

the group's name, purpose, intended membership, meeting place, and starting and ending time.

Post the flyers on bulletin boards where your group's potential members might see them. Carry them with you to give to people.

- Inform your community information services of the group's existence.** Send a notice to self-help centers, referral telephone lines, and newspaper calendars.
- Utilize word of mouth.** Enthusiasm is contagious and very effective.

15 Share the work.

Everyone has a talent; distribute start-up and ongoing tasks to help people feel more involved in the success of the group. Here are some things to accomplish before the first general meeting:

- Arrange refreshments.
- Buy name tags and a pen.
- Bring paper and pencil for a possible phone list.
- Select one (or two) people to lead the first general meeting.

And before you go home . . .

16 Swap names and phone numbers.

This list will allow you to call each other not only about organizational matters but also for encouragement and support. Your committee is a self-help group in itself!

HOW DO WE CONDUCT GENERAL MEETINGS?

"Before beginning, take a small amount of thinking time and save yourself a great amount of doing time."

*--Stephanie Winston
American business consultant*

Here are some tips on how to set up a general meeting:

1 Be prepared.

To avoid unpleasant surprises, it is helpful for the initial organizing committee to verify a few days in advance that the meeting arrangements have been completed successfully.

It is also helpful for the leaders of each meeting to arrive a few minutes early to review the meeting objectives and prepare to greet members.

Set up the room to establish the desired mood, but leave a few things to be done by arriving members. Have an agenda or list of activities posted so that people will know what to expect.

2 Welcome everyone.

Saying hello to people as they arrive is a way of telling them that you are glad they are there. Station a member at the front door to say hello.

If members in your group remain anonymous, you may simply want to ask "older" members to walk up to newcomers to welcome them.

3 Make signing in voluntary.

If you use a sign-in sheet or name tags, let people know that these are voluntary. This shows respect for their privacy and confidentiality. People may be more comfortable revealing their identity later in the meeting after they know more about the group.

4 Open the meeting.

The opening sets the tone for the entire meeting. Here are some hints for the leaders:

- Start on time.** Waiting for stragglers encourages people to be late.
- Begin the meeting.** Stand up and welcome everyone.
- Describe the group's purpose and guidelines.** This serves as an orientation for newcomers as well as a reminder for returning members.
- Review the agenda.** Also note the closing time, but let people know it's okay to leave early if they need to do so.
- Emphasize confidentiality (if it applies to your group).** Explain exactly how your group uses this term.