



Green Mountain Self-Advocates HANDBOOK

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

GMSA wishes to thank you for taking the time to learn more about self-advocacy. The fact that you are reading this handbook proves that you are one of the dedicated leaders to self-advocacy movement. The goal of the GMSA handbook is to support self-advocates to run their own groups.

If you follow the suggestions in this handbook, your self-advocacy group will run smoothly and efficiently. These methods have helped other local self-advocacy groups stay strong over the years. If you want help putting these suggestions into action call GMSA at 1-800-564-9990 and someone will be glad to work with you and your group.

We wish to thank Randy Lizotte and Lindsey Hescock from Speak Up! Addison County self-advocacy group for putting down in writing their experiences supporting a successful local group. Thanks to Kathy Kretz for spending countless hours editing, selecting just the right graphics and for formatting the handbook. Thanks to Ryan Whipple and Karen Topper who provided overall support in making sure GMSA finally finished this handbook.

GMSA would also like to thank the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council and the Vermont Division of Disability and Aging Services for providing financial support to write and print this handbook.

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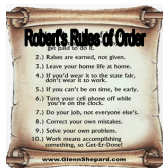


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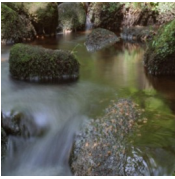
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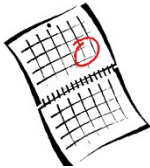
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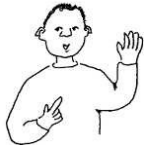
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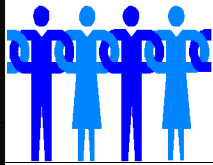
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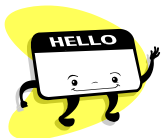
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ABOUT GMSA





ABOUT GMSA

Green Mountain Self-Advocates (GMSA) is a statewide self-advocacy network run and operated by people with developmental disabilities. The GMSA board includes representatives from 18 local self-advocacy groups. The groups come together to listen to each other, make new friends, learn about people's rights and tell politicians and others why people with disabilities are important. Green Mountain Self-Advocates is building a movement for self-advocacy through public education and awareness, peer mentoring, support, advocacy and direct action.



ABOUT GMSA

HISTORY

Green Mountain Self-Advocates is a statewide self-advocacy organization. In 1994, we grew out of a small self-advocacy group in Burlington. With the help of allies, they connected with other Vermont self-advocates to create a network. Together they started self-advocacy groups in Barre, Middlebury, Rutland and St. Albans. Today hundreds of self-advocates speak up for themselves as members of 18 local groups.



ABOUT GMSA

OUR MISSION

The purpose of Green Mountain Self-Advocates is for people with developmental disabilities to take control over their own lives, make decisions, solve problems and speak for themselves. We educate and make the public aware of the strengths, rights, wants and needs of people with developmental disabilities. We help self-advocates by letting them say what they believe. We are building a movement for self-advocacy in Vermont through public education, peer mentoring and support, advocacy and direct action.



ABOUT GMSA

Green Mountain Self-Advocates GMSA

73 Main Street, Suite 401

Montpelier, Vermont 05602

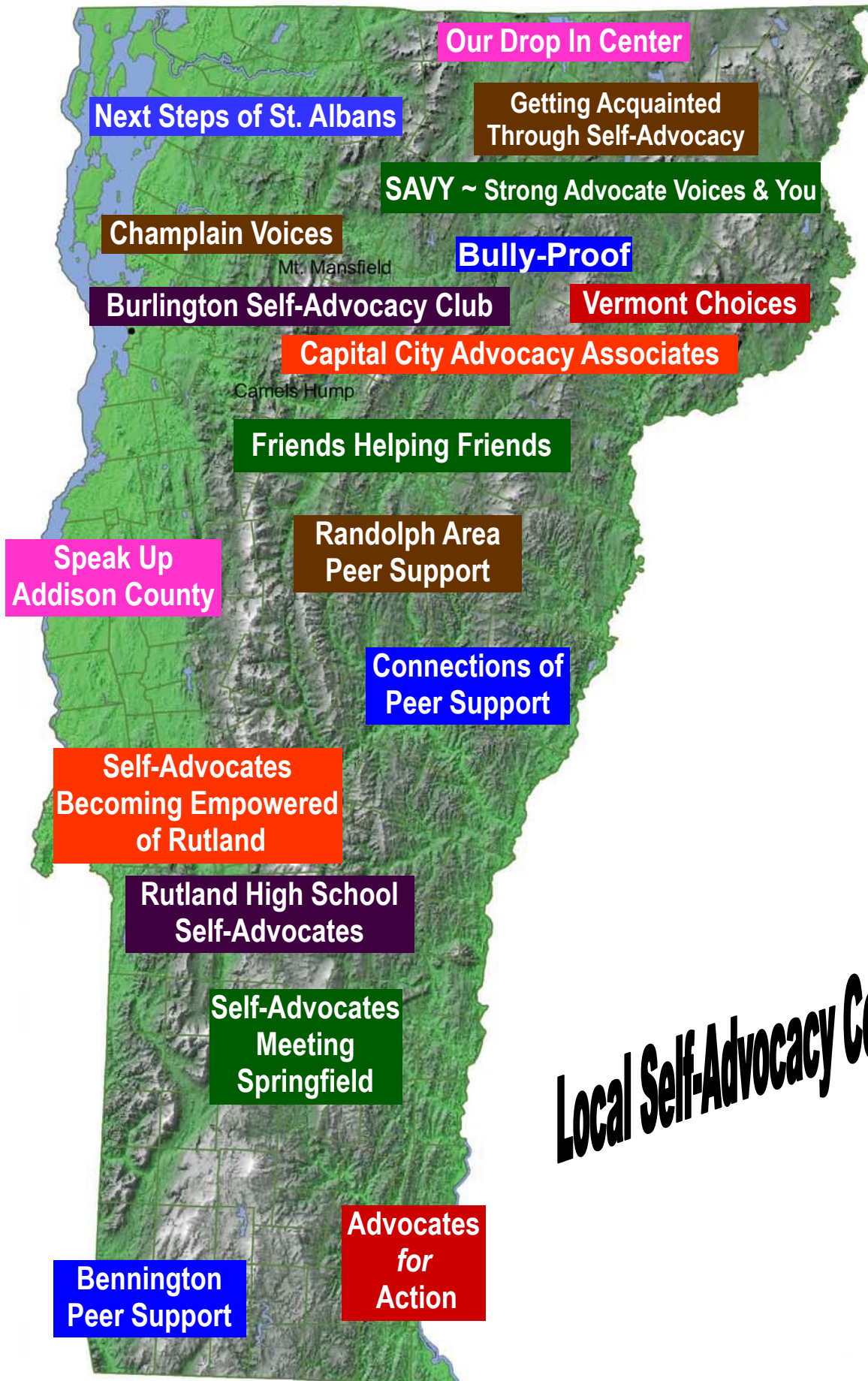
1-800-564-9990 (Toll Free)

1-802-229-2600

Fax: 1-802-241-4224

E-mail: gmsa@sover.net

ABOUT GMSA



Local Self-Advocacy Contacts



ABOUT GMSA

LOCAL GROUP NAME



Advocates for Action

Bellows Falls & Brattleboro

Meeting Time: 2nd Thursday of the month,
12-2pm

Contact: Paula Collins
1-802-254-7500 ext. 1334



Bennington Peer Support

Meeting Time: 3rd Wednesday of the month
6-8pm

Contact: Melanie Brunina
1-802-442-5491



BSAC ~ Burlington Self-Advocacy Club

Meeting Time: 2nd & 4th Friday
of the month
10:30am -12 Noon

Contact: Bob Kay & Jayne Weber
1-802-488-6331



ABOUT GMSA

LOCAL GROUP NAME



CCAA ~ Capitol City Advocacy Assoc. Montpelier

Meeting Time: 2nd Thursday of the month
5:30-7pm

Contact: Karen Noone
1-802-262-1236



Champlain Voices Colchester

Meeting Time: Every Monday afternoon
12:30-2pm

Contact: Paul Nichols & Doris Houston
1-802-655-0511



COPS ~ Connections of Peer Support of White River Junction

Meeting Time: 1st Monday evening of
the month

Contact: Helen George &
Karen Daley-Regan 1-802-886-1833



ABOUT GMSA

LOCAL GROUP NAME



Friends Helping Friends Barre

Meeting Time: 2nd & 4th Wednesday
of the month, 10:30-11:30am

Contact: Steve Gokey & Wendy Higgins
1-802-479-2502 ext. 581



Rockin' Advocates of Montpelier U-32 and Montpelier High School

Meeting Time: 9-10am every Wednesday

Contact: Barbara Bruno
802-262-1236



Spaulding Self-Advocates Spaulding High School

Meeting Time: Tuesdays

Contact: Sylvia Sweet 1-802-476-4811
Rm 134



ABOUT GMSA

LOCAL GROUP NAME



Next Step Self-Advocacy St. Albans

Meeting Time: 1st and 3rd Monday
of the month, 1:30-3pm

Contact: Jonathan Fitzgerald &
Sydney Boyd 1-802-524-6561



Our Drop In Center Newport

Meeting Time: Every week day

Contact: Roland Maurais & Gail Rowe
Francine Heywood 1-802-334-7310
Ext 5123



RAPS
Randolph Area Peer Support

Opening the Doors to
All Communities

RAPS Randolph Area Peer Support

Meeting Time: Every other Friday

Contact: Edwin Place & Joan Carmen
1-802-728-4476 Ext 13



ABOUT GMSA

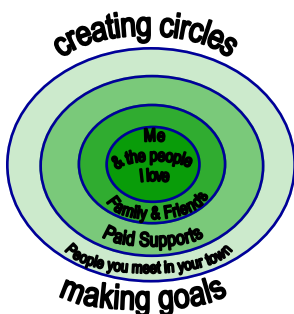
LOCAL GROUP NAME



Rutland High School

Meeting Time: Twice a month

Contact: Carolyn Ravana
1-802-770-1205



Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered of Rutland

Meeting Time: 2nd Tuesday Night
of the month

Contact: Patty Czarnecki & Lisa Lynch
1-802-775-1370



SAMS

Self-Advocates Meeting of Springfield

Meeting Time: 3rd Wednesday
of the month

Contact: George Tanner &
Charlotte Ruskin
1-802-886-1833



ABOUT

GMSA

LOCAL GROUP NAME

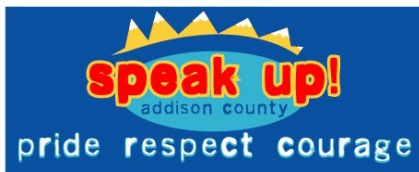
SAVY

Strong Advocate Voices & You
Morrisville



Meeting Time: 2nd Friday of the month
11:30am-1:30pm

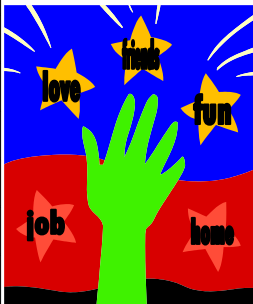
Contact: Gina Brown 1-802-888-7602



Speak Up!
Addison County
Middlebury

Meeting Time: most Thursdays 5-7pm

Contact: Mary Lafountain &
Lindsey Hescock 1-802-388-3381



Vermont Choices
St. Johnsbury

Meeting Time: Every Wednesday
2:00 to 3:00

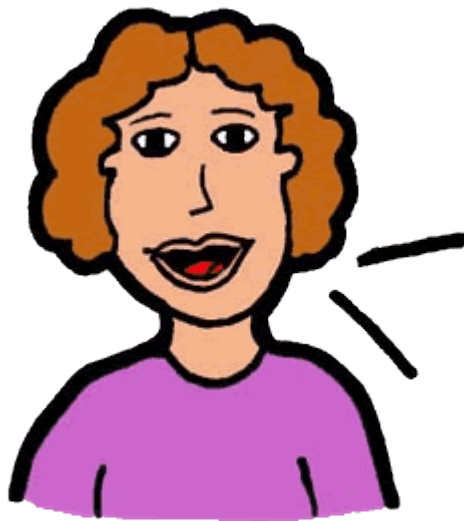
Contact: Aaron Sanville & Heather
O'Rourke
802-748-6350 Ext 1113

GMSA BYLAWS

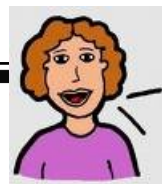


When GMSA first started, a document was written that contains rules that were created by self-advocates. The GMSA Bylaws describe basic information about GMSA and how we go about our business. It's an important thing that all non-profit organizations have. Your local group doesn't need its own bylaws. It's a long, boring thing to read, but some people like to know more about them. Contact GMSA if you are interested in learning more or check out the copy of the GMSA Bylaws at the end of this Handbook.

WHAT IS SELF-ADVOCACY?



WHAT IS SELF-ADVOCACY?



Self-advocacy is...



💡 Speaking up for yourself and helping others to speak up for themselves

💡 Getting to know yourself, being proud and feeling good

**DISABLED
& PROUD!**



💡 Getting to know the people around you, making friends

💡 Learning new things, solving problems, finding resources, making your case, negotiating for what you want



WHAT IS SELF-ADVOCACY?



Self-advocacy is...



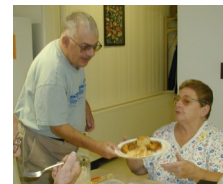
💡 Making your own decisions and knowing your responsibilities

💡 Thinking of all the other movements and preserving your rights



💡 Realizing you are not alone, that there are other people who are just like you

💡 Being part of your community



WHAT IS SELF-ADVOCACY?



Self-advocacy is teamwork....



👂 Listening to people's ideas and respecting their opinions

👂 NOT judging people because of the way they look or speak



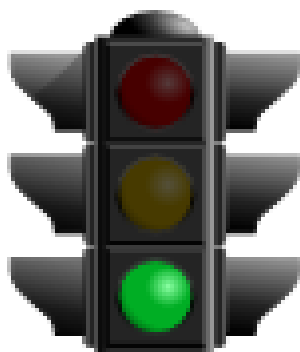
👂 Meeting politicians and telling them like it is

👂 Spreading the word and getting others involved in self-advocacy, especially teens.



👂 Helping others become leaders, feeling the power

HOW TO START A SELF-ADVOCACY GROUP



How to Start a Self-Advocacy Group?



Recipe for Success



Ingredients:



- 1 or more motivated future Self-Advocates

- 1 or more Allies to help



- 1 place to have your meeting

- 1 written flyer that announces where and when your first meeting will be



- 1 person for people to contact if they have questions

How to Start a Self-Advocacy Group?



1 person who will get a snack for the meeting

1 phone call to GMSA to share the exciting news



Combine the motivated people in a comfortable location, then stir gently until slightly lumpy. Makes 8 to 10 servings.





How to Start a Self-Advocacy Group?

Proceed to check the recipe for the following details:



- ☛ Talk with the Ally who is helping you about what you think you need help with and what you can do on your own.

- ☛ Decide when your meetings will be (page 0)



- ☛ Pick a name for your group. First brainstorm a list of possible names. Think about it for awhile and then vote at your next meeting

Learn about “Group Agreements”

- ☛ (page 13)



Make an agenda to follow (page 15)





How to Start a Self-Advocacy Group?

- ✎ Talk about what you want to accomplish as a Group — See Setting Goals (page 69)

- ✎ Decide when your group wants to have the Six Basic Workshops about Self-Advocacy. The workshops are taught by GMSA.



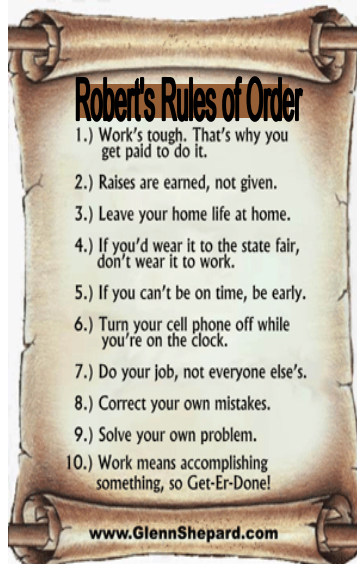
- ✎ Get everyone's contact information before the end of the meeting

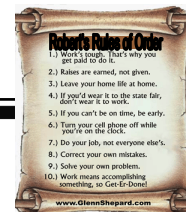
- ✎ Tell everyone to spread the word about your new group



- ✎ Encourage everyone to bring someone new to the next meeting

RULES USED TO RUN MEETINGS





RULES USED TO RUN MEETINGS

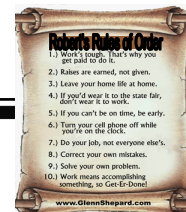


☒ A lot of “business” happens at meetings

☒ Many groups have rules to help people share their ideas, make decisions, and run meetings smoothly



☒ Some groups use Robert’s Rules of Order



RULES USED TO RUN MEETINGS

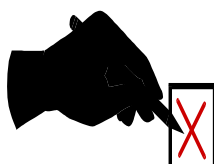
ROBERTS RULES OF ORDER

☒ Lists lots of ways that people talk to each other in groups



☒ Provides ways for the group to run smoothly

✓ Motions to make decisions

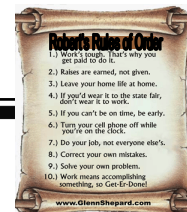


✓ Vote

✓ Take breaks



✓ End the meeting



RULES USED TO RUN MEETINGS

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER



☒ It is sometimes hard to remember what to say with Robert's Rules of Order because it uses words we don't always use

☒ These rules can be changed by groups to meet their needs

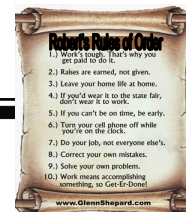


☒ Many boards use Roberts Rules of Order. You should learn them.



But most local self-advocacy groups use easier ways to make decisions.

See page 75.



RULES USED TO RUN MEETINGS

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER CHEAT SHEET



President or Chair: The member elected to run meetings. They can cancel or call a meeting.

Minutes: Written notes of past meetings. These can be read aloud at the next meeting.

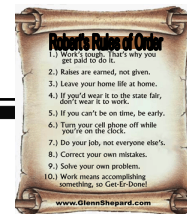


Announcements: Sharing information of general interest to all group members.

Old Business: Things that have been discussed before and need to be talked about again.



New Business: Ideas and issues that are new and need to be discussed by the board.



RULES USED TO RUN MEETINGS

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER CHEAT SHEET

Quorum: The number of board members needed to be present at a meeting to hold a vote.

Proxy: If you can't be at a meeting but you know how you want to vote. Someone can bring your vote to the meeting.

Adjournment: Closing or ending the meeting.



RULES USED TO RUN MEETINGS

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

HOW TO VOTE



◎When you have something you want the group to vote on you need to make motion

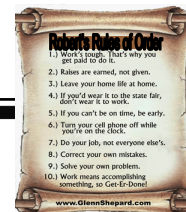
◎The person making the motion should say ***“I make a motion that...”*** and then says what people should vote for



◎Someone else has to agree with the motion

◎This person should say:
“I second the motion”





RULES USED TO RUN MEETINGS

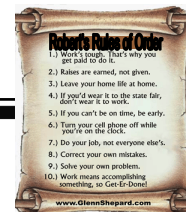
ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

◎Once the motion has been made and seconded then the leader should ask
“Is there any discussion?”



◎The group talks about the good parts and the bad parts of the issue before voting. This is the time to ask questions.



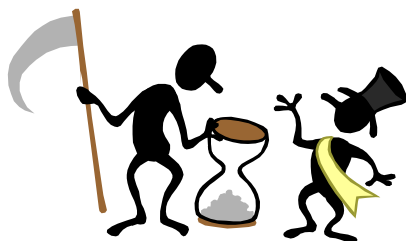
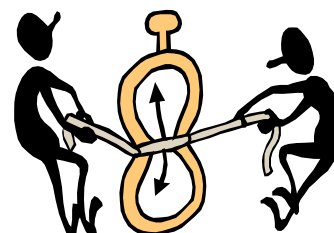


RULES USED TO RUN MEETINGS

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

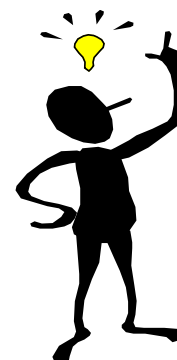
TIME TO VOTE

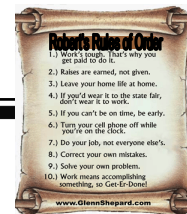
› Sometimes a person may think there has been enough talking and it is time to vote.



› If someone calls for a vote, there can be no more talking and there must be a vote

The person should say ***“I call for a vote....”***



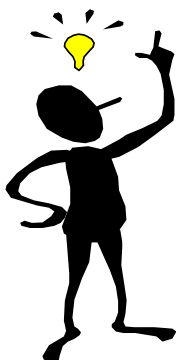


RULES USED TO RUN MEETINGS

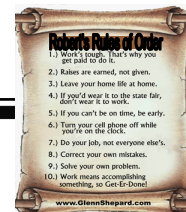
ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

CONDUCTING BUSINESS

‣ Sometimes you may decide to talk about an issue later, at the next meeting.



‣ You can ask the group to do this by saying, “I move that we table this issue.....”



RULES USED TO RUN MEETINGS

THINGS TO REMEMBER



○Relax

○Arrive on time

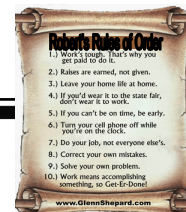


○Respect others and watch your attitude

○Stay on schedule/ follow the agenda

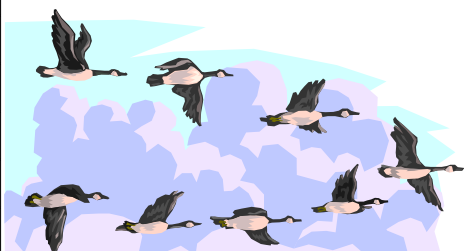


○Have fun



RULES USED TO RUN MEETINGS

THINGS TO REMEMBER



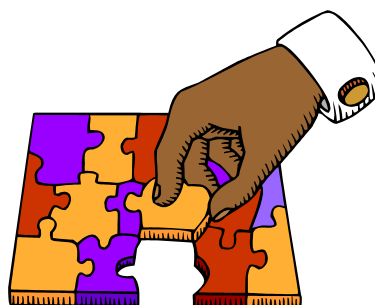
○Teamwork don't do things alone!

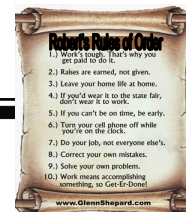
○Courage



○Information - get it.....share it!

○Everyone counts!





RULES USED TO RUN MEETINGS

THINGS TO REMEMBER

○ Try to stay in the meeting until break time or the meeting is over



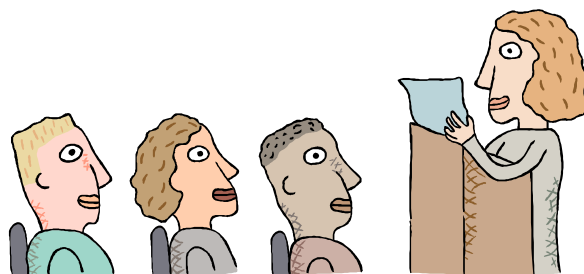
○ Be flexible

○ Be creative

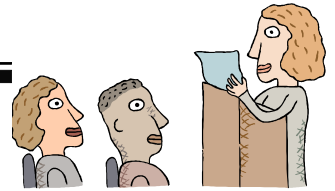


○ It doesn't have to be "US vs. THEM"
Work on issues together!

WHAT TO DO WHEN OTHERS ARE TALKING?



WHAT TO DO WHEN OTHERS ARE TALKING?



☐ Listen to what others are saying

☐ Stop and ask a question if you don't understand



☐ Don't interrupt the speaker

☐ Raise your hand and wait to be called on



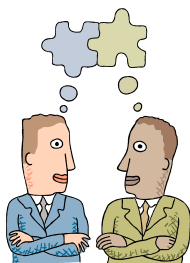
☐ Respect others opinions

☐ Listen and consider others suggestions

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ARE SPEAKING



WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ARE SPEAKING



☐ Be clear about what you want to say

☐ Be sincere; talk from the heart



☐ List the points you are making

☐ Include everyone. Speak to the whole group not just one person

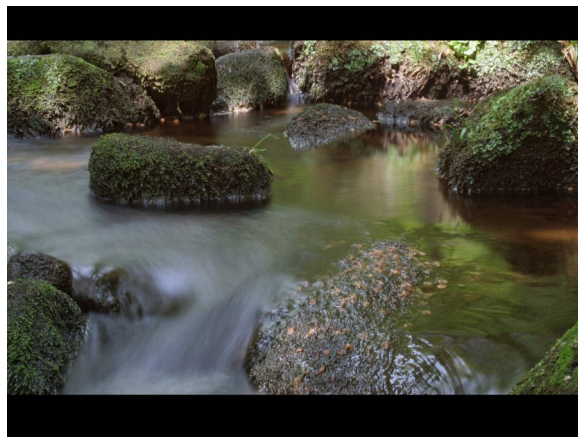


☐ Offer suggestions about how the group can reach a decision

☐ Take only as much time as needed



OTHER TIPS FOR HAVING SMOOTH RUNNING MEETINGS

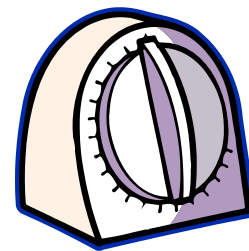


OTHER TIPS FOR HAVING SMOOTH RUNNING MEETINGS



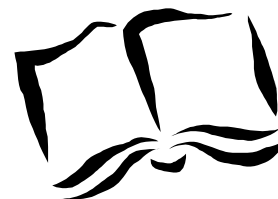
⌚ Set times on the agenda for each issue

⌚ Set a timer at the beginning of each issue to remind you how the time is passing

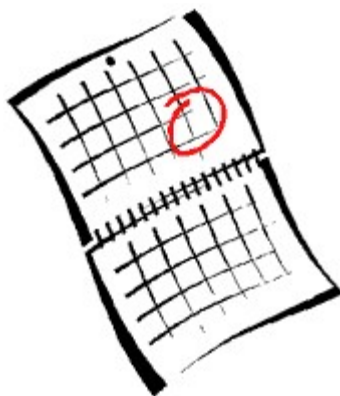


⌚ Have regular breaks

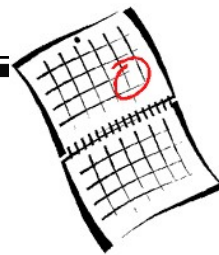
⌚ Read or listen to the minutes and committee reports from the last meeting



SCHEDULING YOUR MEETINGS



SCHEDULING YOUR MEETINGS



FIRST, you...



Find a time and day that's good for most self-advocates. Have your meeting at the same time of the week and on the same day each month.

Find a place you can have your Meetings. For example: Library, Teen Center, Agency, Church Hall, Town Hall, School



THEN, you...




Make a calendar every month.

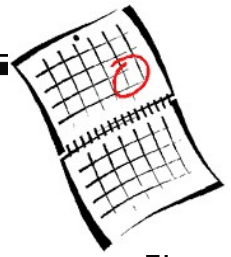
Include:

The name of your group, the days you will meet and times, and the locations.





 A contact number if people have questions about the self-advocacy meetings



 GMSA Board of Directors meetings




 Special Events

 Other items to include in your calendar...

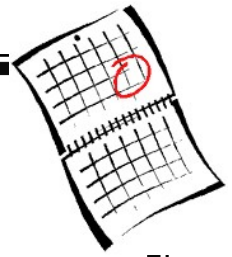


 Holidays


 Some groups like to also find out when birthdays are and put them on the calendar, too.




SCHEDULING YOUR MEETINGS




After you write or type the calendar...


 Hand the calendar out at least one week ahead of time. For example, if it's an October calendar, people will need to get it by about September 25th. This way people will have a full week to plan their schedule and transportation.



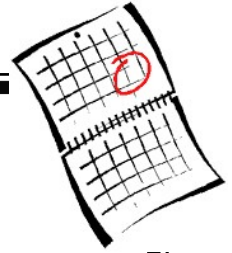
 Mail the calendars out to everyone who wasn't at the meeting.

 Give a copy of your calendar to your agency, so they can add it to their calendar.



 Make sure all the staff in the agency will be getting a copy, so they can tell the people they support about the self-advocacy meetings and events.


SCHEDULING YOUR MEETINGS




Once everyone has the calendar...

 Stick to the calendar!



 If you make a change, you'll need to let EVERYONE know—so be sure about what your plans are before you give everyone copies of your calendar.

 Be respectful of the space you have your meetings in. Leave it as clean as it was when you arrived. Better yet, show you appreciate being able to have your meetings there by leaving it cleaner than it was before your meeting!



GROUP AGREEMENTS



GROUP AGREEMENTS



When groups get together, they decide that they're going to come up with a list of rules that the entire group agrees to follow. We call these rules "group agreements" or "ground rules." In the workshops that teach people all about self-advocacy, these are the ones we use:

▣ Raise your hand



▣ One person speaks at a time



▣ No put downs



GROUP AGREEMENTS



▣ No question is a silly question



▣ It is OK to pass

▣ Confidentiality



▣ Give everyone a chance to speak.

**Are there any more agreements
you would like to add?**

GROUP AGREEMENTS



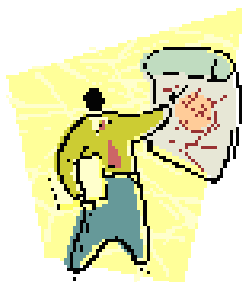
Write up your group agreements on flip chart paper and bring to them each meeting

▣ Go over these rules at the beginning of every meeting. This makes sure that everyone understands what they mean.

▣ Some groups have had meetings and not used group agreements. They reported that the meetings ended up in chaos. They decided that it is important to follow the rules they had originally agreed to use.



CREATING AN AGENDA





CREATING AN AGENDA

An agenda is a list of the things that the group wants to talk about and or accomplish at the meeting. It's very important to have an agenda, so that the meeting stays on track.



☐ Self-advocacy meetings always begin with people introducing themselves and going over the Group Agreements. Some groups will go around the table and everyone will say:

“Hi, I’m (**your name**) and I speak up for myself.”





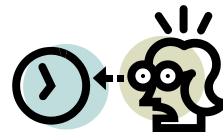
CREATING AN AGENDA

Usually, the agenda is made at the previous meeting, rather than at the beginning of the meeting. It's good to make the agenda ahead of time because:

- ☐ The group will know what they will be doing the next time they meet.



- ☐ It's easier for the Officers to be prepared for the meeting.



- ☐ You can get right to work, instead of needing to spend time figuring out what the group will be doing.

- ☐ You have all the time in between the meetings to add things to the agenda. It's easier to forget what you wanted to say if you're trying to come up with it at the last minute.



CREATING AN AGENDA



⊗ After introductions and Group Agreements, it's a good time to ask if anyone has something they'd like to add to the agenda.



⊗ It's also the perfect time to check-in with people to see how they've been and if anyone has anything they'd like to share.

⊗ As the group gets bigger, it takes longer for everyone to get a chance to speak. You might need to have longer meetings eventually.



CHECK-INS



CHECK-INS



😊 A major goal of your group is to build positive relationships among members.



😊 Clearly, an important part of relationship building is being able to communicate effectively with others. Both to share your needs and opinions and being able to listen respectfully to others.

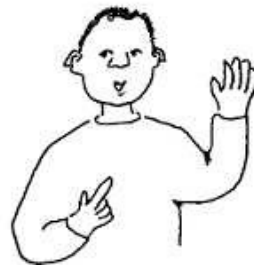


😊 “Check-ins” are a good way to practice these communication skills each time you meet.

😊 A “check-in” is simply a time when each person has a chance to talk.



CHECK-INS



☺ Check-ins point out the importance and value of each person.

☺ A person can also use this time to share that they are having a difficult time.



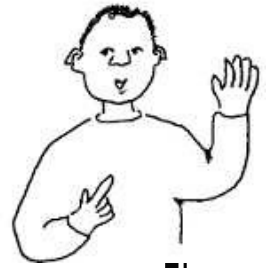
☺ This will alert others to be more sensitive and supportive.

☺ For new groups it can be helpful to provide a question or topic to reflect on -

For example:

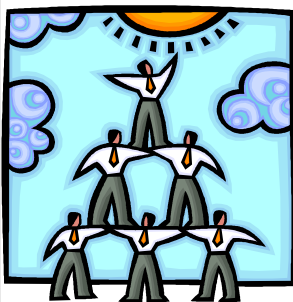
1. What is your dream job?
2. How does voting make you feel?
3. What was A+ or C- experience this week?

CHECK-INS



☺ Over time, as members become more familiar with each other, the “check-in” can become less structured.

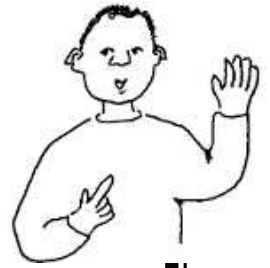
☺ “Check-ins” give each person a chance to reflect on various aspects of their life. For example, this can be a time to share accomplishments that may otherwise go unnoticed.



☺ An important benefit of “check-ins” is that it brings up issues that many people may be struggling with.

Sometimes a group will decide to work together to tackle one of the issues discussed. This helps the group come up with possible goals to work on.

CHECK-INS



☺ Try to keep the entire “check-in” time to around 10 minutes. Each person talks for a short time. If your group meets more than once a month you can take turns checking-in.

☺ “Check-ins” are usually done at the beginning of a meeting.



☺ People should listen and not interrupt.

CHECK-INS



☺ If someone is shy and needs help remembering what to say it is better for a peer to help out instead of a staff person.



☺ A person should always have the option of “passing” during check-in if they do not want to share.





CREATING AN AGENDA



After the check-in, the group gets down to business, creating an agenda. It's up to each group to decide what they want to do.

There should always be three kinds of things the group is planning and doing at their meetings:

① Learning new things



② Something you want to speak up about or ways to get involved in your community

③ Having fun socializing and supporting each other



CREATING AN AGENDA



Self-advocacy involves all **3** of these things! If you lose track of one or two, your group will be a little off-balance. So come up with what your goals are and work from there.



At the end of each meeting, some groups will:



☐ Go over the main points of the meeting

☐ Ask for suggestions on how to make the meeting better



☐ Make the next meeting's agenda



CREATING AN AGENDA

☐ Figure out who will bring the snack to the next meeting



☐ Write down all the things you need to do and the time each thing should happen ~ and you have an agenda!

Then the meeting is adjourned



SETTING GOALS FOR YOUR GROUP





SETTING GOALS FOR YOUR GROUP

Self-advocacy groups should be talking about **3** goals at every meeting:

❶ Something you want to learn



❷ Something you want to speak up about or ways to get involved in your community

❸ A fun goal



When you talk about goals your group needs to figure out:

◆ How do you know if it's a realistic goal?



◆ Do we have enough people to help?

SETTING GOALS FOR YOUR GROUP



◆ Will people need to take time off from work?

◆ How much will it cost the group?



◆ Is someone else already doing the same thing?

◆ What about the location?



And Most Importantly...

Is this how our group wants to spend their time and money?





SETTING GOALS FOR YOUR GROUP

If it is NOT realistic...

What can we do to make it realistic?

What can we do instead?

For example: The idea is to have a dance. Nobody in the group has ever organized a dance. Someone looks into the cost of a DJ and it's about \$300 (even at a discount). The group has about \$400 in their bank account. The local agency has dances twice a year. The group decides that they will offer to help the agency organize their dances. They hope to learn more about organizing a dance. Maybe they will be able to organize their own dance in the future.

If it IS realistic...



◈ Who wants to help?

◈ Where will it happen?



SETTING GOALS FOR YOUR GROUP



◆ When will it take place?

◆ Is transportation an issue?



◆ When will we work on this?

◆ How much time do we need to get ready?



◆ Do we need extra help? From whom? Is it something GMSA might be able to help with?

◆ Do we need to have a self-advocate volunteer “take the lead” and be the main contact person?



SETTING GOALS FOR YOUR GROUP



◆ Do we have the supplies we need?



◆ How much will it cost?



◆ Do we need to raise money to do it?

◆ Who will be invited?

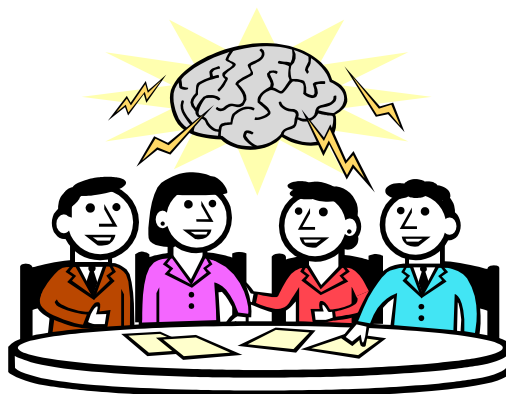


◆ How will we let people know about this?

◆ Do we need to hand out or mail people flyers?



BRAINSTORMING



BRAINSTORMING



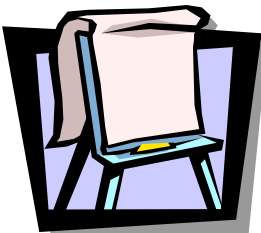
How Do We Brainstorm?



☆ In brainstorming, each person is given 2 or 3 minutes to quietly think of ideas on their own or with a peer.

☆ Help each other to write all of your ideas on pieces of scratch paper or sticky notes.

☆ Next, go around the room in a “round robin” format and each person says one of their ideas. Keep going around the room until all ideas are shared.



☆ You can have a person write the ideas on a flip chart or have folks stick their ideas on the flip chart.

BRAINSTORMING



- ☆ During the round robin members are encouraged to be creative and feel free to come up with “far out” ideas.



- ☆ Others are not allowed to make comments or judgments about the ideas presented.

- ☆ There is no discussion or rewording of ideas. Ideas are simply said and written.



- ☆ When all ideas are exhausted the group takes 2 or 3 minutes of quiet time to see if any more ideas pop up. Sometimes several new ideas do pop up.

- ☆ Next, talk about ideas, reword and combine ideas, or create new ideas. If all agree, then cross out ideas. After discussion the group selects the best ideas for action.

MAKING DECISIONS AS A GROUP



MAKING DECISIONS AS A GROUP



It's not always easy for the whole group to agree on something. All groups go through this. Here are some tips to help your self-advocacy group learn how to make decisions together:

✋ Have discussions that everyone gets to participate in.

✋ Make sure everybody is on the “same page” which means:



☞ Everyone understands what the group is talking about.



☞ Everyone understands what the options are

☞ Everyone understands what will happen if they choose one thing or the other

MAKING DECISIONS AS A GROUP



✎ Use a flip chart paper to brainstorm a list of things to do or solutions to a problem.

TRY THESE DIFFERENT WAYS TO VOTE

✎ Each person votes or puts their name next to every idea they want to do. Vote as many times as you want. The idea that gets everyone's vote or almost everyone (minus one or two) wins.

or



✎ Each member gets 5 stickers to vote with. You can put your stickers on anyway you want to. It's okay to put all 5 stickers on the same idea.

or

✎ Divide the list of ideas into 3 separate lists. Everyone picks their favorite idea on each of the 3 lists. The items chosen most often become the group's list of greatest ideas.



MAKING DECISIONS AS A GROUP

- ✎ Some groups also just ask people to raise their hands to vote on things. **We do not suggest that you vote this way on important issues or when trying to solve a difficult problem.**
- ✎ Think WIN - WIN. Remember what you learned from the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. Don't be in a hurry to just make a decision.
- ✎ Keep talking until you can come up with a solution that everyone can agree on. It may take more than one meeting. Maybe there's more information that can be shared. Sometimes having more information can change people's opinions and what they want to do.
- ✎ The goal is to find a solution that works for everyone.

COMMITTEES



COMMITTEES



Some groups decide that they want to have committees.



✓ A **committee** is a group of people who get together outside the regular self-advocacy meetings to focus on something specific the group is doing.

✓ Community groups, like the *Habitat for Humanity*, *Sierra Club* and *Elks Club*, have committees. If you have self-advocates who want to get involved in community groups, it can be a great experience to learn about committees in your self-advocacy group.



COMMITTEES

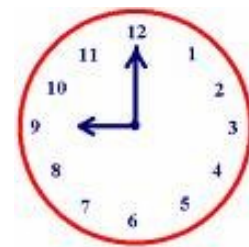


When would we consider forming a committee?



✍ Sometimes there are projects that a few people are really interested in, but the whole group only wants to spend a little bit of time on it during their meetings.

✍ Sometimes there's a project that's going to take a lot of time, but only certain people have the time to work on it.



COMMITTEES



✧ Some committees that self-advocacy groups have had include:



✧ Dance Committee

✧ Finance/Money Committee



✧ Fundraising Committee

✧ National Conference Committee



✧ Public Relations Committee

✧ Voices and Choices Conference Committee



✧ Workshop Committee

GETTING PEOPLE INVOLVED AND KEEPING PEOPLE INVOLVED





GETTING PEOPLE INVOLVED AND KEEPING PEOPLE INVOLVED

How do you get people involved?



◆ Invite people you know to a meeting.

◆ Have workshops and events
that anyone can attend.



◆ Tell your friends about it.

◆ Tell your agency and local
high schools about it.





GETTING PEOPLE INVOLVED AND KEEPING PEOPLE INVOLVED

◆ Start a mailing list.



◆ Make a calendar. Hand it out at your meetings. Mail it to everyone on your mailing list.

◆ Make flyers about your meetings, workshops, and events. Make a handout or pamphlet about your group.





GETTING PEOPLE INVOLVED AND KEEPING PEOPLE INVOLVED

How do you keep people involved?

◆ The group should vote on the best time to have meetings. Find a convenient place to have your meetings.



◆ Do things that involve everyone, that everyone is interested in. Try new things from time-to-time.

◆ Think of ways that people can be a leader, like reading the Group Agreements, running a meeting or taking charge of a project or committee.





GETTING PEOPLE INVOLVED AND KEEPING PEOPLE INVOLVED

How do you keep people involved?



◆ Have a snack at your meetings.



◆ Plan fun parts of your meeting.



◆ Plan fun events.

OFFICERS



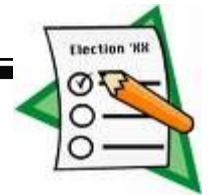


OFFICERS

Self-advocates nominate and elect people to lead their group. It's good for people to know what their role is at the meetings. The Officers are your leaders. They help the group do what they want to do. Members must talk about what they want to do and take an active role in the group. Members run their group and make decisions together.



OFFICERS



PRESIDENT

1. Will run / lead meetings or ask for a volunteer to run the meeting. Must be willing to share the spotlight.



2. Reach out to members who are shy and find something for them to do to get involved.



3. Show courage. Be willing to be completely honest and tell others how you see the situation.
4. Be willing to represent the group.
5. Help keep committees on track



OFFICERS



PRESIDENT

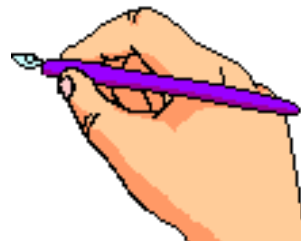
6. Show consideration. Be willing to listen to



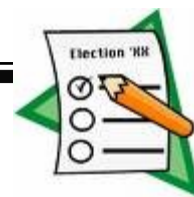
and respect the other person's point of view.

7. Work with others to prepare the agenda, possibly at the Officer's meeting. Make sure it's done before the meeting.

8. Sign official documents.



OFFICERS



VICE-PRESIDENT

1. Will do the work of the president if the president is absent.

2. Study the duties of the President so they know what to do if they need to fill in for the President.



3. Work closely with the President and other Officers to accomplish the goals of the group.

4. Contact people who are absent and support them to get involved.



5. Attend scheduled Officer's Meetings.

OFFICERS



TREASURER

1. Be on the Fundraising Committee.

2. Collect dues (if applicable).



3. Know how to keep track of a bank account
(or be willing to learn).



4. Keep a record of all the
money we earn and spend.

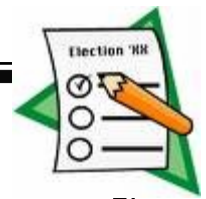
5. Give a monthly Treasurer's Report (the account
balance, what we've spent money on) at every
meeting.



6. Attend scheduled Officer's Meetings.

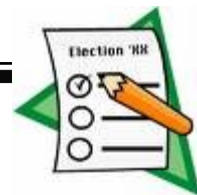
7. Work with the other Officers to accomplish the
group's goals.

OFFICERS



SECRETARY

1. Take attendance.
2. Write down or get help to write down all the decisions made during the meeting.
A blue hand holding a black pen, writing on a yellow surface.
3. Maintain the mailing list & phone number list.
4. Distribute calendars and remind members to come to meetings.
A purple square containing a yellow calendar and a yellow clock.
5. Work with others to create flyers, brochures, thank you cards and any other written messages for your group.
6. Attend scheduled Officer's Meetings.
7. Work with the other Officers to accomplish the group's goal.



OFFICERS

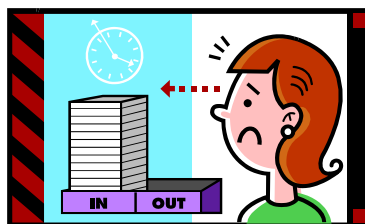
How do you choose good OFFICERS?

Choosing good officers is very important.

Self-advocates need to know what the Officers are supposed to do, so they can choose people who are qualified to do a good job.



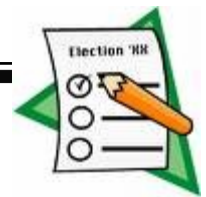
Voting is not a popularity contest!



Officers have a lot of work to do!

Choose Officers who can make a commitment to the group for the entire year.

OFFICERS



There are 2 Kinds of Officers

One Kind:

☒ Does everything themselves.



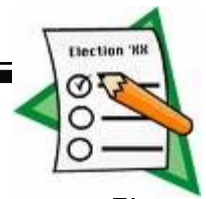
☒ Makes members feel like they do things on their own.

☒ Members get bored.



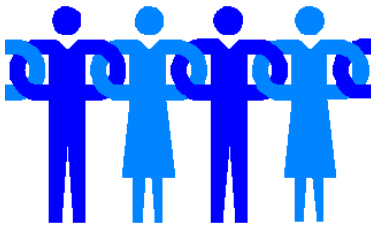
☒ When this kind of Officer leaves group, things fall apart because others haven't learned to do things on their own.

OFFICERS



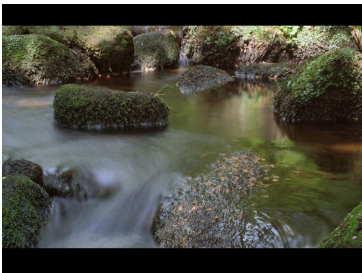
There are 2 Kinds of Officers

The Other Kind:



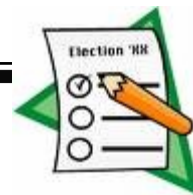
☑ Gets all members involved in the group.

☑ Teaches the members how to do things on their own and how to speak for themselves.



☑ When this kind of Officer leaves the group, things keep going because people know how to do the work.

HAVING OFFICERS MEETINGS



Once the group elects their officers, each officer must learn what their job is, and how to do it. Some groups schedule “Officer Meetings” once a month, usually before each group meeting. The Advisor and the officers get organized during the Officer’s Meeting by:

- ⊗ sharing information
- ⊗ creating an agenda
- ⊗ giving each other feedback and encouragement

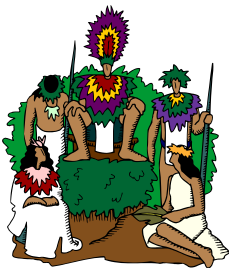


LEADERSHIP AND OFFICERS



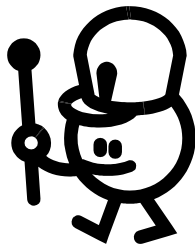
What is “leadership”?

A. The boat Columbus sailed on when he found the New World.



B. Ordering people around so they do what you want them to do.

C. The name of Darth Vader’s space station.



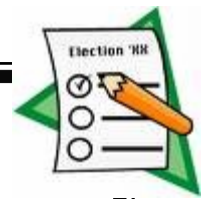
D. One person who does all the work.

This is a TRICK QUESTION!

None of these answers are correct!

We went online and saw that there are hundreds of ways that people describe leadership and qualities of a good leader. Here are some of the things we saw that we liked the best, in our own words...

LEADERSHIP AND OFFICERS



Leadership is...

◆ A person or persons chosen or elected to take charge of the group that chooses them. They help manage activities and help the group go in its chosen direction.



◆ Being optimistic. Believing in one person's ability to make a difference.



◆ Having the ability to encourage and nurture people to help them grow.

◆ Being a good role model.

◆ Following through with things.

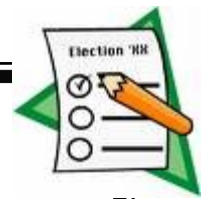


◆ Listening to what people say.

◆ Relating to what another person is going through or thinking, like the old saying "walk a mile in someone else's shoes."



OFFICERS

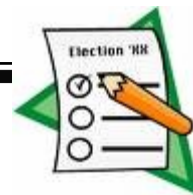


What qualities do you look for in a good leader?

- ✓ Good leaders show courage. They are completely honest and tell others how they see the situation.
- ✓ Good leaders encourage all members to participate in the meetings, including shy people.
- ✓ Good leaders are responsible and show it by doing what they say they're going to do.
- ✓ Good leaders let people know if they can't make it to a meeting.
- ✓ Good leaders don't criticize and talk behind peoples' backs.
- ✓ Good leaders welcome new members.
- ✓ Good leaders can make a commitment.



LEADERSHIP AND OFFICERS



A Few More Things to Think About...

- ♦ People who have disabilities usually don't get the opportunity to use their leadership skills or learn how to be a leader in other parts of their life.
- ♦ Self-advocacy groups offer people many opportunities to be a leader.
- ♦ Your group advisor is there to help, but it's very important that the self-advocates are the ones "running the show."
- ♦ Whether you have leadership experience or this is the first time you've thought about it, **anyone** can learn how to be a strong leader.
- ♦ Contact GMSA to find out about the leadership training workshops they offer throughout the year.



FUNDRAISING





FUNDRAISING

Things you should know to get started on your fundraiser



α Know your mission statement!

α Clearly define the reason and goals for your fundraiser.

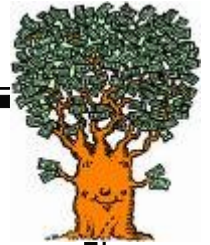


α Be excited about your goals because the more you are, the more you will sell.

α Spread the word. Tell everyone you know about your fundraiser.



FUNDRAISING



Listed are some *How To's* to make your fundraiser successful...



▣ Decide as a group which fundraiser you want to do.

▣ Each member should make a list of family and friends who may be interested in supporting your fundraiser.



▣ Set a start date. For fundraisers that are outside and need a sunny day, schedule a backup date.

▣ Set a closing date. For fundraisers such as 50/50 raffles or coin drops, 2-3 weeks is about the right amount of time.





FUNDRAISING



▣ Assign tasks. Each member should have a job to do.

▣ Send thank you notes when appropriate.

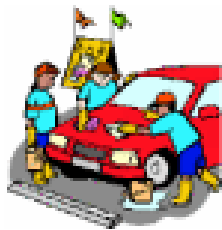


The following are some fundraising ideas.....



▣ Bake Sales

▣ Bottle Drives



▣ Car Washes

▣ Coin Drops



FUNDRAISING



More fundraising ideas.....

■ 50/50 Raffle



■ Garage Sales

■ Put on a dance



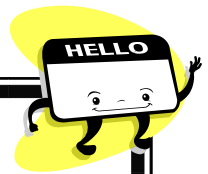
You can sell products such as:



■ Dutch Garden Flower Bulbs

■ Current Gift Wrap



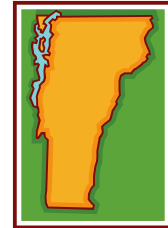


GMSA AND SPECIAL EVENTS

There are many special events for self-advocates and allies that happen in Vermont throughout the year.

- ▲ Voices and Choices is a big conference that happens once per year in May.

Hundreds of self-advocates come to learn new things in workshops, listen to speakers, and have fun meeting new people.

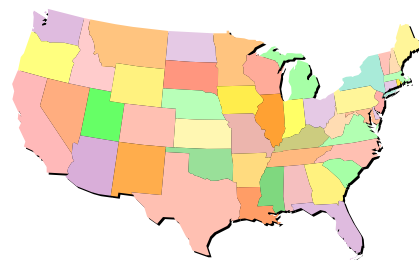


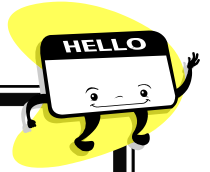
- ▲ The “SABE Conference” is an even bigger national conference that happens every two years. SABE stands for “Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered.” The conference is in a



different major US city every time.

Self-advocates and allies from all over the United States attend.





GMSA AND SPECIAL EVENTS

GMSA also offers many training opportunities all year long. These trainings include:

- ▲ 6 Basic Self-Advocacy Workshops
- ▲ 7 Habits of Highly Effective People
- ▲ Voter Training
- ▲ Reaching My Own Greatness
- ▲ Staying Safe
- ▲ Our Bill of Rights
- ▲ Know Your Legal Rights
- ▲ Speaking Up at the State House
- ▲ Officer and Board Member Training
- ▲ How To Start a Self-Advocacy Group
- ▲ Peer Sexuality Educator

**Call the GMSA office at 1-800-564-9990
for information about these trainings.**

ADVISOR





The Advisor's Role

Tips On What To Do:

- ☆ Give advice to the group when asked.
- ☆ Treating people with respect means being open to all the options we suggest.
- ☆ Have creative ideas—think outside of the box.
- ☆ Look at the person as a person not at their disability — Focus on our strengths.
- ☆ Feel comfortable with people with all different kinds of disabilities.
- ☆ Believe that labels hurt us: mental retardation, client, consumer.
- ☆ Talk to us like other people.
- ☆ Help us get to meetings.
- ☆ Show us how to make our own decisions—even if you do not agree.
- ☆ Encourage us to speak out for what we want to do.
- ☆ Give and take criticism.
- ☆ Encourage us to use our own words.



The Advisor's Role

More Tips On What To Do:

- ☆ Go to all the meetings.
- ☆ Be our equal not our boss.
- ☆ Remind us about group agreements.
- ☆ Listen.
- ☆ Find ways to help everyone get involved.
- ☆ Make sure everyone knows when and where the meetings are happening.

Please:

- ☹ Don't run the group.
- ☹ Don't have a closed mind.
- ☹ Don't take over for the leader.
- ☹ Don't tell us what we should do.
- ☹ Don't make decisions without the members.
- ☹ Don't assume that everyone agrees.
- ☹ Don't talk too much.
- ☹ Don't do too much for us.



The Advisor's Role

One important role an advisor plays is to support the group to evaluate their meetings.

How Did It Go?

Take 5 minutes at the end of each meeting to talk about how the group is doing. Members comment on how they are interacting with each other and building a positive group spirit. There are many useful questions to get positive suggestions and comments.

- ☆ Did we follow our group agreements?
- ☆ Who talked the most?
- ☆ Did everyone have a chance to talk?
- ☆ Did we try to draw people out?
- ☆ Did those talking also seem to be listening?
- ☆ Who shared information?
- ☆ Who gave support and encouragement?
- ☆ Did we get a lot of ideas before making a decisions?

SUPPORT STAFF





Support Staff Quiz

Some self-advocates bring a Support Person with them to the meetings. The following is a quiz to help you better understand the role of the support person at a self-advocacy meeting.

1. What does a good support person do at the self-advocacy meeting?

- A. Talk for the self-advocate
- B. Tell the self-advocate and others in the group what they should do for activities
- C. Talk on their cell phone outside of the meeting
- D. None of the above



Support Staff Quiz

2. How can the support person help the self-advocate?

- A. Be ready to help if the self-advocate asks for help
- B. If someone asks for help and it's something they can probably do by themselves, encourage them to do it on their own
- C. Help a person participate in the meeting
- D. All of the above

3. What are some things that self-advocates have needed help with?

- A. Keeping track of the meeting schedule & things that the self-advocate volunteers to do
- B. Encourage self-advocate to participate in the meeting
- C. Getting a ride to and from the meetings
- D. All the above

Cutting the Strings:

Suggestions for Self Advocacy Groups



By Dave Hingsburger

Everyone around me was having fun. My mother applauded heartily and the other kids were laughing uncontrollably. The characters on the stage moved around with jerky motions. They had high voices, which said silly things.

Perhaps it was just that I couldn't suspend disbelief. Perhaps it was because I couldn't take my eyes off the people standing behind the stage. Whatever it was, I found the whole situation vaguely menacing and highly disturbing.

To this day, I hate puppet shows. I hate those who want to control my movements and tell me what to say. Moreover, I hate almost anything that comes with strings attached.

All this went through my head as I watched, with a gathering sense of gloom, a presentation done by self advocates at a large state conference. One by one they stood, with no animation in their voices, and trotted out a spiel, obviously scripted and practised.

"How moving," shouted one audience member. "How revolutionary," praised another. But for me, I couldn't take my eyes off the facilitator standing at the side giving small directions and encouragements-a puppeteer very much loving the lime-light. Afterwards, as she stood in a rushing torrent of praise, she demurely said, "But this isn't about me."

Until the self advocacy movement began, people with developmental disabilities were the only minority not to lead their own movement. The self advocacy movement was to put an end to this inequity. Unfortunately, it didn't. It hasn't. It can't. Not the way things stand now.

I have been in the fortunate position to travel throughout North America lecturing and consulting on disability issues, taking every opportunity I can to meet



with self advocate groups and their facilitators. But watching what happens in many groups has caused me a growing sense of alarm. Groups are either wildly successful, well-meaning but unfocused (these die out fairly quickly), or they are under the control of facilitators who have not dealt with their own position of power and whose personal issues become the political issues for the group. The latter is the most concerning.

These groups demonstrate how people with disabilities are not free from control by the "betters who know better." From these observations I present a comparison between healthy and unhealthy self advocate groups.

Disability Pride

Disability is a defining condition, not a confining condition. One of the most amazing disability-oriented Web sites is Canadian. It's called "Disability Cool" and its message to all surfers is that it's cool to have a disability. This is shocking imagery and content for many. To identify as a person with a disability, to accept that disability is part of who you are, is the beginning of power. By this definition, the teens who developed this Web site are powerful.

Compare this to a movie put out by a Canadian self advocate organization wherein the lead spokesperson rails against having been labeled and speaks of others with disabilities in a patronizing manner-- not acceptable by even the greenest staff. So much emphasis has been put on the fact that "labeling is wrong" that many self-advocate organizations shrink from using the word "disability," let alone the word retardation.

Alternately, a proud woman with a disability recently gave a speech where she acknowledged her developmental disability, talked about being a victim of rape, and demanded that she be respected as a disabled woman and be listened to as a survivor of violence. Her outspoken, proud manner shocked people.

In New York City a man with a disability gave an incredible presentation at a self advocate meeting in which he referred to himself as "retarded" and talked about how society calls him names because he is "slow," names because he is "black," and names because he is "poor." "The only thing they don't call me is my own

name. That's cause they never even tried to learn it," he said. "But I know their names ... I know more than they do."



Both people come from vital self advocate groups where disability is on the agenda. Indeed, it is the agenda. Neither group is shamed by disability and both recognize that poor treatment is because of bigotry not because of personal attribute or blame.

Interestingly, disability deniers usually come from groups where the facilitator believes that "disability is irrelevant." Right! Tell a feminist that gender is irrelevant. Tell a black man that race is irrelevant. Tell a lesbian that sexual orientation is irrelevant. Disability-proud groups recognize that disability makes a difference--but that difference shouldn't lead to poor treatment, victimization, or discrimination. It's important for a woman with Down syndrome to be able to look in the mirror, actually see herself reflected back, and like what she sees. This is the birth of power.

Minority politics

Almost every minority has shucked off the idea of Normalization. This philosophy wasn't born here with people with disabilities. It was born the first time a black woman used powder to lighten her skin, the first time a gay man erased gender from his language when discussing his lover, the first time a woman slugged back a whiskey after work to be like the boys. And it has never worked. Aping the majority just reinforces its sense of power.

One of the hottest selling disability rights T-shirts is black with a message written in bright, bold letters: Piss on Pity. The idea that people with disabilities are a genuine minority, are genuinely oppressed, and are genuinely pissed off is smothered under the dictums of Normalization, a philosophy that says people with disabilities shouldn't gather in groups, a philosophy which ultimately cuts people with disabilities off from one another.

Consider for a moment the People First group in one state that successfully closed institutions through a court case. Or the People First group that staged an "in your face" action during a Memorial Day parade, which got them a lot of public attention. Or the couple with developmental disabilities, and their self advocate group,



who fought the court for the right to adopt.

Unlike the "Normalization groups" (led by well-meaning but disability denying facilitators) who, week after week, remain stuck on such issues as "being teased," each of these groups was successful because they identified as a minority and used minority politics to wild success.

The need for training

Skill-building has always been a critical part of self-help groups. A good example comes from the beginning of the women's movement when women first started gathering together in consciousness-raising groups. Women came together for support, but also to learn new skills and gain confidence in using those skills.

In unhealthy groups, the facilitator takes a back seat when it comes to teaching anything. There is an attitude that "disability doesn't matter." The idea that people may need help to learn meeting, planning, organizing, and leadership skills is somehow considered "demeaning." This approach, of course, leaves people with disabilities forever under the control of the facilitator. They will always need to rely, defer, and depend on a non-disabled person to "help" (lead) them in the group.

Withholding information, or denying training, is just another abuse of power. Recognizing that people with disabilities lack certain skills is not demeaning, but refusing to teach and train is.

In healthy groups, the facilitator recognizes a need for training and encouragement in an atmosphere that is non-threatening. Some training is provided for during each meeting--not in a standard lecture style but through an interactive learning approach involving practice, feedback, and lots of laughter. Most people learn better by doing than by hearing, and people with disabilities are no different. Many meetings falter and groups fade because people with disabilities come to meetings that are poorly planned and take so long to run that they become boring.

One organization actually has classes for self advocates on how to speak up, how to organize their thoughts when doing a presentation, how to work with media, how to chair a meeting. In another group, at least one fun and functional learning game is planned for each meeting. The facilitator, along with the group chair,



decides what goals to set for the group. From teaching about voting to chairing meetings, they learn it all. And often from each other. There is a self-advocate group right now planning to make a video about how to run a meeting, which is a good reminder that trainers can be people with disabilities themselves.

To acknowledge that a developmental disability is a severe learning disability isn't demeaning; it's liberating for everyone. As one self advocate put it, "Yeah, so I'm slow. Big deal." To refuse to acknowledge the disability is to keep it cloaked in shame and denial.

Everyone speaks out

In healthy groups, all people have opportunities to speak out. Every individual has a right to speak for themselves and for the group. Sharing the spotlight makes sure that a multitude of voices is heard.

One self advocate group sent a person who uses a picture board to an elementary school as part of the school's training on disabilities. The school was flummoxed, but when the individual got into the classroom with the kids, she spent all her time showing them her picture book and having conversations. The kids were fascinated to learn they could communicate with her through this board. In a letter to the self advocate group, the school said the kids learned more from the picture board than they would have from a standard "disability" talk. That self advocate group operates a very successful speaker's bureau and everyone who wants to, gets a chance to learn how to make a presentation and is then given an opportunity to present.

In unhealthy groups, a spokesperson is chosen more often than not by some "approving" body. This spokesperson then becomes elevated and in an odd way "blessed" by the powers that be. He or she is trained in what to say and how to say it, not by members of a group raising issues, but by people outside the group.

In healthy groups, the group develops its own philosophy and norms. People who speak, do so from positions developed within the group. Interference from "powerful others" is not welcome.

This is not to say that in some healthy groups there aren't natural leaders

and speakers who take on more of these challenges. However, all people are given opportunities and all people participate in the message to be given.



Process versus power

He is terrified of her. He is supposed to be the chair of the group, but every word that is spoken is filtered through the facilitator. He feels like he is on trial every minute of his existence as group leader. He loves being the chair but fears her disapproval.

She presents herself as a "true advocate" for people with disabilities. She loves her role as a facilitator and loves standing beside the flip chart. She must be there every time he makes a speech, and therefore her schedule determines his schedule. She is in control. If there is such a thing as passive-aggressive, this is passive controlling.

It's hard to see at first. In healthy groups the facilitator does have a role: facilitation! Helping develop a process for decision-making, and then assisting individuals in making the process work, is a wonderful job. But it's difficult.

Keeping oneself out of power positions while assisting is an art. Clinicians spend years learning how to provide service without leading. Police take special training on how to ask questions without leading. Yet people who become facilitators are expected to naturally know how to assist without leading. It doesn't make sense.

Process-oriented people ask for help, for feedback, and are constantly monitoring their own positions within the group. Power-based individuals see feedback as threatening, and training as an unnecessary bother. Those with power abuse it--always.

Facilitators want to be oil that keeps the meeting moving. Power people want to be the engine that drives the meeting. The problem with Pinocchio wasn't that he was a puppet. It was that his desire to be a human child blinded him to the beauty of his own wood.

WORDS YOU MAY NOT KNOW



WORDS YOU MAY NOT KNOW



Accommodations	How a place or an activity is changed to make sure that a person with a disability can participate fully. For example, a ramp on a building so a person who uses a wheelchair can enter, or a support person who takes notes for a person who cannot read.
Adjourn	End the meeting.
Advisor	People who are chosen by a self-advocacy group to help them with their work.
ADA (American With Disabilities Act)	Civil rights bill signed by President George Bush on July 26, 1990. Prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in the areas of employment, state and local government, public accommodations and services, transportation, and telecommunications.
Agenda	The list of things to talk about or do during a meeting.
Agreements	Saying yes to another person's ideas.
Ally	A person who supports what you believe and works with you to get things done.
Announcement	A message that gives you details you need to know.
Bylaws	A set of rules that are created by a board that tells the board members what their role is and how their organization and their meetings will be run.
Committee	A smaller group of people working on a set task.
Confidentiality	When something is not to be told to anyone outside of the group. Something that is confidential is considered private.

WORDS YOU MAY NOT KNOW



Decision	Pick what you want to do after thinking about all your choices.
Flyers	A single page with information about an event.
Fundraiser	Something you do to raise money.
Goal	What you want to achieve or accomplish.
GMSA	Green Mountain Self-Advocates, the state self-advocacy group in Vermont.
Know Your Rights	There are many laws protecting the civil rights of people with disabilities. One of these laws makes it illegal to segregate people with disabilities by housing us in institutions or nursing homes. Several states have laws that require the use of person-first language in all official documents. These laws play an important part in our journey toward full equality.
Minutes	Notes about what happens at the meeting. The notes are written down, so they can be shared with others.
Mission Statement	A description of the purpose of a group or person. It tells you why the group exists.
Officer	Someone picked to be a leader of your group.
Opinions	A person's ideas or thoughts about something.
Optimistic	Looks at the world as a positive place.
People First Language	Think "people first." You say "a woman who has a disability" rather than call her a "disabled woman." Use common sense. Avoid negative or judging words, such as "crippled," "deaf and dumb," "lame," and "defective." If you aren't sure how to refer to a person's condition, ask them. And if the disability is not important to your story or conversation, why mention it at all?

WORDS YOU MAY NOT KNOW



President	This is the name given to the person that the group votes on to guide them.
“R” word	Do not use the “R” word. Self-advocates feel it is hurtful, negative, and disrespectful.
Realistic Goals	What we can accomplish with the time, money, and people we have to work on it.
Robert’s Rules	A list of rules used to run a meeting.
Role Model	A person who is a good example for others.
SABE	Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered is the national self-advocacy organization.
Self-advocate	A person with a developmental disability who speaks up—alone or with others—for their rights, equality, and freedoms in our communities and around the world.
Secretary	A member of a group who is responsible for taking notes at meetings and making copies for other members. These notes are called the “minutes” of the meeting. The secretary may also be responsible for keeping copies of the minutes and other important documents.
Silence=Death	Self-advocates must speak up. When our stories are silenced, our lives become hidden and invisible. And when this happens, we are not treated with respect, dignity, equality, or even decency.
Speaking for Ourselves	You are not just standing up for yourself, but also for other people with disabilities.
Treasurer	A member of a group who puts together and reviews a report that shows the budget of the organization. The person is responsible for sharing this information with other board or committee members.



WORDS YOU MAY NOT KNOW

Unanimous	Everyone votes yes.
Vice-President	A person elected by the group to fill in for the President when he or she is not available.
Voices & Choices Conference	Annual self-advocacy conference in Vermont that is held in October.



GREEN MOUNTAIN SELF-ADVOCATES BYLAWS

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of the organization is Green Mountain Self-Advocates, known as GMSA.

ARTICLE II. PURPOSES

The purpose of Green Mountain Self-Advocates is for people with developmental disabilities to take control over their own lives, make informed decisions, solve problems and speak for themselves. Another purpose of GMSA is to educate and make the public aware of the strengths, rights, wants and needs of people with developmental disabilities.

ARTICLE III. OFFICE

The office of the GMSA is located at 73 Main Street, Suite 401, Montpelier, VT 05602.

ARTICLE IV. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. How to Be a Member

Any Vermonter interested in the welfare of people with developmental disabilities is eligible for membership. A person may become a member by filling out a membership form.

Section 2. Member Meetings

The entire membership may attend any board meeting or quarterly meeting held on interactive television at locations throughout Vermont.

Section 3. Voting Rights of Members

Only members with developmental disabilities and/or board members will have voting rights. Voting members must be present at a meeting to vote.

ARTICLE V. LOCAL SELF-ADVOCACY GROUPS

A local self-advocacy group consists of people with developmental disabilities advocating taking control of their lives, making informed decisions, solving problems and speaking for themselves. Local groups are located throughout Vermont.

ARTICLE VI. Board Members

Section 1. Definition of Board Members

The board members are a group of people sharing the responsibility of managing GMSA business.



Section 2. Numbers of Board Members

The board will have no more than 25 people. At least 90% of the members will be people with developmental disabilities.

Section 3. Board Make Up (Who Can Be a Board Member)

Each local group may elect one (1) voting member to the GMSA board. Local groups are encouraged to choose an alternate to fill-in for their board member when needed. All other members of the board shall be appointed by consensus of the board.

Section 4. Term of board members

Board members will make a commitment for one (1) year. Each member will hold office until a successor has been selected.

Section 5. Regular board meetings

Regular meetings of the board shall be held at least four (4) times each year, at a time and place chosen by the board. Written or personal notice of each meeting shall be given to each board member.

Section 6. Quorum of Members

51%, one more than half of all the board members, is a quorum.

Section 7. Voting

Each board member shall have one vote. Provided there is a quorum, a majority of those present shall be sufficient to carry any motion or decision.

Section 8. Board Pay

Board members shall receive no pay as board members.

Section 9. Conflicts of Interest

It shall be the responsibility of each board member to tell the board of any connection he/she may have that may effect a board decision. The board may prevent that board member from voting on that issue.

Section 10. Removal of Board members

If a board member cannot do the work of the board, he/she may need to leave the board. The member must first be given written notice and be given a chance to be heard at the meeting where the decision is being made. If a board member misses two (2) meetings in a row without an approved excuse from the President or Vice-President he/she will no longer be on the board.



ARTICLE VII. OFFICERS

Section 1. Officers

The officers of GMSA consist of the following people: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

Section 2. Election of Officers

Each of the GMSA officers will be elected by the membership once a year. Voting members will nominate officers. The President or Vice President may appoint someone to fill a vacancy until the next election.

Section 3. President

The President will run board meetings or ask someone to run board meetings, supervise the Chairs of Committees and sign official documents. The President will also do other tasks as requested by the board.

Section 4. Vice President

The Vice President will do the work of the President if the President is absent. The Vice-President will assist the President and will do other tasks as requested by the President or the board.

Section 5. Secretary

The Secretary will read the minutes at the meetings, be the keeper of the records and sign official documents. He/she will do any other tasks as requested by the board.

Section 6. Treasurer

The Treasurer will present expense reports, an annual report and accountings to the board members and to the members, sign official documents, prepare the yearly budget with the board and do other tasks as requested by the board.

Section 7. Removal of Officers

The board members may remove any officer elected or appointed to office if the board feels that he/she is not doing their responsibilities.

Section 8. Vacancies

If an officer leaves his/her office because of death, resignation or removal, the board members will fill the empty position for the rest of the term.



ARTICLE VIII. COMMITTEES

A committee can be made up of more than two people, with the power to make recommendations about the task(s) that they have been asked to do. The committee will select a chairperson and decide how many members need to be present in order to conduct business and make recommendations. They will bring their recommendations back to the board.

ARTICLE IX. HOW WE DO BUSINESS

Section 1. Fiscal Year

The Fiscal Year of GMSA will start on July 1 and end on June 30 of the following year.

Section 2. Financial and Legal

The coordinator or office manager will authorize expense vouchers. The coordinator or President of the Board will sign contracts, leases or other documents signed and carried out in the name of and on behalf of GMSA. Copies of the minutes where the board members made the decision will be attached.

Section 3. Books and Reports

GMSA will keep correct and complete books and records of their accounts, and will also keep minutes of the proceedings of its board and committee meetings. GMSA will keep at its office or principal place of business, a membership register giving the names, addresses and other details of the membership, and the original or a copy of its Bylaws, including amendments to date signed by the Secretary of GMSA.

Section 4. Inspection of Books and Records

All GMSA books and records are available for inspection. Requests to inspect must be in writing and availability will be subject to a time and place convenient to GMSA.

Section 5. Dissolution

In the event Green Mountain Self-Advocates dissolves, any and all assets will be transferred to another self-advocacy organization that is run by people with developmental disabilities. No assets will be distributed to its board members, members or officers.

ARTICLE X. Amendments

These by-laws may be changed, added on to or taken away from by a majority vote of the voting members. The proposed amendment(s) must be brought to the board members and the membership at least six (6) weeks before the meeting at which it is to be voted upon.