

- ❑ **Define a special role for members who have been in the group for a longer time.** For example, consider pairing "older" members with newcomers when assigning tasks. This allows them to learn from each other, makes tedious work fun, and gives the group backup leadership.
- ❑ **Look within the general membership for hidden talent,** such as the ability to present meaningful and entertaining programs.
- ❑ **Keep guilt to a minimum.** Encourage members to volunteer for tasks that they enjoy doing.
- ❑ **Rotate tasks among group members.** Share in leading meetings, providing refreshments, and other tasks.

It's now time to plan your first general meeting . . .

12 Choose where to meet.

Pick a neutral, private location where people will feel comfortable sharing feelings. Some groups meet in private rooms at libraries, schools, or churches. Although it is tempting to meet at a member's home, doing this has many disadvantages. These include placing undue pressure on the host as well as exposing everyone to distractions (such as phones and children).

When selecting a meeting place, look for the following:

- ❑ Central locations that are easy to find;
- ❑ Long-term availability;
- ❑ Facilities or rooms that can grow with your group;
- ❑ Safe parking at night; and
- ❑ Access for people with disabilities.

As you search, avoid the following:

- ❑ **"Toxic" locations.** These are places where people are likely to feel uncomfortable. For example, people with an illness may not want to meet at a hospital.
- ❑ **Public places.** People need to be able to talk, laugh, and possibly cry where outsiders will not be watching.
- ❑ **Places that obligate members to spend money.** A required meal in a restaurant's private room may prevent members from attending.
- ❑ **Places with fixed seating.** You may wish to change the arrangement of the chairs to suit a specific program or the number of people present. For example, a circle is often used for a discussion group; a semicircle is good for a lecture. Avoid seating in straight rows.

13 Set a day and time.

Make it as convenient as possible for all members. For example, some senior citizens and women may not like to travel at night.

14 Get out the word.

To save time and money, aim your publicity toward your group's potential members rather than everyone in the community. Here are some suggestions:

- ❑ **Identify "gatekeepers."** These are the people who come in contact with potential members of your group. If, for example, your members have a chronic disease, gatekeepers might include medical specialists, their office staff, and medical supply stores.
- ❑ **Visit the gatekeepers to personally ask for referrals.** For example, a divorce and separation self-help group might visit divorce lawyers to let them know to refer clients who are upset and are looking for support. You would thus be helping the lawyer as well as the client.
- ❑ **Create a flyer.** Keep it simple and uncluttered. Include

