

# GUIDELINES FOR STARTING A FREE MOMS BRANCH

*First Edition*

Welcome to our guide created by the **NCSU Free Moms** at North Carolina State University to support both new and existing branches.

Since the beginning, our simple guidelines and generous volunteers have helped us grow steadily while experiencing remarkable stories of provision, kindness and community. We gladly share our lessons, hoping they will bless other branches across the country and beyond.

## Who We Are

Founded in **2019** and established as a nonprofit in **2023**, NCSU Free Moms (and Dads!) has grown in many ways over the years—more students attending, more parents volunteering, and a deeper impact on campus life.

Our companion student organization, **Students Supporting Free Moms**, validates us to the university. These students assist with communication to the university, request the university's approval for space, and help weekly with set up and break down.

- See our Student Org Constitution under the Resources tab

Both students and adults often describe Free Moms as a “joy bubble”—an event that shifts the campus atmosphere and becomes a highlight of the week. Many students arrange their schedules just to attend and often tell us Free Moms on Thursdays helps them get through the week.

## Purpose

The core mission of NCSU Free Moms is beautifully simple: to show up, love kids, bring food, and offer genuine care—purely out of love, with no hidden agenda. This commitment comes to life in weekly gatherings, where a diverse group of Free Moms, Dads, and Grandparents create a warm and welcoming space for students at two campus locations, Centennial and Main Campus. Understanding the importance of fostering a sense of family—especially for those far from home—the organization strives to ensure every student feels valued, accepted, and heard.

Our purpose is simple:

**To offer unconditional love and unwavering support to every student.**—through kind words, kind touch, generous giving, and homemade goodies.

## Identity

Although our founder personally believes we are created to know the love of our Father God, **we do not identify organizationally as a Christian organization**, nor do we define ourselves by politics or theology. Our volunteers hold diverse beliefs.

We focus on the mission of who we *are* rather than who we are not:  
**Parents creating a safe, welcoming space for every student.**

## Rules

We operate with one guiding rule:

**No hidden agendas. No doctrines. No politics.**

We do not recruit, persuade or promote causes. Everything we do is motivated by generosity and compassion—not for personal or organizational gain. This posture of *“there is nothing in it for us”* is what creates the unique ethos of Free Moms. Within the theme of “you be you,” volunteers have found great fulfillment in pouring into the next generation.

## Objectives

Our objectives are to shift the campus atmosphere toward:

- Love
- Acceptance
- Community
- Genuine care

## Organizational Structure

## Registration & Communication

Our website — [ncsufreemoms.org](https://ncsufreemoms.org) — allows parents and friends to register for their preferred volunteer day so we can send first-time visitors details about parking, food, and arrival instructions.

We use **SignUpGenius** to organize weekly volunteers.

## Event Structure

Beginning in 2023, we expanded into two sessions:

- **Centennial Campus:** 9:30 AM – 12:00 PM
- **Main Campus:** 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Centennial continues in our original style—providing food, friendship, birthdays, and dogs.

Main Campus has grown into a larger operation—not because of any grand plan, but simply because individual volunteers initiated new activities based on their giftings and interest. Our growth in the Fall of '23 led to the need for tents over the food. Eventually each team—birthdays, flowers, and gifts—required tents for shade and consistency of presentation.

Each group across the country operates a little differently, adapting naturally to the volunteers' gifts and passions.

**There is no single “right” way to run a Free Moms branch.**

## Giving Philosophy

Everything we offer—food, flowers, gifts, dogs, music—comes **entirely from volunteers or outside donations**.

Florists and wholesalers have generously donated thousands of day-old flowers.

## Relationship to the University

When we began in 2019, we intentionally met outside the Student Center—a location that was open to visitors without requiring registration.

By 2023—with weekly student attendance rising to 500–700—we established a student organization to provide clear communication and recognition with the university. This relationship continues to serve us well and is what we recommend to new groups, though it may take a little time to identify students who would be available and responsible enough to form a student organization.

## Dog Guidelines

We are grateful that we have never had any safety incidents involving dogs. Our dog guidelines have been conservative and have mitigated risks since 2022.

General guidelines include:

- Dogs must be **approved** by our dog coordinator before attending.
- Limit **one dog per household**.
- Maintain **at least 5 feet** between dogs and food tables.
- Dog volunteers usually settle along the outer edges of the Free Mom space.

See our Dog Safety Policy under the Resources tab.

**Additional Thoughts** Every volunteer serves uniquely. We do **not** prescreen volunteers; we simply trust that the right people will come at the right time, and they do.

At NC State, we began with food, hugs and kind words. Over time, individual volunteers introduced:

- dogs
- flowers
- birthday celebrations
- gifts
- music
- and Dad jokes!

Free Moms branches now exist at:

- Appalachian State University
- UNC Greensboro
- UNC Wilmington
- Siena University (NY)
- College of Charleston
- Texas A&M

While each branch is a separate and independent entity that we do not oversee, we are more than happy to support them any way we can.

## Contact

For questions, support or to connect with us: [ncsufreemoms@gmail.com](mailto:ncsufreemoms@gmail.com).

For our NC State University liaison (to speak to other universities), contact:  
Michelle Kurtz, [mskurtz@ncsu.edu](mailto:mskurtz@ncsu.edu)  
Student Leadership & Engagement

Thank you, and God bless!

**Nancy Nelson**

Founder, NCSU Free Moms