

Officer Handbook

A leadership guide for officers of Little People of America, Inc.

National Office

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First and foremost - as an officer of LPA you need to read the LPA Bylaws and LPA Policy Manual. Many of your questions will be answered there.

Mission of LPA

Little People of America, Inc. (LPA) is dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with dwarfism throughout their lives while celebrating with great pride Little People's contribution to social diversity. LPA strives to bring solutions and global awareness to the prominent issues affecting individuals of short stature and their families.

History

Little People of America was formed in 1957 by entertainer Billy Barty. The first national "convention" was in Reno, Nevada, with 21 people attending from nine states. Soon a membership list was compiled of more than 200 people. The United States was divided into fourteen geographic areas known as districts. By the 1978 National "Convention" there were over 500 people in attendance and our mailing roster included more than 3,000 families. LPA quickly became associated with leaders in the field of genetics, orthopedics, and neurology from across the country and around the world. These long-standing relationships with health professionals evolved into the formation of the LPA Medical Advisory Board. Today, the Medical Advisory Board continues to be a vital resource to the LPA membership.

LPA continued to grow and the local support groups known as chapters were chartered by the Board of Directors. Phoenix, Arizona was the first chapter. Today, chapters provide a close personal relationship with individuals with dwarfism, their families, and the organization.

LPA Milestones

- Vocational/educational scholarships have been available since 1960. Many LPs have been supported to reach their educational goals.
- In 1961, LPA began assisting individuals wishing to adopt children with dwarfism.
- The general membership participated in voting for the first time in 1962.
- In 1962, LPA's first national newsletter was published.
- The first International LPA Conference was held in Georgetown, Maryland, in 1982, with over 150 people in attendance from almost ten countries.
- In 1985, the LPA National Convention was held in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, to reach out to the community in our neighboring country.
- In 1986, LPA became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and changed the name of conventions to conferences.
- The Dwarf Athletic Association of America (DAAA) held its first National Games in conjunction with the LPA National Conference in 1986.
- The 1990s and 2000's have brought advances in modern genetics and the discovery of many genes associated with several types of dwarfism, making prenatal testing for dwarfism possible.
- In 1995 'auxiliary' members were first able to vote and therefore hold office (i.e. average-height parents, grandparents, siblings)
- October Dwarfism Awareness Month was first declared in 2009.
- National Conference attendance broke the 2,010 mark in 2005.
- National Conference attendance broke the 2500 mark in Seattle 2007.
- The Board Directors restructured from 21 to 11 in 2014.
- LPA first hired an Executive Director in 2006.
- LPA organized first International Dwarfism Leadership Summit in Berlin in October of 2016. Twenty-two countries and 26 organizations participated.

It is suggested you read both Chapter and District Sections as the information may be applicable to both branches of LPA.

SECTION I. - CHAPTERS

Chapters are the grassroots of LPA and the most critical element of the organization. There are presently 73 chapters nationwide. A chapter's role is to offer support, guidance, information, and networking on a local and/or regional level. Due to travel, financial, or other restrictions, chapter meetings and correspondence are often the first or only contact a member and his or her family may have with LPA, thus making them vitally important. Chapters have the potential to maintain more personal and consistent contact with the members, ensuring that the members obtain the information and support they need, and encouraging and nurturing involvement at the District and National levels.

Roles and Responsibilities

Organize Chapter Meetings

The number of chapter meetings per year varies with each chapter. Some chapters meet monthly, others meet bimonthly. The meeting is often comprised of a general business meeting and an activity. Everyone is welcome, whether they are short-stature or average-sized or parents, siblings, grandparents, or friends. Ideally, activities should be planned for all age groups.

Official chapter business should be run under parliamentary procedure. All officers should be familiar with Roberts Rules of Order and make every attempt to follow them during the business portion of the meeting. Meetings should cover national and district happenings, old and new business, and reports from chapter officers and committee heads.

Publish Chapter Newsletters (four to six per year) and keep in contact via email and Facebook

For many LPA families, the chapter newsletter and Facebook Chapter and District pages are their most frequent link to the dwarfism community due to distance and travel expenses. The communication is a chance to set the tone for your chapter, include a President's Message (and a column for any other chapter officer) and let your members know what you hope to accomplish. It is suggested to mail to all your households once per year.

A newsletter and social media is a great way to highlight the achievements of your members. Keep an eye out for "interesting" members, and ask them to write a short article or essay about themselves. Try to share the burden, and encourage members to submit articles. In addition, the communications should also include reports on national and district policies, events, and other happenings as well as upcoming events and directions to local activities.

Many chapters assign a newsletter editor or Facebook moderator to take over the day-to-day responsibilities. It is best to assign this job to someone with good writing and computer skills..

For mailings, request a roster from the National Office

Host District Regional (on a Rotating Basis)

Chapters are expected to host a district regional on a rotating basis. Contact your District Director or Regional Rep to discuss your chapter hosting an upcoming regional.

Planning a regional is a great way to showcase your chapter to the rest of the district, and to meet others in your district. Many Regionals have evolved into “mini-conferences” with more than 300 registered participants!

See the "How to Host a Regional" section for tips.

Promote Community Outreach

Community Outreach refers to a wide range of activities that chapters have been carrying out since the beginning. LPA is working to develop more established systems of outreach to help you, our members, and our prospective members, all at the same time.

Community Outreach is about getting information to a number of different people and/or groups. The best community outreach tailors the information to the audience targeted. At LPA, we provide materials to help you reach out to prospective and new members. We are in the process of developing outreach materials to help you contact and work with another important group—schools and other community organizations in your area.

New Members.

You will receive a notice from the national office when you receive a new member. Also review your roster for new names. It is recommended that the chapter president or other designated chapter officer contact these new members to welcome them to the chapter (even long-time LPA members who have moved into a new chapter). Send an email or make a call welcoming them to the chapter, and information on when the next chapter meeting is.

Serve as Medical Information/Referral Resource

One of the most important roles of the chapter is to guide new members to appropriate medical information and providers. There is a wide range of information located at the LPA Medical Resource Center on www.lpaonline.org.

Hold Chapter Elections

Elect officers in accordance with your Chapter Bylaws. Other officers that a chapter may elect (as outlined in its chapter bylaws) include, but are not limited to, vice president, secretary, parent coordinator, teen coordinator, and young adult coordinator. In addition, many chapters appoint a newsletter editor, outreach coordinator, and medical resource coordinator.

Elections are held during a chapter meeting. A simple majority vote of the membership present shall determine the elections. In the event of an election, the chapter meeting should be held in a central location.

Manage Chapter Finances

Chapter officers are the stewards of the finances for their chapter. As an elected officer, you are beholden to use the LPA chapter funds responsibly and in good faith for the benefit of the membership.

Both the Chapter President and Treasurer should work together to assure proper accounting of any revenue and expenses for the chapter. Reports are required to be submitted to the National Vice President of Finance on a regular basis.

The Chapter Treasurer should maintain proper records, i.e., receipts, etc., and review the bank statements for the quarter. Chapter Presidents should obtain keep a copy for their own files, and forward a copy to the District Director.

Encourage Fundraising

Presently, of the \$55 national membership fee, 20% goes to the district, and 20% goes to the chapter and the remainder to the national organization. This amount typically does not cover all chapter or district expenses; therefore it is necessary for the chapter to conduct its own fundraisers. Some ideas for fundraisers are: car washes, a candy sale, donut sale, silent auction, 50/50 raffle, casino night, "LPA Night" at a local restaurant, LPA bracelets, walkathon, etc.

Frequently Asked Questions about Chapters

- How does a chapter remain active?

A chapter will always go through cycles of activity and lulls. Don't be discouraged! Always ask your membership what they are looking for in a meeting. Do they want activities geared for kids, young adults, or does your chapter have older LP's who just want to get together and visit? Try to meet everyone's needs so they won't feel left out. Sometimes this will seem impossible, but try to be flexible and rotate the focus of your meetings from kids to young adults to parents to siblings, etc. Maybe switch meetings from Saturdays to Sundays, or try every other month. Ask new members to host a meeting.

SECTION II. DISTRICTS

LPA divides the United States into 13 geographical areas known as Districts. Districts are comprised of several states. See LPA National Bylaws, Article X for the specific lists of Districts and their states. A District provides regional support and information to LPA members.

Roles and Responsibilities

The following section provides a listing of the primary priorities of an LPA District. A district may have additional priorities, based on the needs of its members:

Oversee Chapters

A District Director is there to oversee a chapter and make sure the chapter is operating properly in accordance with LPA Bylaws and Policies.

Organize District Regional Meetings

District meetings/regionals are held at least once a year and usually twice a year, in the spring and fall, in each District at an agreed upon location. Review the "How to host a Regional" in the Officers Documents section of the website.

In many areas of the country, district meetings have evolved into “mini-conferences” with as many as 300+ participants and a variety of activities such as a Friday evening wine and cheese party, children’s room, workshops, medical consultations, off-site events, and a banquet dinner.

At each District Regional, the District Director chairs the District Officers’ Meeting and General Membership Meeting, usually held Saturday morning. He or she discusses with the membership current district business and reports on national issues.

Business Meeting Itinerary for a sample itinerary. The District Director should provide any relevant feedback to the Board of Directors.

Publish District Newsletters/Communicate with Membership (four per year)

The district newsletter or Facebook page is a great tool to help bring your district “together” even when members are separated by many miles. As with the chapter newsletter, the district newsletter is a chance to set the tone for your district, include a Director’s Message (and a column for any other district officer) and let your members know what you hope to accomplish.

The district newsletter is the perfect tool for sharing with the members the latest news from the Board of Directors meetings. As stated above, districts are responsible for publishing a newsletter within 6 weeks after the national conference to summarize all business conducted at conference.

The newsletter is a great way to highlight the achievements of your members. Keep an eye out for “interesting” members, and ask them to write a short article or essay about themselves. Try to share the burden, and encourage members to submit articles. Luckily, most people enjoy writing about themselves! In addition, the chapter newsletter should also include reports on national and district policies, events, and other happenings as well as upcoming events and directions to local activities.

Many districts assign a newsletter editor to take over the day-to-day responsibilities. It is best to assign this job to someone with good writing and computer skills. Fortunately today’s word processing software makes producing the professional-looking chapter newsletter a relative easy task. The costs of mailing the newsletter can be offset by advertising. A good source is the local medical institutions that have experience treating people with dwarfism. See the Chapter Newsletter section for ideas on articles and columns.

Request rosters from the national office for email blasts and snail mail mailings.

New Members.

It is recommended that the district director or other designated officer contact these new members to welcome them to the district (even long-time LPA members who have moved into a new chapter). Send an email or make a phone call welcoming them to the district, and information on when the next meeting is.

At-Large Members

Oftentimes there are current and prospective members who do not live within the boundaries of a specific chapter. We call these at-large members. It is the District Director's responsibility to welcome, guide, inform, and include these members. If there is a chapter within driving distance for the member, they may wish (and certainly are welcome) to attend that chapter's functions. They may also wish to pay that chapter a small fee to receive its newsletters and other mailings.

Community Outreach

It is also recommended that the chapters appoint a Community Outreach Coordinator to lead the effort of contacting schools and organizations and coordinating speakers.

Hold District Elections

Each district must have a District Director and Treasurer, who are elected every 3 years by the membership of that District, at a District meeting. A simple majority vote of the membership present shall determine the election. The district meeting should be held in a central location. Additional officers may include, but are not limited to, Assistant Director, Secretary, Parent Coordinator, and Young Adult Coordinator and Teen Chairperson. These positions are appointed by the Director.

SECTION III. General

Suggested Itinerary for a Business Meeting

Roll Call / Attendance

Read and approve or amend the minutes of the last meeting (Motion is made to approve or amend minutes as "respectfully submitted by [recording secretary].")

Call for Reports (Reporting of officers or committee heads—as requested by the President—on relative information or old business. New business is not introduced yet.)

Discussion of Old Business

Discussion of New Business

President's Comments

Open Forum

Call for Adjournment

Record Preservation

The National Office, the elected officers, the appointed committees, the Districts and the Chapters within LPA generate information and records as a part of their usual functions. These records and documents include but are not limited to the following: Constitutions, By-Laws and Policy Manuals, Chapter applications for charter; lists of elected officers and committee assignments; meeting agendas and minutes; financial records; membership lists; notices to the membership and newsletters; conference and event records; correspondence; photographs; audio tapes; films and

other documents. Records such as Constitutions, By Laws, policy manuals, financial and planning documents, serve as a basis for conducting current business and should be readily available to Chapter officers. Other documents, called non-current records, such as past meeting agendas and minutes, photographs, membership lists and chapter officer lists, serve as a record of the chapter history and should be reviewed, categorized and stored where they can be accessed easily. New officers need access to these records so they can become familiar with events, activities, and decisions that have been made over the years in order to build on successful programs. Contact Jim Kay, LPA Historian, with any questions or to pass on items to be preserved.

What should be preserved?

Each Chapter should, at a minimum, preserve the following:

- Chapter Charter
- Charter Application
- By-Laws of your chapter
- Meeting Minutes
- Meeting and Event Notices
- Membership Lists
- Correspondence
- Rosters of Elected Officers since Chapter Charter
- Treasurer records
- Fund Raising Activities
- Newsletters
- Photos
- Press Clippings
- Chapter History
- Memorabilia (Sports Equip, Clothing, Etc.)