



PEPS GROUP MANUAL

"How to establish a successful Ongoing PEPS Group"

GOING LEADERLESS:

This is an important time for your group as you transition to a leader-less format. This handout contains suggestions for your group to move forward, building upon the support network and friendships you have begun to develop during these first three months together. We hope that you will continue to be a supportive resource for one another and are delighted to have you as part of the growing PEPS family!

LEADERSHIP:

Until now, your group has had a PEPS-trained leader who was responsible for getting everyone together, leading a discussion topic, coordinating meeting places and making certain that all members were informed of any group or meeting changes. Now that you are on your own, you will want to decide how the group will be led. Some groups choose to have a rotating leadership, where one person selects and leads the topic discussion while another hosts the meeting. Other groups may decide to forego a formal topic discussion yet still rotate the hosting duties.

MEETING ORGANIZATION:

A little organization and planning will help make your ongoing group more successful for both parents and children.

1. To get started, have a meeting discussing some guidelines for the group. Examples might be:
 - How often to meet
 - Do you still want to meet weekly? For instance, if you only meet every other week, then if one person or couple misses a group they will only be attending one group that month.
 - Meeting Logistics
 - Locations and hosts for the next few meetings
 - It's helpful to choose homes that are set up well for an active group of children. If one person volunteers their home as a regular meeting place, give them an afternoon of childcare and rotate snacks! Help them clean up. Check out our list for places besides your home to meet.
 - Who will attend meetings (especially important for couples' groups – will you continue to have both parents attend, have some mom- or dad-only meetings, etc.)
 - Topics for the next few meetings
 - Discussion leader for each meeting
 - Snacks or Meals
 - Updated roster with phone, email and preferred contact method- especially for the host when letting them know if you can't attend the group
 - Decision on how you'll communicate changes in meeting plans to the group
 - Responsibilities
 - Divide tasks and take turns being responsible for the whole group, possibly
 - Do you want to divide housekeeping chores such as
 - Telephone calls and emails
 - Art activities
 - Snack

2. Next, establish a calendar for at least six months to a year. On page eight you will find a sample calendar with a space for babies' birthdays. You can copy your roster onto the back of the page if you choose to use this format. Establish your calendar:

- For Meetings
- For Parent's Night Out
- Family Picnics/Potlucks/Pancake Breakfasts
- Outings

3. Establish guidelines for the group, such as:

- How the children will be supervised
- No use of roster for solicitation purposes
- Birthday party traditions
- Sick child policy
- Adding new members or allowing visitors or siblings

4. Formats:

- Meet regularly with children
- Organize periodic potlucks with partners and siblings
- Schedule monthly "Moms' Nights Out" and/or "Dads' Nights Out"
- Host holiday parties
- Parents meet with 2nd child while older kids attend a dance or music class

5. Ideas for Moms' and Dads' Nights/Weekends Out:

- Many websites offer great ideas for Parent's Night Out and don't forget that a lot of Community Centers and Daycares have Parents Night Out if you all want to get together at once.
- If one parent is staying home, you can try a babysitting co-op. There are many ways to create one, both formal and informal. Call the PEPS Community Outreach Coordinator for more information at 206-547-8570 x28.

SPEAKERS:

We have speakers who are available to visit your ongoing PEPS group. Please contact the speakers directly at least two weeks in advance to schedule a time to have them come to your group. You can review the PEPS Speakers List on PEPSNET. You will get an invitation to PEPSNET within a month of completing your twelve week group

Remember that it's easiest to have speakers around during the early stages of your group or have speakers who can engage your children if they are mobile. Some groups will have a potluck, leave their little ones at home with a sitter and have the speaker come to the dinner. It's a great way to socialize and get information at the same time.

PROBLEM SOLVING WITHIN GROUPS:

REMEMBER, there is no one “right way” to parent. Listen to and support each other.

Q: My group seems to be stuck in a rut. We meet together every week for a playgroup, but it doesn't seem like we ever talk about anything new, and it doesn't seem like we really get a chance to connect. We're mostly having small talk while the kids play.

A: Some groups are happy with playgroups for the kids that only offer casual conversation for the adults. Other groups find that they need something more. Here are some ideas other groups have tried to get new energy and focus: worked on craft projects together for holidays, formed a book club for discussing books of interest to all, worked on a service project for PEPS or other community agencies, taken classes together, or added an aerobic workout for the moms to the weekly kids' playgroup.

-An excerpt from the PEPS News

Older Babies and Toddlers:

As children get older, even though we know that there are developmental milestones that they are meeting, they can come into play when the groups begin to run into problems. Some of these problems include:

- Sleep-Children have different sleep needs
- Movement- They begin to move everywhere
- Eating- It's messier than it used to be
- Behavior-Sharing, Hitting, Biting can begin to occur

Toddlers don't know how to be in a group dynamic, how to share, they will hit and they can bite. Some of the more active babies can really take up a lot of time! Unfortunately, this can often be the downfall of groups if not addressed. Groups turn into playgroups and there is less sharing time for Mom and Dad. In order to deal with these problems, we recommend that you set guidelines for dealing with your babies as they turn into toddlers. Some ideas to explore are:

- Who will intervene if the child is hitting or biting?
- When children have different nap schedules, you can schedule a longer meeting, or alternate mid-morning meetings with afternoon meetings.
- How do you deal with parenting advice or unwanted competition with each other?
- Who will clean up after everyone leaves? Often homes are much messier after the groups leave than they used to be. (Maybe one or two people can stay to help clean up or this might be a good time to change your meeting places.)
- Meet in the Park on sunny days. On cold ones, meet in a church or community center. You may need to change your evening to the weekend.
- Keep having those Parent's nights out. They can be the glue of your relationships with each other during a transition time like this.
- Focus on some of the things that the children need developmentally-invite a specialist to your group, access the speaker list to help in this area.

Keep having Parents' Night Out during this time. It may help your group survive!

CELEBRATING BIRTHDAYS:

As your children near their first birthday, your group may wish to discuss how to handle birthday celebrations within the group. Since all of the children will reach this milestone within a few months of each other, the idea of doing big celebrations for each individual is probably overwhelming, as is the idea of purchasing gifts for each child. The following is a list of some of the options - your group may also choose not to do anything to formally acknowledge birthdays.

- Sing Happy Birthday to the Birthday child at the meeting close.
- Take a picture of each child at his/her first birthday and assemble these all into a collage that color copies could be made of and given to all the parents in the group.
- Parents could host a meeting near the time of their child's birthdays. This could be an evening gathering with families, if desired. A group gift exchange might be appropriate: every family brings one gift, and then each child draws a number from a hat to choose which gift they will receive.

Going Out and About:

For Libraries, Community Centers, Parks and Beaches, check your local city websites. They have great information. Some rooms are free, some there is a small fee and some, like the library and community center, have toddler programs. All it takes is a little investigation to find out what is available. Website links are located on page 8.

Check out these places:

- Zoo
- Kelsey Creek Park (barn and animals to pet)
- Children's Museum
- Pacific Science Center
- Beach parks
- Snoqualmie Railroad
- Seattle Aquarium
- Berry Picking
- Houses
- Parks
- Churches
- Community Centers
- Libraries
- Parks Department indoor play area
- Nature Visitor Centers
- Ballard Locks
- Kids Quest Museum
- Discovery Park
- Arboretum

GIVING BACK:

Once your group is established and you have been meeting for a while, you may want to consider a project for your group or volunteering your time. There are a number of organizations that could use your support! PEPS groups in the past have done a number of things to give back to the community. They include:

- Creating a PEPS guild dedicated to PEPS,
- Collecting “barely used” baby clothes and products and taking them to the Baby Closet, West Side Baby, or Baby Boutique and
- Two members sharing childcare so they can co-lead a PEPS group.

TIPS FROM OTHER PARENTS FOR KEEPING YOUR GROUP TOGETHER:

- Don't change the day or time you meet and keep meeting every week. If you miss one week then it won't seem like you have missed nearly a whole month. Many successful groups that have stayed together for several years have kept their group day and time the same and haven't changed it.
- Dealing with naps: If it is a morning group that meets and baby's start changing their nap times, groups may move the time up a half an hour so everyone still comes in the morning.
- Have Parent's nights out! Schedule them regularly, at least three or four months in a row just to get in the habit. If you are a couple's group and you have nannies, check and see if a couple of nanny's can watch the kids so you can all go out together. If not, have one couple at a time watch the kids.
- For moms, have the dads watch the kids, for dads, have the moms watch the kids, for families, have a monthly barbeque, potluck, brunch or outing. Many couples groups have moved to this format once their children turn into toddlers because they meet in the evening and the children need to go to bed.
- Ideas for changing group format:
- Groups go from meeting weekly to meeting once a month for a potluck and once a month for an outing.
- Often it takes one person who will keep the group going when things begin to falter.
- Adding new group members: Many PEPS groups are allowing non-members to come in and feel that it enhances their group.

WEBSITES:

WWW.SEATTLE.GOV

WWW.CI.BELLEVUE.WA.US

WWW.CI.MERCER-ISLAND.WA.US

WWW.CI.KIRKLAND.WA-US

WWW.CI.REDMOND.WA.US

WWW.SEATTLEATTRACTIONS.COM

WWW.THECHILDRENSMUSEUM.ORG

WWW.CHILDRENSMUSEUMOFTACOMA.ORG

WWW.HOCM.ORG

WWW.CHILDMUS.ORG

WWW.KIDSQUESTMUSEUM.ORG

FREE
PEPS GROUP
BIRTHDAY PARTIES!

AT THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM, SEATTLE!
LOCATED IN THE HEART OF SEATTLE CENTER.



FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO MAKE RESERVATIONS
PLEASE CALL: 206-441-1768 EXT. 242
CHILDREN IN THE GROUP MUST BE TURNING ONE IN ORDER
TO RECEIVE A FREE BIRTHDAY PARTY.

Children's Museum
The Kenneth and Marilee Albackoff Exhibit Center
305 Harrison Street • Seattle, WA • 98109-4691

