

Home Education Network of Geneva DRAFT Guidelines

Vision and Purpose for the Network

The Home Education Network of Geneva is a nonprofit organization providing free educational information, as pertaining to home education, to prospective home educators, and participants of the Network. The goals of the Network are as follows:

1. To provide an opportunity for participants to communicate and meet each other through Network meetings
2. Be a central point from which participants can be connected and linked based on geographical area, language and individual situations.
3. To be a springboard from which participants may start their own support groups;
4. To provide educational support to the home education community through providing resources at the Network meetings.

The network strives to provide this support in an atmosphere of respect, inclusiveness, and acceptance through Internet communications, Network meetings, and educational material.

Legal Responsibilities

Each participant must understand that the Network does not, under any circumstances, provide legal advice to current or prospective home educators. Participants are encouraged to settle any disputes or disagreements that may arise with relevant authorities as amicably as possible, avoiding legal intervention. However, if legal assistance is unavoidable, the following options are available:

1. The educational departments employ professional lawyers which can be asked to assist and/or advise in home education affairs. This service is normally free. It should be recognized, however, that legal professionals will have personal views and biases which could effect their advice;
2. You may present your case to a lawyer of your choosing. This is usually a very expensive option and a standard lawyer is often not experienced in the sphere of school law; or
3. The Home School Association of Switzerland has a lawyer who is available for both members of the Association and non-members. Membership to the Association impacts the costs associated with using this legal advice. Participants should contact the Association directly if they wish to pursue this option.

The Swiss legislation regarding home education in the canton of Geneva states:

Chapitre IV Art. 15⁽⁴⁹⁾ Instruction obligatoire

- ¹ Le département vérifie en tout temps que l'instruction obligatoire dans les écoles privées est conforme aux dispositions légales et réglementaires.
- ² L'enseignement obligatoire, lorsqu'il a lieu à domicile, est également contrôlé.
- ³ Si le département constate que l'instruction donnée dans une école privée ou à domicile est insuffisante, il prend les mesures qui s'imposent ; il met notamment en demeure les parents ou les tuteurs des enfants de les envoyer dans une autre école ou de les confier à d'autres professeurs.

The following is a translation of these statements. Please note, this is not a professional translation and should not be relied upon for legal purposes.

- ¹ The department verifies that at all times compulsory instruction in private schools must conform with legal and statutory arrangements.
- ² Compulsory instruction, when it takes place at the home, is equally controlled.
- ³ If the department notes that the instruction given in a private school or at the home is insufficient, it takes the necessary measures; it will demand that the parents or the guardians of the children send them to another school or entrust them to other teachers.

The Network encourages all home educators in the canton of Geneva to recognize the above requirements and comply with any other statutory checks.

In support of this, it is a requirement of your participation in the HENG that you provide copies of all your written correspondence with the relevant cantonal authorities.

If you live in Geneva, this will entail:

1. The initial request to the relevant Government department of your intention to home educate;
2. The response received from the Swiss education authority;
3. A copy of the completed “Enseignement à Domicile” form; and
4. The approval letter you received from Département de l’instruction publique.

For those participants who live outside the Geneva canton, or outside Switzerland, please provide whatever correspondence you have sent and received from your relevant authority together with your Participant’s Inquiry Form. If unique or alternative arrangements are sought and approved by the relevant authorities, please ensure that these details are provided with your Participant’s Inquiry Form.

The HENG emphasizes that our support is primarily to those home educators who have registered with their respective authority and have been granted approval or met whatever other legal obligations there are with the state.

Network Guidelines

In order to achieve the vision of the Network and to promote support and friendship, each participating parent must agree to the following guidelines:

1. We recognize that home educators come from vastly diverse backgrounds but all with the common philosophy that we want the best for our children and their education.
2. We welcome participants of all religious, political, educational and personal philosophies. Additionally the Network does not discriminate by race or gender. We purposefully do not do anything religious at any of our activities unless announced by the planner. We will respectfully accept other members' philosophies and be sensitive to the family values of others, especially when they may differ from our own.
3. Due to the multi-lingual situation in Geneva, the Network strives to cater to both English and French participants. Therefore, under normal circumstances presentations will be either in

one language and then translated or two separate presentations will be given (one in English and one in French). Participants may decide which presentation they will attend. If the Coordinator sees that there is a group which all speak the same language, it may be decided only to cater for one language.

4. The Network Website informs participants of the proposed Network Meetings and allows inquiries by prospective home educators to be directed to appropriate support groups or individuals. The website lists:
 - the vision and purpose of the network;
 - the details of the Network Meetings (dates, location, proposed speakers, etc.);
 - the groups that are currently meeting in the Geneva region;
 - general home education information relevant to Geneva; and
 - a Participant's Inquiry Form.

The details of the groups only include the group name, the location and an email address. To protect the individual members' identity, no names are listed.

5. The Network is supported by volunteers. All volunteers are active participants who wish to give their time to the operation of the Network. Participants must understand that participation in the Network will require involvement in the Network meetings and their preparation (including setting/cleaning up and bringing refreshments), assisting in children's programs, answering enquiries from prospective home educators, assisting new participants of the Network, and handling meeting costs. We encourage all participants to volunteer to whatever areas they are best able to contribute to the smooth running of the Network.

Conduct at Network Meetings

6. The Network will organize two 'Network Meetings' per year. Attendance and participation of these meetings is open to all interested parties, yet by invitation only. In order to maintain a low profile, the Network Meetings are advertised only on the Website and through a process of handing out flyers to interested parties. Participants would be invited through a sponsorship system based on geographical area/friendship and the information provided on the 'Participants Information Form'. If costs are incurred, they would be kept as low as possible, purely to cover the cost of photocopying etc.

All participants must have completed the Participants Inquiry Form (PIF) prior to attending the Network Meetings. This form may be downloaded from the Network website then mailed. This Form allows the Coordinator to plan the Network meeting suited to all participants and ensure there are sufficient handouts available. If the PIF has not been submitted prior to the Meeting, it should be completed at the meeting and handed to the Coordinator.

7. Children and adults are expected to treat each other respectfully at all times. Children must not disrupt the events or behave aggressively.
 - a) Parents are responsible for the actions of their child and will discipline their own children respectfully while participating in Network activities. When our children need it, we will take them aside and quietly handle any discipline or set them aside from the activity for a "quiet time".
 - b) If you have a child with special behavior needs, let the Network Coordinator know prior to attending the event to assist in preventing disruptive behavior.

- c) If behavior problems arise, the Network Coordinator may ask that you gently redirect your child towards more appropriate behavior. The Coordinator may ask that any action other than gentle redirection be handled out of the view of the other members.
 - d) If you are unable to redirect the child's attention, the Coordinator may ask you to remove the child from the event.
 - e) When parents are not in the vicinity, or are unaware of the problem, children may be corrected by any supervising parent who notices negative behaviour.
 - f) Repeated problems should be reported and will be handled by the Coordinator in liaison with senior participants.
 - g) If you feel that you are being treated unjustly please wait until the meeting is over to discuss this with the Coordinator.
 - h) All members should respect the hard work and effort it takes to organize an event and encourage your children to comply with the guidelines of the event.
 - i) On occasion Network participants graciously offer the use of their home for meetings. Due to the varying ages of our participants some homes may no longer be child proofed or there may be areas which are off limits to children. Please be respectful and ask the home owner where your child is allowed and keep a close watch over your child.
8. Occasionally conflicts between participants may arise. These issues must be dealt with privately outside of the Network meetings. Personal disagreements should not be displayed at the meetings.
9. We will use the internet as a timely and inexpensive way to communicate to those participants who have internet access. The HENG website is: <http://HENG.nyonweb.ch>