

**Homeschool Steam Alliance  
Handbook  
2019-2020**

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# **I. Homeschool Steam Alliance (HSA)**

## **About HSA**

Homeschool Steam Alliance (HSA) was founded in 2018 and is a parent-operated, not-for-profit charitable organization. HSA was established to support and encourage the Champaign County homeschool community by providing opportunities to the homeschooled students. We do this by providing free or subsidized competitions, workshops, or events to members of Homeschool Steam Alliance. These competitions, workshops, or events may or may not be organized by HSA. (Example of what we may participate in but do not organize are: Rube Goldberg Machine Build Competition, Lego League, and Science Olympiad offered to all our members free or at a reduced fee.) We file our taxes as a 501(c)(3) corporation. Therefore, all fundraising is done on behalf of HSA and membership in HSA does not create right, claim, or entitlement by individual members of HSA to any of the funds raised. All distributions of fundraised earnings are set in accordance with rules approved by the HSA Board of Directors.

Participation in the academic competitions and workshops can be quite expensive. Expenses related to competition can include a vast array of different things such as costumes, registration fees, travel, etc. HSA works to raise funds to help defray expenses and to further academic opportunities for all Champaign County homeschoolers as well as other students who may participate in our events.

## **Board of Directors**

HSA is run by elected officers of the Board of Directors (the Board) whose positions and duties are described both here and in HSA's ByLaws. Elections are held once each year in the late summer at our Annual Meeting. The nomination process can vary from year to year. A current list of the Board can be found on our website and can be contacted at [homeschoolsteamalliance.com](http://homeschoolsteamalliance.com). First year members are not eligible to serve on the Board.

# **II. Membership**

## **Annual Membership Drive**

The annual membership drive occurs in the summer of each year. To maintain active membership in HSA, one is required to:

1. Complete membership form and pay dues (or applied to have dues waived)
2. Read the HSA Handbook & acknowledge (either electronically or on hard copy) that it has been read
3. Fill out and return the Database Form (either electronically or on hard copy)

5. Fill out and return the Fundraising Agreement (either electronically or on hard copy)

### **Renewing Members**

Those renewing their membership for this season must complete the registration process by turning in the required yearly forms (listed above) by September 15<sup>th</sup> *as well as* make payment of membership fees (or request to have fees waived) of the current year **on time**. This will allow the family to continue membership without disruption, and thereby retain the right to participate in any competitions, workshops or events paid for or subsidized by HSA in the membership year. If a renewing member does not turn in his or her forms **and** make payment (or request to have fees waived) by the due dates, he or she is no longer a member of HSA and knowingly forfeits his or her right to participate in the free or subsidized competitions, workshops, or events funded by any past fundraised earnings from the prior membership year.

### **Membership Expectations**

Active membership is key to its success. HSA members are encouraged to volunteer to be a chair or co-chair of a fundraiser, committee or to serve on the HSA Board of Directors. Sign-up instructions will be given at the Annual Meeting or via email. Members are required to abide by the HSA Handbook and By-laws, which will be distributed electronically.

### **Meetings**

An Annual Membership Meeting shall be held at a place, date, and time designated by the President.

To facilitate and encourage more membership participation on issues before the Board of Directors, all members are always invited & encouraged to attend any meetings, review the agenda &/or minutes, and present any questions or comments to a Board Representative (or their Level Representative), preferably in writing. The Board Representative will then compile all comments and questions received from the general membership and present it to the Board at the specified board meeting. Members can offer agenda topics at any time to a Board Representative.

In addition, each Committee will be required to meet regularly and report back to the Board.

## **III. Membership Fees**

### **Purpose and Determination of Fees**

HSA members must pay fees (or have fees waived) to participate in free or subsidized competitions, workshops, or events that HSA organizes or attends. These fees will help with administrative costs as well as underwrite organization functions and activities, and serve to defray the overall cost of competition registration. The amount of the membership fee is the same for all families regardless of how many students are in the family.

Each year, based on information from the different committees and the Treasurer, the Board will develop an operating budget. The budget is based on a proposed schedule of competitions, workshops, events, and fundraisers as well as examination of costs incurred in the previous year. Registration fees are based on estimated costs for the upcoming year and estimated funding from grants and fundraising events. The Board votes on the budget at the predetermined meeting, typically in early summer of each year.

At the beginning of the school year, The Board determines the Membership Fees based on the following information:

1. The board decides what competitions, workshops, and events HSA will organize and/or attend.
2. The Board determines the cost of the competitions, workshops, and events by factoring in the following:
  - Registration fees, supplies, travel, and administrative expenses
  - Team leader/chaperone fees (travel, food)
3. The Board will estimate the expected amount of funding grants and fundraising.
4. The Board then divides the estimated costs, minus the grants and fundraising, by the number of members enrolled at that time.

### **Schedule and amount of payments**

The HSA fiscal year runs from August 1<sup>st</sup> through July 31<sup>st</sup>.

You may pay with cash, check, or PayPal. You may be charged a service fee for certain payment types depending on the current year's agreements.

**No refunds or credits are given for membership fees.**

### **Delinquencies and Penalties**

A \$35 returned check fee will be charged for all returned checks.

**Please Note:** Sometimes our organization participates in events requiring the students to travel with chaperones, who are usually parent volunteers. The organization will cover the travel costs of these chaperones as funds are available, as the chaperones are ensuring the safety of the students.

## **Special Consideration**

Obviously, even though we are an organization, we are still a group of fellow parents. We are human beings who understand that “life happens”. So, we outline the above deadlines and penalties to make sure everyone works together to pay our bills and cover the expenses of our students. In the event you cannot pay your member fees by one of the established deadlines, please contact the Vice President to discuss an alternate plan. Communication is the key to making this whole organization work.

## **IV. HSA Refund policy**

Refunds or credits **will not** be made to families for any competition, workshop, or event fees. When a student does not attend a scheduled competition, workshop, or event, members must still pay the full membership fee because this was factored into the total when the fee was computed.

If there is a deficit between the amounts paid by student and HSA’s actual expenses during a school year, HSA *does not* go back to the parents and request more money to make up the difference.

With the constant ebb and flow in overages and shortages, this policy of “no refund and no additional money requests” has been proven to work, and is the method used by most other organizations like ours. HSA board and the committees try exceptionally hard to make the numbers right, to make sure there is a balance between logistics and fairness, and to keep things as simple as possible.

## **V. Fundraised Earnings Distribution**

Under IRS law, in order for HSA to retain its 501(c)(3) not-for-profit, tax exempt status, HSA parents are not allowed to fundraise through HSA solely for their own student. It is important to remember that HSA is organized to promote opportunities for our homeschool community and cannot benefit individual students. This is why a member fundraises on behalf of HSA and not for themselves or any particular student. Participation in the organization does not create a right to the distribution of fundraised earnings. Earnings will not inure to the benefit of any private individual. When a student or parent fundraises, the earnings belong to HSA and are distributed to its members in accordance with the federal laws with respect to not-for-profit, charitable companies (including Internal Revenue Code Section 501).

## **VI. Fundraisers**

Throughout the season, HSA plans to hold a variety of fundraisers in which all members are expected to participate, and we are changing and adapting all the time to provide fresh opportunities to support the members. All HSA fundraisers are organized and run (or chaired) by volunteer members. Any member wishing to chair or co-chair a fundraiser should contact the Fundraising and/or Sponsorship chairs. Notifications regarding these events will be sent out via email.