

Practice Manual



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Introduction

The CHEC Practice Manual exists to help guide members in 'how things are done' in our midst.

Parts 1, 2 and 3 form the CHEC Aims and Objectives, which along with our Constitution, form our Official Documentation.

These, along with Part 4, Code of Conduct, must be read and accepted by all members applying for or renewing membership.

Remaining sections of the Practice Manual exist to guide members regarding planning and attending events, communication tools, and other facets of community life which the Administration Team wishes to address.

Part 1 Who We Are

CHEC is a Christian support network for home-educators in the ACT and surrounding regions. As our name implies, our particular focus stems from the fact that we are believers in Jesus Christ, who approach all areas of life from a worldview that is shaped by the Bible.

Part 2 Purpose

Believing that Jesus Christ is Lord, we are committed to raising our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. We will meet together to encourage and support each other in our endeavours to train our children successfully. We will honour the Lord Jesus Christ and acknowledge that, with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, He will be our strength and wisdom as we seek to raise our children for His glory.

Part 3 Aims

CHEC aims to carry out its purpose by:

- (1) Providing the opportunity for home-educating families to meet each other and form friendships that will facilitate mutual encouragement;
- (2) Holding discussion meetings where parents can meet together and discuss issues related to home education from a Christian perspective;
- (3) Arranging excursions, where children can learn about their local area and specific topics of interest;
- (4) Arranging other educational and social activities (such as sports, language classes, Toastmasters, picnics etc.) to supplement the teaching provided at home and enable parents and children to meet and interact with each other.

The group relies on volunteers from its membership to arrange all activities and services. Both mothers and fathers are encouraged to be involved when and wherever they can, both in the administration of the group and by participating in and organising activities.

Part 4 Code of Conduct

As a Christian group, CHEC bases our principles and day to day dealings on the Holy Bible, and **we warmly welcome all home educators who understand this and are happy to be guided by these principles within our group environment.** Whether or not a family considers themselves to be Christian does not affect their welcome in our midst.

1. Guidelines

When we are gathered as a group, there is an expectancy that we will act according to these following guidelines. They have been put in place to promote a harmonious and cohesive experience for all members present at any CHEC gathering, and to ensure that we as a group and as individuals promote home education in a positive way to the public.

In the Holy Bible, in the book of John, chapter 13, verse 34, Jesus said, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” This bible verse should be the foundation for all our interactions with our fellow humans.

1.1 General

Our character towards others should be respectful, gracious and encouraging, loving and supportive. We are all different and it is this difference which creates our diverse and dynamic community.

This would indicate that:

- **At a public excursion** we would be considerate of the instructor and the other people present, and act in a way that would allow everyone to benefit positively from the excursion;
- **In someone’s home** we would be considerate of our host/ess and the other people present, acting in a way that honours the host/ess and their home, and enabling those present to enjoy their time together;
- We would endeavour to ensure that our actions do not endanger anyone who is present at the time, nor put someone else in danger at a later date. It is understood that accidents do happen through honest mistakes and it is desirable that such are forgiven graciously and readily;
- **When we are using a hired venue**, we are considerate of our hosts, treating the venue with respect and leaving it clean and tidy to reflect that respect to our hosts.

1.2 Preparation & Modelling

Character is highly significant in parenting, as we model attitudes and actions to our children.

- As parents, we show respect to our host, host-organisation, tour guide or other parents by explaining and modelling these principles to our children so they in turn can reflect this respect to others;
- Part of creating a safe environment for our children is remembering to set boundaries for them before each event. We can be sure to let our child know who the instructor will be and which CHEC parent has organised the event. If our child has a question or need to be corrected during the event, they will have the prior knowledge of who has authority in each situation, although they should also be reminded to be respectful and responsive to another parent’s gentle instruction;
- As we respond to emails advertising excursions, think about how we can help our child to gain the most from the excursion and how they can help others gain the most from the excursion, too. We are best equipped, as parents, to be mindful of our own child’s attention span, the suitability or age appropriateness of activities, or even potential difficulties. Talking to the organiser in advance can be beneficial in aligning expectations on both sides. Ask for another parent’s assistance if you think it will be of help to you. There will be other parents or families in CHEC who will be glad to help you or your child if needed.

1.3 Privacy & Personal Choice

Australia has quite strong privacy laws, but beyond that, our desire is to always be respectful of individual needs for privacy, as well as personal choices.

- We respect privacy requirements unconditionally and do not pass any contact details to anyone else without the person's express permission.
- The CHEC Directory is available for members to locate contact details for each other as needed;

In CHEC's role as a support network, we choose to respect the uniqueness and personal views of each family to home educate as they see fit.

- We respect unconditionally each family's right to decide what is appropriate for their own children, and reflect that respect in our language to and about one another, as well as our unconditional acceptance of that family regardless of how their views may align with or differ from our own.
- We accept that there are a wide range of educational approaches practised within the broad parameters of home education, and acknowledge that unless a child is genuinely being abused or neglected, as described in the Child Protection Act 2008¹, another family's choices are none of our business, and not part of our role in the community.

2. Childcare

We as parents need to be aware that we are responsible for our child/ren's behaviour.

If a parent is unable to be with their child/ren at a CHEC event, it is very important that they find another parent who will be responsible for the child/ren until the parent returns. This is to ensure that a parent who is known and trusted by the child/ren is able to deal with any personal comfort, safety or behavioural issues which may arise.

Any parent may remove their own child (or another child in their care at the time) from a situation if the child is being disruptive, to gently remind them of the way the group has been asked to behave, and the guidelines set by either CHEC or the hosting organisation's rules. Once the parent is confident the child understands what is required of them, they may return to cooperatively resume their activity.

The instructor or the parent who organised the excursion may ask for a child to be removed if they are a constant disruption to the group. It should be ensured that the child is safely reunited with either their parent or the parent responsible for their care.

3. Events

If there are any questions or issues that arise and need answering at a CHEC event, either the parent who organised the event or the host organisation is the first point of reference. Please remember as you approach these people that they have gone to a great deal of effort to organise a positive learning experience for all CHEC families present, and would appreciate being approached with the same respectful and courteous manner you would appreciate if you had organised the event.

4. Relationship

Relationship with each other is the most important aspect of our CHEC group, not rules which we must follow. Our fostered relationships will hopefully create a warm and loving environment where the children feel loved and respected, and the parents feel encouraged and supported. We hope to achieve this through the development of friendships fostered by participation in excursions, discussion meetings, regular weekly activities, one off parent focused activities, picnics or small gatherings in family homes.

These relationships should encourage us to work through any problems we may have with an open heart and mutual respect, applying grace and humility towards one another.

If we have an unfortunate circumstance where this warm exchange is not achieved we need to follow the principles that have been laid before us in the Holy Bible.

¹ The DHCS document "[Keeping Children and Young People Safe](#)" provides good information on this subject. If you wish to check the legislation personally, [click here](#).

5. Difficulties

5.1 Common Difficulties

If there is constant disruption to the group from behaviour or lack of consideration, members should come alongside one another to offer their help and support. It is hoped that friendships of trust between members will provide support and encouragement through any difficult time, with the ability to speak the truth in love to an open heart, so that a resolution may be found.

If a personal issue arises between two members, it is hoped the members would be able to work it out together without the need for further intervention, and without gossip.

5.2 Dealing with Difficulties

In all our dealings with each other regarding any conflict, our first priority should be to talk to the other person ourselves and try to work the issue out.

Should no solution become apparent, the matter should be directed to a member of the Administration Team. These members have been voted in as trusted and godly individuals, and will be prayerful in determining what course of action should be taken, in consultation with other members who may be involved in the matter, as necessary.

5.3 Serious Difficulties

Serious difficulties are restricted to infringements of privacy or safety, misconduct by a member or the Administration Team or Communications Team, or persistent disregard for the Conditions of Membership.

Serious difficulties are addressed, and will be dealt with in accordance with Part 1.2, sections 9 and 10 of the CHEC Constitution, which is aligned with the Associations Incorporation Act 1991.

The Holy Bible, in the book of Ephesians, chapter 4, verses 31-32 explains: “Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behaviour. Instead, be kind to each other, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.”

From this, we understand that forgiveness should always be our heart’s desire, and we would never expect any member or former member to engage in any slander or malicious behaviour towards any CHEC member or CHEC as a group.

Part 5 Building Community

CHEC is only as active and vibrant as its current members choose to be. We rely on members volunteering to take on roles, organise events, run groups, and help develop relationships within the group, as and when they are able.

All members are encouraged to contribute to the group in some way each year, although it is understood that many factors influence availability, inspiration, capacity, etc. A group which has many members contributing to its activity and atmosphere, is one which is most likely to be happy, healthy, and meeting the needs of the most members.

1. Contributing

1.1 Ways to Contribute

You may wish to contribute to the CHEC community by:

- volunteering to help on either the Administration Team (voted members with official roles) or Communications Team (willing and able members with behind-the-scenes-roles);
- co-ordinating a regular class or study of some sort (art, language, writing, etc.), either long or short term, for a particular age group or to meet a particular need, run by a CHEC member, or someone from the community;

- organising a one-off excursion or activity for CHec's Friday calendar (children focus)
- planning a one-off afternoon tea, discussion group, or talk (parent focus)
- arranging a family outing for a time when dads can join in (weekend picnic, bushwalk, camping trip, etc.)

If you have an idea, but don't feel you could facilitate it alone (for whatever reason), another member or two may be available to work with you in pulling it all together.

CHec does periodically hold planning meetings, and this is a great way to exchange ideas, put forward needs which could be met, or suggest activities which might be used later in a year or season.

All activities, whether once-off or regular, must be cleared and confirmed with the Calendar Clerk – email: calendar@chec.org.au or phone the current office-holder.

1.2 Organiser's Parameters

Sometimes, for various reasons, group numbers do need to be limited. This may be because the person running a workshop is only willing to have a group of a certain size or demographic. Sometimes an event would run more smoothly if there were age boundaries.

As an organiser, you may:

- apply genuine boundaries to any event you organise to help the event run as you envision
- expect to have these respected by parents
- amend the boundaries at your own discretion if numbers and timing dictate
- expect to have your decision respected by other members

Please do not, however, apply boundaries in order to exclude particular families or individuals – to do so would be entirely contrary to the inclusive environment we aim to foster within CHec.

2. Organisation

2.1 Your Approach

There are a couple of ways to approach organising any kind of event, whether a regular activity or a one-off. You can either:

- Email the group with a basic outline of your proposal, and gauge interest before making definite plans. This can be useful if the organising will be particularly complex and you need to ascertain whether there will be enough participation to justify your efforts.
- Co-ordinate with the Calendar Clerk and make any other necessary arrangements, then email the group with complete details, as outlined in Necessary Steps, below.

2.2 Considerations

- It's wonderful to be able to arrange events which appeal to many members, but sometimes an activity will only be suitable for a particular age group, gender, or other demographic.
- CHec's insurance covers most general activities. If you wish to organise something that is particularly out of the ordinary (water-skiing or caving, for example), it would be best to contact the Administration Team before getting too far along with arrangements, so they can verify essential points with the insurance company.

2.3 Necessary Steps

If you would like to organise an event, either a one-off or an ongoing activity, these are the steps to follow:

- Come up with the idea and investigate its feasibility.
- Ensure you have conferred with the Calendar Clerk regarding a suitable date.
- Make the necessary arrangements.
- Think about any safety issues that might arise and make common-sense provision for these (e.g. 'wear closed sturdy shoes' if the terrain may prove hazardous to feet etc.)
- Announce the event to CHEC members using the CHEC email facility.

You will need to ensure the following items are addressed as necessary:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| ○ day and date | ○ age range (or any other necessary boundaries) |
| ○ time | ○ details of the excursion |
| ○ location, including address | ○ your name and preferred contact details |
| ○ cost | ○ RSVP date |

3. Venue Hire

CHEC has used a number of venues around Canberra which have proved suitable for our needs, and a list of those found suitable will be listed under 'Venues' on the website.

Cost of venue hire:

- is usually on a user-pays basis for events of interest to limited numbers
- will usually be covered by CHEC for general meetings or major events of whole-group interest
- may be covered by CHEC for other events on a needs-and-resources basis

4. Bookings for Events

Being a reliable attendee or organiser helps everybody involved, regardless of the nature of the event, and as we sow, in the same way we shall reap ☺. Here are some things you can do which will benefit everyone involved:

4.1 Generally:

- Reply to activities by the required date, making sure you also mark your calendar.
Some events, even free ones, require certain numbers to go ahead, so your reliability with this helps everyone.
- Please respect age ranges or other boundaries designated by the organiser.
- Don't just turn up to any activity, unless the activity advice states that it is acceptable to do so.
Knowing numbers in advance can be a big help, even for casual gatherings, and having people 'just turn up' can be an inconvenience. This is a courtesy appreciated by all.

4.2 Organisers:

- As the organiser, if you receive bookings via email, please reply so that attendees know their bookings have been received.
- If you receive more responses than you have spaces to allow, please keep a waiting list, so that if an attendee cancels, you can be fair in filling their place.

4.3 Attendees

- As the attendee, if you have emailed your reply but not heard from the organiser, please take a few moments to contact the organiser and ensure that all is well.
- Advise as soon as you know if you are unable to attend after making a booking. Even last minute withdrawals in the case of an emergency should be communicated to the organiser.
In some cases you may still be required to pay for the activity. Please show respect for the organiser in this regard.
- If you can only be contacted by phone, please make that clear to the organiser when making your booking, so that they know to phone you personally rather than using a general communication through the CHec email facility.

5. Event Admission Protocols

Responses to CHec events will be accepted by organisers using the following criteria:

- Applications for events are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.
- A waiting list will be kept on the same basis when events are over-subscribed, in case of withdrawals.
- Prospective members, who have registered their interest in joining CHec with a member of the Administration Team are welcome to attend up to three events before committing to membership (?), and will be given the same priority as members when applying to attend an event.
- Other non-members may attend CHec events if places are still available after all members applying have been accepted. A surcharge may be required for some events, at the discretion of the Administration Team. This money will be deposited in the CHec bank account as a contribution towards the insurance policy.

6. On the Day

- Arrive 15 minutes before the activity is due to start.
This reduces distractions, allows for groups to be designated, payments made and for the activity to proceed peacefully.
- Try to bring the correct amount of money for your family to each paid event.
This makes the organiser's job much easier.
- Take the mobile phone number of the organiser with you, if possible.
That way, if there are any mix-ups at all, good communications can still be maintained. Good communication and respect for others benefits us all.
- Remember that you are responsible for your children.
Some excursions are to locations with particularly strict codes of conduct, and CHec's good reputation rests with the conduct of the whole group. Generally, try to ensure that all behaviour is respectful of others and of their property, and that neither noise nor behaviour is distracting for others.
- When using a hired venue, we need to leave it as clean as we found it – or better!
If appropriate, dishes should be washed, furniture and other equipment returned to its original place, floors vacuumed and doors and windows closed.

7. Thanks

Looking for opportunities to thank others for their kindness to us or their service to us, is a wonderful way for us to foster a loving community.

- Always feel free to say thank you to those who have served our group at a venue, or by sharing their time, knowledge, skills, etc., with us.
- If you have been particularly impressed, by all means express your personal thanks by more formal means if you wish.

- Expressing your appreciation to the organiser of the event can also be a wonderful encouragement to the members who often serve our group without any expectations – this can, of course, be done either in person, on publicly using our email facility.

Part 6 The Business End

1. Insurance

CHEC does have an insurance policy. This is a general, public liability policy covering all sums we become legally liable to pay as compensation in respect to either personal injury or property damage in connection with any CHEC activity.

1. The limit of liability is \$20,000,000, with an excess of \$1,000 for each and every occurrence of claim.
2. The policy covers anyone who is a member of CHEC, or who is acting on behalf of CHEC in a voluntary (i.e. unpaid) capacity in connection with a CHEC activity.
3. This is **not** an accident policy which would cover death, injury or disability occurring during an activity or in transit to or from an activity.
4. A public liability policy only becomes relevant when an injury or damage occurs as the result of negligence. In such a case, the onus is on the complainant to establish that someone covered by the policy has been negligent.

Some venues that we use require us to have public liability insurance. A certificate of currency is available from the Secretary if required.

2. Communication

Communication in CHEC is primarily by email and the website: www.chec.org.au.

The CHEC email and website facilities are managed by the Communications Team, with oversight from the Administration Team.

It is vital to note that:

- (a) The content of all CHEC emails and web pages are to be kept confidential and not passed on without the permission of the author.
- (b) Only content related to CHEC in particular or home education in general should be included in emails or web pages.
- (c) Special urgent prayer requests may be sent by email.

2.1 Email

For many years CHEC has used a Yahoo group to facilitate email communication. During 2012, it is intended that we will begin using the email address group@chec.org.au.

- Only one log-in will be required.
- All functionality will be through one internet location, rather than spread across several facilities.

2.2 Website

Our website, using our own domain name, has begun to take shape since 2011.

(a) Public pages

These include:

- Home (with links to ETD and HENCAST)
- About Us (general page)
- Contact Us (webform)
- Membership Information (general page)
- Christian Home Education (article)
- Links

(b) Members Only Area

Members have access to the remainder of the site. Members Only pages include:

- About Us (Admin & Comm Team pages)
- Membership Info (Form & MO Pages)
- Calendar
- Help Pages
- News
- Forums
- Official Pages
- Members List

(c) Potential Future Pages

These may include:

- Venues
- Activities suggestions
- Reviews of resources, books etc.
- Reading lists
- Recycling (buy, borrow, sell, give away)
- Recipes
- Library
- Prayer Requests
- Team Only pages (to retain information through team changes)
- More Help pages
- *Other suggestions from members*

OTHER SECTIONS MAY BE ADDED TO THE PRACTICE MANUAL, OR IT MAY BE AMENDED, AS NECESSITY DICTATES.

The Practice Manual must reflect the Aims and Objectives of CHEC, and our Constitution, at all times, but does not need to be submitted to the Office of Regulatory Services for approval.