

The GCA Centre for Adult Autism: Chattanooga, Metro Atlanta, and Mountain Empire Chapters
Rules, Regulations, and Standards of Conduct
CREATED 2/18/2020

Purpose:

The purpose of having these rules is to ensure a safe, supportive environment for members to congregate and support each other. Also, these rules help ensure the integrity and long-term survival of the group. **These rules concern members' social media activity and activity at in-person and telephone conference meetings.**

The following activities will not be permitted in the group:

- Violence or threats of violence towards yourself or another member
- Profanity used in a verbally abusive manner, or being verbally abusive towards another member
- Possession, sale, or use of Illegal Drugs at all meetings (this includes legal drugs obtained illegally)
- Possession, sale, or use of Alcohol at our main meeting site (if you are cooking and wish to use alcohol in a dish you are preparing, you must get the facilitator's and building management's permission first)
- Possession, sale, use, or brandishing a firearm or other dangerous weapon. A pocketknife 4" or less in length, as well as kitchen cutlery are exempt provided the user does not intend to use them in a violent manner.
- Use of tobacco (or similar products, aka e-cigarettes) in indoor spaces where the group meets
- Lewd or Lascivious Conduct during group meetings
- Dominating the group discussions (please excuse yourself if you want to discuss something in detail with someone else)
- Starting rumors and gossip.
- Failure to respect the confidentiality of the group, as well as discussing the identity of group members to non-members. (the facilitator is exempt when the integrity of the group is compromised, or when there are threats of violence)
- Soliciting donations without the express permission of a GCA administrator

-Failure to observe quiet times (i.e. during a movie on movie nights)

-Failure to clean up after yourself

-Sharing the Conference call phone number and PIN with Unauthorized people (these numbers are only for Members attending the conference call)

-Courting, flirting, and solicitation for intimate relationships (dates) is prohibited in all meetings and social gatherings except for those specifically held for single members. Sexual harassment will not be tolerated and, depending upon severity, may result in immediate disciplinary action. No means No, period! All sexual misconduct complaints must be handled by Dave Buck, the Executive Director of the Chattanooga Autism Center. It is out of the scope of any GCA leader's authority to handle these claims. Alternatively, a complaint may be issued with Amber Doolittle, Dave's assistant. You may contact the Chattanooga Autism Center by calling (423)531-6961 and selecting either option 2 (Amber) or option 4 (Dave). All complaints will be investigated in a fair and just manner, and they will be kept confidential. Additionally, facilitators and leaders in GCA are prohibited from having intimate relationships (dating, etc.) with GCA members. This is automatically considered a conflict of interest and a breach of trust, and it will result in the immediate removal of leadership privileges. Should GCA have a singles group in the future, there is potential for rules related to courting and flirting (but not harassment) to be relaxed, depending upon what the group members prefer.

-Recording of meetings and gatherings (No photography, video, or audio recording is allowed at any of our meetings without consent from all attendees and the facilitator.)

-Advertising or recommending other autism support groups (or medical or therapeutic services) here. We feel that we can cater for each other's needs within the group. If you feel that there is an Autism group or medical service that offers a service that we cannot, please advise an admin or the executive committee, and an exception might be made.

-Pro-cure rhetoric or justification for pro-cure rhetoric. In addition, any anti-autism sentiment of any kind will not be tolerated.

-Other issues will be brought up as needed. Once a new issue is recognized, the facilitator will announce it as a discussion item for the next meeting, for everyone's edification. After discussion, any action to be taken will be voted on by the group

A word about controversial topics:

They come up. With that being said, we will only allow them if the topic is of one's opinion and does NOT attack a person or group of people. Discussions are healthy and healthy differences of opinions are good. We are all about accepting each other's differences and celebrating diversity. Please only comment on a post or discussion topic if you can contribute positively to the conversation. Personal attacks on others' views are NOT allowed. People who do so will be warned the first and second times, then banned IMMEDIATELY a third time at an Admin or Facilitator's discretion with explanation. Additionally, discussing off-topic items for an extended

period of time is prohibited. If you wish to discuss an off-topic issue, please excuse yourself and meet in a separate room from the group or discuss it via private message. Political issues not directly pertaining to ASD/HFA/PDD will always be considered off-topic.

Have fun!

We welcome an array of people to this group. This includes people who are ASD, parents, extended family, friends, co-workers, specialists, people in the media (TV, magazines, radio, etc.) and even people who know nothing about Autism in the hopes of raising awareness, acceptance, and action. So sit back, relax and connect!

Penalties for Violations:

The penalties for rule violations are as follows, in order of severity. The group does not have to follow this order, especially for serious or repeated incidents:

-Verbal Warning: A warning will be issued by the facilitator.

-Probation: A member will be placed on probation if the verbal warning is unsuccessful. Probation can last 30 days or more, depending on severity. If any violations are committed during probation, more serious penalties will be assessed.

-Suspension from a set number of meetings: Suspended member will not be permitted to attend a set number of meetings. If one of the meetings is cancelled, the suspension rolls over to the next meeting that the group actually meets. If the suspension is for two (2) or more meetings, the suspension will be consecutive, and the building management where meetings are held will be notified of the suspension, and they will take appropriate action as well.

-Dismissal from the group: Permanent separation from the group. The membership will be revoked and the person will be prohibited from attending any future meetings. The building management where meetings are held will be notified of this dismissal, and they will take appropriate action as well. Members that are dismissed must wait at least one year to ask the Executive Committee for permission to rejoin the group. A clearance note may be required from a mental health professional to rejoin the group after a suspension or dismissal. We may require that a sealed letter be sent to the professional to tell our side. If the person who wants to rejoin refuses, they may be denied access to the group. The decision to reverse a dismissal will be made by the group as a whole (the dismissed person will not have a vote in the matter).

Authority to enforce rules:

The facilitator of the group has the authority to enforce the rules alone if there is an emergency. The administrators of the GCA Facebook Group are Jonathan Sharp, Jamie Mackintosh, Nathan Zimmerman, and Kevin Fox. The GCA Executive Committee members are: Nathan Zimmerman, Chair; Jonathan Sharp, Treasurer; Jamie Mackintosh, Kevin Fox, and Nancy

Rogers. Only active members of the GCA Executive Committee will be permitted to have administrator access on group Facebook pages.