In the Name of Allah, The Compassionate, The Merciful

CAIR

Council on American-Islamic Relations
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As salaamu alaikum, and welcome to the CAIR family!

Congratulations on your endeavor of establishing a CAIR chapter in your area. CAIR currently has chapters in several states throughout the United States. We have also branched out to Canada.

Local chapters aid CAIR in furthering its mission of promoting a better understanding of Islam and Muslims and allow for the local community to experience the benefits of CAIR year-round. CAIR chapters benefit the geographic areas they serve by meeting the needs of area residents. Chapters also attract new members to CAIR through local meetings, workshops and social events, giving added breadth and strength to the organization.

We here at CAIR National will do our utmost to provide you with any assistance needed in maintaining your chapter. The Chapter Coordinator will serve as the liaison between CAIR National and your chapter by:

- Maintaining contact through e-mail and phone calls;
- Providing information and assistance and supporting new chapter development;
- Communicating chapter needs to the CAIR Board and recommended Board actions; and
- Facilitating any training needed by chapter executives.

Enclosed in this packet is the Chapter Operations Manual that contains the requirements for starting and running a CAIR chapter. It also presents techniques that should prove useful in developing a successful chapter. May Allah (SWA) guide your efforts, and once again, welcome aboard!

Respectfully yours,

Khalid Iqbal
Director of Operations

Nihad Awad
Executive Director

CAIR Chapter Operations Manual

Part 1

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR)

What is CAIR?

The Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) is a 501 (c)(4) nonprofit, grassroots membership organization with headquarters in Washington D.C. and a number of regional offices across the United States and Canada. Members of the Muslim community established CAIR in 1994 to challenge the misrepresentation of Islam and Muslims in America. Through its work CAIR is committed to promoting a better understanding of Islam and Muslims in America. The belief among CAIR members is that this misrepresentation is most often the result of ignorance on the part of non-Muslims and reluctance on the part of Muslims to articulate our cause.

No one will advocate on behalf of Muslims until Muslims collectively take on the responsibility of addressing the concerns of our own community. In this regard, CAIR has embarked on an activist-professional approach to addressing issues of discrimination, racism, and stereotyping of Muslims in all areas of public discourse in America. In following this well documented method for advocacy, CAIR has been able to score a number of success stories not to mention the real impact in influencing the national debate about Islam and Muslims in America.

What is CAIR's Mission?

CAIR is dedicated to promoting a better understanding of Islam and Muslims through the active involvement of Muslims in all arenas of public discourse. CAIR contributes an Islamic perspective on issues of importance and strives to empower the Muslim community through political and social activism in defending Muslim rights. Thus, CAIR's mission is founded upon:

- Empowering Muslims in America
- Promoting Understanding of Muslims
- Defending Muslim Civil and Human Rights
- Being Actively Involved
- Contributing an Islamic Perspective to Society

Section 2

How Does CAIR carry out its Mission?

Media Relations

We work with media professionals to help shape a positive image of Islam. CAIR activists also monitor the local, national and international media to challenge negative stereotypes of Islam and Muslims. CAIR's work involves the deployment of a comprehensive media strategy, the goal of which is to create an awareness of Islam and Muslims among journalists. Yes, a few journalists have an agenda in their writings about Islam and Muslims; however, the overwhelming majority operates from a point of ignorance, which can be overcome. Yet, Muslims in the past have surrendered the media field without taking the appropriate steps needed to remedy the situation. CAIR's work is the first of its kind in pursuing a well developed and coherent media strategy. The continued success of this strategy is dependent on all the Muslims collectively taking part in the implementation.

Conferences and Seminars

CAIR organizes conferences and seminars for media professionals, government officials and the academic community. These events are designed to present otherwise unavailable information about Islam and Muslims. Conferences and seminars are designed to offer opportunities for in-depth discussions of important issues and events of concern to the Muslim community.

Publications

A variety of publications addressing the needs of Muslims in America are offered to opinion leaders and the public. We also publish a quarterly newsletter. CAIR also produces practical handbooks, such as "Hajj and Ramadan Publicity Resource Kits," for use by Muslim leaders and activists and the media.

Action Alerts

CAIR issues Action Alerts to the Muslim community as a means of promoting activism and generating a grassroots response on important issues. We believe local response is a key factor in making our voices heard.

Research

CAIR undertakes research on subjects relevant to the American Muslim community, including gathering data for an annual report on the status of Muslims civil rights. This report details anti-Muslim bias and violence. In addition, CAIR produces position papers on a variety of issues relating to Muslims in America and abroad.

Anti-Discrimination Work

CAIR works through its legal advisors and local activists in fighting discrimination of any type directed against Muslims in North America. This discrimination often relates to misuse of Islamic symbols or the violation of civil rights in the workplace.

Lobbying
CAIR lobbies political leaders on issues related to Islam and Muslims. Issues of particular interest include freedom of expression and religious practice for Muslims in North America.

Training/Outreach
CAIR trains Muslim community activists and leaders in techniques of effective media and public relations, lobbying and public speaking. Experts are available to offer seminars to local communities.

Internships
CAIR offers internships to students, community activists and other interested individuals who wish to gain experience in media relations, political activism and anti-discrimination work. CAIR has established a Leadership Training Center (LTC) expressly for this purpose.

Inter-Faith Relations
Islam places much stress on promoting mutual respect and good relations between followers of the Abrahamic faiths. CAIR works towards this goal through public education and inter-faith cooperation.

CHAPTERS MUST ADHEARE TO CAIR'S MISSION
All CAIR Chapters must function in light of the definition of CAIR's mission and the activities described above. As a dynamic and growing organization CAIR welcomes new ideas and activities, which should be discussed with the CAIR National and implemented with the CAIR Board approval. Any chapter that steers away from this framework will be in violation of the chapter affiliation agreement, and may be subjected to disenfranchisement.

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CAIR Chapter Operations Manual – Part 1

Section 3

CAIR's Organizational Philosophy

CAIR's work is centered on the premise that people can make a difference in their communities if they undertake a self-empowerment approach to problems. Muslims in North America are confronted with a host of problems, the solution for which requires active involvement by members of the community. *"All politics is local"* is the famous saying of the late Speaker of the House Tip Oneal, which is both a statement of historical fact and a call for strategy.

While CAIR's national office is located in Washington D.C., the real work and steps of empowerment must occur at the local level. Every Muslim community in America must be involved in the effort of protecting and furthering the community's rights and interests. CAIR's model calls for the establishment of chapters for community organization in every major area of Muslim concentration linked in common strategy and collective goals to benefit the community.

CAIR's mission encompasses the total Muslim community in North America, but for this to occur, we need dedicated people who are ready to step forward and take on the responsibility in their local area. This call is for Muslim communities across the United States and Canada to take a step toward the establishment of a CAIR Chapter to help in the work highlighted above.

This CAIR Chapter Operations Manual has been developed in order to make the starting of a new chapter a little less strenuous on those who have taken the first step toward community self-empowerment. Since a key element of community empowerment is the development of skills, knowledge and abilities among community members, this manual, insha Allah, will offer you the insights of others who managed and succeeded in opening such chapters in a number of areas across North America. As you go through the process of establishing a chapter, we are dependent upon you to increase CAIR's collective knowledge base, thereby bringing about an awareness of items and issues facing Muslims that are not mentioned in this manual.

132 0060

CAIR Chapter Operations Manual

PART 2

CHAPTER OPERATIONS

CAIR Chapter Operations Manual – Part 2

Section 1: Starting a Chapter

This section discusses the steps necessary to organize and activate a new chapter.

Establishment of Chapters

Organizing a core group of interested Muslims is the key to starting a CAIR chapter. Any responsible party consisting of at least ten (10) active members of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) shall complete a standardized request form, and submit it to the Chapter Coordinator of CAIR's National Headquarters. Afterwards, CAIR's Chapter Coordinator will consult the Executive Director of CAIR on the matter and provide some immediate response to the requesting party regarding the feasibility of establishing such a chapter. If the response is negative for establishing the chapter, the party can appeal directly to the Board of Directors. Final approval of the chapter lies with the Board of Directors. Upon approval of the establishment of a chapter, the party will be provided with standard bylaws of CAIR, training manuals, a list of CAIR publications and other relevant materials.

Purpose of Chapters

Chapters serve CAIR's purposes by carrying out its mission through a local presence, addressing issues and developments pertaining to the local Muslim community and supporting activities of CAIR worldwide.

Scope of Chapters

Chapters may be established on a non-exclusive basis to cater to the needs of the local Muslim community. Where a significant overlap of the defined communities arises from the proposed formation of a new chapter, a compelling reason must exist for the redundancy.

The Start-Up Process

Notify CAIR

The first step is to notify CAIR National that the group is interested in forming a chapter. CAIR National will provide start-up information and will advise the group of potential problems, including the possibility of conflicts with existing chapters that may serve that region.

Hold a Start-Up Meeting or Event

To kick off the formation of the chapter, the core group should organize meetings and local events to attract chapter members. It is important to develop a good list of

192-0062

potential members. This includes CAIR members who live in the area (available from CAIR National) as well as other lists that the core group can obtain through their professional contacts. After making arrangements for the first meeting or event, the core group should mail a promotional flyer and cover letter (approved by CAIR National prior to distribution) explaining the beginning of the new CAIR chapter. Follow-up phone calls will help ensure a good turnout.

Application for Recognition

To form an official chapter, the organizing group must submit an application form (available from CAIR National) to the Executive Director of CAIR. The application must contain the names of at least ten (10) active CAIR members (dues paid) from the chosen geographic area.

Organizing Status

Upon approval of an application, a chapter is recognized as having *organizing status.* (Grounds for disapproval by the Board might be conflict with an existing chapter in the area, proposed goals that are inconsistent with CAIR goals, or failure to obtain signatures from ten CAIR National members in good standing.) While in organizing status, the chapter will continue to work with the Chapter Coordinator and can obtain general assistance from Headquarters. Organizing status continues for at least six (6) months following the approval of the application for recognition. Once assigned organizing status, the new chapter should begin carrying out its proposed goals and activities.

Request Active Status

At the end of six (6) months in organizing status, the organizing chapter should file a chapter report. This report should be submitted to the Chapter Coordinator along with a cover letter requesting active status. Upon its acceptance by the Board of Directors, the chapter will be granted active status. Chapters will not be assigned active status until they have resolved administrative issues and demonstrated that they are sponsoring regular meetings and events.

See Appendix A: CAIR Chapter Application Form

Getting Organized

Once the organizing has begun, the new chapter should begin carrying out its proposed goals and activities. This includes the following:

- Become familiar with the CAIR chapter bylaws
- Form Chapter Executives
- Resolve other organizational business matters.

See Appendix B: CAIR Chapter Bylaws

Organizational and Business Matters

Chapter Area

The geographical boundary of a CAIR chapter shall be the limits of the city in which it is established. If multiple chapters in the same state combine to establish a permanent physical office, the boundary will then extend to the state.

Chapter Name

The name should be in the form of "CAIR _____" (example: CAIR Memphis, CAIR Baton Rouge). Most chapter names should refer simply to a single city or a portion thereof. The CAIR Board of Directors must approve the name chosen at the time the application for recognition is approved.

Logo

Chapters should incorporate CAIR's logo into the chapter logo to foster overall recognition of both CAIR and the chapters. Chapters shall submit a proposed logo to the Board for approval, along with a letter acknowledging that the chapter use of the logo does not give the chapter any rights, title or interest in the logo. Once the logo is approved, the chapter logo should be used on all chapter publications.

Officers

Proper management of a local chapter requires the formation of officers and heads of committees. Officers should be CAIR members in good standing. The executive body should include the officers and the committee chairs. Chapters shall consist of Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and other officers as desired. Each chapter shall determine the length of term of its officers and how they are chosen for their positions. The chapter offices, including the duties, are defined in the chapter bylaws.

Once an officer has served his/her term, there should be an immediate meeting of the old and new executives to resolve old business and to make a smooth transfer between officers, especially the secretary and treasurer.

Liabilities

CAIR National shall not be liable for any act or omission or incurred liability of any kind of any chapter. To prevent such an act, omission or liability, the Board of Directors of CAIR National has the authority to overturn any decision made by a chapter if it deems the decision is not in accordance with CAIR policies or can cause harm to CAIR. The Board of Directors of CAIR National is the final authority in all matters related to CAIR National and its affiliates.

Organization

Chapters will have, as a minimum, officers, written bylaws and members and will be responsible for maintaining a current list of those members that is available to CAIR National at all times. Chapters may be subject to an annual review conducted by CAIR National to ensure that the chapter is adhering to CAIR and chapter policies and procedures, and at this time, if the chapter is in compliance, it will have its status reconfirmed by CAIR National. An Annual Financial Report, Annual Activity Report and other reports requested by CAIR National will also be required.

Chapter Office Employees:

Chapter employees will be directly responsible to the chapter board (if one is formed) for their routine activities. However, for policy and important administrative matters, chapter employees will also be responsible for reporting to the Executive Director of CAIR National.

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CAIR Chapter Operations Manual – Part 2

Section 2: Membership

This section of the manual discusses requirements for structuring chapter membership.

Chapter Membership and CAIR Membership

All individuals falling within the defined scope of the chapters shall be eligible for membership without discrimination. All members of a chapter shall be members of CAIR. Membership is not necessary, however, for participation in the activities of CAIR or its chapters.

Benefits of Membership

Chapters should document their membership benefits and distribute this information to potential members. The following are some examples of potential benefits:

- Newsletter
- Discounts on local events
- Membership directories
- Local networking opportunities
- Being a part of an internationally recognized organization

A chapter may discover more benefits of membership as it matures and should add these to information given to potential members.

Dues

Dues should be in accordance with CAIR National's membership fees. The membership will only be CAIR National membership. There shall not be any duplicate Chapter membership. The chapters will forward all memberships received to CAIR National which will issue receipts, new membership cards and new members kit. 50% of the membership funds received through the chapters will be refunded back to the chapters for their operational expenses. This does not include the membership drive carried by CAIR National directly.

Membership funds raised by the chapters shall be split evenly (50/50) with CAIR National.

Member Recruitment

CAIR National may be able to provide some leads for potential members from event attendees or people who have made inquiries into the organization, but have not joined. Important areas for local recruitment are academia (both faculty and students), masajid, businesspersons and other professionals. Chapters should strive to recruit at least ten (10) new members annually.

Member Database and Mailing List

There shall be a single CAIR membership database that will be maintained by the membership department of CAIR National. CAIR National shall share the membership information with the chapters for their respective geographical areas.

Committees

Committees encourage local participation, and broad participation is essential for the long term health and growth of the chapter. Suggested committees include Media Watch, Civil Rights, Education and Special Events.

Visibility and Stability

Chapters need to establish a stable contact point that will ensure that membership queries are addressed, that open communication is maintained and that follow-up take place. This contact should be readily accessible by phone or e-mail. People often do not become members right away. They may have an application for weeks before they decide to join or give their support. A chapter must continually communicate the value of its member services to both potential and existing members.

Fund Raising

All CAIR Chapters shall organize at least one major fund raising activity for CAIR National in their area per year. The Chapter shall be responsible for all organization, local publicity, logistic, volunteer support, location, food arrangement (if dinner meeting) etc. CAIR National shall be responsible for providing a speaker, and national publicity for the event.

The funds collected during this fund raiser will be shared by CAIR National and the chapter in the ratio of 70% CAIR National / 30% for the Chapter. This ratio may be negotiable depending on the chapter finan situation and needs.

CAIR Chapter Operations Manual – Part 2

Section 3: Chapter Activities

Successful chapters offer a variety of activities to their members. The range extends from very simple programs to complex and complicated workshops. These activities are offered at a range of costs to both members and non-members. A chapter may undertake any activity reasonably related to and in furtherance of the purposes of CAIR in its scope of jurisdiction through, but not limited to the following means:

- Media Relations
- Local Political Activism
- Community Outreach
- Inter-faith Relations
- Anti-discrimination Work
- Research on local Muslim community issues

Outstanding Chapter Award

Each year a chapter that has sponsored particularly effective activities or has otherwise excelled in serving its membership and the community is eligible to receive the Outstanding Chapter Award.

One Day Events

Chapters may offer one-day mini-conferences with a particular theme. If held regularly, these events could evolve into larger regional conferences as the chapter matures.

Workshops

Chapters may stage full-day workshops educational workshops. Chapters may do this independently if members have the time and qualifications to prepare a workshop curriculum and materials. Chapters may also enlist the help of CAIR National.

Distribution of CAIR Publications:

Chapters should conduct activities designed to distribute CAIR publications not only to the Muslim community but also in schools, libraries, hospitals and othe rpublic institutions and events.

Meeting Activities

The initial meeting should involve the selection of officers, a well thought out agenda and the identification of main issues the chapter will encounter and involve itself in. Meetings should be held to share information and make collective decisions.

Chapter Introduction

After establishing the chapter and officers, the next step is to get the word out to the community that a CAIR chapter has been established in the area. The local Muslim community, local Politicians and other professionals could be invited to an "open" meeting where they can learn about the activities and services of CAIR.

Future Meetings

Holding a chapter meeting should become a normal occurrence, and the actual time spent in meetings should be reduced in the long run. With good meeting management, a successful meeting should last no more than one hour and a half. Reports from officers and committee chairs should include all relevant material for the meetings.

Other Activities

Chapters may also:

- Participate in panel discussions and talk shows.
- Write opinion pieces.
- Develop a local and national media resource guide.
- Develop a local and national political resource guide.
- Connect with civil rights organizations.
- Develop a listing of local religious institutions.
- Develop a list of human, physical and financial resources in the local Muslim community.
- Build a strong support base in the Muslim community.
- Develop activities and ways of increasing membership.
- Hold voter education/registration drives.

Additional detailed information is also given in Appendix 3

Public Positions and Statements

Specific officials of local chapters may make public statements and take public positions as long as such statements are related to and advance the purposes of CAIR, prepared and presented in a professional manner and not likely to give rise to any legal liability. Where there is a question regarding the appropriateness of a public position or statement, or if a statement is one before an international governmental body, the chapter must consult with CAIR National for assistance and approval. CAIR National shall be informed **in advance** of all public positions and statements taken or issued by a chapter. All public positions and statements made by a chapter shall clearly indicate the source as "CAIR _____ (chapter name)."

Quarterly Chapter Activity Report

132-0069

Each chapter is required to submit a written quarterly activity report preferably in electronic form on or before the 15th of the following month. December, March, June, September. This will keep CAIR National updated with the activities of the chapters and also will assist in bringing important issues to the monthly CAIR Board meetings. Please see Appendix 4 for the suggested report format. This report should also include updated reports on civil rights complaints that the chapter is working on.

Chapters should also send a minimum of 10 copies of their local newsletters, brochures, meeting and event notices, and other publications to CAIR National. All of this material and reports should be sent to attention.

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132 0090

CAIR Chapter Operations Manual – Part 2

Section 4: Finances

It is essential for chapters to establish and maintain good financial records. All financial transactions should require approval of the executive committee or the Treasurer. Expenditures should always be documented by written requests and receipts.

Accounting

Chapters should use good standard accounting methods for all accounting and record keeping.

Bank Accounts
Chapters should use bank accounts to manage their funds. To open a bank account, U.S. chapters should first obtain an IRS Employer Identification Number (EIN). No individual should open an account on behalf of a chapter.

Keeping Records

Chapter financial records should be open to the membership, the executive committee and the CAIR Board of Directors upon request.

Budget

It is advisable that all chapters develop an annual budget to cover anticipated chapter activities. All chapter expenditures should be tracked against the budget. CAIR will not be responsible for any chapter obligation, unless otherwise authorized by the CAIR Board of Directors.

Reporting

On a periodic basis, the Treasurer may wish to submit a written report on the financial standing of the chapter. In addition, the chapter should prepare an annual financial statement with a copy going to CAIR National.

Fundraising

Chapters require funds to carry out their activities and to cover unforeseen events. Several opportunities exist for raising funds:

- Membership Dues
- Advertising space in a chapter newsletter
- Booth space at workshops
- Public donations and grants

In addition to fundraising for itself, each chapter is required to hold at least one fundraising event per year to benefit CAIR National. The funds raised will be divided as follows: 30% for the chapter and 70% for CAIR National. Depending upon the circumstances of a particular fundraising event, this formula may be negotiable.

132 00012

CAIR Chapter Operations Manual – Part 2

Section 5: Legal Issues

Legal issues are of great importance to organizations and their chapters, and they are everchanging; therefore, this section may be updated from time to time.

Incorporation

Chapters may choose to become incorporated and seek tax-exempt status. The following is a list of advantages and disadvantages of incorporation.

Advantages

- Legal Entity
- Limited Liability
- Continuous Existence
- Tax Exemption
- Low Postage Rates

Disadvantages

- Cost of Incorporation
- Paperwork
- Lack of Flexibility

Tax Exemptions and Tax Obligations

U.S. Chapters

If local laws allow, each chapter may choose to file and obtain state and federal tax-exempt status. Tax-exempt organizations must file legally required forms with taxing authorities annually.

Canadian Chapters

Canadian chapters often apply to the provincial ministries responsible for agencies and societies in order to be recognized as non-profit agencies. This registration requires renewal on an annual basis along with the submission of the current list of officers to the ministry.

CAIR Chapter Operations Manual – Part 2

Section 6: Headquarters Assistance

CAIR Chapters benefit in tangible and intangible ways from the international recognition of the CAIR name and logo. Association with the parent organization provides chapters with a reputation that attracts potential members.

Chapters are encouraged to call CAIR National with any questions and concerns. Assistance includes, but is not limited to:

- Administrative Support
- Workshops
- Standard Chapter Bylaws
- Training Manuals
- Contacts and Resources