



STATE ORGANIZATION AND CHAPTER LEADERS/OFFICERS POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

Officers

Note: Appointing or electing officers is not a requirement for new chapters. An organization might prefer to operate by steering or planning committee. Once the organization is fairly mature and increasing in size, officers may be elected for effective administration and continued organization development.

However, it is completely acceptable to operate with a steering committee so the leadership responsibilities don't fall on one person. If a steering committee is used, please reflect that on the annual chapter update form. List all the names of the committee but indicate one or two people who will be listed on the website for contacts and indicate who should receive communications from the HLAA National office.

New chapters do not need officers until the membership feels that it would be wise to have them. With the possible exception of a secretary, it is preferable to have people with hearing loss or parents of children with hearing loss as officers. All officers must be current HLAA members. Ideally, no officer should serve more than two consecutive terms in a position. Officers are the organization's leaders and are responsible for handling the affairs that do not need to be voted on by the membership. Officers/leaders should report their actions/decisions to the membership.

The first step for new officers is to convene for a brainstorming session to consider the purpose and goals of HLAA. HLAA State Associations and Offices and HLAA Chapters share HLAA's mission, are an important part of the Hearing Loss Association of America, and have a unique reach into local communities. In planning objectives for the organization, the leaders might work to develop ways to engage people and keep them involved. The key to the success of self-help groups is the *opportunity to help others with their personal growth*. From personal growth come new leaders.

Inspiring Others

A weak organization is often one in which a few do all the work. Recruiting, developing and replacing officers and committee chairs is a continual process. By getting to know the members well, you can ask them personally, face-to-face, to assume jobs that you know they are capable of doing. People who have never been involved in an organization before will be more likely to succeed with small tasks. You are there to encourage and support them. As you observe a greater degree of confidence, invite them to take on jobs that are more challenging. In this manner, you can develop leaders who can assume greater responsibility for the organization. Involving as many members as possible in chapter work offers learning experiences while nurturing self-help and developing future leaders.

Divide responsibilities into workable and understandable parts. The officers can then determine, depending on the current needs members have identified and the chapter's stage of development, the number of committees and chairs needed to achieve the desired programs or provide services. A committee structure frees the



president or leader and other officers to focus on broader issues, and strengthens and unifies the group.

Chapters may opt to be governed by a formal board of trustees or operate as a steering committee with a chair, a treasurer and a secretary. State associations have formal officers much like HLAA National. HLAA State Offices have a single director and may have other people fill roles such as newsletter editor, historian, etc.

President/Leader

Who is this person?

Congratulations! You have accepted the highest compliment an organization can pay you. The members are placing their trust in your leadership abilities. You have the courage, desire and caring sensitivity needed to lead others in self-help activities. You believe in and are committed to HLAA's mission and the principle of self-help. You know that changing people's attitudes about hearing loss is critical to making progress. You have demonstrated an appreciation and understanding of HLAA goals and philosophy and are aware that effective action begins at the local level. You have a challenge to explore and maximize individual and group growth, and in the process, create a dynamic team that can make a positive difference for people with hearing loss in your community.

What is the president's/leader's role?

The president/leader assumes responsibility for the morale and growth of the organization, setting the spirit and pace of it, lending enthusiastic support and cooperation to a wide variety of activities, and relating warmly and openly to participants. As an HLAA leader, you view leadership as a responsibility rather than rank and privilege.

HLAA encourages you to develop your leadership skills to provide a model of self-help leadership. A working familiarity with the contents of the Leader Support section of the HLAA website along with the supplemental support materials provided by HLAA will provide you with an understanding of the HLAA philosophy, structure and procedures. You will keep members abreast of HLAA national developments and bring the HLAA message to members and people in your local communities. You will join others in learning about and sharing improved methods of coping with hearing loss.

HLAA believes that we are *people* first and have a hearing loss second. We are concerned for the well-being of the complete person and not just his or her hearing. A president's most significant function then, is to encourage each member to understand more about themselves and become as comfortable as possible with their hearing loss. The president needs to get to know each member well. Along with organization members, he or she will explore the aspirations of the group as a whole.

Leadership Style

Every leader brings their unique style to the job. Leaders of self-help groups (in this case, HLAA State Organizations or Chapters), understand that the organization does not belong to them personally. Their leadership style will not create dependence, rather, it will give members the feeling that HLAA is *their* organization and it is *their* participation that will determine its future. Leaders must take special care to avoid inhibiting participation by members or take actions that might be seen as dominating the group.

While the president presides over all general member and officer meetings, important interaction should come through emails, phone conversation or in-person contact between meetings. How are the other officers/leaders doing? Do they understand what the organization needs? Do they need suggestions or help? Will everything be done on time? Are there new ideas or problems that need to be discussed?

At the beginning of each term of office, it is typical for the president to bring together the officers (or everyone, if the group is small) to draft a yearly planning calendar of meetings and special events and projects. Please consider HLA Convention, held annually, so there is no schedule conflict. Not only does this ensure a coordinated program, it also establishes goals, which unify the group.

The president periodically asks the other leaders: Are we keeping to the plan that we drafted for the year? Are members getting involved in committee work? Are programs meeting members' needs? Is our communication access adequate? Are we growing? Do members feel comfortable at meetings? Are we looking outside of ourselves? How do we benefit our community?

Developing a close and friendly relationship between former and new leaders is ideal, as that is a good way to establish strong traditions for the organization. When presidents/leaders rotate out of office, they must be careful to step aside and offer support and advice to the new leader only when asked. Past presidents are valuable resources for events or projects, furthering HLA National programs, or being involved at the state level.

Suggested Materials for Officers (*Please note:* Many of these documents are available at hearingloss.org under Chapters & State Orgs tab – click on Chapter Leaders Resources link.

- Meeting agenda (formats available on the Internet)
- Bylaws/standing rules
- Budget List of members/participants Planning calendar
- *Hearing Life e-News* newsletter (Sign up on hearingloss.org for free.)

Checklist for the President/Leader (State Associations and Chapters)

- Preside at general membership meetings.
- Be an ex-officio member of all committees except the nominating committee.
- Ensure that all decisions and resolutions are put into effect.
- Communicate regularly with HLA National and complete required forms by the deadline. We are all one organization working toward common goals.
- Recruit people to chair committees and assume other tasks. Cultivate new leaders.
- Arrange for the vice president (and other leaders) to conduct chapter meetings at least twice a year.
- Assign tasks to the vice president so that he or she is not simply a figurehead.
- Write a message for publication in the organization's newsletter and/or website and suggest other material to be included. (Always quote accurately, credit sources, get permission when applicable and check facts thoroughly.)
- Send appropriate material to chapters@hearingloss.org for possible publication in our magazine, *Hearing Life*. Include a photo in a high-resolution .jpg format and make sure that faces can be easily seen.
- Stimulate interest in new programs and projects.
- Please read all HLA National communiqués and distribute them to appropriate officers and members promptly.
- Show the most recent issue of our magazine, *Hearing Life* at member meetings. (HLA provides a subscription to each state organization and chapter for this purpose.)



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- Read the HLAA mission statement aloud at meetings. (It is in our magazine, *Hearing Life* on page 6.)
 - At meetings, watch for to people who may not be hearing or understanding.
 - Yearly, or as the term of office is finished, email the HLAA National office (chapters@hearingloss.org) a list of succeeding officers' names and addresses.
 - Preside at all board meetings and share in the discussion of ideas, changes, and proposals to be decided together for the organization to grow. Final decisions are the responsibility of all officers and major changes are voted on by the general membership.
 - With any changes of office (including the presidency), follow up to make sure that all HLAA materials are turned over to the successors.
 - Keep in contact with the HLAA Chapter Coordinator(s) in your state, if applicable.

Vice President (State Associations or Chapters)

In any organization, especially a new one, the president has a tremendous job. So does the vice president, whose support and insights are needed. (Too often vice presidents function as little more than an organizational figurehead. Presidents should ensure that the talents of vice presidents are fully used.)

A vice president might begin with an assortment of duties helpful to the president, such as filling in as program or publicity chair, seeking new members, providing literature or even bringing refreshments. An HLAA State Association or Chapter vice president is in a position to truly listen to the feelings and responses of the group and act accordingly.

A chapter may choose to have two vice presidents. One might serve as program chair and a second may serve as membership or publicity chair. In highly organized organizations, a vice president is considered to be in training for the presidency.

Checklist for the Vice President

- Assume the president's duties in case of his or her absence.
- Keep in touch with activities and committees and assume tasks as requested by the president.
- With the president and secretary, help complete the agenda for the general meetings.
- Coordinate the planning calendar of meeting topics and special events with the president and committee chairs.
- Make sure each chair knows what is expected, by providing: a written job description; someone to discuss the job with; and, membership support.
- Assume the duties of an office vacancy until the vacancy is filled.
- Prepare proposed bylaw amendments for all HLAA Members to vote on.
- Plan and conduct at least two association or chapter meetings per year, as requested by the president.
- Serve as a liaison to other chapters in the area and beyond.
- During meetings watch for people who may not be hearing or understanding.



Secretary

Please don't be intimidated by the size of this list. Often a person without a hearing loss serves in this role. All we are asking you to do is take a front seat with a sharp pencil, laptop or iPad, and do the best you can. No one will care if you ask the speakers to repeat, because it gives all listeners a second time around, too. You can fill in the blanks later. Your notes will be more than adequate. A highly active chapter may wish to establish a separate office of corresponding secretary.

Checklist for the Secretary

- Record the proceedings of meetings, both regular and board meetings, so that there can be no question as to what action was taken. Email the minutes or prepare copies for distribution.
- Have on hand at each meeting the following items.
 - Association or chapter bylaws
 - *Robert's Rules of Order*
 - The previous meeting's minutes. (It is not necessary to read them at regular meetings.)
 - A list of officers or steering committee leaders, standing special committees and their members
 - Paper ballots and agenda templates (found for free online) should they be needed
- Assist the president and vice president in the preparation of agendas for meetings.
- Notify committee leaders of their appointments and duties.
- Count the standing vote when so requested by the presiding officer.
- Call the meeting to order in the absence of the president and vice president and preside until a meeting chair is appointed.
- Act as custodian for all records except those assigned to others.
- Distribute minutes, agendas, and other announcements as requested.
- Attend all regular and special meetings. When absent, arrange for a substitute to take minutes.
- Use the following general outline for preparing the minutes.
- Kind of meeting; regular, or special
- Name of assembly; i.e., regular monthly meeting of HLAA organization
- Date, place and time of meeting, number of members present
- Names of presiding officers, guests, and any presenters
- Approval of minutes of previous meeting, and corrections if any
 - ♦ Record all motions and announcements. (Do not record withdrawn motions. Include the maker of the main motion. Including of the name of the person seconding a motion is optional.)
- Note any correspondence received by the chapter.
- Become familiar with parliamentary procedure by reading *Robert's Rules of Order*.
- Attend to all routine correspondence such as thank you letters to speakers and other correspondence as directed by the president. Keep copies in an appropriate manner such as in a file folder by date. (A highly active chapter may wish to establish a separate office of corresponding secretary.)
- Recruit a resource person ("librarian") to order, show and distribute literature at member meetings.



Treasurer (State Associations and Chapters)

Once an HLAA organization is functioning, it has an identity. If money is received or collected, it is time to open a checking account. This is the most accurate method of keeping track of income and expenses. Obtain pre-numbered checks so that each can be accounted for.

This and other business requires obtaining an employer identification number (EIN, also known as Taxpayer Identification Number or TIN) from the Internal Revenue Service. Use IRS Federal Form SS-4 available at irs.gov. The form is simple and easy to complete.

Organization financial records will vary in size and complexity depending on the size/activity of the chapter. An invoice or sales receipt must support all expenditures. The important thing is that the records clearly and accurately reflect each transaction.

In addition to processing chapter income, treasurers may be responsible for forwarding new and renewed membership dues to the HLAA National office.

Checklist for the Treasurer

- Maintain complete and accurate financial records.
- Establish a local bank account as soon as funds warrant. Decide how many persons may write/sign checks. (Two people are recommended.)
- Make all deposits and withdrawals to the organization's bank account.
- Balance the account(s) using the bank statement monthly.
- Distribute funds as decided and/or requested by the chapter officers. Decide a dollar amount of what expenses must be pre-approved.
- Prepare a periodic or annual financial statement of income and expense for the president and members. Give a copy to the secretary for inclusion in the minutes, newsletter or posting at meetings—depending on the procedure your organization follows.
- If the organization is included in the HLAA's federal income tax exemption under IRS code 501(c)(3), work with the HLAA National staff to complete any requirements to maintain tax-exempt status.
- Prepare and mail federal and state tax forms in a timely fashion.
- File all documents to meet state requirements.
- Serve as chair, or a member of the chapter's finance committee. You may also serve on any special fundraising committees.
- Handle all income and send new or renewing membership dues owed to HLAA's National office.
- Turn all records over to the incoming treasurer.

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