



# **AMC Boston Family Outings Committee**

## **LEADER HANDBOOK**

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## **Welcome and Introduction**

The AMC Boston Family Outings Committee is an activities committee within the larger Boston Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC). The Boston Chapter is one of 12 chapters from Maine to Washington D.C. The Family Outings committee believes that all outdoor adventures shared with other families make the experience more fun and less work. When families participate in an event, they become part of a group with a common interest in outdoor fun, outdoor cooking, and the general well-being of kids outdoors. Hiking, camp set-up, activities, meal preparation, and outdoor adventures become “easier” when kids have other kids around. And in the event adversity should strike, the rains fall, winds blow and tents collapse, we work together to put things right.

Leaders within the Family Outings committee organize and lead a variety of trips and events:

- Hikes – walks and longer day hikes
- Fishing
- Camping trips (usually car accessible)
- Winter overnight trips to houses/lodges/hostels with xc-skiing, sledding, building snowmen, snowshoeing, downhill skiing, skating etc.
- Overnight trips to AMC huts or similar backcountry facilities
- Backpacking trips
- Canoeing and paddling trips
- Bike Rides
- BBQs, picnics, swimming
- Educational nature or preservation-related presentations or events

### ***How to Use this Handbook***

This handbook is NOT a repeat of material covered in leadership training. Although there may be some items here that were included during leadership training, this handbook is meant as a supplement to leadership training and it provides information to leaders that is specific to the Family Outings Committee. While this handbook is meant as a guide to help you, the best guide is your own good judgement when with a group. There are countless situations that may arise during a trip or event and we ask that you use flexibility, cooperation, and critical thinking to navigate those situations.

### ***Important Links***

The links below are resources that you may access to help you in your trip planning and in learning more about our committee:

- Our website: <https://amcboston.org/committee/boston-family-outings>
- Our Yahoo Group for Leaders/Coleaders Only: To join, send a blank email to [amcbostonfamilyoutingleaders-subscribe@yahogroups.com](mailto:amcbostonfamilyoutingleaders-subscribe@yahogroups.com)
- Our Yahoo Group for entire Family Outings Community: To join, send a blank email to [amcfamilyoutings-subscribe@yahogroups.com](mailto:amcfamilyoutings-subscribe@yahogroups.com)

- Our Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/488676165723/?ref=bookmarks>
- Our Google Drive Link (contact the Chairperson or Leader Development Coordinator to grant you access)

### ***How to Become a Leader for Family Outings Committee***

A description of the various leader categories, requirements, and processes to become a leader are found in the Family Leader Application and Requirements document which can be found on the Family Outings website:

<https://amcboston.org/committee/boston-family-outings/leader-resources>

## **Benefits of Being a Family Outings Leader**

### ***Training Reimbursement: Leadership Training & WFA/First Aid***

All leaders may be reimbursed for their **leadership training** taken through the AMC Boston Chapter. Once someone has completed their requisite number of co-leads and has been approved by the Family Outings committee as a leader, they may ask for reimbursement. Leaders should contact the Family Outings Treasurer to start the reimbursement process.

Leaders and coleaders (someone who has taken leader training but who has not completed their requisite coleads nor been approved as a leader by the committee) may be reimbursed for **WFA or first aid courses** taken as a condition of leadership. The amount of reimbursement for WFA is equal to the current fee charged by the Boston Chapter to take WFA when offered by the chapter (i.e. does not include lodging or meals). Leaders/coleaders should contact the Family Outings Treasurer to start this reimbursement process. All persons requesting reimbursement must be current AMC members.

### ***'Free Leader' Financial Policy***

For overnight trips that are self-service (i.e. leaders plan the meals and purchase all groceries), leaders/ coleaders and one child per leader/ coleader may go for free and have their meals and lodging covered by the overall trip budget. Note that a 'coleader' is someone who has taken leader training and who is in the process of doing coleads with the intent of becoming a leader.

For overnight trips that are NOT self-service (i.e. full-service AMC hut stay), leaders/ coleaders may go for free and have their lodging covered by the overall trip budget, but they pay for any children they bring.

Variations of this policy, while still adhering to the spirit of the policy, are possible with approval from the committee Treasurer during creation of the trip budget.

## **Trip Planning**

### ***Where We Go***

Family Outings Committee leads trips all over New England, with the majority of trips in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. The Family Outings website has a list of resources and

examples of places we have led trips to in the past. Because our committee attracts many families who are new to adventuring outdoors or who have little kids venturing out on their first hikes, local state parks and town forests often provide great options for families. The “Resources for Families section of the Family Outings website has ideas for places to go: <https://amcboston.org/committee/boston-family-outings/resources-families>. This is list not all encompassing - feel free to lead trips not on this list if you are comfortable with that location.

### ***Leader to Participant Ratios***

Family Outings Committee strongly encourages at least one leader and one co-leader (or additional leader) per trip. For large overnight trips, more than two leaders/coleaders may be needed depending on the leader’s comfort level. In addition, two leaders (or one leader and one co-leader) from the same family should not be the only leaders/co-leaders on the trip (especially for overnight trips) for the following reasons:

- If there is a family emergency (sick kid, etc.), the trip may be at risk.
- It helps to have one parent focusing on the kid (s) while the other is leading.
- For trips where leaders are compensated expenses, there are limited spots and it is good to spread the wealth with leaders from different families.

When planning for number of leaders and coleaders, always consider whether the group may need to split into two because of size or varying speeds. A leader (not a coleader) must be able to remain with any sub-group that splits off (the exception being if a participant needs to be walked back to the trailhead and end their hike; a coleader may accompany them).

With respect to adult/children ratio on trips, the Club’s *AMC Outdoor Leader Handbook*, updated January, 2019, makes the following statements specific to youth participation in AMC outings:

“...the leader should require a minimum ratio of 1 parent/guardian to 3 children”

### ***Trip Finances***

Any trip that requires fees from participants is required to have a budget that has been approved by the committee’s Treasurer. The general process that the Family Outings Committee follows is:

1. Determine which leader or coleader will manage the trip’s finances and who is the point of contact to the Treasurer.
2. Prepare trip budget, including a ‘Go/No-Go’ date.
3. Gain approval for trip budget from Family Outings Committee Treasurer and discuss how trip expenses will be paid.
4. Trip may now be approved in ActDB for posting to outdoors.org
5. Pay any advance lodging fees, collect money from participants, buy supplies, etc.
6. After the trip, reconcile finances and email final report and receipts to FO Committee Treasurer.

### Tips for preparing a budget:

- Download the trip accounting template from the FO website:  
<https://amcboston.org/committee/boston-family-outings/pre-trip-resources>
- Use the “AMC Family General” Google Drive folder to find examples of previous budgets for a particular trip.
- Determine expenses (lodging, food, wood, ice, etc.) and income (fees paid by the estimated number of participants).
- See the Family Outings Committee Free Leader Financial Policy for how to determine when and which leaders can have their lodging and meals paid for by the trip.
- Assume you will not fill the trip exactly
- When determining participant fees, budget trips to run at a small surplus to cover committee expenses (eg. Group gear, events, trips that lose money).
- If one price can be charged for anyone (adult or child), do it!
- For food estimates, assume approximately \$10 - \$12 per person per day for camping trips (which allows extra for ice & fire wood) and \$9 - \$10 per person per day for non-camping trips (lodges/huts).
- For budget purposes, assume a roughly 50/50 split of adults/children when there are differing prices for adults vs. kids.
- For lodging facilities that offer a discount for children (most AMC huts/lodges), this discount should be passed on to the participants. For AMC facilities, an adult = 18+; youth = 13 – 17; child = 3 – 12 years old.
- Although they may not be considered in the food budget, children age 2 and younger are usually charged a fee because they take up a bed space, depending on the specific lodging facility, and require trip leaders’ time and energy. Use your discretion.
- Participants who arrive late or depart early do NOT receive a discount. Trips are budgeted per trip, not per night (with the notable exception of Nickerson).

### Go/No-Go Date:

Based on the cancellation policy for the particular lodging, a go/no-go date should be determined. Just prior to the go/no-go date, the trip leader (or leader responsible for the finances) should have a conversation with the Committee Treasurer if the trip is not sufficiently filled to break even. By that date, if the trip has not sufficiently filled with participants, the Committee may or may not be willing to take the risk to run the trip.

### Paying for lodging/expenses:

The preferred method is for the trip finance manager (the leader or coleader) to pay all trip expenses (lodging, food, etc) themselves and they will be reimbursed after the trip and upon submission of the trip finance report to the Treasurer. There are exceptions to this procedure and those should be discussed with and agreed to by the Treasurer when the budget is being created (for example, advance lodging fees may be paid directly by the Treasurer).

### Receiving money from participants:

- Participants make checks out to “AMC Boston Chapter Family Outings” and send to the trip finance manager. The trip finance manager should ensure all checks are made out correctly (correct year and name) before sending to the Treasurer.
- Participants are NOT accepted on a trip until their check has been received! They are accepted in the order in which their checks are received. When using REGI, do not change a prospective participant’s status in REGI to “approved” until AFTER you receive their check.
- Checks should be mailed by the trip finance manager to the Treasurer prior to the trip and in a timely manner once you have received. Make note of when you received and mailed checks in finance tracking template.

After the trip:

- Grocery and other trip supply receipts purchased by various leaders/assistants should be given to the trip finance manager (not to the Committee Treasurer!) who reimburses the leaders by check or cash and submits the scanned receipts to our Treasurer for reimbursement at the end of the trip.
- For larger events with larger outlays of cash or longer events in which there is no one leader present for the duration of the trip (i.e. Nickerson), the Family Outings Treasurer “may” reimburse additional leaders directly, however, the process and expectation should be agreed in advance.

Email final report and receipts to the Treasurer within one or maximum two weeks of the trip.

### ***Posting the Trip On-Line***

To be an official AMC trip and for leaders to be insured by AMC’s liability insurance, all trips must be listed in the Activities Database (ActDB) which is on AMC’s website, *outdoors.org*. In addition, Family Outings committee (along with most other committees within the Boston Chapter), uses the REGI system to manage registrations for all trips (everything from short walks to longer overnights). Instructions for posting your trip in both REGI and in ActDB are located on our Family Outings website:

<https://amcboston.org/committee/boston-family-outings/pre-trip-resources>

### ***Screening***

For most trips, screening is a conversation to set expectations and be sure participants know what to expect and what to bring. Some trips do require a more thorough screening to determine if participants are strong enough physically to manage and enjoy the trip. Ideally, this is a mutual determination to see if the trip is appropriate. According to the *AMC Outdoor Leader Handbook* (search for it on <https://www.outdoors.org/> ),

*...Some AMC programs are designed for a specific population, or topic. However, any person who meets the minimum qualifications (skills, experience, and fitness level) established by a trip leader(s) for an activity is eligible to attend, if space is available.*

Please note that although our trips are geared towards families, we cannot screen out a participant solely for the reason that they do not have a child attending with them.

It is important to be very clear with such individuals that this is a family trip, there will be children, and our focus is on families having a great time outdoors. We can remind such individuals that for a hike/walk/bike/paddle/etc., the group may take more frequent stops, travel at a slower pace, may not reach its intended destination, or change its plan entirely depending on the age/interest/ability of the kids participating in the activity. Some people without children may want to go on a Family Outings trip because they are looking for a slower pace, the trip fits in their schedule, etc., and they can be a valuable addition to the group!

### **Registration**

- Collect name, age of children, address, email, best contact for phone, note their questions or concerns (most of this info should already be in REGI).
- Gather information on medical needs, allergies, or medications (even for a day hike); this info will likely already be in REGI.
- For overnight trips, gather info regarding food allergies, sensitivities, and specialty diets. Let the participants know we strive for a balance between providing food options for everyone, but that we are not running a catering service. Consider sharing the meal plan with confirmed participants at least a week before the trip so that they can choose to bring some of their own food if needed. See “Managing Menus and Meals” section.
- Participants should be sent the AMC waiver and photo release forms prior to the trip. Although the forms may be signed at the trailhead or upon arrival at the start of an overnight trip, participants should be alerted to the forms ahead of time.
- For trips that require a fee,
  - A participant’s place on the trip is confirmed only when the leader receives a check made payable to the AMC Boston Family Outings. Do NOT approve a participant in REGI until their check has been received (their status can remain as “submitted” until after they are screened and their check received).
  - The cancellation policy MUST be emailed to the prospective trip participant BEFORE they pay for the trip (see below for *Cancellation Policy*). In addition to emailing the prospective trip participant, the cancellation policy can be added to the “cost” section for the trip in REGI to protect the leader and better ensure participants see it prior to paying.

### **Cancellation Policy for Overnight (Fee) Trips**

A cancellation policy MUST be emailed to the prospective trip participant BEFORE they pay for the trip. Typically, this information is sent to a prospective participant during the screening and registration process, along with the AMC waiver and photo release forms.



The following policy can be copied/pasted (replace the “**XX days**” with whatever is applicable for your trip) into an email and sent to prospective participants but can be modified for a specific trip’s lodging cancellation policy. Generally, the cancellation policy is to refund payment 30 days or more prior to the start of the trip. However, this may be adjusted to 35 days or whatever date makes sense based on when you, as a leader, need to confirm the lodging and their respective cancellation policy.

“If you need to cancel for any reason, and there are at least **XX days** before the start of the trip, you will receive a full refund. If you need to cancel less than **XX days** before the trip, the leader will make every effort to find a replacement for your spot(s). If no replacement can be found, there will not be a refund.”

### ***Committee Group Gear***

Family Outings has equipment that may be borrowed for use on Family Outings trips. These items include: snowshoes, microspikes, fishing poles, and camping gear (stoves, pots/pans, canopies, propane, first aid kits, etc.). Ask the Gear Captain for a list of the gear that is available. You will be asked to sign out whatever gear you borrow, maintain it in good condition and return clean and dry. The names and contact info for the Gear Captains are located on the Family Outings website:

<https://amcboston.org/committee/boston-family-outings/pre-trip-resources>

### ***Info Sheets***

Family Outings trips require an information sheet unless they are “Show and Go.” For short day hikes, the Info Sheet could be sent the week prior to the hike. For longer trips and overnights, it’s helpful to send out information and expectations several weeks in advance or earlier. Use your best judgement and make sure you are communicating with participants prior to the trip.

What to include in an information sheet:

- Name, date, and location of the event
- Leaders (contact information)
- Description
- What equipment leaders will provide (Ex: specific meals, fishing poles, snowshoes, etc.)
- What participants need to provide your own (Ex: plate/utensils, bicycle, backpack, day hike snacks, sleeping bag/linens, etc.)
- Directions to destination
- Who/How to contact if they need to cancel last minute (even for a day hike!)
- **MUST INCLUDE:** Risk Management statement (below)
- For fee trips, **MUST INCLUDE:** Cancellation Policy
- Electronic device/games policy (below)
- A link to AMC Acknowledgment and Assumption of Risks and Release Agreement (waiver) and Photo Release (links to both can be found on the Family Outings website)

## **Risk Management Statement**

“Participant safety is top priority on all AMC trips. All minors must be accompanied by a responsible adult throughout the trip. Adults must take responsibility for the safety and well-being of their children. Every family must sign the AMC waiver and photo-release form . If you choose not to sign the photo release form that’s fine – just let someone know before they start snapping photos of you. If you are bringing kids who are not your own, or you are not their legal guardian, the parent or legal guardian needs to sign the release forms prior to the trip.”

The release forms can be found on the Family Outings website and should be printed and brought to the trip: <https://amcboston.org/committee/boston-family-outings/pre-trip-resources>

NOTE: If parents are bringing a child that is not their own, they must be sent the waiver before the trip and have it signed by that child’s parent and bring it along.

The Club’s *AMC Outdoor Leader Handbook*, updated January, 2019, AMC makes the following statements specific to youth participation in AMC outings:

*“Any minor attending [an AMC outing] (regardless of the presence of their parent or guardian) must have their parent or legal guardian sign AMC’s Acknowledgement of Risks, Assumption of Risks, and Release Agreement for AMC Volunteer-Led Activities (Release Agreement) prior to their participation.*

## **Electronic Devices Policy**

Please inform your trip participants of this committee policy! You may copy the text below and include in your info sheet.

*Family Outings Committee discourages the use of electronics (cell phones, handheld gaming devices, and similar devices) on our hikes, overnight trips, and other outdoor events. Our trips are intended to encourage an appreciation of the outdoors while communicating and building camaraderie with other participants on the trip. If you do bring electronics, we ask that you use them only during your drive, to take photos, or use them during quiet time at night.*

## **WMNF Guide Cards**

Anytime a trip takes place in the White Mountain National Forest, AMC leaders will carry a WMNF Outfitter Guide Card. Contact the Treasurer or Chair to obtain a guide card. Following the trip, the leader will complete and send the WMNF Summary of Use Report to the contact on the form and email the WMNF Summary of Use Report. A copy of this form is on the Family Outings website, <https://amcboston.org/committee/boston-family-outings/post-trip-resources>.

For hikes in the White Mountain National Forest Wilderness Areas (there are six designated areas), such as the Great Gulf, Presidential Range-Dry River, Pemigewasset, Sandwich Range, and Caribou-Speckled Mountain areas, group size must be no larger than 10 people. This is dictated by the WMNF Service, not Boston Family Outings.

For more information, go to

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/whitemountain/specialplaces/?cid=stelprdb5186032>

## **On-Trip**

For reminders on what to do once you are on your trip (trailhead talk, setting group expectations, managing group dynamics, etc.), refer back to your leader training! For guidance on meals and food allergies and special diets, see below.

### ***Managing Menus and Meals***

Boston Family Outings typically plans and cooks meals for our overnight trips located at lodges or campgrounds that do not provide meals. Cooking on your trips can save money and can also bring families and kids together.

A few suggestions when cooking for families and kids:

- Buy extra snacks for kids
- Try to keep your meals on time or on the early side and communicate times with participants ahead of time (appetizers are a great way to keep people from getting hungry)
- Get everyone involved. Have a job signup sheet for all families (even kids!) to help out.
- Leaders should not be the lead cook for any meal (except for perhaps the first evening as participants are arriving) as they need to be available to attend to participants or issues that come up. Encourage participants to take ownership of the cooking once you explain the menu and directions. Check in with them as needed.

### ***Allergies and Special Diets***

Many participants today have special dietary needs and preferences, allergies, and food sensitivities. Our leaders will do the best they can to accommodate within reason, however, we can't ask participants to pay more or ask leaders to go out of their way to accommodate special diets. Our guideline is that we accommodate vegetarian and medically required special diets (eg. celiac) within reason as well as some preferences, but not all.

It is often a good idea to let participants know what is planned for the meals so that they can decide where they need to supplement.

An example of text you can use in your trip info sheet:

*Please contact [trip leader] if you have any food allergies, special medically required dietary needs or are a vegetarian. To the best of our ability we will accommodate. It is helpful to talk ahead of time to plan appropriately. If you prefer not to eat lactose or gluten, or if you are strictly organic or have other food preferences, we ask that you bring with you some supply of your own food.*

For examples of meals we have used on previous trips, see the Google Drive folder, "Meal Planning": <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1J-zFzAVmDnANg2CGrgHOzSMTJzVwCNHg>

## **Post-Trip**

### ***Check List***

Check the following list after each day or overnight trip:

<https://amcboston.org/committee/boston-family-outings/post-trip-resources>. Sample text, forms, and surveys are all located on the Family Outings website.

- Send release and photo waivers to AMC
- Send 'thank you' to participants
- Send survey to participants (for overnight trips)
- Fill out and send WMNF Use Form (for trips in the White Mtns)
- Fill out and send Incident Form (if applicable)
- Reconcile trip finances and send info to the FO Treasurer (for overnight or other fee trips)
- Leader/Coleader evaluation forms (if the trip is being used by a coleader for their application to become a leader)

### ***Leader/Co-Leader Evaluations***

If a trip is being used by a coleader as one of their requisite coleads in order to move towards becoming a leader, both the leader and the coleader fill out evaluation forms. These forms are Google surveys and links to them can be found on the Family Outings website:

<https://amcboston.org/committee/boston-family-outings/post-trip-resources>.

### ***Accident/Incident Reports***

If an accident or incident occurs during a trip, the leader and participant must fill out the AMC's *Accident/Incident Report Form* and send to the contact on the form. A copy form can be found on the Family Outings website.

Or here: <https://www.outdoors.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/vol-incident-report.pdf>

## **Liability**

The AMC Outdoor Leader Handbook contains more information related to liability protection for AMC volunteer trip leaders (can be accessed from the AMC website, [www.outdoors.org](http://www.outdoors.org)).

Leaders are encouraged to be familiar with the details.

Many Family Outings weekend-long trips are designed to include a variety of families with a large range of ages of children as well as differing experience levels and interests. Despite the activity offerings during the day that are designed to be inclusive of all ages, interests, and abilities, some families or individuals may choose to do an activity outside of the activity offered by the leader(s). Family Outings leaders are not responsible for adult participants and their

family if such a family chooses to opt or sit out of a portion of a planned AMC Family Outings group activity or if they choose to undertake their own excursion. If a participant decides to not take part in the planned activity, the leader should remind them that AMC is not responsible for any risks or issues they might encounter or losses they might incur in doing so. It is good practice, though, for the leader to follow up to ensure that the participant has returned from their excursion.

## **Tips for Hiking with Kids**

Family Outings Leaders and parents have collected various tips and tricks for encouraging fun and safe hiking and other outdoor activities with kids. We would like leaders to understand and follow Family Outings Committee's guiding philosophies regarding trips with kids:

### **❖ Parenting Styles**

- There are many parenting styles out there and you may experience some of them on your trip. As a leader, we ask that you remind your participants to respect diverse parenting styles and to allow parents or guardians to parent their own children. Also remind them that if there is ever a safety situation, ANY adult is welcome to become involved. If the safety of a child is becoming a problem on the trip, use your judgement - most times it will be appropriate to distract the child with something (a game, a task, etc) or in more serious instances, it may be appropriate to have a chat with the parent or guardian. It is your job to help diffuse the situation without parenting or disciplining the child directly.

### **❖ Manage your expectations and be flexible, always**

- Kids can be unpredictable at times; a fast hiker on one day may be sluggish or stubborn another day. Your group may not always reach the summit or walk a route as quickly as you planned. Kids have meltdowns. Kids get sick in the middle of weekend trips. Make the trip about the journey, not the destination. Be prepared to alter the trip route or itinerary as needed based on any unplanned events or group dynamics. Set those expectations with your participants in the info sheet so that everyone has a flexible attitude the day of your trip.

### **❖ Teach basic safety precautions**

- Feel free to teach kids and families to carry whistles, stop at trail junctions, and about appropriate clothing to wear. Older kids may enjoy helping with navigation and reading the map. Many participants on our trips are new to outdoor adventures and will likely welcome advice from an experienced leader!

### **❖ Keep kids and adults fueled and hydrated**

- Kids can run out of steam quickly! Water and snack breaks may need to happen more frequently than for a typical adult-only trip. Bring extra snacks for kids that aren't yours. A bit of food goes a long way.

❖ **Have fun!**

- Play games on the trail! Even older kids can enjoy some simple games played on the trail such as 'Would you rather?', 'Alphabet', or 'Categories' game. For overnight trips, have participants bring card or board games. Arts and crafts can keep little kids entertained for hours on a cold winter day at the house or lodge.

❖ **Equipment, Clothing, and Gear**

- Although outdoor clothing and gear is a huge industry right now, it is very possible to do outdoor activities with safe clothing and gear for low cost. As a trained leader, use your best judgement as to when to require specific gear vs. lower-tech alternatives. For example, sneakers are usually acceptable to hike in except for some of the more rugged mountains and trails which require boots. Snow boots are often acceptable except when doing a lot of elevation or deep or soft snow which may require microspikes or snowshoes.
- Generally, we encourage or require trip participants to wear non-cotton clothing. Most kids 'sport clothes' found at stores such as Target or Walmart are nylon or other synthetics and are perfectly acceptable over expensive hiking pants from name-brand outdoor stores. Fleece pajama bottoms are another great option for a warm layer in winter.

A more comprehensive list of tips and a list of games that can be played on the trail, see the links on our FO website:

<https://amcboston.org/committee/boston-family-outings/resources-families>