines his/her fee for the course.
- The subcontractor may require each child to have/purchase materials/supplies in order to implement course objectives in addition to his/her course fee.
- A service agreement or contract will be set up and signed between the subcontractor and the organization.
- The subcontractor will provide proof of insurance and identification.
- The leadership team will determine:
 - If the fee is collected by the organization and then issued to the subcontractor with the requirement of a W9/1099
 - If each family pays the subcontractor directly, per child
- Subcontractors are required to provide appropriate clearances.
- Subcontractors are required to read Love First Homeschool Inc. Participant Handbook.

Gentle Discipline Policy

Purpose

We believe the best way for all to enjoy their time at Love First Homeschool 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:
 - a. First, redirected to the appropriate activity
 - b. Second, asked directly to stop the inappropriate behavior

c. Third, 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.
5. 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.
6. Leaders are to seek restoration when an issue has been addressed. Lovingly welcome the child back into class for a second chance whenever possible.
7. 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).
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. If a child engages in bullying or any form of verbal abuse, physical fighting, brings a weapon, engages in theft, or willfully destroys property, the child will be subject to disciplinary action.

Unacceptable Corrective Methods

Yelling, humiliating, time out, and physical punishment by any adult are unacceptable at Love First Homeschool.

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 that Love First Homeschool Inc. will continue to be a pleasant, safe place to learn, explore, and grow together.

Children with Special Needs

It is the parent's responsibility to make the teacher, event coordinator, and/or leadership team aware of any special needs their child may have that would affect their learning or participation in the event/activity. If the student requires consistent individualized assistance, the parent will be assigned as a helper in the child's classes/activities in order to support the child when in a class situation. The goal of Love First Homeschool Inc. is to provide a safe, welcoming, and educational environment for every child participating in the organization, without exception.

Conflict Resolution

We understand that conflict is natural; however, as people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe that we are called to respond to conflict in a Christ-honoring way. We also believe that conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, serve other people, and to grow to be more Christ-like.*

We strive always to maintain an atmosphere of grace and love. Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. (James 1) If possible, be willing to overlook an offense. (Proverbs 19)

We ask that if there is an issue that needs to be addressed that you follow these steps:

1. Go directly to the involved person and address the issue calmly.
2. If the problem is not resolved, seek counsel from the leadership team.

**adapted from Peacemaker® Ministries. <https://peacemakerministries.org>*

Safety and Security

Safety of everyone attending is always the first priority. As such, the following protocols are in place:

- We will enter and exit only through the main entrance.
- Doors will be locked upon the start of the club/event. Someone will have to let you in if you arrive after start time.
- If you are taking kids outside for any reason, let the leadership team know ahead of time.
- Children must be supervised at all times; no exceptions.
- All participating adults must have valid, required clearances.
- Adults should never be alone with a child who they are not the parent or guardian of.
- Keep classroom doors propped open.
- Adults should not make promises of confidentiality to any children.
- No weapons of any kind (knives, guns, swords, etc.) are permitted in student possession.

Emergency Procedures

We have procedures for two types of emergencies: those requiring students to remain in the classroom until further notice and those requiring the evacuation of the building.

Emergency Hold Plan – this plan will be used if a threatening intruder enters the building or if we need to take a complete head count of the student body, for example, if a student is missing.

1. The Emergency Hold Plan will be indicated by sending a text through the Remind app to alert all attending adults. When appropriate, members of the Leadership team or other appointed adults will also alert classes.
2. Upon receiving the “Emergency Hold” message, all students are to remain in their current classroom. The door should be shut and secured if possible, lights turned off, and students gathered into the safest area of the room.

3. Classrooms should remain secure until a member of the Leadership Team indicates it is safe to resume.

Emergency Evacuation Plan – this plan will be used when complete evacuation of the building is needed for the safety of everyone inside, as in the case of a fire.

Teachers/helpers will be expected to locate the rooms where your classes are held and review the quickest way to exit the building in the event of an emergency. An emergency evacuation drill may be held sometime during the year.

In the event that we would need to evacuate the building, the fire alarm will be sounded. In response to this warning, teachers/helpers should follow these steps:

1. Gather the children in your class into a line and take a headcount.
2. As you exit the room, turn off lights, and close the classroom door to verify that the room is vacated.
3. Lead the students single-file to the quickest exit available. There should be no talking to allow everyone to hear any instructions that may need to be given.
4. Proceed to the furthest area of the parking lot.
5. Have your class line up and take a count of your students to make sure you have everyone.
6. Keep the students with you until the Leadership Team ensures that all students are present and gives further instructions.

Guests and Visitors

- A. Guest speakers will need to be pre-approved by leadership.
- B. For safety and insurance purposes, guest students (friends of participants) are not permitted unless pre-approved by leadership.
- C. When guests are permitted to attend, this information will be given in the event sign up. For example, a friend may attend a dance with a member. When permitted, the guest will be expected to sign all the same waivers as members.

Cancellations

Organization cancellations, for any reason, will be emailed.

Building

Host church

Our host church, First Christian Church, has graciously agreed to host our group. Love First Homeschool Inc. is an independently registered nonprofit organization. We exist as our own legal entity upholding and maintaining all requirements of the law.

Cleaning

Every family is responsible to help clean. Our goal is to leave the church in better condition than when we got there. See “*Cleaning*” under *Member Expectations and Requirements*.

Health Policy

Guidelines for Staying Home

You or your child should stay home if exhibiting any of the following symptoms:

- fever of 100.4 or higher
- vomiting or diarrhea
- rash with fever
- other symptoms that would hinder participation:
 - tired, unable to focus
 - uncontrollable coughing or sneezing
 - bad sore throat
 - eye drainage

24 Hour Rule:

- You or your child should be fever free without medication, as well as no vomiting or diarrhea for at least 24 hours before attending.
- If you or your child was given an antibiotic, please stay home for at least 24 hours after the first dose.

Please use wisdom when deciding if you should keep your family at home for the day. While your attendance is important, your health and the health of others is the priority. If it is a situation where only one person is ill, please use caution in deciding if the rest of your family will attend.

If you or your child begins to feel unwell after you have arrived, please inform a member of the leadership team prior to leaving for the day.

Guidelines for Incidents and Injuries

1. Care for the injury with proper first aid care and necessary attention. A first aid kit is available at the welcome table.
2. Inform a member of the leadership team of the situation.
3. Fill out an Incident Report form located in the file folder at the welcome table. This completed form needs to be signed by the child's parent/guardian as well as a member of the leadership team.

Parent/Guardian Support

At Love First Homeschool, we strive to support the whole family, including the parents/guardians, and desire to build a network of friends who can encourage and pray for one another. Our group consists of both new and seasoned homeschooling families which provides a great opportunity for growth and reflection. To foster this community building, we have a

designated room available for parents/guardians.

This lounge area is for parents/guardians only. Please be respectful of this space; exceptions are made for small babies that stay with mom for the day.

We encourage relationship building during this time and are hopeful to form lasting, Christ-honoring friendships.

Rules and Facility Use Checklist

Outdoor activities-please protect the landscaping by staying out of the mulch and plantings. Use the sidewalks and grass areas for outdoor activities.

Pantry supplies and linens must be washed and returned as soon as possible.

Nothing is to be taped, stapled, or tacked to the walls without permission from the leadership team.

No church equipment can be removed from the church premises for any reason.

No commercial activity shall be conducted on the premises.

No alcoholic beverages may be served, consumed, or brought onto the church property.

Love First Homeschool Inc. is a smoke-free and tobacco free facility.

Wipe down all tables and chairs as needed. Bathroom toilets must be cleaned and flushed and counters wiped dry.

If there are finger and handprints on the windows or doors in the entryway, please clean them with the glass cleaner located in the janitor's closet.

Do not leave leftover food and drinks behind. Give away, take home, or throw away.

Collect, bag all trash, and place it inside the trash can located in the main stairwell.

Any shortages or maintenance issues discovered while using the facility should be reported to a member of the leadership team as soon as possible.