

S e c o n d C h a n c e L e a r n e r s

Handbook

STEPS TO SUCCESS

A HANDBOOK
WITH GUIDELINES TO
SETTING UP A SUPPORT GROUP
FOR ADULT LITERACY LEARNERS



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INVOLVE YOUR LOCAL LITERACY COUNCIL:

- ask for two or three literacy council volunteers to work with you
- ask the executive of the literacy council to have tutors spread the word
- give tutors your name and phone number so learners will be able to contact you
- make sure the learners know YOU are a learner
- ask that learners call you so you get a chance to talk before the first meeting

FIND A PLACE

- pick a day and time
- have the council help you find a rent-free place to hold your meetings such as a :
 - church
 - library
 - school
 - hospital
 - adult learning centre
 - community hall
- make sure your meeting place is easy to find, on a bus route, and accessible.

ADVERTISE:

- on local radio stations
- through the literacy council newsletters
- church bulletins
- your local paper

Reading relatives may read the ads and tell the learners about the group.

Have your literacy council help you or ask the media people to help you write the ads.

YOUR FIRST MEETING:

- get to know each other
- talk about your experience - this helps others feel more at ease
- find out what people want from the meetings - this helps you know how to get ready for other meeting
- talk about a name for your group
- ask people to give you their phone number so you can call them for the next meeting

THE NEXT MEETING

- try to get others to talk about their experiences
- or talk about their new learning experiences
- find out how people feel about the group
- talk about what the group would like to know
- who might be a good guest speaker?
- decide on a name for the group
- form a phone committee
- talk about sharing duties such as clean up after a meeting
- does the group want a coffee break?
- coffee breaks mean bringing food, cups and other items; talk about each person taking turns for coffee breaks
- ask the group to invite other learners
- ask learners from other programs

WHAT YOU MIGHT DO AT MEETINGS:

- once people feel at ease, give time for news updates from the members who want to share information
- bring news from the local literacy council
- discuss community events
- have a guest speaker
- talk about last meeting - what was good? or bad?
- discuss next meeting

IN TIME, INVITE OTHERS TO SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY:

- ask others to chair some meetings, help others along to get them ready for taking on some duties
- suggest members volunteer to read at meetings or read something they have written
- look at forming an executive, have literacy council talk about these duties and help out
- look at the strengths in the group and ask members to take on duties such as secretary, treasurer, or a special event
- try to involve spouses and partners in helping to plan events or writing ads, or other things you need done

WHAT ABOUT MONEY TO SUPPORT YOUR GROUPS ACTIVITIES?:

- your group might need funds to plan special meetings or social events
- talk to your literacy council about funding resources in your community
- have your group come up with ideas to make money
- make sure they understand that the whole group works on the activity

LEARNING AND HELPING WITHIN THE GROUP:

- help the group develop
- help people to take responsibility for getting involved in meetings and activities. This builds confidence.
- encourage members to sit on other boards, such as local literacy groups, literacy councils, or other community boards
- have people from the community show the group how committees function and where and how to get involved
- share information about national, provincial and local literacy groups and learners groups.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

- plan a barbecue - get donations from the community
- visit a town council meeting
- visit the local newspaper
- visit the local radio or television station
- visit the library - get a library card
- find out about local reading circles - get the kids involved
- volunteer at the school or kindergarten
- go to lectures
- attend local meetings

SHARE WHAT YOU KNOW:

- get others involved in the group
- get other learners in other communities excited about starting a learners support group
- find ways to keep in touch with other learners groups in the province

GOOD MANNERS IN A MEETING:

In general, learners will be shy about taking part. It does not take much to make them feel as though what they have to say is not important.

At learners' meetings and at all meetings follow these GOOD MANNER rules and share these with members of the group:

- be nice
- do not talk while someone else is talking
- respect what others have to say
- be positive
- never put down some one else's idea
- what's said in a meeting stays there
- do not discuss someone else's problems with others

IF YOU ARE THE CHAIR OF THE MEETING:

- try to encourage everyone to take part
- try to keep the talk on the topic
- answer questions as clearly as possible
- put time limits on each part of your meeting
- involve the group in decisions
- involve the group in sharing the meeting

IDEAS FOR GUEST SPEAKERS

Library, Banks, Tax Office, Insurance, Travel, Motor Vehicle, Neighborhood Watch Program, Health Care, Dental Care, Alcohol or Drug Abuse, The Court System, Your local Literacy council, Local community improvement group, READ Canada - reading circle volunteers, Library or book mobile, Housing coalition, Your local helpline - resource centre