

Member Handbook

Dear Choir Member,

Welcome to Oklahoma Homeschool Choirs (COHC)! Over time, our choral programs have developed a reputation of excellence. As a member of COHC, it should be your goal to continue to build that reputation. Superior music groups are a result of many hours of hard work as well as a strong dedication and commitment from each member. This handbook is provided to make your orientation to COHC a quick and easy task. We encourage you and your parents to read this handbook before rehearsals begin so that you may better understand our policies and your obligations.

We expect great things from you this year as a member of COHC. For example, we expect you to be cooperative, committed, on time, involved, positive in attitude and behavior, and in general, distinguish yourself from the overall population by always doing the right thing at the right time. The hope is that come year's end you will feel greater pride in your accomplishments both individually and as a group as a result of being a member of COHC.

We are looking forward to working with you this year too. Your talent, hard work, and compassionate attitude will be what make this organization great. Once again, welcome. We are glad you are here.

COHC Board and Staff

Mission Statement:

The mission of Central Oklahoma Homeschool Choirs is to provide an excellent choral music education amidst a Christian environment to area home school families.

The program strives to ignite a love of music through the singing of sacred, traditional, and contemporary choral literature, cultivate basic vocal techniques and music literacy skills through a varied repertoire and musical games, promote the development of personal character and teamwork through performance preparation, and provide opportunities to serve the community and proudly represent the home school sector both locally and nationally through musical presentations.

Objectives:

We believe that our choir programs offer many opportunities to our members including:

- the opportunity to demonstrate and build his/her musical ability
- the opportunity to develop leadership skills
- the opportunity to develop a sense of responsibility
- the opportunity to meet and make new friends
- the opportunity to participate in music "field experiences"
- the opportunity to perform as a representative of COHC and the general Oklahoma homeschool population
- the opportunity to discover the unique thrill of excellence in performance

Statement of Faith, Family, and Education

We believe in God, the Father, the Creator of heaven and earth, in Jesus Christ, His only Son, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, was crucified and buried and on the third day rose

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again, and in the Holy Spirit, who gives us wisdom, strength, perseverance, and love to be a witness for the Son.

We believe that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God but that the gift of life is available for all who believe in Jesus Christ, His Son.

We believe in the Bible, the Holy and inerrant Word of God, our sole authority.

We believe that the family is the basic governmental, social, and spiritual unit created by God. We understand "family" to mean male and female parents, legally married, with or without children; however, we recognize the exceptions of single parents, adopted children, foster children, and stepchildren.

We believe that the ultimate responsibility for the education of children belongs to the parents. Homeschooling provides a good means to accomplish this. We support the right of parents to provide for the education of their children in a manner of their choosing.

The Curriculum

Quality music from all styles and periods form the foundation for musical learning and serve as the basis for the curriculum. Folk, popular, gospel, spiritual, classical, and patriotic music are included.

Concepts about music (melody, rhythm, harmony, timbre, dynamics, form, style, and performance practice) and musical skills (singing, theory, sight-reading) are taught throughout the rehearsals using methods of singing, listening, and analysis.

The students are taught to use their vocal instruments through exercises, posture, breathing, and tone production. The essence of the musical experience is based on pitch and movement as it is "felt" and heard. The ability to hear music, to conceptualize music, to perceive and respond musically develops naturally from the human voice. Singing skill and musical understanding are essential components of the creative process and fundamental concepts of music education.

Choir Programs

Music Experience

The Music Experience program is for children ages 5 to 7 (must be this age on September 1). In this program, members focus on music exploration and creativity through playful songs, rhymes, instruments and games. The goal of this group is to plant seeds for lifelong musical appreciation.

Principio

Principio is our elementary choral program for ages 8-10 (must be this age on September 1). Members of this program concentrate on developing healthy vocal techniques, basic music reading skills and experimenting with part-singing. This program provides an outstanding springboard for future opportunities within COHC.

Illuminati

Dubbed as our middle school choir, this program serves ages 11-13 (must be this age on September 1). This treble choir program emphasizes vocal training, note reading, and performance skills through the use of two and three part music.

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Bella Voce

Bella Voce is our senior choir serving primarily ages 14-18 (must be this age on September 1) as well as all other male students of a changed voice. Members of this program will fine tune their vocal training, note reading, and performance skills in a four-part SATB setting.

Rehearsal Times

Please see our website for current rehearsal times and locations.

Attendance

Membership in COHC requires a commitment to faithful, consistent, and punctual attendance. Due to the nature of the program, when a student is absent, the entire choir suffers because that student was not in rehearsal to learn his/her part along with the rest of the choir. For us to achieve our goals of musical excellence, attendance at all rehearsals are expected. *Therefore, if a member misses 5 or more rehearsals in a semester for any reason, he/she may continue to attend rehearsals but will not be allowed to perform (including tour participation) the remainder of the semester.*

If you cannot attend a rehearsal for any reason, please inform your director via email or by phone.

Tardy Policy

Being on time to choir is essential to maximize the learning experience. Students who are late to choir not only lose out on the educational experience at that time, but also disrupt their classmates' ability to learn and their choral director's ability to offer quality instruction. In short, please arrive early so that you are on time. Should tardies become an issue, choral directors may enforce a tardy policy which they will share with you ahead of time. Tardy policies could include loss of privileges, prize incentives, or up to 1/2 an absence.

Registration

COHC will accept new members through the end of August. After that time a student must wait until the new semester begins before joining a program.

Members who join in the fall will not need to re-join in the Spring. All memberships will carry-over to the Spring semester unless we are notified otherwise in writing.

Please see our website for current registration dates and information.

No matter what date a member joins the program, tuition will still be expected for the entire semester in which their membership becomes active.

Any absences acquired **before** registration will contribute to the aforementioned attendance policy in which 5 or more missed rehearsals will result in the member not being allowed to perform the remainder of the semester.

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Expectations and Procedures

COHC exists to give musically motivated students the opportunity to create beautiful music in an energizing, invigorating, and loving atmosphere. As a member of COHC, you are instantly recognized as a fine musician. Behavior problems are not tolerated and may result in expulsion from the choir.

It is your responsibility to:

1. understand and follow all policies and procedures presented in the Member Handbook.
2. exhibit self-discipline and act appropriately at all times.
3. treat others with respect, trust, honesty, fairness, and kindness.
4. take COHC membership seriously and show you are committed to COHC by doing your best to participate fully in rehearsals, performances, or in any capacity while representing COHC.
5. be a positive representation of COHC at our rehearsal location, performance locations, and performances throughout the community.
6. faithfully attend rehearsals and all scheduled performances. Exceptions include illness or absence due to an unforeseen circumstance.
7. sign up on the website for the member news for our weekly updates and announcements. If you are unable to receive updates via the website, it is your responsibility to make appropriate provision to receive such announcements.

Rehearsal Expectations

We are all here because we have something in common--we enjoy singing! How we sound as a group has a lot to do with how we work together. If you will follow the procedures listed below every rehearsal of the year, the result will be a choral group that truly makes beautiful music!

1. When arriving, immediately go to your designated rehearsal location or waiting area.
2. Use the restroom and/or get a drink, if needed prior to entering your rehearsal. Singers may not leave the room after entering the rehearsal area unless there is an emergency or special permission has been granted.
3. Choir members should be punctual to all rehearsals and performances. Late members are a distraction to the program and will miss vital information utilized throughout the remaining rehearsal.
4. **Bring your music and a sharpened pencil to EVERY rehearsal.**
5. Please remove all food, drinks, or gum from your person before entering the rehearsal area. Only water bottles will be permitted and are, in fact, encouraged.
6. If, for any reason, a member cannot actively participate in a rehearsal, the member should bring a written note and observe quietly and attentively. The note should go to his/her director prior to the beginning of the rehearsal.
7. If, for any reason, a member needs to leave a rehearsal early, the member should bring a written note and give it to their director prior to the beginning of the rehearsal.
8. Pay attention to the director at all times. Refrain from behaving in a manner disruptive to the rehearsal or distracting to other choir members, directors or accompanists. Behave in a manner that promotes a positive and successful rehearsal environment. This includes talking. Once rehearsal has started please refrain from talking without permission until the rehearsal is over.
9. If you have a comment or question for the director during a rehearsal, please quietly raise your hand and wait to be called upon.
10. Cell phones and other electronic devices should remain hidden at all times. Use of an electronic device during a rehearsal will result in confiscation by the director. If this happens, only a

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parent/guardian would be able to retrieve the device from the director at the end of the day's rehearsal schedule.

11. Mark your music with a pencil only. You "own" the music assigned to you this year. It is your responsibility to keep it looking like new. Any damaged or lost music/folder must be replaced by the person it is assigned. Each time music is passed out, you will be required to sign a check-out sheet. At the end of the semester, if your music is not returned, you will be fined for the amount of the music.
12. In the presence of clinicians, substitutes or other guests, please exhibit your best manners. Remember, you represent your family, COHC, and the greater home school community.

Facility Expectations

1. Please respect our facility hosts. Students may not roam the building at any time. A member's presence in an unassigned location could be cause for expulsion from the choir.
2. Running, yelling, and rowdy behavior are not permitted in the building or on the grounds at any time.
3. Non-participating siblings must be supervised by a parent/guardian at all times.
4. At all times, show respect and support for each other, parent volunteers, directors, staff, and the facilities.
5. Parents/guardians and siblings must leave the building after dropping off students.

Drop-off Procedures

1. Music Experience and Principio students can be escorted to their classroom.
2. All other students should be dropped off at the outside door.

Pick-Up Procedures

1. Music Experience students will be brought to parent/guardian by their choral director. They may be picked up just outside the building.
2. All members are expected to be picked up at or before the last choir rehearsal of the day ends. (depending on their rehearsal time). As a courtesy to our staff, if a member is not picked up by 10 minutes after the final rehearsal of the day the following fee will be billed to their account: \$5 for every 5 minutes their ride is late (i.e. If the rehearsal ends at 12:00 p.m.--12:15=\$5, 12:30=\$20, etc.).

Performance Procedures

Performances are an important part of being in choir. We work constantly to be prepared to perform. When performing, students receive a deeper appreciation of music and a greater feeling of unity from the organization and the people with whom they are involved. There is no other way as a director cannot duplicate a performance for the student who is absent. There is no other means to make-up the unique thrill of performing, feeling the reaction from the audience, or the excitement of knowing the hard work in preparation for the performance was worthwhile. Every member of the choir plays a vital role in the success of the entire organization. As directors, we cannot expect a total commitment from any one student without expecting the same amount of commitment from every member in the choir. Therefore, the following rules apply to performances:

1. **ALL PERFORMANCES ARE REQUIRED** (unless otherwise stated). This includes all performances on our calendar and any other performance in which at least a four week notice is given. Students will only be excused from a performance due to a personal illness, death in the family, or an emergency over which the student has no control. Students will not be excused because they do not have a ride (if this is the case, call a friend!). In any event, the director must be notified of an expected absence prior to a performance. Students who are not attending ALL

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PERFORMANCES may be subject to removal from COHC.

2. Performers should arrive 10 minutes prior to performance call time and immediately check in with their director. Tardiness to a performance may exclude a singer from participation in the performance.
3. Performers should not arrive more than 15 minutes prior to call time.
4. Performers must ARRIVE wearing proper COHC attire. Failure to wear the proper uniform WILL result in non-participation in the performance.
5. As a courtesy to other choir members, singers should refrain from wearing any perfume, cologne, scented hairspray or heavily scented deodorant. Failure to follow this procedure may exclude the singer from participation in the performance.
6. Singers should conduct themselves at all times in a calm, polite, and professional manner, giving undivided attention to the COHC staff and appointed chaperones at all times.
7. All singers must know the music. Each musician must have a confident command of the performance repertoire. Failure to demonstrate this at the final rehearsal may result in release from the corresponding concert commitment.
8. Due to one-time sound checks, staging, and other last-minute details, all singers are required to attend the final rehearsal prior to a performance. Without prior arrangements for a final rehearsal absence, a singer will not be allowed to perform at the corresponding concert.
9. If a singer feels ill during a performance, he/she should quietly sit down on the riser and rest for the remainder of the song. Then, if feeling better, the singer may get up and sing again. If not, the singer should quietly leave the stage at the end of the song. Note: Once a singer leaves the stage for any reason he/she may not return.
10. Singers with outstanding dues will not be allowed to perform.

Dress Code

All COHC members are expected to adhere to modest standards of dress, and to consider and respect others' standards during rehearsals. The COHC dress code applies equally to students, teachers, staff and volunteers.

Parents are responsible for ensuring that students adhere to the dress code. If in doubt, ask your child to wear something different. Parents of any student wearing inappropriate clothing will be contacted by either the Choral Director of the student or the Executive Director.

1. Members should dress in a conservative manner during all rehearsals and events.
2. Please refrain from bare midriffs and short shorts or skirts. A good rule of thumb: if your fingers placed down your side can touch bare skin, it's too short.
3. Should members be encouraged to bring their swimming suits on a choir tour, men will be asked to wear a t-shirt and women should wear either a one-piece swimsuit or the equivalent (i.e. a non-midriff baring tankini). Women wearing a bikini will be asked to wear a t-shirt over their swimsuit. Men's speedos are not permitted.
4. No undergarments may be visible at any time and applies to both male and females.

Extra Rehearsals

Several times throughout the year there may be calls for an extra rehearsal. This includes choir retreats, ensemble rehearsals, combined rehearsals and the like. A few extra rehearsals have been built into the calendar already. For all other extra rehearsals, members will receive notification at least 4 weeks in advance. All extra rehearsals are required. If students are late or have to leave early, they must have a written note from their parent or guardian. Excuses will be accepted for missing an extra rehearsal only if

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notification is received within the 7 days of the announcement of extra rehearsal. Otherwise, an absence of an extra rehearsal will be applied according to attendance policy.

Weather Policy

In the event of severe weather, we will follow Putnam City School District closings for the Oklahoma City location, Edmond Public School District closings for the Edmond location and Norman Public School District closings for the Norman location. Please check your local news station or the COHC website for confirmation. **Please note:** When a rehearsal is canceled due to severe weather or other natural disaster, the rehearsal will not be made up and no tuition discount will be applied.

Contact Information

Our website is <http://centralokhomeschoolchoirs.com>.

Our email address is: admin@centralokhomeschoolchoirs.com

Our mailing address is: 2011 West Danforth Road; Box 204; Edmond, OK 73003

Member News

All member news is filtered through the COHC website. Each member family is responsible for subscribing to the member news. If you are unable to receive updates via the website, it is your responsibility to make appropriate provision to receive such announcements. Weekly news updates will be provided via this website feed. This is COHC's primary form of communication. Since member families will be responsible for all information sent via the website feed, subscription to the feed is expected before the first rehearsal.

Member Dues and Financial Policies

Tuition commitments are based on the number of immediate family members enrolled. There are two available payment plans—monthly and by the semester. Families are encouraged to choose the one that best fits their financial situation. Tuition includes:

- One short sleeve choir shirt per student
- Use of all music (must be returned to COHC each semester)
- COHC contest fees
- All concert fees

About the Payment Plans

Semester installments provide the best value as families with one or two students receive a 10% discount and families with three or more students receive a 15% discount. The first semester payment is due at the first rehearsal in August and the second payment is due at the first rehearsal in January.

Families selecting monthly installments will submit 8 post-dated checks at the beginning of the year to the COHC accountant. A check will be deposited on first day of rehearsal in August, and then the first day of the following months: September, October, November, January, February, March, and April.

Disclaimers

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- When enrolling in COHC, families are making both a school-year attendance and financial commitment. **If a student drops during the semester, pay will still be expected for the remainder of the semester.**
- **EPIC families please note:** An EPIC agreement must be signed with the COHC CFO before your enrollment spots are confirmed.

Have a financial question?

Any financial questions may be directed to accounting@centralokhomeschoolchoirs.com.

Late Fee Policy

For those on the 8 Installment plan, tuition is due on the first rehearsal of the month. For those on the Lump Sum semester plan, tuition is due the first rehearsal of August and again in January. A \$5 late fee will be added per week to each payment after the due date. A singer will not be allowed to attend rehearsal after the fourth week of nonpayment.

Scholarships

There are two scholarships available for students within the COHC. Both scholarships are possible through generous gifts of members and friends of the COHC. All those wishing to apply for either scholarship may find more information on our website.

The Rachel Scarberry Choral Scholarship Fund is established to provide monetary assistance to a current Central Oklahoma Homeschool Choir student(s) in order that they may participate in outside honorary choral events beyond Central Oklahoma Homeschool Choirs (COHC) as a representative of COHC. The COHC board awards money twice a year, as funds are available to applicants meeting the criteria.

For application details; [Rachel Scarberry Scholarship Fund](#)

Semester Scholarship

If your family is in financial need of a Semester Scholarship, please contact the [Chief Financial Officer](#). You will receive a PDF form that will need to be completed and returned to the CFO **by Friday, August 7th** (for the fall semester) or **January 1st** (for the spring semester). The Scholarship Committee will meet and determine the scholarships for this upcoming semester, and you will be notified via email by Monday, August 10th (for the fall semester) or Monday, January 4th (for the spring semester) of their decision.

Before you submit the Semester Scholarship Form be sure that any previous accounts with COHC are in good standing and paid in full. Accounts which are not in good standing will not be considered for the upcoming semester. Scholarships are disbursed each semester and are determined by the need of the family, the number of families requesting the Semester Scholarship, and the funds available in the General Scholarship Fund for the upcoming semester.”

Uniforms

Our choir has a reputation of looking very professional. For us to look this way, we must all wear the same attire. All uniforms must be wrinkle-free and in tip-top condition for ALL performances. Students wearing dirty or wrinkled uniforms, as well as incomplete uniforms (missing tie, wrong shoes, etc.), will not be allowed to perform.

Informal Attire

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Choir t-shirt and dark blue jeans or long jean skirt that comes to the ankles (no holes). During performances the shirt should be tucked in. Informal attire will be worn during tours, t-shirt days, and other special events.

Formal Attire

Our formal attire includes black and white uniforms. Students are responsible for ordering their own formal uniform via the links provided on the website. Please see our website for links and ordering information. Formal attire will be worn at all COHC concerts and on other special occasions.

Tours

All chaperones must be a guardian of a participating member and at least 21 years of age. Chaperones must travel and stay with the students at all times. Parents wanting to drive their own vehicle and follow behind the group, are free to do so at their own expense but will not be considered as a group chaperone. It should also be noted that students will NOT be allowed to travel in parent vehicles at any time while on tour except in the case of an emergency. *Exception: Due to the fact that we do not have transportation from Frontier City back to our original contest site for Heartland Music Festival, parent chaperones may be allowed to take their vehicle to Frontier City provided that there are enough chaperones/choral directors on the bus from the contest site to Frontier city and provided that they supply their own parking fee. However, students will still be expected to ride on the bus.*

In order for a group to participate in a day tour there will need to be an adult to student ratio of 1:6 for all groups with Illuminati students and 1:12 for Bella Voce student groups. In order for a group to participate in an overnight tour, there will need to be an adult to student ratio of 1:4 or one adult per room. In the event that this ratio cannot be achieved, the tour will be cancelled and refunds will be given according to the the reimbursement plan as described below.

In the most severe discipline cases, the director may send a singer home before the completion of the tour at the parent's/guardian's expense.

No singer may leave the tour group, even with his or her parent, without prior written approval.

While most tours are optional, each member is highly encouraged to participate as the success of the choirs are a team effort. Once committed (once the initial tour deposit has been paid), all who have signed up are expected to participate pending an immediate death in the family or sickness as the choir will be counting on each participant's involvement to make the trip a success. This includes sponsors and members.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is the governing body of COHC. The Board maintains COHC bylaws, handbooks, and other policy manuals as well as lead in fundraising efforts and community awareness. To be a Board member, one must meet the following requirements:

1. They may not be related to another member of the board.
2. They must be parents of current COHC members or members of the community as long as 60% of the board are parents of current COHC members.
3. They must be able to affirm the COHC statement of faith, family, and education.
4. Their children must be in at least their second consecutive year of membership at the time of

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election.

Useful skills for board members include:

- Fundraising and grant writing experience
- Accounting and bookkeeping experience
- Public speaking experience
- Media relationships experience
- Graphic design and production experience
- Employee and volunteer management experience

While the above skills are helpful, they are not mandatory to be a member of the COHC Board.

The term of service for Board members is two years running from January 1 to December 31. Elections will take place in fall of each year. All parents interested in serving on the Board should contact the current board President to discuss placement on the December ballot.

Student Accompanists and Assistants

To develop the next generation of piano accompanists and music educators, we like to encourage any interested students ages 14 and up to get hands-on experience as a student accompanist and/or assistant.

Students with sufficient piano skills may audition for his/her choir director for an opportunity to be a student accompanist. If approved, student accompanists will be expected to practice their music at home and be prepared to accompany the choir on the assigned piece(s) by the date assigned by the director. Failure to do so, will forfeit their opportunity to participate as a student accompanist.

Students interested in being an elementary choir student assistant may also talk to his/her choral director. Student assistants will be expected to attend all rehearsals of the elementary choir assigned.

The positions of student accompanist and student assistant are volunteer positions, provided to give students field experience. No monetary compensation will be applied. All student accompanists and assistants will be expected to sing in Bella Voce when not accompanying or assisting.

How Parents Can Help

Students cannot succeed in COHC, or in any worthwhile learning or extra-curricular activity, without their parents' on-going, active support. When enrolling a student with us, parents are asked to pledge that they will do the following:

1. Grant permission for their child to participate in any and all activities of COHC including but not limited to rehearsals, concerts, workshops, camps, parties, meetings, photo and recording sessions, and concert tours.
2. Assist in some capacity during the choir year as a parent volunteer.
3. Familiarize themselves with the policies and expectations contained in the current Member Handbook.
4. Ensure that their singer(s) get to and from all scheduled rehearsals, performances, and other choir events reliably and on time, outfitted with his/her music, pencil, water bottle, uniform, or other items as appropriate.

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5. Notify COHC in advance if their child will be late to or absent from a rehearsal.
6. Stay up-to-date by carefully reviewing communications from the choir.
7. Keep up with their family's financial obligations with COHC. Remember, choir is a year-long commitment and tuition is a non-refundable semester-long commitment. Should a student withdraw for any reason, tuition will still be billed for the remainder of the semester.
8. Help their singer to learn and practice his/her music and lyrics at home.
9. Support their child by organizing family and friends to join them at his/her performances.
10. Ensure that their child's uniform fits properly, is clean, and complete for all performances.
11. Teach your child to be punctual at rehearsals and performances.
12. Attend any mandatory parent meetings as presented in the choir calendar
13. Support COHC's membership, leadership, activities, and events through active participation.
14. Sign up for updates and announcements on the website.

Solicitation Policy

COHC adheres to a no solicitation policy which states: No staff or member family or otherwise may solicit other member families or staff during his/her rehearsal or performance time anywhere on the Company premises. No staff or member family may distribute any written material in (a) working areas at any time or (b) non-working areas (restroom, hallway) during his/her working time without permission.

Grievance Procedures

While we hope to never have to use these procedures we realize that Organization related problems can arise in any place of membership. We hope individuals will try to reconcile differences on an individual basis. Should this not be possible, to resolve a problem quickly and fairly, COHC has developed a grievance procedure using the following steps:

1. If you have a problem, notify your choir director immediately. Most difficulties can be settled promptly at this point. The choir director shall respond in writing within seven (7) days of meeting with you.
2. If the problem is not resolved to your satisfaction you may go to the Executive Director and verbally explain the problem to him/her; or you may instead submit the problem to him/her in writing. This step should be taken within seven (7) days after your choir director has given his/her decision or after the incident giving rise to your grievance, whichever is later. If the circumstances require it, the Executive Director will conduct an investigation.

Following the Executive Director's investigation, the Executive Director will respond in writing to your grievance. The decision shall be final.