



PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES WHY EVERY STATE ORGANIZATION AND CHAPTER NEEDS ONE AND HOW TO SET ONE UP

Why?

HLAA at the state and local levels are led by volunteers with hearing loss, along with, in some cases, their families and friends. Because most of us are not credentialed in hearing health care, we recognize our need for professional advice and support.

A Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) can provide valuable professional counsel and guidance to leaders and members. Many hearing health professionals have been instrumental in helping to start HLAA Chapters. They appreciate and understand the assistance that only those who experience hearing loss themselves can provide to each other. They know that the “continuing education” and peer support people get in HLAA State organizations and Chapters complement their services. They are interested in the welfare of HLAA and happy to be of assistance.

Professionals are careful not to dominate a chapter, knowing this diminishes the benefits of emotional support and education that can help people with hearing loss move toward a better quality of life. They understand that the members must lead and that all members need to take responsibility for the organization. If they are instrumental in starting a chapter, they know it is important to back away from any leadership roles they may have assumed to help the chapter get started. They also know HLAA State organizations and Chapters may not be used as vehicles for business.

Advisors can and do:

- Supply timely information and help with technical questions.
- Make recommendations for action that will result in organizational progress and suggest new programs and projects.
- Provide information on any innovations relative to people with hearing loss and make suggestions where and how the chapter might be more effective.
- Give community stature to the organization.
- Serve on panels or as speakers when requested.
- Attend meetings of the officers when invited.
- Observe at member and leadership meetings.
- Identify resources for and provide referrals for their clients to HLAA and the chapter.

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How?

Invite the help of professional advisors as soon as possible, ideally when organizing a new chapter or at least within six months after becoming a chapter. HLAA suggests the chapter have three to five members to serve a specified tenure not to exceed two years unless members vote to renew that tenure. Terms also may be staggered to provide continuity. Professional advisors may come from the fields of hearing health, such as ENT physicians, audiologists, hearing instrument specialists, hearing health specialists, or be rehabilitation counselors, as well as educators, people in the business community, clergy, counseling professionals, local community leaders and others.

Here are steps for identifying and inviting people to serve as professional advisors.

1. Select advisors from professionals who have demonstrated an interest in HLAA, where possible, and who are familiar with problems relating to people with hearing loss, able to identify problem areas, and capable of lending direction that promotes progress.
2. Write to those people selected and follow up by phone or email to schedule a personal visit.
3. Meet with them as scheduled.
4. When they pledge to support the chapter, schedule a time and place for them to meet the other advisors and the chapter officers to discuss the goals of HLAA and the chapter.

Note: Professional advisors must be HLAA members. They will enjoy keeping informed about HLAA activities. The chapter may consider providing each advisor with an HLAA gift membership as a token of their thanks. HLAA professional members enjoy additional benefits noted on the [Membership](#) page of our website.

Keep advisors well informed of all activities. A steady and productive communication between the PAC and officers is useful. It can be useful to ask specific members to keep in touch with an advisor "assigned to them" on a regular basis. Most advisors are careful not to interfere. They will not help, or even come to meetings, unless they are invited.

How is it working?

Please let us know your experiences with professionals and how you have found to benefit from their advice by emailing the director of Chapter Development at Chapters@hearingloss.org

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