organizing PARENTS

Building Family Advocacy Organizations

State of Connecticut
Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities

INTRODUCTION

Being a parent is a tough job. For parents and guardians who have children with disabilities, the responsibilities can be even greater, the challenges multiplied, and the obstacles taxing on one's energy, composure and stamina. The situation is compounded by the stress and pressure parents may experience about their child's education, especially if they are unfamiliar or confused by the various federal and state laws and regulations related to special education and disability rights. In addition, parents may feel intimidated by educators, medical professionals and other experts and believe they are woefully unprepared to participate in their child's education.

Whether you need information and guidance yourself, or have successfully advocated for your own child and want to train, coach or mentor other parents, starting a parent advocacy group in your community is a proven approach to empowering families that have children with disabilities. A parent advocacy group provides opportunities for parent-to-parent networking and advocacy skill building, and through collective action works to correct problems or inequities in local school districts.

This "how to" guide will familiarize you with the parent advocacy group model, explain the benefits of belonging to a group, and describe the process for starting a group in your community. In addition, this guide presents information for starting and managing a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization.

Requests for information, free consultation services or technical assistance with starting an organization may be obtained by contacting the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities at 860-297-4300, toll free at 1-800-842-7303, TDD at 860-297-4380; or by e-mail at OPA-Information@po.state.ct.us

Good luck and may your group be successful and your members empowered!

Chapter One:
WHAT IS A PARENT ADVOCACY GROUP?

As mentioned in the introduction, it is normal for any parent to feel inadequate and at times overwhelmed, but this is especially true for parents raising children with disabilities. Language and cultural differences may create additional barriers that can further isolate families from the broader community.

When parents have opportunities to network with other parents facing similar situations and hear their stories, they soon realize they are not alone and feel more empowered and in control. Hence, the mission of a parent advocacy group is to support parents and families to effectively advocate on behalf of their child or family member who has a disability. How the mission gets carried out varies from one group to the next and is determined to a large extent by the needs and desires of families from the local community.

A number of service agencies, hospitals, community-based health clinics, and disability-oriented organizations - such as United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) and Associations for Retarded Citizens (ARCs) - sponsor parent support groups. While these groups are generally helpful, they typically do not focus on reforming local educational systems or engage parents in advocacy/skill building.

The school-based, parent-teacher organization or association (PTO/PTA) is the most commonly recognized community-based, parent volunteer group. While this type of group serves families and school districts in innumerable ways, providing parent-to-parent support and advocacy to

families with disabled students typically is not an offered service.

Most cities and some towns have school-based family resource centers that parents and guardians can turn to for information and support. However, most centers are inadequate at providing assistance to families of special education students due to budget constraints, staff shortages, limited training about special education laws and regulations, lack of advocacy training and experience, and philosophical differences about inclusion.

Creating an Independent Parent Advocacy Organization

The focus of this manual is on creating a parent advocacy group that is independent of service agencies, school systems and family resource centers. Children benefit when parents have a group independent from the school system that gives them access to accurate information as well as much needed guidance and support from people who have "been there".

Parent advocacy groups are uniquely different in structure and the services they provide. One group may focus solely on supporting families through informal meetings, while another offers information, referral services, and educational workshops, and hosts networking events for families. Some organizations may even provide advocacy services such as accompanying parents to PPT/IEP meetings.

Other parent advocacy groups, in particular those that have a statewide focus, work almost exclusively on influencing legislative reform. The law is very specific, however, about what types of groups can engage in lobbying activities, and to what degree. While the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) does not prohibit lobbying by 501(c)3 tax-exempt

organizations, the law is very strict about the amount of time and resources the organization can spend on legislative advocacy. Groups applying for tax-exempt status that plan to engage in substantial lobbying are encouraged to seek legal counsel.

Defining Grassroots Advocacy

The grassroots advocacy model uses time-tested community organizing methods to mobilize a target population. Parent groups formed at the grassroots level typically have one or more of the following major goals: 1) to *empower* parents and families 2) to *develop* parents' advocacy skills and 3) to *enhance* educational opportunities for students with disabilities.

The grassroots model is the most commonly recognized and applied model used by community organizers. Using this model, people are brought together around a common concern or problem, and work together to create community change. In a parent advocacy organization, group leaders put aside individual agendas and focus on addressing the collective needs and interests of many families. For example, parents, advocates, community leaders and other interested persons may take steps to organize after a troubling community event has occurred, or as the result of a policy developed or decision made by the local school district. The group's agenda may be to push the district to change its policies and procedures and to monitor the district's practices.

The following scenario illustrates this point: *A disabled elementary school student does not return home from school at the end of the day. Later that evening he is found sitting in the back of the school bus where the driver unknowingly left him. Parents, advocates and community leaders come together, organize and strategize, and insist that the administration take corrective measures to make certain it*

Examples of Parent Advocacy Group Activities

- Core services offered by a community advocacy group might include parent training, peer support, and advocacy assistance.

- The group may offer workshops for its members on topics such as special education laws, PPTs and IEPs, negotiation skills, disability-specific issues, child development, raising a child with a disability, discipline, nutrition and health related issues including treatment and medication.

- The peer support function involves matching a parent volunteer in a one-to-one relationship with a parent of another special education student for the purposes of coaching, mentoring, and goal setting related to their child's educational plan.

- An advocate may accompany parents to PPT/IEP meetings at no cost or for a modest stipend to cover their own respite and travel expenses.

Who Belongs & Why They Join Parent Advocacy Groups

Groups are commonly formed for the benefit of parents and families from

one community. However, membership is often extended to families in neighboring towns whose children attend school in that district. Grandparents and other primary caregivers should be encouraged to join parent advocacy groups. If your group plans to have an educational reform agenda, it will be important to recruit policy makers, community leaders, educators and other school personnel who embrace parental empowerment and will support your group.

Parents and caregivers often join a group out of frustration with the local school district. They typically want to learn more about the laws and regulations that protect the rights of children and adults with disabilities, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Others join to learn more about their child's particular disability, and what to expect over time, from other parents whose child has the same condition.

How Parent Advocacy Groups Function

A number of parent advocacy organizations operate informally with no legal status or governing body, providing mutual support and self-help strategies to group members. Others evolve into non-profit organizations governed by a board of directors.

Each organizational model carries its own set of conditions and factors to consider. For example, a group that operates more informally may attract families interested in giving or receiving information and mutual support. The deliberate absence of group leaders or a formal structure in this type of group, however, may not attract people who are interested in addressing the inadequacies within the local school district and focusing

on educational reform. On the other hand, an informal group can change its direction and structure easily or disband with little formality, which is something legally recognized non-profit organizations cannot easily do. Groups that are sponsored by existing organizations face the risk that the sponsoring agency's priorities will change and funds will be redirected to new initiatives. ***The goal during the organizing phase of the group is for parents to select or design a model that is right for their community.***

Why You Should Join or Start a Parent Advocacy Group

You should consider joining or starting a parent advocacy group:

- if you are a parent, grandparent or other caregiver of a disabled child or special education student, and want to meet and network with other families to learn from their experiences.

- if you wish to participate in trainings and teach advocacy skill building techniques to others.

- if you desire to be a more active and effective participant in your child's education.

- if you wish to learn about IDEA and other relevant laws such as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

- if you are caring for a disabled child and feel isolated, and that school personnel are talking at you – not with you.

- if the need exists for system-wide advocacy to create special education reform in your community.

- if cultural differences and language barriers impede participation in existing parent-centered groups.

A parent group should strive to make members feel welcome and supported by demonstrating a respect for cultural differences and by communicating in members' primary language. Several parent advocacy organizations exist in Connecticut that accommodate Spanish-speaking and African American families.

"Regardless of purpose or structure, a parent advocacy group derives its strength and power from the collective wisdom, energy, and life experiences of its members." *Advocate from the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities*

Chapter Two:
"HOW TO" ESTABLISH A PARENT ADVOCACY GROUP

It only takes one person to have the idea and a handful of people to make it happen. Successfully recruiting parents to participate in the organizing process of an advocacy group will depend on several factors that are important to understand. These factors are often out of your control if you are the leader trying to get the group off the ground.

There is a great deal of time involved in the start-up of a parent advocacy organization and not everyone will be able to devote the time needed while balancing the demands of work and family. The beliefs and values of a community, current level of parent participation in school affairs, outcomes of past organizing efforts, and whether an event has recently occurred in the schools or community that can unite parents, will all impact your success in getting a group started.

Making the decision to join or form a parent advocacy group takes a commitment of time and the desire to support other families. Empowerment does not come easily or quickly. For our purposes, empowerment is defined as developing the knowledge, skills, and confidence to advocate at both the individual and systems level. Empowerment emanates from having a solid knowledge base and exercising assertive advocacy. It is derived from learning and practicing advocacy techniques that instill confidence and encourage parents to share their knowledge and skill with others in the hopes of creating win-win outcomes for families and school districts.

Form a Planning Committee

As with any group just starting up, a parent advocacy organization will rely initially on the vision, commitment, sweat equity, and financial support of its founding members. If you are serious about starting a parent group, begin by forming a planning committee to explore community interest and recruit other families to belong. Recruit a core group to work on the planning committee. Six to eight people is a good size; however, small groups of three or four people can function equally well at the start.

The committee may be composed of parents only, or a combination of parents, advocates, and supporters from the school community and general public. Arrange a regular meeting schedule that is mutually convenient for everyone such as mid-morning or early afternoon on school days. It may be necessary to meet in the evenings or on weekends to accommodate working parents.

See the Appendix for guidelines on roles and responsibilities of a planning committee.

Consider the Options

Establishing an organization is the same as starting a business. It requires that you have a plan and commit the time and give of yourself in every way – energy, talent, skills, and, oh yes, money. Anyone who has founded a charitable organization has reached into his or her own pocket on more than one occasion to pay for stamps, refreshments, and the incorporation and tax-exemption application fees.

Before venturing too far down the road consider the alternatives to legally forming a nonprofit organization. You don't want to tie up the group's resources on administrative tasks or expenses, nor have the founders get "burned out."

The planning committee should be prepared to answer the following questions:

- Will this be a single or multi-issue organization?
- Is the problem or need we want to address short-term or long-term?
- Is there a group already in existence addressing the problem or need?
- If so, what makes our group different?
- Is there a benefit to joining the other group and collaborating?

If joining an existing group is not an option, the group should conduct a needs assessment to: 1) minimize risk of duplicating an existing organization; 2) create programs based on the limitations or gaps in existing programs and services; and 3) make a distinction between the mission, philosophy, and target population represented by your organization and that of any existing organization that may have similar goals; and 4) identify opportunities to form strategic alliances with existing organizations.

For example, a new group that wants to target parents of adolescents with mental health disabilities may find it advantageous to form a partnership with the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) - Connecticut Chapter. Partnering with established statewide or community-based organizations lends value and credibility to newly established groups. Group leaders would be wise to spell out the terms of any relationship with another organization in writing beforehand and to try to anticipate the areas of potential conflict or confusion. For

example, will the sponsoring organization just offer the group technical support and provide grants management, or does it expect to retain total control and oversight of the group?

Some organizations will support the start-up of a new parent advocacy organization by acting as a fiscal sponsor. In this way, a new group that does not have tax-exempt status can apply for grants to cover start-up costs and initial program expenses. Fiscal sponsors typically charge a small fee for providing their support service. The fee should be reasonable, however, and not exceed 20% of the grant amount awarded. The success of any fiduciary relationship is contingent upon two-way, on-going communication about expectations, roles and responsibilities and project outcomes and ownership.

Organize Your Community

Once the planning committee determines there is a need for a new organization, the next step is to evaluate the level of community support and parent interest in getting involved and sustaining the group. The planning committee should look closely at students' and families' needs and concerns to determine if they are limited to one school or are district-wide. If the issues are district-wide, attempts should be made to involve parents from every school in resolving the issue.

The following methods are suggested as ways to gather input from parents and other community allies:

- Hold public forums to gather community input.

- Post notices about forums and other meetings in newspapers and public places (e.g., libraries, doctors' offices, stores and offices of local service providers).
- Meet with parents at Family Resource Centers; ask staff to co-host a public forum on special education.
- Speak at PTA/PTO meetings.
- Meet with clergy, elected officials and other community leaders.
- Speak with teachers, social workers, and other school staff

Recruiting Members

Begin by approaching families in your town about joining the group, and consider extending the invitation to parents from surrounding communities, particularly if your town is part of a regional school system or accepts special education students from other districts.

You can reach families through your own child's classroom teacher and the school's director of special education. School district confidentiality policies will limit the degree to which teachers can and will divulge student information.

However, they can do outreach on behalf of the group. Approach school social workers, nurses, psychologists and other service staff to obtain support for the group and ask them to "talk it up" with parents they meet. Attend PTA/PTO meetings and inform the board of education about the newly forming group.

Don't overlook community youth groups, parks and recreation programs, faith-based programs and local service providers. Use the media to reach families by publishing articles in local newspapers, and arranging to

appear as a guest on a local radio call-in program and local cable access channel. Be sure to give listeners the name of a contact person and telephone number to call for more information.

Parent recruitment should reach out to parents whose children are young, ideally when families are in the Birth to Three system or when the student first enters the school district. In this way, parents can gain knowledge and confidence early on to advocate for their children throughout their school years.

You will find that most parents will join the group if they have an active role in defining their needs and identifying what they see as the inefficiencies in their schools. Stories that parents will share not only help to illustrate the obstacles and frustrations felt by children and their families, but they provide anecdotal proof of the problem.

In considering how you will present your group's mission to the outside world, it is important to strike a balance and blend anecdotal data with quantitative measures that verify and convey the magnitude of the problem. This will boost the group's credibility, enhance parental involvement, and help the larger community to understand and accept the group's agenda.

Nuts and Bolts Issues

Your group will need to determine the best meeting time for its members. Most parent groups, especially those just starting, meet monthly and even more frequently at the beginning and end of the school year. Some groups may prefer to meet at members' homes and find by rotating the location every member is given the opportunity to host a

meeting. Other groups prefer to meet in a public location such as the library, a municipal meeting room, a church, at a business or nonprofit organization, or the community room at the local grocery store or fast food restaurant (e.g., Friendly's Restaurant or Burger King). The meeting space selected should be accessible to children and adults with disabilities and have adequate parking.

The lack of appropriate space for childcare is often one drawback to holding meetings in public places. If on-site space is available, parent volunteers may provide childcare on a rotating basis, or the group may receive stipends to hire a child care provider from a grant the organization applies for and receives.

To show support for the community, local service agencies and businesses often donate office space to newly formed charitable groups. A desk and telephone is all a group needs to set up shop and begin to establish its identity within the community. Many groups operate from the home of a group member until funds are raised to rent office space and hire staff.

At each meeting, a collection is often taken up to cover basic expenses such as mailing costs and refreshments. Some groups maintain a checking/savings account, while others keep the treasury locked in a security box. To open a bank account, the bank will ask the organization to provide a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN), which can be easily obtained by filing Form SS-4 with the Social Security Administration.

Adopt a Mission Statement

The planning committee's primary task is to lay the foundation for the organization by determining what its mission ought to be, the purpose of the organization, the programs and services it will offer and what the target population will be. Regardless of whether the group remains informal or becomes a nonprofit organization, it is critical to the group's harmony and ultimate success to have a clearly articulated mission statement that is endorsed by all group members. Clarity of focus goes a long way in maximizing the group's effectiveness and can help conserve precious resources, such as time and volunteer involvement. It also helps to enhance group image with prospective funders and the community. The care and thoughtfulness that goes into a group's formation will influence its long-term health.

See the appendix for guidelines on developing a mission statement.

Select a Name

Pick a descriptive name that clearly reflects the group's purpose or activities and does not confuse or turn off the very people you want to attract, including potential funders.

Establishing Goals & Objectives

It is important that both informal support groups and nonprofit organizations establish **goals and objectives**. A **goal** is a broad-based statement of the ultimate result of the change being undertaken or a statement that describes the planned and achievable impact or results an organization expects to have on the target population. What is the

overall long-term condition desired for the target population? In other words, what ideal condition will result if your group is successful in advocating for inclusive education for students with disabilities?

Example of a Goal:
To enhance advocacy skills of parents of children with disabilities.

An **objective** is a measurable, time-specific result that the organization expects to accomplish. Objectives specify the results of an activity and always flow from the goals. Objectives should address the essential area(s) the group is seeking to change and spell out the population(s) to be involved in the change.

There are two types of objectives - process and outcome. **Process objectives** describe the procedures or steps to be taken toward accomplishing a desired end. Process objectives address program

Example of a Process Objective:
Within the first six months of the project, four advocacy skills building workshops will be offered to parents of special education

implementation, whereas outcome objectives describe the expected benefit. Process objectives specify a target group and focus on what will happen to them because of the intervention.

Example of an Outcome Objective:
There will be a 50% increase in the rate of parental satisfaction with

Outcome objectives reflect a change in behavior, skills, attitudes, values

and beliefs, knowledge or conditions. Well-stated outcome objectives provide a timeframe for the goal, and identify the target population(s) and the number of people to be involved.

A parent advocacy group may measure several different types of outcomes. If the organization's purpose is to support parents, the goal is to make parents effective advocates for their children. In this situation, the group directs its resources to supporting parents and serving families. The objective may be to provide a series of parent trainings on special education laws and advocacy skill-building. If we were to evaluate this group at the end of the year, we would look at several outcomes, the first of which is the number of parents who participated in the training, and secondly, and how relevant and useful the information prepared them to participate in their child's education.

Make a Plan

Once the mission statement is adopted and priorities determined, the next step is to create a plan to guide the group's activities. In the beginning, a new group may create a short-term plan to guide the organizing phase that spells out the direction the organization will go in, describes the different strategies that will be used to accomplish goals and objectives, identifies who is responsible for carrying out each task and includes a timeline for implementation and completion.

Develop a Budget

Budgets can be developed once a workplan is developed. The budget reflects the financial cost of administrative functions and program

implementation and the resources needed to carry out the organization's mission.

Establish a Governing Body

Once need has been established, the mission statement adopted and a workplan adopted, the planning committee is ready to move to the next phase of determining whether to remain informal or establish a nonprofit organization. One group may choose to remain informal and provide mutual support and self help assistance to a small group of members, while another meets periodically with parents to share information and discuss school and community concerns. Still other groups may want to formalize their structure into a governing body, most commonly called a board of directors, and establish a nonprofit organization. No matter what the size or purpose, every group needs leadership to function and thrive.

It is not unusual for a planning committee to meet monthly and devote up to one year to plan before moving to the decision-making stage. Because of changing life situations and competing interests and other commitments, not all committee members will choose to remain involved beyond the initial planning stage. Some

people are "visionaries" and only like to plan, while others are "doers" who prefer to roll up their sleeves and get involved in the implementation phase. The key is to strike a balance in your group between these two personality types because it is as important to dream as it is to get something done.

If a group decides to formalize, its members must make a commitment to follow the basic responsibilities of nonprofit boards of directors:

- ✓ Determine the Organization's Mission and Purpose
- ✓ Select the Coordinator or Executive Director
- ✓ Support the Coordinator and Assess His or Her Performance
- ✓ Ensure Effective Organizational Planning
- ✓ Ensure Adequate Resources to Fulfill the Mission
- ✓ Manage Resources Effectively
- ✓ Determine, Monitor, and Strengthen Programs and Services
- ✓ Enhance the Organization's Public Standing
- ✓ Ensure Legal & Ethical Integrity and Maintain Accountability
- ✓ Recruit and Orient New Board Members
- ✓ Annually Assess Board Performance

From *Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards*,
National Center for Nonprofit Boards, Washington, D.C.

Beyond these responsibilities board members should be prepared to meet the following expectations:

- Believe in, and support, the group/organization's mission.
- Regularly attend group/board meetings and other important meetings.
- Make a serious commitment to participate actively in board and committee work.
- Volunteer and willingly accept assignments and complete them on time.
- Stay informed about matters relating to the organization and prepare for board and committee meetings by reviewing agenda materials, minutes, and financial and other reports beforehand.

- Get to know other board and committee members, be a team-player and maintain a working relationship that promotes consensus-building.
- Be honest, trustworthy, and listen and respect other people.
- Make an annual gift and participate in fund raising for the organization.

Chapter Three:
ESTABLISHING A NON-PROFIT, TAX EXEMPT ORGANIZATION

There are several different ways to form a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization. Two or three people can incorporate the organization without involving other stakeholders, a sole incorporator can independently and legally establish the organization and recruit the board of directors afterwards, or an organizational meeting can be held that involves all key stakeholders in selecting the board of directors and authorizing the filing of forms for incorporation and tax-exemption.

With whatever model that is chosen, careful consideration should be given in the pre-incorporation planning phase to involving key stakeholders if community buy-in and support from members and allies is to be maintained. The planning and formalizing process outlined herein is rooted in high ethical standards and sound organizational development and nonprofit management practices.

Membership Organization versus Self-Perpetuating Board of Directors

One question the planning committee or incorporating founders will need to decide almost immediately is whether to have a voting membership and whether the governing body will be composed of and chosen by the membership. In a membership organization, the members elect the board. Generally speaking, prospective board candidates must be members in good standing to run for the board. However, in the case of the self-perpetuating board, where the organization has no membership,

current board members recruit new board candidates from the general public and elect them to the new board.

Establishing a Membership Organization

Benefits

- There will be support for the organization and buy-in on the issues when people whose lives are impacted are directly involved in the change effort.
- There will be access to prospective donors who already know something about the mission and programs of the organization.
- Membership dues can provide an infusion of unrestricted capital into the organization.
- There will be a constant source of volunteers.
- Membership organizations help ensure the program is grassroots-driven and reflective of its diverse community.
- If all the directors left tomorrow, the membership would have the legal authority to re-start the organization.

Drawbacks

- An annual membership campaign and maintaining communication with members is labor intensive.
- There are costs associated with maintaining membership files, mailings and arranging accommodations (e.g., childcare, transportation and interpreters).
- The organization may be vulnerable to corruption or membership factions.
- There may be competing interests, conflicting perspectives, or obsession with minutia when more than a few people are involved in the decision-making process.

Establishing a Self-Perpetuating Board

Benefits

- There are fewer people to involve in the decision-making process.
- Directors have more control over who serves on the board.
- There may be a grouping of like minded people
- The board has the freedom to establish priorities and legal authority to alter the organizational documents (i.e., Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws) without approval from another body.

Limitations

- In the short-term, self-perpetuating boards may be the most expedient way to organize, but in the end, they can lead to group burn out, especially if the board is too small.
- It can be difficult to recruit quality board members, particularly in organizations that do not have an ongoing board development program.
- There may not be enough committed volunteers to carry out the organization's mission.
- The group's leaders may lack name recognition and thus credibility within the community, making parents less apt to join the group. People join groups they are familiar with or personally know someone who is.
- An organization's visibility diminishes when too few people are associated with the group.
- The organization's size may isolate the board from policy makers, in turn polarizing the group by disconnecting it from potential allies and supporters.
- Selected self-containment can lead to "group think" which happens when only one perspective is represented rather than multiple perspectives.
- If all the board members resigned, there would be no one to carry on the work of the organization.

Organizational Structure & Legal Status

Steps to Establishing a Nonprofit Organization

To make the official transition from a loosely formed, or informal group, to a nonprofit corporation requires that an organizational meeting be held at which time the election of a governing body take place. It is at the organizational meeting that the corporation officially comes into existence and begins functioning as a nonprofit organization. Therefore, the organizational meeting is not only legally necessary, it is symbolic and an event worth celebrating with the community.

To incorporate as a Non-stock Corporation in Connecticut, one or more incorporators must file forms with the Secretary of State's Office in Hartford within thirty (30) days of the organizational meeting. The forms can be obtained on-line at www.sots.state.ct.us/Forms. For questions regarding corporations, contact the Commercial Recording Division at (860) 509-6001 or at www.crd@po.state.ct.us. The filing fee, including the cost of obtaining a certified copy of the form the organization will need to file with the Internal Revenue Service for tax-exempt status, is approximately $90.

According to Connecticut general statutes, a corporation must have a minimum of three (3) directors and a president and secretary to exist. Most organizations will have other officer positions, including but not limited to vice president and treasurer. Articles of incorporation and bylaws will need to be created in time for the organizational meeting. Bylaws are the operating rules of the organization and should be drafted and adopted by the board early in the development stage. Loosely formed groups may adopt rules that outline members' responsibilities

and appropriate meeting decorum; these are not the same as bylaws.

See the Appendix for components of bylaws and articles of incorporation.

After incorporation, the next step would be to file for tax-exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service. The organization must file Form 1023, an "Application for Tax Exemption" and Form 9818 "User Fee for Exempt Organization Determination Letter Request".

Organizations engaged in a tax exempt purpose in accordance with Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Service Code of 1986 and have annual gross income of $5,000 or less, qualify for automatic tax exempt status. However, without an official determination letter from IRS, the organization will experience difficulty applying for grants. A determination letter can only be obtained by filing application Form 1023 with the IRS.

Shortly after the organizational meeting, the corporation should file Form SS-4 to receive a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN). This number will enable the corporation to open checking and savings accounts. The application fee ranges from $140 to $500 depending on the size of the organization's budget and years of operation.

The planning committee should consider various organizational models and adopt a structure that matches the mission, values, philosophy, and goals and objectives of the organization. The group's structure and legal status should promote identity, financial stability and long-term sustainability.

The most successful organizations are those in which people work cooperatively towards a common purpose and the mission statement is clearly understood, accepted and articulated by all group members. Whether the mission is to support families or work to reform education, the structure selected by the founders should align the mission, goals, and programs for maximum benefit. Keep in mind that the structure can be modified as the organization grows.

Types of Organizational Structures

The most commonly applied legal structures for parent advocacy groups and other community-based organizations include:

Mutual Support /Self-Help Group

Characterized by an informal atmosphere and loosely formed structure, the self-help group centers attention primarily on the individual and not the educational system. Members offer each other support and feel comfortable asking for, receiving and giving advice and counsel to fellow group members. This model requires someone to assume the leadership role of facilitator and to take care of making meeting arrangements. Members of this type of group have the freedom to leave and rejoin the group should they need additional help in the future.

Nonprofit, 501(c)3 Tax-Exempt Organization

Many groups start out providing mutual support/self-help, while other groups go one step further by accompanying parents to PPT/IEP meetings and sponsoring free workshops. Soon afterwards, the founders realize that without funds the support they can offer families will be limited and

inadequate. As the membership expands, many groups find they are unable to respond to the volume of requests for help or afford the mailing cost to send families resource information and a periodic newsletter. This is typically the time when group leaders, or the sponsoring agency, if there is one, suggest establishing a nonprofit corporation in order to apply for and receive grants and tax-deductible donations. Incorporation gives the organization protection against liability that unassociated nonprofits do not have.

Nonprofit, 501(c)4 Tax-Exempt Organization

This is the legal designation by the Internal Revenue Service for social welfare organizations or groups engaged in substantial legislative advocacy or political lobbying. 501(c)3 organizations function under significant limitations on lobbying activities Nonprofit organizations with a mission to engage exclusively in reforming the educational system through legislative advocacy should consider becoming 501(c)4 organizations. Donations to the organization are not tax-deductible, however, and most foundations do not make grants to 501(c)4 organizations due to IRS tax code rules and restrictions.

Unincorporated Nonprofit Associations

Unincorporated nonprofit organizations are not currently recognized by Connecticut state statute. Therefore, they are not legal entities and present increased risk to their board and membership. Without officially incorporating, people associated with the group do not have any legal protection under the law and may experience difficulty raising funds.

Affiliated or Sponsored Organizations

Affiliated or sponsored organizations are typically state chapters of a national organization that has already received tax-exempt status. There will undoubtedly be an application for the local organization to file with the national office, and possibly other restrictions, but once the paperwork is complete the national office that holds the tax-exempt status notifies the IRS when an affiliate joined and was accepted. Whether donations to the local organization are tax-deductible will depend on the legal status of the national office. The Internal Revenue Service allows organizations of this nature to request "group exemption" status for chapters affiliated with a central organization.

Chapter Four:
FUND DEVELOPMENT

The terms fund development and fund raising are often used interchangeably, but fund development is an organized, ongoing and systematic process of cultivating support and securing revenue, in-kind support and other resources to develop, maintain and enhance the operations of a nonprofit organization. Fund development should not be something an organization does occasionally; rather it is ongoing and deliberate.

Long-term fund development success is contingent upon creating and implementing a diverse fund development program that incorporates a variety of fund raising methods. Funding and other resources should come from a variety of sources with no one single source making up more than 40% of the organization's total funding base.

An important element of any successful fund development program is in relationship building with donors, funders and the community. Acknowledge donors by thanking them throughout the year for their support. Institute a systematic process for maintaining communication with donors and for developing relationships with prospects you hope will become new donors. Send newsletters, news clippings and periodic mailings out to publicize your accomplishments and update donors about the organization's activities.

Do the same with donors or foundations your organization is cultivating for support. One method is to send foundations and other funders,

including municipal, state and federal agencies, a press release announcing a new program before ever submitting a funding application. In this way, your group will establish name recognition and spark interest before ever asking for financial support, especially if the program is cutting edge or responds to a pressing community need. Another method is to send foundations a cover letter and case statement description to ascertain their interest before spending the time and resources preparing an application that may not get funded.

See the Appendix for guidelines on developing a case statement.

What is Meant by Organizational Readiness?

The governing body, or planning committee if a board of directors has not yet been installed, will need to determine the organization's readiness to fund raise by answering the following questions:

- Does the organization have a clearly defined mission statement?
- Does the organization have goals and measurable objectives?
- What programs does the organization provide; are the programs well organized?
- What evidence is there of activity?
- How old is the organization?
- Is the organization involved in a controversial issue that could affect the level of funding the group receives from foundations and other mainstream sources?
- Does the organization rely on paid staff or volunteers?

In evaluating an organization's fund raising capacity it is important to consider whether adequate resources are available, such as the

availability of volunteers or staff, time, and unrestricted funds to commit to fund development. After all, it takes money to make money. And if an organization plans to raise funds by holding special events, money will be needed to pay for rental deposits and to cover other up front expenses. Evaluate whether your organization has the infrastructure to support fund raising activities by looking at your technology capabilities and personnel. Do you have someone qualified on staff or a volunteer to manage grants, especially government grants that have onerous reporting requirements and plenty of paperwork?

Create a Fund Development Plan

Before engaging in any fundraising activity, it is important to develop a fund development plan so that time, money and human resources can be allocated wisely. A fund development plan reflects income needs and a fund raising goal for meeting those needs. The plan is based on the organization's overall goals and objectives for a specified period of time, typically eighteen months to two years. Once the plan is developed, it should be reviewed regularly and modified as needed.

The first part of the planning process involves research and decision-making about the fund raising methods the organization will engage in. Once that is completed, a list of all prospective fund raising sources should be written with the information organized by the likelihood of success and the amount of work involved. It's important to know that many grant applications require an inordinate amount of time to complete and involve developing a finely detailed proposal. Therefore, it is recommended that you budget your time and resources wisely when deciding which grantmakers to approach. Make income projections for every source based on previous experience with events or the funding

guide-lines given out by the foundation. Next, set goals and make cash flow predictions.

After completing all the steps, create an implementation timeline based on a fifteen (15) month calendar cycle. Be sure to include other pertinent information on it such as grant application deadlines and follow-up dates. Obviously, small unincorporated organizations will not need to conduct an elaborate planning process, but will still need to set a fund raising goal and identify sources based on need.

Fund Development Plan Outline

1. **Identify Fundraising Goal**
2. **Funding Sources**
   A list of funding sources including grants, corporate gifts and individual donations
3. **Fundraising Events**
   List the various community fund raising activities the organization will undertake.
4. **Strategy and Timeline**
   Plot on a timeline all sources of guaranteed funding sources, then begin filling in information on all new activities and prospective grantmakers. Include due dates for grant applications and build in enough time for writing, proofing and getting board approval of proposals before submission. Laying out your fund raising program in this way provides visual descriptive detail about when and where resources need to be directed and provides a safeguard for assessing whether the plan is realistic and doable or whether the organization is taking on too much at one time.

Questions to ask in the fundraising planning process:

- What activities are we asking to be funded?
- How much do we need to raise?
- Whom can we form strategic alliances with?
- Who are our competitors? Can they be made into allies?
- Who is likely to give to our organization and how much can they give?
- How will we motivate people, businesses and community institutions to give to our organization?
- Who will do the work necessary to raise funds?
- How will success be measured both programmatically and financially?

Fund Raising Methods

Individuals

Fundraising is a task many people dislike and others even fear. The very idea of asking someone for money makes people nervous. This anxiety is magnified if the person being asked is a stranger to the person doing the asking.

Nearly 90% of all donations given to nonprofit organizations in the United States are made not by corporations or foundations but by individuals. It is your friends, neighbors and relatives who finance the work of nonprofit organizations. Why do they give? Simply put – they were asked. The more personalized the solicitation, the more likely a contribution will be made. In other words, the likelihood of walking away with a donation is greater in a face-to-face solicitation, especially if the person being asked – called a prospect in fund raising terminology – knows the person doing the asking.

At first, you may feel awkward asking someone to make a donation. Before doing so, spend time thinking about your own values and beliefs about money. What is *your* attitude toward people who are financially well off and those who are not? Our own life experiences with money and beliefs about charitable giving influence our fund raising psyche. In a solicitation, it may feel as though you are asking someone to part with their money, but with the following advice (and practice) you can be a successful fundraiser.

- The saying "charity begins at home" rings very true for nonprofit organizations. Before group leaders or the board can ask others to give, they must demonstrate their own financial commitment to the organization. Make your own gift before asking others to give. Every group member or director of the board should contribute within his or her own financial means. The size of the organization, budget and board composition will influence the method and frequency in which members are expected to contribute.
- Avoid internalizing the task. After all, the money is not for you. You are simply one donor asking a prospective donor to support an organization you believe in and support financially. Tell the person why you support the organization and provide examples of how contributions support families with disabled children.
- Don't overlook families as prospective donors. Many parent groups start out believing that the financial costs of raising a child with a disability are so cost prohibitive that families won't donate – ***false***. Never make blanket assumptions about the ability, or motivation, of an individual or group of people to give. If families value the service your organization provides, they will support it, even if it means

dropping a $5 bill in the hat after a workshop that may have cost $25 to attend elsewhere. Remember, extended family members and family friends are also potential donors. The most common response given when a person is asked why they don't donate -"I was never asked."

Direct Mail

The next best method of fundraising is direct mail. It can be costly and take several years to build up a solid donor base, but it is well worth the effort. Membership organizations, and groups with an expansive mailing list, can be successful raising funds through the direct mail approach, so be sure to maintain good records of the names and addresses of anyone and everyone who has had association with your group or organization.

Make it an annual goal to increase the size of the membership and general mailing lists by adding names of parents, other family members, advocates, community supporters, workshop attendees, and participants at special events and other group sponsored events. Even if the person attended only one meeting doesn't mean they don't support the mission of your group or organization. Never make assumptions about people's intentions or motivation to support charitable organizations. The only way to know is to ask them.

Although direct mail can be a profitable venture, it is also costly, particularly for a group with limited resources to invest up front for developing, printing and mailing the solicitation packet. However, expenses can be minimized by approaching businesses for services in-kind or reduced rates. Nonprofit organizations and government agencies with a similar mission or serving the same target population may support the group with in-kind support such as printing and postage.

Membership Dues

Another fundraising method used by grassroots organizations is the levying and collection of membership dues conducted in conjunction with an annual solicitation campaign. Membership dues and donations are an unrestricted source of revenue that can be used to cover anything from general operating expenses to a specific program. If the funds collected are to be earmarked for a particular program or special project, prospective donors should be told in the appeal literature.

Fees for Goods & Services

A number of parent advocacy groups request families and other beneficiaries to contribute a modest fee to attend training events or for advocacy support services or goods they may receive. Examples of other goods include publications such as advocacy manuals and audio/visual tapes produced from workshops the group has sponsored. Goods and services can also be targeted to educators and service providers with fees charged accordingly.

Telephone Campaign or Phone-a-thon

Community-based organizations find that by using the telephone and volunteers affiliated with the group to fund raise, they stay in touch with key stakeholders on important issues and can monitor emerging needs and concerns of families and the community. This information can be valuable in the annual priority setting process. Groups that have amassed an extensive mailing list as the result of a growing membership or high participant turnout at events may find fund raising via telephone quite successful.

Foundations

Private, community and corporate foundations make grants to nonprofit, 501©3 tax-exempt organizations to fund programs and services. Grants can fund programs, general operating expenses, technical assistance, or capital support for a building project or infrastructure purpose. The grant is requested in the form of an application or proposal written and submitted according to guidelines set forth by the foundation. Grants are generally time-limited with three years as the average maximum commitment by a foundation.

Corporations

Many corporations will donate to nonprofit organizations and often take a special interest in charitable organizations their employees are affiliated with. In fact, a number of companies will match employee contributions to a qualified 501(c)3 organization, so that if an employee donates $100 their company will match it and the organization receives a combined gift of $200. Therefore, it makes good financial sense to ask people associated with your group if there is an employee contribution-matching program where they work.

Corporations support nonprofit organizations in ways other than funding by donating in-kind goods and services. The use of office space, telephones and printing facilities are some of the ways corporations can assist your group. Corporate giving occurs in one of two ways: either directly from the corporation or through a foundation created by the corporation. Contact the corporation's public relations office or human resources department if you are not sure a foundation exists.

Special Events

A special event is a one time, or annual, event that participants pay to attend. Special events help promote the organization's name and appeal to a broad segment of the community. There is an inherent risk and uncertainty with special events so organizations are advised not to build an entire fund development plan on this method. To hold a successful special event requires an adequate amount of planning time, volunteers, and money to pay for upfront costs. Depending on the nature of the function, the organization may be required to obtain event insurance which can be costly.

Religious Philanthropy

Many religious institutions provide grants to nonprofit organizations, particularly groups focused on self-reliance, empowerment and systems change. Unlike foundation grants, funding from religious sources can go on in perpetuity when a partnership is formed. Religious philanthropy is plentiful in Connecticut and on the national level.

Federated Giving

Commonly referred to as workplace fundraising, federated giving involves a consortium of nonprofit organizations conducting annual fund raising campaigns in corporate and public work sites in which employees make donations to qualified 501©3 organizations through payroll deductions. It is an excellent way to raise unrestricted income and to publicize your organization to literally thousands of people at one time. Most workplaces require that participating organizations have their 501(c)3 designation for at least one year and belong to a federation. The United Way is one such federation, as is Community Works of Connecticut, Inc., a

coalition of small to medium size community-based nonprofit organizations dedicated to social change and progressive causes. Contact your local United Way Agency or Community Works of Connecticut about becoming a member of their organization.

Tribute/Memorial Gift

A tribute or memorial gift is an opportunity for a donor to make a contribution to your organization in someone's honor or memory, often a family member with a special interest in the cause of the organization.

See the Appendix for additional information regarding fund development.

Chapter Five:
MEETINGS & DECORUM

Meetings are very important because they are where the business of the organization is conducted and where the work of grassroots organizations takes place. It is important to understand the different types of meetings that staff, volunteers and board directors may participate in.

Types of Meetings

Board Meetings

The frequency of board meetings should be spelled out in the organization's bylaws. According to Connecticut General Statute, boards of nonprofit organizations, legally referred to as Non-Stock Corporations, must hold at least two (2) meetings per calendar year, one of which may be the annual meeting. Groups just starting out that rely mainly on volunteers (until funds are raised to hire staff) will find it necessary to meet more frequently in order to manage the organization's affairs.

Membership Meetings

The frequency of membership meetings and the roles and responsibilities of members should be clearly defined in the organization's bylaws. Membership meetings provide the board and membership an opportunity to speak directly to each other about activities the organization is involved in and to elicit member input into major policy and program decisions.

Annual Meeting

According to Connecticut General Statutes, nonprofit organizations must hold an annual meeting to report on the activities and financial status of the corporation. It is also at the annual meeting that elections of directors and officers takes place. If the organization has a voting membership, then by law the membership must be officially notified as to the date and location and receive the agenda within a reasonable amount of time.

Committee Meetings

The following committee meetings may be held:

> ***Standing Committees*** – Standing committees are the official committees of the organization, as determined by the board, and as defined in the organization's bylaws. The most common standing committees are the Executive Committee, made up of the board officers; the Board Development Committee or Nominating Committee; the Fund Raising Committee; the Membership Recruitment Committee; the Finance & Budget Committee; the Public Relations Committee; and the Personnel Committee. Not all of these committees are required and smaller organization may find the need for only two or three standing committees.
>
> The committees established should match the scope of the board's responsibilities, be realistic and manageable, and reflect the organization's structure, philosophy, and mission. For example, an organization with a self-perpetuating board will need to establish a board development committee rather than a membership recruitment

committee. A small organization with limited financial resources will have little use for a finance committee and could authorize fiscal oversight responsibilities to the treasurer or executive committee.

The board should periodically evaluate the useful and continued need for committees. Any change to the standing committee structure will require amending the bylaws.

Ad-hoc Committees - Occasionally the board will want to establish special, or short-term, committees to address a matter that is beyond the scope of a standing committee. An ad-hoc committee may be appointed to plan the organization's anniversary celebration or search for a new office location and make a recommendation to the board.

The size of standing and ad-hoc committees will depend on various factors including the issue the committee has been charged with addressing. Sensitive issues such those involving a personnel grievance may be handled by two or three people on Personnel or Executive Committees. Fund development, on the other hand, requires a larger committee with at least five (5) people to manage the workload. Committees should appoint a chairperson to facilitate meetings and function as the liaison to the president and board of directors. Committees should take minutes, or develop a meeting summary, that get mailed or e-mailed to board and committee members in a timely manner. All committees should be expected to provide an annual report of their activities, accomplishments and priorities for the coming year.

Decorum

Both formal organizations and informal support groups need to practice good meeting decorum. Attendees need to feel comfortable participating in any discussions that take place. Informal groups want to strive to create an environment that is relaxing and encourages supportive and non-judgmental communication. The agenda may be unstructured and the dialogue loose to enable everyone to participate.

While loosely formed groups tend to focus on supporting the individual and operate in a casual manner, nonprofit organizations are structured and more formal. Boards of Directors meetings are where the business of the corporation is conducted and not a forum for personal discussion or advocacy support and assistance. This restriction may make it difficult for a parent who is invited to attend a meeting, and even for some board members, to understand that the board meeting is not a support group meeting. Therefore, public participation in board meetings should be limited to the annual meeting and membership meetings, unless individuals are candidates for the board of directors. An alternative is for board members who choose to meet informally to do so 1 hour or ½ hour before or after the board meeting.

The meeting agenda should be developed by the chairperson or Executive Committee and sent to board members in advance of the meeting so they come prepared.

Parliamentary procedure, or Roberts Rules of Order, are rules developed to help groups run meetings and conduct business in an efficient,

organized and civil manner. To ensure the proceedings are run in an organized and democratic fashion, many groups follow some form of parliamentary procedure, some more informal than others.

See the Appendix for an outline on conducting meetings.

"Change takes time with progress measured in increments." *Advocate from the, Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities*

Chapter Six:
SUPPORTING PARENTS & CREATING SYSTEMS CHANGE

Strategies for Supporting Parents

The different educational programs and support services described at the beginning of this manual are just some examples of the activities conducted by parent advocacy groups. Your group may decide to adopt some, or all of these strategies, or opt to develop an entirely new program concept. It is important to recognize that every community is unique and different and that a parent advocacy group must match the needs and interests of families living in that community if it is to be successful. The amount of resources you have will dictate the level of support and programs you can offer families. You may decide to focus initially on raising start-up funds to develop the organization's infrastructure and hire a Coordinator.

In many organizations, those both loosely formed and as well as those nonprofit, the board of directors and members close to the project staff the organization and run programs. For instance, members may volunteer to accompany parents to PPT/IEP meetings and continue to operate this way, even once staff is hired, recognizing that participation empowers parents and builds leaders. Parent volunteers often receive stipends or gift certificates as compensation through grants the group receives.

One way to offer a parent training series, if you don't have the financial resources, is to partner with another organization by raising project

funds through a joint grant application to cover speakers' fees, child care, transportation, training material and refreshment costs. The rental of a facility may not be necessary if the other organization has a facility in which the training could be conducted.

Strategies for Making Systems Change

The following are commonly used strategies that, when applied alone, or in combination, are successful at bringing about systems' change. Your group must be able to clearly and succinctly define the problem and be prepared to offer solutions.

First, brainstorm the questions that must be asked, then come to consensus about the outcome(s) the group seeks, and finally identify the strategies the group will use to bring about systems change:

- Educate policy makers and elected officials about the needs of families with disabled children and special education students.
- Lobby the legislature. Lobbying is a limited activity for 501(C) 3 organizations and is unrestricted for 501(C) 4 organizations by the IRS.
- Meet with school administrators or appointed gatekeepers.
- Organize letter-writing campaigns.
- Send an official letter from the group to the Board of Education stating the problem and offering solutions.
- Hold public forums where policy makers, elected officials and community leaders are invited to meet with parents and the public to discuss special education and related topics. Develop and send the agenda beforehand to invited guests with the list of questions they will be asked. It is never appropriate to ambush or attack invited

guests because it puts people on the defensive and impedes conflict resolution and attainment of win-win outcomes for families and the school district.

"Parents are powerful when they join as one unified voice to insist on inclusive educational opportunities for all children as guaranteed by law."

Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities

How to Conduct a Meeting

1. Chairperson calls the meeting to order.

2. Minutes from previous meeting are approved once any corrections have been made.

3. The Treasurer and/or Finance Committee provides a financial report.

4. The Executive Director or Project Coordinator report is given.
   This only applies to organizations that are staffed.

5. Standing Committee Reports
   Sample: *Executive Committee, Board Development, Fund Development, Membership, and Program*.

6. Ad-hoc Committee Reports

7. Old Business

8. New Business

9. Adjournment

Useful Websites for Non-Profit Organizations

Nonprofit Management

Nonprofit Gateway
http://www.nonprofit.gov

Nonprofit Genie
http://www.genie.org

Grant Research and Proposal Writing

GuideStar
http://www.GuideStar.org

Foundation Center
http://www.fdncenter.org

Fundsnet
http://www.fundsnetservices.com

State Funds
http://www.opm.state.ct.us/programs.htm

Federal Funds
http://www.cfda.gov

Federal Education Grants
http://www.ocfo.edu.gov or www.ed.gov.funding.html

Progressive Funders

Haymarket People's Fund
http://www.haymarket.org

Family/Parent Centered Funders
The For All Kids Foundation
http://www.rosieo.warnerbros.com/cmp/allkinds/small.htm
Annie E. Casey Foundation
http://www.aecf.org

Sample Agenda:
ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

The acting chairperson/president initially presides over the meeting until the election of a board of directors and officers takes place. In the case of membership organizations, the board is initially elected by a majority of members present at the organizational meeting. In the case of a self-perpetuating board, where there is no voting membership, the incoming board elect themselves as the founding board of directors and incorporators. Officers are customarily elected by the board of directors and not by the membership because the board customarily choices its own leadership. The following is a sample organizational meeting agenda:

- **Call Meeting to Order**
- **Welcome & Opening Remarks**
- **Election of Board of Directors**
- **Election of Officers**
- **Acceptance of Organization's Name**
- **Acceptance of Bylaws**
- **Formalizing Motions**
- **Intent** "To organize for the purpose of becoming incorporated in the State of Connecticut and registered as a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization with the IRS."
- **Acceptance of Purpose or Mission Statement**
- **Authorize President's Signature on Incorporation Forms and IRS Application 1023 (application for 501©3 or 501©4 status).**

- **Appoint a Statutory Agent** to receive legal documents on corporation's behalf and when the corporate address has changed without notification to the Connecticut Secretary of State.
- **Set Dues (if applicable)**
- **Make Committee Assignments**
- **Schedule Next Board Meeting**

Basic Components of By-Laws

1. Corporation's Name

2. Mission Statement & Purpose

3. Registered Office

4. Members (definition, rights & privileges, termination, and resignation)

5. Dues (structure & collection method)

6. Meetings (annual, regular, special, membership and committees)

7. Place of Meetings

8. Notice of Meetings

9. Quorum

10. Conflict of Interest

11. Proxy Voting

12. Board of Directors (powers, number, tenure, qualifications, and removal)

13. Officers (number, election & term of office, powers & duties, removal, and vacancies)

14. Committees (composition and purpose & duties)

15. Fiscal Matters (accounting year, checkbook and banking responsibilities, and signatures)

16. Waiver of Notice of Actions and Without Meeting

17. Books & Records

18. Indemnification

19. Dissolution

Components of Articles of Incorporation

1. Name/Registered Office
2. Purpose
3. Limitations on Activities
4. Members
5. Directors/Officers
6. Debt Obligations and Personal Liability
7. Dissolution
8. Incorporators' Signatures

Mission Statement Development

Mission

- Mission is the end result at which an entire organization is aimed.
- Mission is the organization's driving force. It's reason for being.
- Mission supports VISION — an image shared by the entire organization of what the world, community or society would look like if that mission were realized.

Mission Statement

A mission statement should accurately reflect the organization's reason for existing. The statement should broadly describe what the organization does. Avoid being too specific or naming programs or services by name. Otherwise, the organization may need to change the mission statement frequently to reflect program changes. It can comprise the organization's tax-exempt status.

Mission statements serve to answer the following:

- Why do we exist? What is our purpose?
- Who do we serve or benefit?
- Who are "we"? Who should belong to our organization?
- How do we operate? What kinds of things will we do?

1. What are the results we want to achieve?
2. What is our purpose?

3. What should we do?
4. For whom should we do it?
5. How do we plan to do it?

After answering these questions by writing a mission statement

THE MISSION OF_____ IS TO:

Organization's name

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Fund Raising Case Statement

What is a Case Statement?

A brochure or short document (no more than three pages in length) used by organizations to establish need and build support for its programs and fund raising strategies. The case statement is not a direct solicitation for funds; instead, it is a support piece. "A case statement tells the story of what your organization is; what it plans to do or become; and why it deserves support." (Thomas Broce, author of Fund Raising: The Guide to Raising Money from Private Sources).

Why Should Parent Groups Develop Case Statements?

- Disciplines your organization to plan, plan for how existing resources will be allocated (i.e. time, staff, and money); evaluate service delivery gaps and program shortcomings; identify additional needed resources; and formulate a written plan that funders and prospects can respond to.
- When there have been too many missed opportunities.
- Save time and money in the long run.

What are the Benefits to my Parent Group?

- Offers a checks and balance system for ensuring unobstructed communication and a mission-centered organization.
- Public relations tool where the organization controls the message and content by explaining in its own words the problem and/or community's needs; its mission and purpose; population served (and not served); limitations; programs and accomplishments.
- Provides a quick response to prospects' inquiries
- Saves time later when developing proposals

Components of a Case Statement?

- History of the organization.

- Briefly outline the problem, the people impacted, and the program for which you are raising funds.
- Explain how the parent group will go about solving the problem. Show how the group is the best to do this and why it seeks the opportunity to do so.
- Explain why the parent group is the most or best qualified to respond. Highlight past accomplishments.
- Describe the fund raising project and when appropriate, match prospects' interests to the parent group.

Where Case Statements Fall Short?

- A confusing mission or undefined purpose.
- Too emotional.
- Vague plans.
- "Show me the money" — Instead, explain how your group will solve the problem.
- The need must be real, readily demonstrated and worth supporting.

GRANT SOURCE RESEARCH WORKSHEET

Funder Name _____ Prospect Score _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

GRANT INFORMATION

Assets $_____ as of ____/_____/_____ Gifts Received _____
Total Amount of Grants $_____ Total # of Grants _____
Average Grant Size $_____ Dollar Range of Grants $_____ to $_____
Amount of Grants in our Field $_____ % of total amount _____
Number of Grants in our Field _____ % of total number _____

Funding Cycle _____
Restrictions _____
_____

GRANTING PATTERN

Geographical Area of Grants

_____

Types of Support Given

_____

Sample Grants in *19*_____

	Amount
_____	$_____
_____	$_____
_____	$_____
_____	$_____
_____	$_____
_____	$_____

APPLICATION INFORMATION

Contact Person/Program Officer

_____

Phone _____ Fax _____ E-Mail

_____

Deadline for Proposals _____

Application Procedures

_____

_____

_____

_____

NETWORKING INFORMATION

Names of Board Members, Trustees, Past Reviewers, etc.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Leadership Contacts in our Organization

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

OTHER COMMENTS

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

GRANT FUNDING POTENTIAL

Evaluation of Grant Funding Potential

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Project Title

_____

Proposal Emphasis

_____

Suggested Request

_____

RESEARCH INFORMATION

Date of Research _____ Researcher

_____

Sources

_____

Proposal Anatomy

Cover Letter: Highlight the attached proposal and indicate the type and amount of support you are seeking. Describe briefly the mission of your organization. Explain how your proposal meets the foundation's guidelines and interests and remind the reader of any previous communications or relationship to the funder.

Cover Page (1/2 page): Includes information such as: Title of the project, submission date, beginning and ending dates of the project, total project amount, amount requested, contact person's name, phone number and e-mail.

Executive Summary (1/2 page): Briefly describes the need and your proposal activities to address the need. Defines the problem and the constituency served. Explains strategy and describes short and long-term goals.

Introduction (1/2-1 page): Highlights the organization's mission, purpose and goals. Build's organizational credibility through narratives about the organization's history, how it was started and who sits on the board. Briefly say something about the organization's culture and values and identify any unique aspects about the organization. Describe some of the organization's most significant accomplishments.

Statement of Need or Problem (I - 1 1/2 pages): Describes the situation that caused you to prepare a proposal. Identifies the focus of the proposal and highlights population to be served. Don't assume funders understand the problem or need. Use statistics, quote an expert or

discuss current research findings. Such statements should never be about a lack of funding!

Statement of Goals (1/2 page): A broad-based statement of the ultimate result of the change being undertaken or a statement that describes the planned and achievable impact or results an organization expects to have on the target population.

Goals should answer the following questions:

- What ideal condition will exist if we eliminate, prevent, or improve the situation?
- What is the overall long-term condition desired for our target population? Example: People with disabilities living in Hartford County will live with dignity and independence by owning their own home.

Objectives (1/2 page): An objective is a measurable, time-specific result that the organization expects to accomplish. Objectives specify the results of an activity and support goal attainment. Every goal should have 3-4 objectives.

Types of Objectives

Process: Describes the procedures or steps to be taken toward accomplishing a
desired end. The How rather than the What. Example: An accessible housing registry will be developed by January.

Outcome: Describe the expected benefit. Outcome objectives reflect a change in: behavior, skills, attitudes/values beliefs, knowledge or conditions. Example: There will be a 5% increase in the number of people with disabilities who own their own home in Hartford County.

Strategy and Implementation: (1-2 pages): Describes the specific plan of action for achieving goals and objectives. This section provides in great detail information about the specific methods, activities, procedures and timeline for the project.

Evaluation: (1/2 —I page): Evaluation provides a measure for judging how effective your project has been in reaching its goals and objectives. Evaluation can focus on outcomes — measures whether the stated objectives were achieved or process — used for making changes and adjustments in programs.

Budget: (I —1 % pages): Describes in monetary terms the proposed project broken down by expense and other sources of income to support the project. Include a narrative and keep a record of how you arrived at your costs. The budget should be clear, correct and realistic.

Attachments: IRS tax-exemption letter, board resolution (if applicable), board of directors list, current operating budget, current audited financial statement, list of recent and current funding sources, resumes of key staff and consultants, letters of endorsement, and public relations kit. Only provide attachments at funder's request or your own discretion.

Write Your Own Letter of Intent

The _____ is submitting this letter of intent to
organization
_____ Foundation to determine your interest in providing
_____ funding for our _____ program. We are a

_____ serving _____
The mission of the _____ is to _____
_____
_____.
The board of the organization is comprised of _____
who _____.
In 19__, the _____program provided services to _____
_____.
By providing _____ to _____, the
_____ program is helping to _____
for _____.
Our primary goal is to _____
for _____. One need frequently identified is a need
for _____. There are currently no
_____ _____. By developing _____
organization
_____ program, _____ will be served by
_____.

Our proposal to the XYZ Foundation would be _____ funds for the
_____ program serving _____.
_____% of the funds received would directly benefit _____ who
need _____ to help them _____. Our
proposal will request $_____ to _____.

We look forward to hearing from you regarding our letter of intent. We will contact you in the next few weeks to see if you need more information. If you have any questions about _____, please do not hesitate to
name *title*
contact me at at _____ or our _____,
_____, at _____.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Name/Title

Outline for a Letter of Proposal

1st Paragraph	Addressee	person requesting the proposal or official contact person.
	Introduction	the reason for writing, and in particular, to this funding source.
2nd Paragraph	Problem	in I or 2 sentences state the problem, need or desired state of affairs your project addresses
3rd Paragraph	Proposed Action	an outline of the project in 4 to 6 short sentences presented as a solution to the problem or need just described; include the timetable.
4th Paragraph	Benefits	how clients or the community will benefit from the intervention directly and indirectly.
	Unique Features	how this project differs from others, the sponsors of the project (i.e., who cares)
5th Paragraph	Budget	brief summary, perhaps broken down

	into broad performance or program expenditures.
$ Requested	dollars sought for this year or for entire project period, and amounts to be donated from other sources.

Attachments may include copy of IRS determination letter, a press clipping that dscribes the program, board list, and full budget. Read directions.

The Do's and Don'ts of Grant Writing

Do's

- Engage in ongoing research — stay current by reading annual reports, subscribing to nonprofit and fund raising journals and attending foundation sponsored events.
- Assume that there will be competition for funds.
- Show that are others are committed to the project.
- Involve board members in the process.
- Aim for clarity and brevity.
- Make your proposal interesting to read and aesthetically pleasing with ample margins, headings and bullets.
- Have someone else read your completed proposal.
- Always include a dollar figure.
- Call to find out why your proposal was denied.
- Adhere to the funder's deadline(s).
- Always say "thank you" starting with an acknowledgement of the grant.
- Maintain your organization's good relationship with funders.

Don'ts

- Use jargon
- Make up your own application when one is provided.
- Ignore established eligibility requirements.
- Try to make your program fit.
- Submit "carbon copy" proposals.
- Set unrealistic goals.
- Describe the problem but not the solution.
- Attempt to circumvent the chain-of-command by approaching board members instead of the program officer.
- Don't make repeated calls to the decision-maker.