

## **CHAPTER 13: EDUCATING COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND BAR LEADERS**

### **A. Preparation of the Committee Chairs Handbook**

Before the start of the bar year, you need to assemble a handbook for each committee chair to use as a reference tool during the year. The committee chair's handbook should include basic information about the structure of the young lawyers organization and the senior bar, where it fits into a state bar or local bar, and information about all of its committees. It should also describe the duties and responsibilities of the officers, directors and committee chairs and staff members, where appropriate. There should be a section on how to organize and operate a committee, including the preparation of a plan of action and annual report, planning and scheduling meetings and events, conducting effective meetings, operating the committee, and resources that are available to the committee chair.

It is also important to include a section on financial guidelines and procedures, including reimbursement rules, procedures and forms.

In the appendix to the handbook should be a copy of the section's by-laws, a sample plan of action, reimbursement forms, the names and addresses of all committee chairs and council members or directors, and a schedule of all meetings and major events during the year.

The committee chair's handbook should be distributed and discussed at a special orientation session or during the first regularly scheduled committee chairs' meeting. During that meeting, you should not attempt to review everything in the handbook, but should stress certain items of importance—for example, reimbursement policies, whether Board approval is necessary for major expenditures, any policies about direct contacts with the media and policies about attending meetings.

### **B. Preparation of Officers/The Organizational Meeting**

It is essential for the success of your young lawyer organization that the roles of each of the officers of your group be specifically defined. The officers are your bar leaders who must motivate your executive council members as well as the membership at large in order to accomplish your goals during the year. Prior to the first meeting of your Board or membership you should meet with your officers to go over your plans and objectives for the year. Convey to them how important they are and what you expect each one to do. Use this meeting to go over division of oversight responsibilities for the Section's programs. Make sure they have a copy of and have read the committee chairs handbook which contains the bylaws, policies, the calendar and other important information. Tell them how often you plan to have officers' meetings during the year. Ask them for their continuing input.

After this initial meeting, you and your officers should continue to meet on a regular basis before each Board/Council meeting to go over the proposed agenda and discuss the issues that should be addressed. You will also need to schedule frequent conference calls with officers between meetings. It is important that you are aware of what each officer is doing and that you let them know of your activities, important telephone conversations and contacts.

Your officers will form the core group of an executive committee, if you choose to have one. In addition to the officers, the executive committee should consist of the previous chair, the chairs of your respective standing committees, a state bar association liaison and an American Bar Association liaison, if you choose. If the schedules of the executive committee members permit, it would be a great idea to spend an afternoon or a full day to plan your bar year in a “retreat” forum. Consider a familiar hotel in your locale which has meeting facilities or meet at someone’s home. Also consider providing breakfast and/or lunch. Provide a specific agenda for your “retreat” and strictly follow it so that your organizational meeting will provide the momentum necessary for a successful bar year. Have the Secretary take minutes and distribute them after the meeting.

C. Creation of Institutional Files

The Chair and the bar staff should each have a complete record of all correspondence (including committee correspondence), agendas and minutes (committee and YLS Board), fliers, newsletters, agreements or contracts, in short, everything written about or for the young lawyers section that year. As in the ABA/YLD, the YLS Chair and bar staff should be copied on everything. You should also send a copy to anyone mentioned in the correspondence.

Having these records is necessary to provide a clear picture of exactly what was done during the year. In addition, it facilitates putting together a comprehensive award of achievement application at the end of the bar year.

At the end of the bar year, the Chair should turn over the files to the next chair, who may decide to purge some of the redundant or less important material. To the extent possible, the staff should maintain complete files for future reference.

D. Regular Meetings are Essential

It is important to set regular meetings for your Council or Board and for committee chairs. Council/Board meetings should be held at least every month, committee chairs at least once every other month. Try not to change meeting times and places—it causes tremendous confusion and disruption and makes it difficult for people to plan ahead. A schedule should be set ahead of the bar year and you should stick to it. Try to resolve potential conflicts with other organizations before you publish your calendar.

Encourage committee chairs to schedule meetings of their committees on a regular basis. A report of the minutes of each meeting should be forwarded to the Chair of the YLS.