

**ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY**  
**DOWN SYNDROME ASSOCIATION OF CENTRAL TEXAS**  
**MEMBER COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS RULES**

**I. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy of the Down Syndrome Association of Central Texas (DSACT) is to set out rules for members of DSACT's Member Communication Platforms (Facebook groups, Yahoo group), so that the platforms remain a supportive, respectful means of sharing information and ideas related to Down syndrome and DSACT.

**II. Policy**

The following rules will be published periodically on DSACT's Member Communication Platforms, and will be used in determining when group members are placed on moderated status or are banned.

**Member Communication Platforms Rules**

DSACT's Member Communication Platforms (Facebook groups, Yahoo group) give parents and other caregivers a place to meet, interact, and share ideas with each other. We are a positive and proactive group who operate in an environment free of harassment and judgment. Please treat fellow group members in a kind and considerate way, as you would like to be treated. As in any community, opinions may differ.

**A. Prohibited Practices**

Any of the following are prohibited from DSACT's Member Communication Platforms:

Cursing or posting rude or accusatory remarks about any other DSACT member or a member of the Central Texas community.

Spamming (sending unsolicited email directly to one or more people).

Soliciting the group for any private business or non-DSACT fundraiser

- You may not use the groups for commercial or advertising purposes or for self referrals.
- Notices about all third-party fundraisers must be approved in advance by the DSACT fundraising committee and the Executive Director. Please contact the Board of Directors and Executive Director for the guidelines and application form if you are interested.
- It is acceptable, no more than once per year, to post announcements and offerings related to individuals and companies who serve the Down syndrome community, such as therapists and instructors.
- Attacks or slanderous comments regarding particular facilities or people.

- Posts that reflect religious or political opinions in an aggressive or judgmental manner, or contain statements that could be offensive to other members.
- DSACT's Member Communication Platforms are forums for parents to share questions and information. Some parents may also have a professional role in which they provide services to people with Down syndrome and/or their families. The posts for such parents may not serve as referrals to their professional roles, but may only provide information about their experiences as a parent.

### Forwarding and Quoting

(a.k.a., "What is said in the group stays in the group")

- You may not forward/share any opinion or personal posts of anyone in DSACT's Member Communication Platforms, including DSACT members, officers, Board members, and volunteers, unless you first receive permission from every group member whose posts you want to forward.
- Example: DSACT member "XYZ" posts: *"I used to go to that doctor and I couldn't stand her. She was so negative and mean!"* You may not forward the post to your friend who works at the physician's office, to your neighbor who also goes to the same physician, or to anyone else outside the DSACT group.
- The reasons for this are:
  - DSACT parents voted to maintain these groups as parent-only forums. They provide a safe place to vent, obtain advice, share opinions, and obtain knowledge, and would destroy trust if they had to worry about other members forwarding their emails to the parties they may have had questions about or issues with.
  - The DSACT Board has worked tirelessly to establish positive relationships with physicians, geneticists, educators, administrators, elected officials, and others in Central Texas. Forwarding/sharing of a confidential post may harm or destroy relationships that have taken years to build.

**B. DSACT group members will be placed on MODERATED STATUS without notice or ultimately banned from the group for violating any of the prohibited practices:**

- A member may be allowed one “freebie” while he becomes familiar with the rules of conduct. However, after a second post that violates the group rules, the member will be placed on moderated status and all future posts will require approval by one of the moderators. The moderators and owner reserve the right to ban members for repeatedly posting or attempting to post messages that are inappropriate to the group.
- Moderated status may be lifted at the discretion of the group moderator.
- Members who have questions about whether a post is acceptable may email the Executive Director to resolve these questions.

**C. General Rules**

**Please refrain from posting simple agreements**, such as: "That's a good idea", "me too", "great job", etc. Instead, members should add something to the conversation: a new idea, an illustration of the concept, an experience that relates to the topic. Or better yet, members can send these types of posts directly (off-list) to the person who posted the original message.

**Make sure that your subject line is a reliable indicator of the message content.** When posting, change the subject line as your topic changes.

**Avoid redundant posts.** Scan all messages of a thread (subject line) that have come in since the one you would like to respond to. Finding out what has been said since then may change how you respond, or whether you respond at all.

**Stay on topic.** Although all groups are different, most groups appreciate it when you stay on topic. If you constantly stray from the topic you may be moderated or removed from the group. Posts must be directly or indirectly related to Down syndrome. “Who knows a good carpenter?” is not an appropriate post.

**When you feel angry about the post of another DSACT group member**

You can choose to do nothing and let it go. This will usually produce the best outcome. Pointing out annoyances, especially on-list, often causes a flare-up and does nothing to improve behavior or increase understanding.

You may also consider sending your complaints or concerns to the group owner or moderators to allow them to address the matter. Please do so off-list and be sure to include the name of the offending poster and the specific content you find

offensive. If you feel you must reply, remember that all responses must be respectful and considerate, and that you should respond “off line” (directly to the individual and *not* to the group). You should first write a draft but refrain from sending until you have cooled down, re-read, and edited your post. When in doubt, save the message overnight (sleep on it) and re-read it in the morning before hitting the "send" button.

**D. Disclaimer**

*Any material posted on DSACT’s Member Communication Platforms by the DSACT officers, Board of Directors, volunteers, or organizational members is designed for informational and educational purposes only. Any information, expressed or implied, posted on the group is not intended, nor should be construed as legal, medical, or other professional advice. None of the information posted on the group should replace consultations with qualified legal, educational, healthcare, or other professionals to meet individual or professional needs. The opinions expressed on the group and any references to programs, services, therapies, or treatment options do not imply endorsement by DSACT.*