Volunteer's guide to Homework HOUSE



Hi, Welcome to Homework House!

We are so glad you decided to volunteer with us. Homework House is a safe place where children are cherished and nurtured, where they can learn and grow and where they can find renewed joy in learning!

As a volunteer with Homework House, you are joining an amazing group of almost 250 community members who have chosen to donate their time and resources. Volunteers come from a variety of sources including local high school and colleges, RSVP senior corps, the local community, and even our own former students. You may not know exactly what you are doing **yet**, but throughout this incredible journey we will learn and grow into our own roles. We are so incredibly grateful to have you joining our team. Please also make sure you watch through our orientation video! (See tutor resources webpage.)

Here at Homework House, you will be helping to bridge the opportunity gap in Holyoke, one tutoring session at a time. Together we have helped well over a thousand children receive free, quality, afterschool tutoring. 90% of our children have mastered at least one age-appropriate high frequency word list and 86% of our K-3 grade kids have met or exceeded their reading growth expectations. In addition to the performance aspect of our tutoring, we focus on fostering a positive environment through individual relationships between our tutors and children. We could not do this without you!

In this handbook, you will find information about Homework House, Holyoke, and what you can expect as a tutor in our program. Please read the information carefully and reach out to our Volunteer Coordinator if you have any questions.

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with Homework House, we are so excited to start working with you.

Best,

Homework House Staff



Purpose of the Handbook

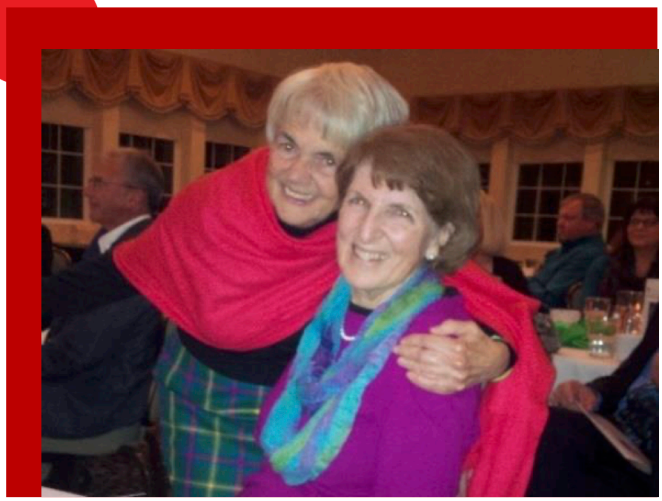
This handbook is your introduction to Homework House and its inner workings. You will learn about the history and inspiration of Homework House and be introduced to our founders. You will find what to expect in the onboarding process and in your tutoring experience, along with Homework House's policies. Lastly, we've included a recommended reading list to help you interact with the kids in ways that are ethical and effective.

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The Inspiration Behind Homework House

Sister Jane and Sister Maureen



Sister Jane Morrissey and Sister Maureen Broughan started Homework House as a labor of love. They are longtime members of the Holyoke community and have dedicated their lives to service with the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Springfield.

The Sisters of Saint Joseph focus on strengthening communities through education and through promoting a culture of neighbors helping neighbors. When Sister Jane and Sister Maureen saw Holyoke schools struggling, they put these values to use!

Inspired by a program in California of the same name, they set to work building a program that would address some of the disparities of opportunity they were seeing. They gave it the official name "Homework House of Hermano Pedro," in honor of a 17th century indigenous Caribbean friar, whose extensive work in Guatemala included founding schools. In February of 2006, Homework House's first site opened.

Both Sister Jane and Sister Maureen have retired from Homework House, but their legacy still lives on in our programs, and we're still joined by volunteers from the Sisters of St. Joseph.

Sister Jane



Sister Maureen



Homework House A History

A Timeline of Homework House

Sisters Maureen and Jane see a need... and an opportunity!

February 2006
The First Homework House at Immaculate Conception is opened to boys

Early 2007
Homework House expands to include both boys and girls

September 2007
Homework House was Incorporated as a non-profit

Late 2007
The Second Homework House location, Our Lady of Guadalupe, opened

July 2015
The State imposed Receivership on the Holyoke Public School District

Today
You decided to volunteer with Homework House!

About The Community, Holyoke



Image from Holyoke City Website

Holyoke is located in heart of the Pioneer Valley in western MA where Interstate 91 and the Massachusetts turnpike intersect. Holyoke was one of the first planned industrial cities; it was incorporated as a town in 1850 and as a city in 1873. In the early industrial period, Holyoke was known for producing paper. It was coined *the Paper City of the World* and at one point had over 25 paper mills in operation (see https://www.holyoke.org/).

Today Holyoke is home to about 37,000 people. A survey issued by the Holyoke Participatory Assessment Mapping or P.A.M. Project in 2017 asked participants to discuss in their own words what they like most about Holyoke, and the findings are displayed in the word cloud to the right. The community is a hub for diversity, opportunities, and social connections. These characteristics and more foster a strong sense of community and personal connection of the residents to the city of Holyoke. Core values shared by members in the Holyoke community include safety, freedom, and environmental quality. Other values in the community include connection to family, job stability, and health.



To view the 2017 PAM project survey and Learn more about Holyoke Visit:
https://www.oneholyoke.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/PAM-Holyoke-Community-Report_FMM.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1M20nMdnhsUF_KG7JmrPhZslftOQtNRXYNfATGNyDqRFt0VcDg-7UCHpI

Holyoke has had several waves of immigration contribute to its rich cultural diversity including people of Irish, French-Canadian, Polish, and Puerto Rican descent. Today Holyoke is known to have incredibly strong Irish-American and Puerto Rican communities. According to the 2020 US Census, 51% of the population identified as Hispanic, and according to the 2024 World Population Review, 41% speak Spanish.

The poverty rate in Holyoke is 26.5%, more than double the national rate of 12.6% and a significant contrast with the statewide rate of 10.4%. Nearly half of the elementary and middle school students in Holyoke live below the poverty line.

As of 2015, Holyoke Public Schools were labeled chronically underperforming along with Lawrence Public Schools and Southbridge Public Schools. This designation put Holyoke into Receivership. As part of the Receivership program, Holyoke Public Schools abides by a turnaround plan issued by the state of Massachusetts.

Who is Homework House?

Our Mission

Homework House strengthens our community by promoting educational success and providing free tutoring and mentoring for children living in economically-disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Homework House fosters educational success for children by providing safe, nurturing environments that recognize and build on their inherent strengths and resilience.

Our Vision

Homework House fosters educational success in children by providing safe, nurturing environments that recognize and build on their inherent strengths and resilience.

Our Values

ACCESS

We provide free and neighborhood-centered access to our programs.

EXCELLENCE

We believe every child can achieve excellence according to their strengths and needs.

FAMILY

We respect and engage children's families, recognizing the social and economic challenges they may face.

EDUCATION

We value education as a potent force that enables people to become productive, contributing members of society.

DIVERSITY

We foster and support a diverse community of adults and children that respects and celebrates individual differences.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

We advocate for social justice by acting in culturally competent ways that promote dignity, opportunity, economic equity, and well-being for all.

homework HOUSE

Why Volunteer

We asked our tutors, both past and current, what their favorite part of volunteering with Homework House was. Here are the happy moments they shared:

The Happy Moments

I loved it when I was working with a student and he would suddenly have an epiphany about how to do a problem. It was really nice to see him smile and be proud of his work.

Homework House was the very best part of my day! The children were eager to learn and an absolute joy to be with. I was truly honored to be serving children in Holyoke. The children were attentive and willing to engage in a learning experience no matter what the subject.

A student drew a picture of us on the white board and was being very nice and welcoming towards me when she realized I was newer than others.



The first time I was there I was able to help one boy with his math homework and the next week he wanted to continue having me help him specifically.

Definitely when all the kids are done with their homework and we end up playing Apples to Apples with them.

Reading with two little first graders. It is a joy to see them meet a challenge and finish successfully.



I feel like every moment I had at homework house was happy. Every time I walked through the doors and up the stairs, I felt like I was a part of something important. I was a piece in the learning of students, and it was these moments that made me want to become a classroom teacher.

Getting to create small memories with the students that I am able to hold close to me.

One time I was working with a student on a worksheet who was having some trouble. After a bit of "sounding out" and drawing he successfully completed the work. He was so proud of himself that he wanted to take a picture with his work and then he asked me to take a picture with him.

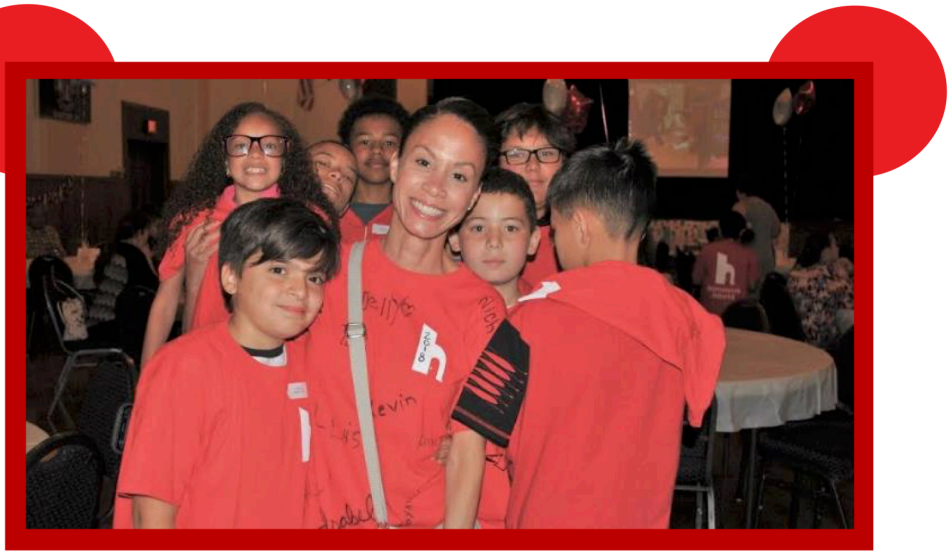
"Literally everything"

Meet Our Kids

Our kids are 1st through 8th graders from the Holyoke Public Schools.

Most of our children are working below grade level, and are referred to us by teachers, counselors, or parents. Despite their challenges, they're highly enthusiastic and excited to learn with their volunteer tutors.

Many of our children are bilingual or partly bilingual, from Spanish-speaking families. Most parents and families are extremely involved with our program, eager to help and volunteer, and supportive of their children's educational opportunities.





Reasons to Volunteer

Make New Friends

Volunteering allows you to become more connected within the community. You will have the chance to meet people with similar interests and different backgrounds and perspectives than your own.

Increases Self Confidence and Happiness

A study from the London School of Economics found that volunteering correlated with happiness. People who volunteered had much higher feelings of satisfaction and happiness. It can give you a sense of accomplishment as well as a sense of pride and identity.

Enhance Your Career

You learn many valuable skills from volunteering, such as cultural awareness, interpersonal communication, and organization. Most programs have orientations and other trainings, so the only requirements are passion, patience, and positivity.

Our Programs

Main Programs

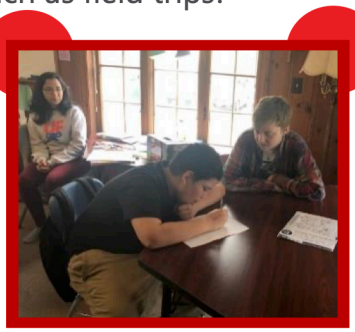


Our primary program is an afterschool program that runs Monday-Friday. Here we provide free tutoring after school to 1st grade through 8th grade children who are students in the local Holyoke schools. This program is run out of two locations in Holyoke.

During the summer, we also run our "Summer Readers and Leaders" program!

This is a 5-week intensive program from July to August, where children work individually and in small groups with credentialed reading teachers in focused literacy activities and with math skills. There are also a variety of fun opportunities such as field trips!







Special Events

- **Annual Spelling Bee**
  - The Spelling Bee is a fundraising event involving volunteers and staff to raise money and compete in a spelling competition.
- **Igniting Potential Breakfast**
  - The Igniting Potential Breakfast is the kick-off to our year. We share the amazing aspects of our program and the influence it has had.
- **Year-end Celebration**
  - Our year-end celebration is for our volunteers, staff, parents, and children to come together and celebrate all the achievements and happy moments.

Tutoring

Tutors assist students enrolled in 1st through 8th grade with homework completion and improvement of reading and math skills. Tutors enhance self-esteem and confidence in the student through encouragement and positive reinforcement.

Goal

Build a positive and supportive relationship that will engage and motivate students to work towards improvement of ability and effort in all academic subjects, attitude about school and academic achievement.

Responsibilities

- Attend tutoring sessions as scheduled. If you will be absent, notify your Volunteer Coordinator at volunteer@homeworkhouseholyoke.org or (413) 313-8615.
- Sign in at arrival at the assigned Homework House location.
- Assist students in reading, writing and math skills, in cooperation with HH staff.
- Guide students in problem solving and completion of assignments.
- Maintain student-focused, positive role-model behavior at all times. No cell phones, please.
- Take initiative and pursue opportunities to interact positively with students during non-academic time periods.
- Complete "Student Daily Report" after each session.
- Discuss learner and/or program concerns with Site Supervisor.

"My experience at Homework House affected my life in a way I could never have imagined, and I have the children to thank for that. "

Mary Lee
Volunteer with Homework House

Tips for Tutors

Guide Don't Solve

Instead of giving the answer, help the students discover the answer themselves. Try outlining the text where an answer may be found, read out loud to the students, work a similar problem step by step, or have the student read with assistance to find the answer.

Respect Boundaries

Know your limits and be open and honest about them. It is okay to say "No". Also respect the boundaries of your students. Don't take it personally if students take a while to warm up to you.

Listen Well

Be an active listener: give your student 100% of your attention. Keep confidences and don't make promises you can't keep. Also learn how to pronounce your student's name correctly. (Have them learn yours too!)

Ask for Help

It is alright to not know the answer to a question or problem. If you are not sure about an answer, encourage the student to ask their teacher for assistance and to let you know the outcome.

Be Realistic

You might not be able to see immediate results. Look for small steps and successes. Setbacks happen often when progress is being made. Make sure to praise your student honestly and frequently. Remember attentiveness and effort are as important as performance.

A Day in the Life of a Tutor

- When the tutors arrive, they sign in on Bloomerang and on paper at the site.
- Tutors check in with their classroom lead, get out binders, folders, and notebooks for the kids they'll be working with, and check their student[s]'s daily progress sheet from the day before. They'll also help with any prep work the staff member needs, such as making copies or gathering supplies.
- As the kids enter the building, tutors help distribute snacks - greeting and chatting with the children about their day.
- Tutors then work individually with the students. If they brought homework, they work together on it. For the students who do not have homework, an academic assignment is given for them to work on.
- At the end of each day the tutors fill out a daily progress report for the student(s) they worked with that day, which goes in the back of the student's binder. The report includes information about the work done, highlighting any challenges or successes that student had that day.



Tips for Engaging Kids

There will be days where the kids just do not want to do their work. Here's a few things you can do.

Reframe the Work

What is the child interested in? Do they really enjoy trains or sports? Is there any way to incorporate these interests into their math homework? Feel free to get creative.

Negotiate Little Breaks

A tried-and-true study technique for all ages: "If you work for the next 20 minutes or if you complete this worksheet, we can take 10 minutes to play a game!" This gives them a concrete goal to focus on instead of "just having to do all this work," and provides an incentive for them to get it done.

Make It a Game

Work doesn't have to be boring. There are so many ways reading and math can be incorporated into games. If all else fails, there is a Kahoot! For every subject.

Let It Go

Some days are just rough. This is not an everyday solution, but if the kid has had a rough day, let them talk about it if they want to and then give them a day to breathe.

Rules and Expectations

CORI/SORI/Background Checks

Prior to beginning work with Homework House, all staff and volunteers are required to undergo a background check.

CORI (Criminal Offense Record Inquiry) is a name-based criminal background check. The information provided is searched against Massachusetts court records to determine if there is a possible record for that person. It does not require fingerprinting.

For those who have lived in Massachusetts for fewer than the last 7 years, a national criminal background check will be conducted.

Each applicant's information will also be run through the SORI (Sex Offender Registry Information) system, which checks national records.

For more information about CORI you can go to: https://www.mass.gov/service-details/criminal-record-checks

Attendance

Regular attendance at your scheduled shifts is expected: we count on you as we do our paid staff. If you are going to be late or must miss your shift, please inform your volunteer coordinator as early as possible. (volunteer@homeworkhouseholyoke.org or 413-313-8615).

General Tips for Nonprofit Work

Redefine Success

Patience is key, especially when working with kids! It will be rewarding and tiring, and change may not be visible right away. Celebrate the small victories, and remember that it's not about "what you achieve," but ultimately about who your student learns to be.

Be Culturally Respectful

Our volunteers come from a broad variety of backgrounds, and your background may or may not differ from that of many of your students. A person may not always choose to talk about it, but if they do share their perspective or culture, enjoy the learning moment! If someone works very differently than you do, remember that what seems "rude" or wrong to you may simply be a difference in perspective – and that what seems normal to you may be jarring to someone else. Keep an eye out for how your words or approach may be affecting others, and be aware of your own heart responds to those around you.

Stay Humble

Chances are you will learn just as much if not more from those you are working with as they will from you. Enjoy the process, listen well, and remember your teacher is ultimately in charge.

Seek Out Feedback

Don't be afraid to ask for feedback. Actively seeking feedback during the process can help make the experience more fulfilling and useful to both you and those you are working with.

Have Fun!

You are a gift to the students and staff here, and they will be a gift to you! Enjoy your time here – because we enjoy *you!*

Homework House follows the HPS calendar. There is a calendar posted on our website, and we also post reminders on the doors.

Sign-In

Please sign in every day on BOTH the Bloomerang app and the paper sign-in sheet.

Bloomerang allows us to track and credit your hours. The paper is a safety measure that allows us to quickly determine who is in the building in case of emergency, and it also allows us to manually add your hours should you experience problems with the app or forget to sign in on it.

If you are joining us from a college campus, please sign into the app when you arrive at the van or car to leave campus, and sign out when you return to campus. This allows us to credit you for your travel time.

Cell Phone Use

Please make sure you sign into and out of your shift on the Bloomerang app. Other than this, please don't use your cell phone while at the program. This is an example to our kids as well as a way of signaling our respect for them.

The exception is if your teacher asks you to use your phone for educational purposes, such as looking something up or translating for a non-English-speaking student.

Food

No outside food, please: we have some kids with severe allergies.

Privacy and Social Media

Do NOT take pictures of the kids or post any pictures of any children to any social media site.

That said, we'd LOVE for you to share Homework House posts! We have the appropriate parental releases and we refrain from photographing children whose parents have not given permission, so any HH post is fair game for sharing!

Do not share your personal contact information with a child or friend a child on any social media outlet. This includes video games such as Fortnite. Arranging outside contact is prohibited.

Inclement Weather

Homework House follows the inclement weather decisions made by the Holyoke Public Schools. There are times that we will need to cancel but the schools do not. We will make every attempt to notify tutors. It will also be posted on WWLP and Masslive.

If there is inclement weather, please check appropriate news and school closure information in the event that we are unable to reach you. If Homework House decides to remain open but you do not feel safe coming in because of inclement weather in your area, please contact the volunteer coordinator as soon as possible.

Dress Code

Your appearance sets a tone for the children and parents and is a reflection of our respect for them. Volunteers must follow acceptable standards for personal hygiene, as well as conform with required standards of dress. This includes:

- Wearing clean, neat clothes and footwear which are appropriate for your position.
- Do not wear any revealing clothes or clothes that bear offensive or inappropriate written messages.
- No extreme clothing, such as halter tops, torn T-shirts, ripped jeans, pajama pants, oversized pants or shirts may be worn.

The Executive Director or Director of Programs will determine whether clothing is appropriate or not. Volunteers who are wearing inappropriate dress **will be sent home**.

Daily Progress Reports

All students have a folder for daily progress reports. This is one of our primary sources of consistency and communication, where tutors make note of what a child has been working on, what challenges or issues they have faced, etc., so that the next day's tutor is oriented to the child's situation. Please check your student's (or students') folder(s) upon arrival in order to prepare for the day. Before you leave, you must fill out a progress report for the day, so that the next day's tutor can be prepared, and so that our educators can track the child's progress and needs.

Resignation

If you choose to end your volunteering with us for any reason, please notify your volunteer coordinator (volunteer@homeworkhouseholyoke.org) as soon as possible. Thank you again for choosing to volunteer with Homework House!

Medical Attention

Homework House requires volunteers to notify a supervisor when medical attention is required for any reason, including accident or illness. Volunteers requiring transportation to a medical facility must be taken by trained medical personnel. Transportation and medical costs are the responsibility of the volunteer.

Gift Policy

Homework House employees and their families are **not allowed to give or receive gifts, favors, meals or entertainment** to or from any child, child's family or vendor of Homework House except as approved by the Executive Director. If you are offered a gift, please politely decline.

Personal Space

Touching a child or another staff person or volunteer can produce unintended negative reactions and can be misconstrued. For this reason, employees and volunteers are expected to refrain from touching anyone else except in an emergency. If a child initiates a hug or other physical contact, staff and volunteers should redirect them to something more appropriate to the situation, e.g. a handshake or high five.

Personal Property

Homework House is not responsible for personal property of employees and volunteers within facilities, vehicles or parking areas. Any personal items brought on premises deemed inappropriate by Homework House may be removed without notice.

Personal Safety

At Homework House the safety of our volunteers, employees, and children is a top priority. Everyone is expected to perform their duties exercising good judgment in regards to her/his personal safety and the safety of others. Every volunteer is expected to understand the impact of her/his actions on the safety of others and to support

Homework House in meeting its safety objectives. All incidents and safety-related concerns must be reported immediately to the Executive Director. Volunteers are responsible for complying with Homework House safety policies and procedures as a condition of continued service.

Violence

It is the goal of Homework House to provide a workplace that has a **zero-tolerance for workplace violence, verbal or non-verbal threats and related actions**. All volunteers are expected to comply with workplace violence policies and procedures. Please report any incidents of violence without fear of reprisal.

Violent behavior can be defined as:

- Physically harming or verbally threatening an individual, groups of individuals or relatives of those individuals.
- The possession or brandishing of any object that could reasonably be perceived, as a weapon(s).
- The use of loud, angry or disruptive behavior by employees or visitors that is not part of the typical work environment.
- Callous or intentional disregard for the physical safety or wellbeing of others.
- Intentional destruction of Homework House, employee, volunteer, or student's property.
- Commission of a felony or misdemeanor on Homework House property.
- Any other conduct that a reasonable person would perceive as constituting a threat of violence.

All incidents will be promptly investigated by the Executive Director.

Weapons

Do not bring weapons with you to Homework House. Possession of weapons is prohibited on Homework House property and while on duty at any location. Possession of a firearm or weapon of any sort while at Homework House by any staff member or volunteer will be cause for immediate termination. Report any weapon possession to your immediate supervisor or the Executive Director.

Weapons are generally defined as guns, knives and other objects universally considered a weapon by the vast majority of society. A "weapon" can also be any object which

would do harm to another when used as such. Homework House shall deem any such object a “weapon” for the purpose of enforcing this policy.

Smoking

Smoking is prohibited on Homework House property and while on Homework House business including field trips and special events.

Solicitation

As a courtesy to everyone at Homework House, solicitation of political information, religious information or items for sale is not allowed. Solicitation for sale of items involving fundraisers for school projects and the like may be conducted with the prior approval of the Executive Director.

Confidential Information Security

As a matter of course, volunteers of Homework House may have access to confidential information. This information includes, but is not limited to correspondence and contributions, and our clients and their families, personal and medical information. A volunteer should only discuss the above matters with other volunteers and staff as it relates to his/her work at Homework House. A volunteer should not discuss these matters outside Homework House or as part of course work. If any children are referenced in your coursework, please change the names to respect their privacy. If a volunteer has a question about the confidentiality of any information, they should ask for clarification from the Executive Director. Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action and/or legal action.

Preventing Peer Sexual Abuse

Peer sexual abuse – unwanted or uninvited harmful sexual behavior towards a minor from a fellow minor – is an unfortunate reality we must face. Roughly 1/3 of all childhood sexual abuse is perpetrated by other children. The vast majority of child perpetrators are 12-14 year old boys, but aggressors may begin their behavior by 4 or 5 years of age.

Any sexual interaction between children should be redirected, even if it seems to be innocent curiosity. The encounter is more likely to be abusive when there is an imbalance of power between the children. The most common and easily-spotted power imbalance is age difference, but there are many others, including but not limited to

- differences in social or economic status,
- differences in size (i.e., a child of the same age may be larger and physically intimidating),
- differences in mental or intellectual state (e.g. some children are less aware than others of when they're being manipulated).

Children with special needs are particularly vulnerable to abuse.

The highest risk situations are ones in which an aggressor can avoid adult supervision – for instance, in locations that are out of sight or during times when adult attention is focused elsewhere – and ones which involve partial clothing, such as changing or using the toilet. The most common place for victimization to occur is in the bathroom.

Signs that a Child May Be Being Victimized

- Doesn't want to be alone with another child.
- Avoids an activity previously enjoyed.
- Complains of bullying.

None of these signs is a definitive test. Use your judgment, and communicate about concerns with staff.

If you witness abuse, intervene and notify staff immediately!

Signs that a Child May Be an Aggressor

- Persists in physical contact (or pressure to remove clothing) when other child objects.
- Ignores social cues or instructions regarding boundaries
- Seems incapable of stopping inappropriate behaviors even after correction.
- Seems to prefer company of younger children.
- Creates secrecy with younger children (esp. touching games)

PEER SEXUAL ABUSE CAN AND SHOULD BE REPORTED!

A Few Volunteer Reminders

- **The students are the most important people in the room.** You are here to make meaningful connections with the students. Be attentive to your student while you are here. Try to keep them engaged in either academic activities, games, or other activities while you are tutoring.
  Please refrain from doing your homework, reading, or being on your phone. If your student is on the computer, help with another student or ask your teacher if there is anything else you can do.
- **The students will be shaped by behavior they see modeled**. Be mindful of what you say in front of the students, because they are listening and will acquire the language you use! In addition, if there is any behavior you want the students to portray, the best way to get them to do it is to demonstrate it yourself. If you want students to speak quietly, then speak quietly to the students. If you want the students to focus, then focus on your work with the student (or on the teacher, if the teacher is talking!)
- **The daily progress report is your friend!!!** Each shift should start with looking over your students' folders, so that you can be up to date on how they're doing. It will let you know if there are challenges other tutors are seeing, what the child has been working on, etc – and it's the best way to be prepared to help them. At the end of your shift, PLEASE make sure you fill out a daily progress report for that day, to help the next person out!
- **The teacher is the authority in the room.** It is not your responsibility to discipline students. Do not make decisions about rewards or punitive measures without first consulting the teacher or unless your teacher asks you to do so.
- Familiarize yourself with the rules of the room as well as the locations of materials and supplies. It is helpful to know the rules to remind students when their behavior is disruptive. In addition, knowing where supplies are will allow you to put things back where they belong.
- **At the start of the day, there are ways you can help your teacher.** Checklists are posted at the entrance to each classroom with ways to make the most of the beginning of your shift!
- **Please, please, please make sure your student(s) clean up after themselves!** You are responsible for reminding them to throw their trash away from snack and overseeing that process. In addition, if you and your student participate in any activity that is messy or has many parts, please be sure to clean all materials you used and put them neatly back on the shelves where you found them.

Legal Information and Policies

Child Abuse & Neglect Policy & Procedures

All staff, **INCLUDING VOLUNTEERS**, are mandated reporters. By law you are **required to report any suspected abuse or neglect**. Parents and guardians are notified that staff are mandated reporters in the Parent Handbook. If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected follow the steps below for reporting:

1. **Report any suspected neglect or abuse of a child immediately to your supervisor.** They will inform the Homework House Executive Director as well as to Department of Children and Families (DCF). (If the Executive Director is not on-site, they will be notified right away. The Executive Director is responsible for notifying the Board President.)
2. **Follow up and confirm that the report was submitted**. The Homework House Executive Director will report any suspected abuse or neglect to the DCF immediately (calling the Springfield DCF office at 413-452-3200 between 9am and 5pm or the Child-At-Risk Hotline at 1-800-792-5200 between 5pm and 9am or on weekends or holidays). They will then submit a written report (https://www.mass.gov/how-to/report-child-abuse-or-neglect) to DCF within 48 hours. If, however, Homework House for some reason does not report it and you are still concerned, it is your responsibility to make the report yourself at the above numbers.
3. **Cooperate in any ensuing investigation.**

You should NOT speak with the parent or guardian before reporting. You are not required to investigate the suspected or alleged abuse or neglect before reporting. If you are unsure, err on the side of reporting. If, for whatever reason, the designated person does not report, the Executive Director or, in the case of the Executive Director not reporting, the Board President should be notified, and a report should be made immediately.

If it appears that a child's immediate safety is in question, the Homework House Executive Director will call the Holyoke Police Dept. in addition to contacting DCF.

If it is suspected that a staff member or volunteer is abusing a child in the program, the staff member or volunteer will be placed on involuntary leave without pay and the matter will be reported to the Holyoke Police Dept. and to DCF. The Executive Director

will notify the Board President as soon as any allegations about a staff person or volunteer are made. If a parent has concerns about suspected abuse by a staff member or volunteer, they are encouraged to speak with the Executive Director or Director of Programs. They also have the right to contact DCF or the police directly.

For more information on what it means to be a mandated reporter go to: https://www.mass.gov/how-to/report-child-abuse-or-neglect-as-a-mandated-reporter

Harassment

Homework House recognizes that diversity in the workplace is a source of strength and fosters a work environment in which all staff and volunteers are inspired to do their best, strengthened by their different perspectives, backgrounds, and life experiences. Inclusion and diversity are important parts of Homework House's strategy for success. Creating a work environment that values and utilizes the diverse talents of our staff and volunteers helps build a foundation that consistently delivers quality in the workplace.

Homework House strives to create and maintain a work environment in which everyone is treated with dignity, decency, and respect. The Homework House environment should be characterized by mutual trust and the absence of intimidation, oppression, and exploitation.

Any form of unlawful harassment based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, marital status, status as a covered veteran or member of the Reserves or National Guard or membership in any protected class is expressly prohibited.

OBJECTIVE

This policy identifies the respective responsibilities of Homework House and its staff and volunteers regarding conduct and the work environment. Please note that while this policy sets forth the goal of promoting a workplace that is free of harassment, the policy is not designed or intended to limit our authority to discipline or take remedial action for workplace conduct which is deemed unacceptable, regardless of whether that conduct satisfies the definition of harassment.

PROCEDURE

Definition – Staff and Volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner as judged by a reasonable person. Staff and volunteers have the right to conduct their work without disorderly or undue interference from other Staff and

volunteers. A congenial environment of respect and professionalism is encouraged. Therefore, staff and volunteers are prohibited from intentionally harming or threatening to harm other staff, volunteers, children, visitors or property belonging to any of these parties. This prohibition includes but is not limited to intentional acts such as:

- **Verbal** – comments which are not flattering regarding a person's nationality, origin, race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, or other protected status (e.g. slurs, stereotyping).
- **Non-verbal** – distribution, display or discussion of any written or graphic material that ridicules, denigrates, insults, belittles, or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group because of national origin, race, color, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, pregnancy, disability, marital status or other protected status.

All staff and volunteers should take special note that, as stated above, retaliation against an individual who has complained about harassment, and retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation of a complaint of harassment is unlawful and will not be tolerated by this organization.

Complaints of Harassment - If any staff or volunteer believes that he/she has been subjected to harassment, the individual has the right to file a complaint with our organization. The complaint can be filed orally or in writing.

If any staff or volunteer would like to file a complaint, he/she may do so by contacting the Executive Director. The Executive Director is available to discuss any concerns and to provide information about the harassment policy and the complaint process. The Executive Director will inform the President of the Board that a complaint has been made.

Complaints alleging harassment by the Executive Director should be made to the President of the Board of Directors. The Board's Executive Committee will investigate any complaints made against the Executive Director in accordance with the procedures outlined in the following sections.

Harassment Investigation – Once a complaint is received, an investigation will begin in an expeditious manner. The investigation will be conducted in such a way as to maintain confidentiality to the extent practicable under the circumstances. The investigation will include a private interview with the person filing the complaint, the person alleged to have committed the harassment and with witnesses. The person alleged to have committed the harassment will be interviewed by the Executive Director

(or the President of the Board of Directors if appropriate). Once the investigation is completed, the Investigator will, to the extent appropriate, inform the person filing the complaint, the person alleged to have committed the conduct and the President of the Board of Directors of the results of the investigation.

If it is determined that harassing conduct has been committed by a member of the staff or volunteer, the Executive Director will act promptly to eliminate the conduct, and where it is appropriate, impose disciplinary action.

Disciplinary Action - If it is determined that inappropriate conduct has been committed by a staff member or volunteer, the Executive Director will take the appropriate action up to and including termination. The severity of the discipline depends upon the circumstances of the infraction.

State and Federal Remedies - In addition to the above, if a staff member or volunteer believes he/she has been subjected to harassment, they may file a formal complaint with either or both of the government agencies set forth below. Using the complaint process does not prohibit a staff member or volunteer from filing a complaint with these agencies. Each of the agencies has a short time period for filing a claim (EEOC – 300 days, MCAD - 6 months).

The United States Equal Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
1 Congress Street - 10th floor
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 565-3200

The Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD)

Boston Office:
One Ashburton Place - Room 601
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 727-3990

Springfield Office:
424 Dwight Street, Room 220
Springfield, MA 01103
(413) 739-2145

Worcester Office
22 Front Street, Fifth Floor
P.O. Box 8038
Worcester, MA 01641
(508) 799-6379

For discussion of sexual harassment, please see Homework House's Sexual Harassment policy in the next section.

Sexual Harassment

It is the goal of Homework House to promote a workplace that is free of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment of staff and volunteers occurring in the workplace or in other settings in which the staff and volunteers may find themselves in connection with

their work is unlawful and will not be tolerated by this organization. Further, any retaliation against an individual who has complained about sexual harassment or retaliation against any individuals for cooperating with an investigation of a sexual harassment complaint is similarly unlawful and will not be tolerated. To achieve our goal of providing an organization free from sexual harassment, the conduct that is described in this policy will not be tolerated and a procedure has been provided by which inappropriate conduct will be dealt with, if encountered by staff and volunteers.

Homework House takes allegations of sexual harassment seriously. The Executive Director will respond promptly to complaints of sexual harassment and where it is determined that such inappropriate conduct has occurred, the Executive Director will act promptly to eliminate the conduct and impose such corrective action as is necessary, including disciplinary action when appropriate.

Please note that while this policy sets forth the goal of promoting a workplace that is free of sexual harassment, the policy is not designed or intended to limit our authority to discipline or take remedial action for workplace conduct which is deemed unacceptable, regardless of whether that conduct satisfies the definition of sexual harassment.

PROCEDURE

Definition of Sexual Harassment - In Massachusetts, the legal definition for sexual harassment is this: "sexual harassment" means sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when such advances, requests or conduct have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or sexually offensive work environment.

The legal definition of sexual harassment is broad and in addition to the above examples, other sexually oriented conduct, whether it is intended or not, that is unwelcome and has the effect of creating a workplace environment that is hostile, offensive, intimidating, or humiliating to workers of any gender may also constitute sexual harassment.

While it is not possible to list all those additional circumstances that may constitute sexual harassment, the following are some examples of conduct, which may constitute sexual harassment depending on the totality of the circumstances including the severity of the conduct and its pervasiveness:

- Unwelcome sexual advances - whether the advances involve physical touching or not.
- Sexual epithets, jokes, written or oral references to sexual conduct, gossip regarding one's sex life, comments on an individual's body, or comments about an individual's sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess.
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cartoons.
- Unwelcome leering, whistling, brushing against the body, sexual gestures, suggestive or insulting comments.
- Inquiries into one's sexual experiences and discussion of one's sexual activities.

All staff and volunteers should take special note that, as stated above, retaliation against an individual who has complained about sexual harassment, and retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation of a sexual harassment complaint is unlawful and will not be tolerated by this organization.

Complaints of Sexual Harassment - If any staff or volunteer believes that they have been subjected to sexual harassment, they have the right to file a complaint with our organization. The complaint may be reported orally or in writing. If any staff or volunteer would like to file a complaint, they may do so by contacting the Executive Director or the President of the Board of Directors. These persons are available to discuss any employee concern and to provide information about the sexual harassment policy and the complaint process.

Complaints alleging sexual harassment by the Executive Director should be made to the President of the Board of Directors. The Board's Executive Committee will investigate any complaints made against the Executive Director in accordance with the procedures outlined in the following sections.

Sexual Harassment Investigation – Once the complaint has been reported, the Executive Director will promptly investigate the allegation in a fair and expeditious manner. The investigation will be conducted in such a way as to maintain confidentiality to the extent practicable under the circumstances. The investigation will include a private interview with the person filing the complaint and with witnesses. The person alleged to have committed sexual harassment will be interviewed. Once the investigation has been completed, the Executive Director or President of the Board, if the allegation is against the Executive Director, to the extent appropriate, informs the person filing the complaint and the person alleged to have committed the conduct of the results of the investigation.

If it is determined that inappropriate conduct has occurred, the Executive Director will act promptly to eliminate the offending conduct, and where it is appropriate, also impose disciplinary action.

Disciplinary Action - If it is determined that inappropriate conduct has been committed by any staff and/or volunteers (s), the Administration will take the appropriate action up to and including termination. The severity of the discipline depends upon the circumstances of the infraction.

State and Federal Remedies - In addition to the above, if any staff or volunteer believes they have been subjected to sexual harassment, the employee may file a formal complaint with either or both of the government agencies set forth below. Using the complaint process does not prohibit them from filing a complaint with these agencies. Each of the agencies has a short time period for filing a claim (EEOC - 300 days, MCAD - 6 months).

The United States Equal Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
1 Congress Street - 10th floor
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 565-3200

The Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD)

Boston Office:
One Ashburton Place - Room 601
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Springfield Office:
424 Dwight Street, Room 220
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Worcester Office
22 Front Street, Fifth Floor
P.O. Box 8038
Worcester, MA 01641
(508) 799-6379

Whistleblower Policy

Homework House Inc. requires directors, officers, employees, and volunteers to observe high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities. As representatives of the Homework House, we must practice honesty and integrity in fulfilling our responsibilities and comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

Reporting Responsibility

This Whistleblower Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees and others to raise serious concerns internally so that Homework House can address and correct inappropriate conduct and actions. It is the responsibility of all board members, officers,

employees, and volunteers to report concerns about violations of Homework House Inc.'s code of ethics or suspected violations of law or regulations that govern Homework House Inc.'s operations.

No Retaliation

Reporting Individuals will not be disciplined or be retaliated against for asking questions or voicing concerns about conduct of this sort. It is contrary to the values of Homework House Inc. for anyone to retaliate against any board member, officer, employee, or volunteer who in good faith reports an ethics violation, or a suspected violation of law, such as a complaint of discrimination, or suspected fraud, or suspected violation of any regulation governing the operations of Homework House Inc. Anyone who retaliates against someone who has reported a violation in good faith is subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment or service.

Reporting Procedure

Homework House Inc. has an open door policy and suggests that employees or others share their questions, concerns, suggestions or complaints with their supervisor. If the reporting individual is not comfortable speaking with a supervisor or not satisfied with the supervisor's response, they are encouraged to speak with the Executive Director, the Board President or any board member. Anyone receiving a report is required to refer those complaints or concerns about suspected ethical and legal violations in writing to the Homework House Inc.'s Executive Committee who has the responsibility to investigate all reported complaints. Employees or others with concerns or complaints may also submit their concerns in writing directly to the Executive Committee of the Homework House Inc. Board of Directors.

The Homework House Inc.'s Executive Committee is responsible for ensuring that all complaints about unethical or illegal conduct are investigated and resolved. When the investigation warrants, appropriate corrective action will be taken. Written statements detailing dates, allegations, actions, etc. will be made. These statements will be stored in a safe and confidential manner by the Executive Director in a locked file cabinet.

When the investigation does not prove substantial and further action is not taken, the report and results will be kept in a confidential manner by the Executive Director in a locked file cabinet.

If the report is against the Executive Director, the report and results will be kept in a confidential manner by the Board President. The Board President will transfer the report and results to each succeeding Board President.

The Executive Committee will advise the Executive Director and/or the Board of Directors of all complaints and their resolution and will report at least annually to the Treasurer/Chair of the Finance Committee on compliance activity relating to accounting or alleged financial improprieties.

Acting in Good Faith

Anyone filing a complaint concerning a violation or suspected violation must be acting in good faith and have reasonable grounds for believing the information disclosed indicates performance is not in compliance with Homework House policies, procedures, or stated expectations or behaviors are not in adherence to laws and regulations. Any report that proves not to have reasonable substance and which proves to have been made maliciously or knowingly false will be viewed as a serious disciplinary offense, up to and including dismissal from the Board and termination of employment.

Confidentiality

Violations or suspected violations may be submitted on a confidential basis by the complainant. Reports of violations or suspected violations will be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation.

Handling of Reported Violations

The Homework House Inc.'s Executive Committee will notify the person who submitted a complaint and acknowledge receipt of the reported violation or suspected violation. All reports will be promptly investigated and appropriate corrective action will be taken if warranted by the investigation.

Drug-Free Workplace Policy

It is the policy of Homework House to maintain a drug-free workplace and to discourage the abuse of drugs and/or alcohol by its employees and volunteers. Employees or volunteers who are under the influence of a drug or alcohol while on the job compromise their own health and safety as well as the health and safety of others and can cause loss of productivity or a disruptive work environment.

To promote and maintain safe and efficient working conditions for everyone at Homework House, the following guidelines are expected of all staff and volunteers. Homework House strictly prohibits the following conduct within the workplace or when performing Homework House business regardless of location:

- The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, sale, purchase or usage of any illegal drug or other controlled substance
- The manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, sale or purchase of alcohol.
- The manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, sale purchase or usage of any legal drug or prescription drug in a manner inconsistent with the law.

These guidelines are applicable except when medication is prescribed by a licensed physician or other duly licensed medical or dental practitioner and is used in strict accordance with medical instructions.

Any volunteer or staff member who reports to work under the influence of alcohol and/or illegal drugs is subject to disciplinary action including immediate discharge. Anyone who reports to work while impaired by use of alcohol, over-the-counter medications, prescription drugs or other controlled substances is also subject to disciplinary action including immediate discharge.

Impairment is defined as, but not limited to:

- Endangerment to the individual's safety or the safety of others
- Potential risk of damage to Homework House property
- Substantial interference with job performance or business operations.

As a condition of working with Homework House, all volunteers and staff must abide by the terms of the drug free workplace policy. All employees must notify Homework House in writing of any drug statute conviction for a violation occurring in the workplace within five calendar days after conviction. Within 30 days notice of such conviction, Homework House will take appropriate personnel action up to and including discharge and/or require the individual to satisfactorily complete a drug abuse rehabilitation program. An individual's failure or refusal to participate in a rehabilitation program following referral to such a program by Homework House will disallow the individual continued service with Homework House.

Where there is a reasonable belief that a violation of this policy has occurred, Homework House reserves the right to conduct searches of desks, lockers and other employee areas. Failure or refusal to permit a requested search may result in disciplinary action. Law enforcement officials may be notified when appropriate.

Our Partners

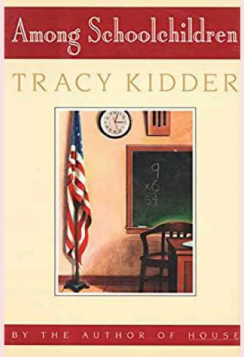
We would like to send a huge thank you to all our partners who make our work at Homework House possible.

Another thank you to all the programs who volunteer with us. We would not be able to work with so many children without your hard work and contributions.

Recomended Reading

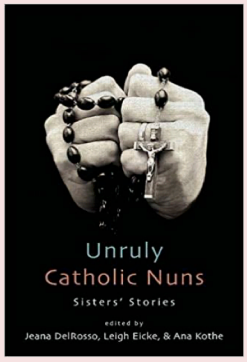
Are you are interested in learning more about tutoring, working with culturally diverse people, the community of Holyoke, or a little more about our founders? Here are a few selected books and articles you can investigate.

Among Schoolchildren



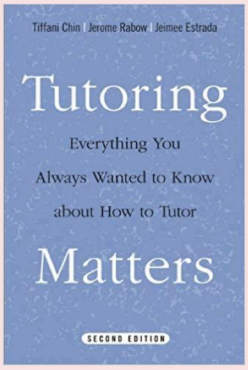
Tracy Kidder's Among Schoolchildren describes one year in a 5th grade classroom at Kelly School in Holyoke, MA, one of the schools we work with. It Evaluates the role of teachers in the US education system including systemic challenges and how teachers overcome them.

Unruly Catholic Nuns



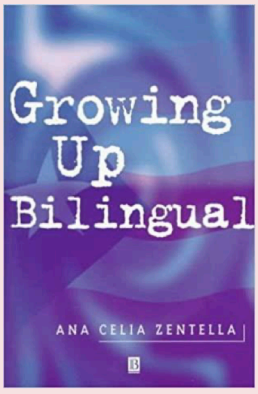
Unruly Catholic Nuns explores the voices of current and former Catholic nuns as they share their lived experiences with Catholicism, both in accordance and in conflict with the institutional Church. It also features our very own Sister Jane in part III: The Holy Spirit Confirms!

Tutoring Matters



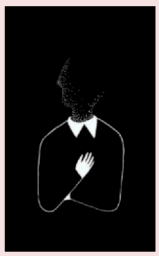
Tutoring Matters by Jerome Rabow, Tiffani Chin, and Nima Fahimian provides accounts by over 100 tutors, both new and experienced, to create a rich guide for creating individual and personalized experiences as a tutor as well as giving advice for frequently encountered situations.

Growing Up Bilingual



Growing Up Bilingual: Puerto Rican Children in NY by Ana Celia Zentella is one of the most important books on bilingualism in the United States. It will help you educate yourself on the bilingual and more specifically Puerto Rican community.

The Healing Practice of Cultural Humility



The Healing Practice of Cultural Humility by Charlene Leung on Lions Roar is a short article about how to evaluate your biases and practice cultural humility, an important skill for working with people from different backgrounds.

https://www.lionsroar.com/the-healing-practice-of-cultural-humility/