Creating Thriving Chapters
PFLAG Chapter Operations Manual
# Table of Contents

## PFLAG Knowledge
- Page 7

- PFLAG is the extended family of the LGBTQ community. We’re made up of LGBTQ individuals, family members and allies. Because together, we’re stronger.

- The History of PFLAG
- PFLAG Chapter Network
- Terminology

## Chapter Leadership
- Page 11

- With strong leadership, chapters have the foundation that they need to fulfill their mission.

- Roles and Responsibilities
- Leadership Structure
- Leadership Strategies

## Chapter Meetings
- Page 15

- The ability to meet and share personal stories with others is a comfort to many and the opportunity to learn allows PFLAG members to continue to grow.

- Chapter Meeting Location
- Welcoming First-Time Attendees

## Support
- Page 19

- Support is a vital component our three-part mission. Families and people who are LGBTQ come to us for support. Peer support and personal stories can provide much-needed reassurance and comfort.

- Confidentiality & Ground Rules
- Facilitation
- Support Group Structures

## Education
- Page 24

- Community education about LGBTQ people, their family, and their friends is a wonderful way to advance PFLAG’s mission and spread the word about the support you provide to families in need and your advocacy for full equality.

- Speaker’s Bureau

## Advocacy
- Page 30

- Our voices help move equality forward on issues like marriage, family acceptance, safe schools, nondiscrimination, healthcare, and workplace fairness.

- Strategy
- Playing by the Rules
Communications
page 33
Good communications is key to chapter visibility in your community and makes a huge difference in the support you can provide to those who need PFLAG.

Methods of Communication
PFLAG as a Community Resource
Web & Social Media Presence

Chapter Responsibilities
page 49
For more than 40 years, countless individuals have worked to create a strong PFLAG network. We all have a responsibility to uphold the reputation of PFLAG as a place where people want to go to for support, to learn about LGBTQ issues, and advocate for the acceptance of all people who are LGBTQ.

Qualities & Standards
Annual Filing Duties
Officer & Board Liability
Financial Checks & Balances
Conflict of Interest
Chapter Board Best Practices

PFLAG Logo
page 41
Every time you use the PFLAG logo, the world sees us as one unified organization. Every website, every business card, every piece of letterhead, every PFLAG banner – all of it strengthens our brand recognition, confidence, and respect for PFLAG.

PFLAG National: A Resource for Chapters
page 44
PFLAG is a true grassroots organization, so much so that PFLAG National was founded by the chapters in an effort to better serve the network.

Peer-to-Peer Networking

Conflict Resolution
page 55
The passion that people have for LGBTQ equality and the goal to effect change in your community sometimes leads to conflict. Understanding the causes of conflict, ways to prevent it, and what to do when this inevitable reality occurs will make you a stronger leader.
Fundraising can help your chapter provide services and resources to your community. We offer our best help for you to become comfortable and effective at asking.
Throughout the manual you’ll see some symbols that will help highlight keys to success for you to incorporate in your regular chapter work. Here’s what they mean:

### Best Practices

Looking for the best way to do something? Look to these sections for the accepted, prescribed, correct, and/or most effective best practices on leading a PFLAG chapter.

### Resources

When there’s a website with great information, we can’t help but share it. Look to these sections for links to more information on leadership, nonprofit responsibilities, and LGBTQ education.

### Sample Docs

Looking for something useful and don’t want to reinvent the wheel? Look to these sections for your supply of the best documents created by PFLAG staff, chapters, and industry experts.

### Webinars

Did you miss a PFLAG Academy Online learning session that really wanted to see? Now you can. We started recording the webinars in May 2015. As a member, you can access past sessions on demand, even if you missed it live.
PFLAG Knowledge

PFLAG is an extraordinary grassroots organization with a growing network of members in the United States and abroad. As a chapter, you benefit from the credibility and stature built by PFLAG members for more than 40 years. You are part a larger community of family members, friends, allies, gay, lesbian, bi, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) people working together for all our communities to be fair and safe places to live.
The History of PFLAG

PFLAG emerged when Jeanne Manford, a New York City school teacher, her husband Jules, gay-activist son Morty, a group of parents, and LGBTQ people met for support on March 26, 1973 at the Metropolitan-Duane Methodist Church in Greenwich Village (now the Church of the Village). A year before, in June 1972 she marched alongside Morty in The Christopher Street Liberation Day March holding a sign with the message: “Parents of Gays: Unite in Support for our Children.” She was surprised by the welcome she received that day. The people who approached her asked if she could speak with their mothers and fathers, wishing their families could be so accepting.

“As we marched the parade route, so many people came up and hugged me and cried and talked about their own parents.”

Manford’s role as a gay rights leader began one night as she was watching television in her home. On the news, she saw footage of her activist son being beaten at a protest while police looked on. She took action by writing a letter that appeared in the New York Post on April 29, 1972, in which she declared, “I have a homosexual son and I love him.” Manford later explained, “I didn’t think anything of it, but I guess it was the first time a mother ever stood up publicly and said, ‘Yes, I have a homosexual child.’” A few months later, she took up her sign and marched her way into LGBTQ history.

The first formal meeting took place on March 26, 1973 at the Metropolitan-Duane Methodist Church in Greenwich Village (now Church of the Village). In the next years, through word of mouth and community need, similar groups sprang up around the country, offering “safe havens” and mutual support for parents with gay and lesbian children. Representatives from these groups met for the first time in Washington, DC at the 1979 National March for Gay and Lesbian Rights.

By 1980, PFLAG, then known as Parents FLAG, began to distribute information to educational institutions and communities of faith nationwide, establishing itself as a source of information for the general public. Then “Dear Abby” mentioned PFLAG in one of her advice columns and PFLAG received more than 7,000 letters requesting information.
In 1981, members decided to launch a national organization. The first PFLAG office was established in Los Angeles under founding organizational president Adele Starr. In 1982, the Federation of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Inc., then representing approximately 20 groups, incorporated in California.

In 1987, PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) relocated to Denver, under President Elinor Lewallen. And by the late 1980s, PFLAG began to have notable success in organizing chapters in rural communities.

In 1993, PFLAG added the word “Families” to the name and added bisexual people to its mission.

In 1998, PFLAG became the first national LGB organization to formally add people who are transgender to its mission.

As the new millenium starts, PFLAG began to develop nationally-coordinated programs like Cultivating Respect: Safe Schools for All, Straight for Equality™, the National Scholarship Program, and One Voice Can Change the World.

In 2014, the organization officially dropped “Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays” and changed its name simply to PFLAG. The mission and vision of the organization were also updated to reflect PFLAG’s decades of inclusive work.
Language is a powerful tool used to shape our perceptions of people. Precise use of terms for people’s gender identity, expression, and sexual orientation can have a significant impact on demystifying the misperceptions associated with these concepts. The vocabulary of both continues to evolve and there is not universal agreement about the definitions of many terms. We offer a glossary of definitions and examples of frequently used (and misused) terms as a starting point for dialogue and understanding.

Terminology

Within the PFLAG network, there are two types of affiliates: chapters and state councils. A chapter is a group of individuals or families in a community meeting regularly for support, education, and advocacy. A state council is a statewide coalition of PFLAG chapters, working together to further PFLAG’s goals.
Chapter Leadership

Having a strong leadership team in place is important for chapters to be successful. Chapter leaders that share responsibilities and clearly understand their roles are the best at creating a foundation for the chapter. With strong leadership, chapters have the foundation that they need to fulfill their mission.
Chapter Leadership Structure

Chapter leadership sets the tone for the success of your chapter. All chapters need at least three officers: a president, secretary, and treasurer. This is a requirement of nonprofit organizations in most states and it is a great best practice for financial transparency and to ensure checks and balances.

Diversity must be part of your chapter leadership. A combination of straight parents of LGBTQ people, people who are LGBTQ, straight allies, people of different ages, genders, races, ethnicities, abilities, and socioeconomic backgrounds provides greater perspective on the issues. Having a chapter that is inclusive of differences is vital to fulfill our mission of support, education, and advocacy for all.

Chapter Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Strong leaders help chapters to accomplish their goals and serve their members. The most effective leadership structures in chapters allows for more than one person to share responsibilities and work together to coordinate chapter activities. Chapters with active boards and members are able to accomplish more and are better able to attract additional leaders and members.

In general, the president is the face of the chapter, the secretary communicates important chapter business to members, and the treasurer maintains chapter funds. Your chapter can select specific responsibilities for each role. It is important that leaders understand their roles and responsibilities. You can accomplish this by creating a list of responsibilities for each position and train each new board member. Look for samples of chapter leadership roles and responsibilities on the next page.

It is perfectly acceptable for chapters to mix and match the duties of the chapter leadership. Some chapters’ boards brainstorm to determine what tasks need to be accomplished and then divide those responsibilities among board members. Demonstrating that new and different ideas are welcome is important for retaining these new leaders. Ultimately, it’s important for each person to clearly understand the defined roles and what is expected of them. There is also no limit to the number of board members and leadership positions that you can have for your chapter. Adding new leadership positions is a great way to share the workload and engage more people.

Here are just a handful of additional positions you might include on your chapter board:

- Vice President
- Safe schools coordinator
- Membership coordinator
- Support group facilitator
- Fundraising chair
- Newsletter editor
- Advocacy liaison
- Faith director
- Diversity coordinator
- New member welcome coordinator
- e-Communications coordinator
- Publicity coordinator
- Speakers’ bureau coordinator
Effective Leadership Strategies

Being a strong chapter entails a lot of responsibilities—but it doesn’t have to be stressful. Below are a few best practices from the network that can help you model strong leadership and boost engagement.

- Hold regular board meetings (monthly, bimonthly, quarterly) to plan and discuss activities and responsibilities.

- Practice transparency. At chapter meetings, share reports at monthly chapter meetings on board activities and chapter finances. In newsletters, add summary information on how you are allocating chapter finances for added transparency. Even if your newsletter list includes more people than chapter members, doing this can help attract new members. Transparency can be an important value for people before they join.

- Check with your state laws on nonprofit board meeting rules. For example, you may need to send notices of board meetings a certain amount of time before a meeting.

- Open board meetings to any member who would like to attend. Send out a meeting agenda as an invitation.

- Hold annual meetings and elections.

- Cultivate leadership. In addition to holding annual elections, constantly look for new people in the chapter who might be interested in getting more involved and provide opportunities for them to move into leadership roles.

- Ensure new leadership opportunities by limiting board terms to 4 to 8 years for all board members. Leave a seat vacant if necessary.

- Examine the past year and what you have accomplished.

- Do strategic planning. Chapters benefit from taking time each year to set goals and plan for the year ahead. Selecting 2 to 3 specific goals for the year to come will help your chapter focus.

- Develop a Board Code of Conduct for each board member to follow. This helps chapter leaders understand what is expected as well as how to represent your chapter and PFLAG.

- Understand and follow your bylaws. Use the governance in your bylaws as a guide for your work. The procedure to make changes to bylaws may depend on your state regulations.
- Keep minutes of board meetings. Accurate minutes not only capture the discussion for reminder later, but also document decisions.

- Make all governing documents available in a private cloud and/or electronic account (like Google Drive) and make it accessible to all board members. Include minutes, bylaws, financials, etc.
Most PFLAG chapters meet monthly to provide support, education, and advocacy to their members. While many people attend special events that PFLAG chapters have, the heart and soul of PFLAG is at the monthly meeting. The ability to meet and share personal stories with others is a comfort to many and the opportunity to learn allows PFLAG members to continue to grow.
Chapter Meeting Location

PFLAG chapters meet in a variety of different locations, but there are some commonalities for a desirable meeting space. You want a place that is well marked and easy to find, free of charge, accessible by public transportation (where available), offers enough parking, welcoming, open in the evening and/or weekend, and that place provides enough flexible space. If you have the opportunity to mark bathrooms as all-gender (gender neutral), this sends a message about your chapter inclusiveness. You might not be able to find a space that meets all of these needs, but look for as many as possible.

Churches and LGBTQ-specific spaces are the most common places for a chapter meeting. Each has benefits and drawbacks.

Churches. For many PFLAG chapters, meeting in a church is a free and safe option. However, it’s important here to note that people with a different faith tradition, no faith tradition, or those who have felt abandoned by their faith tradition can feel intimidated or unwelcome in certain faith settings. If your chapter meets in a church, look around your meeting space—what do the pictures and images depict? If it’s a Christian church, think about ways to make it safe for people who are not Christian. If your chapter meets in a religious building, do everything you can to be clear—in publications, on your website, on social media, and in public speaking—that the groups are separate and PFLAG is not religiously affiliated.

LGBTQ-Specific Spaces. Just as meeting in a religious building comes with pros and cons, LGBTQ centers have positive and negative qualities. Be aware that while often easy to arrange, LGBTQ-specific spaces like community centers or service providers can be a barrier for struggling parents or LGBTQ people who may not be comfortable being public about their identity. While many LGBTQ people find centers to be a welcoming place, families and straight allies may perceive them to be a space reserved for people who are LGBTQ. Keep this in mind. It is okay to hold events, fundraisers and social times in LGBTQ bars, however it is not appropriate to hold a monthly meeting in a bar.

If you’re concerned about the drawbacks to these types of spaces, consider other spaces including libraries, colleges and universities, medical centers, community centers, and meeting rooms in restaurants or hotels. The ultimate goal is to find a welcoming space for meeting attendees.

Best Practices for Finding Your Meeting Location

Meet in a public location. It is absolutely necessary. PFLAG chapters are open to the public and your chapter should not meet in someone’s private home.

Meet in an easy-to-find location. In any community, urban, suburban or rural, try to avoid an obscure location on the edge of town or a place that requires multiple, difficult directions to get there.

Choose a meeting time wisely. Most chapters meet on a weeknight, Saturday morning, or Sunday afternoon. When choosing a meeting time, think about what audience you want to attend. Keep in mind faith gathering times, work hours, sporting events, family gathering times, and school activities. You may choose to hold meetings at the same time as and in or near a building where an LGBTQ youth group is meeting to help attract parents to your meetings.
Meet in a location accessible by public transportation. If someone who doesn’t have a car wants to attend a meeting, have directions readily available for public transportation.

Ensure that people who are differently abled can attend your meetings. At your next chapter meeting, find out how you would get to the meeting room if you were a person with a disability and plan accordingly.

Make sure people can find the meeting room. If your meeting room is difficult to find, ask someone to greet people at the front door or arrange to have signs directing people to your meeting room.

Choose a room size that will accommodate everyone in a circle. Sitting in a circle helps everyone see each other equality, fosters learning and exploring together.

Welcoming First-Time Attendees

The experience that people have the first few times they attend your chapter meeting will influence whether or not they keep coming back.

Attending your first PFLAG meeting can be intimidating. Finding ways to engage new attendees and make them feel welcome will make the process smoother for them and encourage them to become involved in the chapter. Following these suggestions and best practices also will make your chapter inviting, informative, and engaging for both new attendees and regular chapter members.

Best Practices for Welcoming First-Time Attendees

Have a greeter. Designate a friendly member of your chapter to be present by the door and welcome people as they come in. This will also let people know that they are in the right place.

Use the buddy system. Looking for ways to engage seasoned members and welcome newcomers? Try a buddy system by asking experienced members to get to know new members as an extra way to provide support. Board members or regular attendees can “buddy up” with new people as they arrive. The new buddies can introduce themselves, answer any questions that people have about the meeting, and offer them materials about the chapter and from your resource collection.

Create a first-time attendee packet. Make up folders that contain a welcome letter, a copy of your chapter brochure, flyers about upcoming events, and any other important materials that your chapter has. This gives new attendees more information about the chapter and something to take home with them. The packet can be electronic and sent with a follow-up email to the person.

Follow up. Ask for contact information and find out if it’s alright for one of the leaders to be in touch. Call or email the attendee after a week and ask how they are doing, if they have any other questions, and how they liked the meeting. Call or email them again a week before the next meeting to remind them of the upcoming meeting.
**Dos and Don'ts of Chapter Meetings**

**Do.** Keep the meeting confidential. Tell everyone that any information shared in the meeting space stays in the meeting space.

**Do.** Publicize an agenda, with support and program times identified. It allows for returning and new members to participate as they desire.

**Do.** Start and stop the meeting on time. People appreciate when you show respect for their time. You cannot assume that everyone at a meeting has the time to stay longer.

**Do.** Keep the environment welcoming to all. Watch our for cliques that form within the existing group. Use the buddy system to help avoid cliques from happening.

**Do.** Some chapters find that providing snacks is a good way to have some social time at the meeting.

**Don’t.** Conduct chapter business during the meeting. Your monthly chapter meeting is not meant as a time to plan chapter activities. Even if no one new attends, focus on support, education, and advocacy. It’s fine to make announcements about upcoming events and financial activity, but keep it brief. Hold separate board meetings for chapter business and planning.

**Don’t.** Conduct a meeting without a facilitator or moderator.

**Personally greet someone new.** It’s a great way to create safe and welcoming space.

**After the meeting is over, create a plan for follow-up with people who attend the meeting.** Personally contact first-time attendees, add new names to email lists, and send announcements about activities and upcoming meetings.

**Leave a sign-in sheet near the entry to your meeting room.** This allows you to gather contact information for supporters or for people to skip it if they prefer.

**Make a resource library available.** PFLAG publications, books for a lending library and information packets are a great way to start. As an added bonus, have a sign out sheet for resources. It is a good way to find out if the resource is liked and useful.
Support

Starting with the first support group meeting Jeanne Manford held in 1972, peer support has been a vital component of PFLAG. Families and LGBTQ people often come to us for support in the coming out or disclosure process. Peer support can provide much-needed reassurance and support to families and LGBTQ people.
People come to PFLAG in different stages of acceptance, and peer support is a way for us to be a valuable resource at every stage. Be prepared for a wide variety of reactions and feelings. Some people struggle with the news that their loved one is LGBTQ. Some family members celebrate the news and are ready to march in a Pride parade the first time they come to a meeting. Some families worry for the well being of their loved ones. Some know LGBTQ people, but did not expect an immediate family member would come out. Some LGBTQ people are anxious for their families to be accepting. Some people who are LGBTQ struggle with their own sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Preparing your support group facilitators is critical in providing support.

Confidentiality & Ground Rules

PFLAG support meetings are a confidential and safe place for people to share their stories. The confidentiality statement is a key element that helps participants feel safe and comfortable at support group meetings.

To create an environment where people feel they can share and speak openly, your support group facilitator needs to set the tone. Read a statement of confidentiality and provide some ground rules at the beginning of every support group and in one-on-one support sessions. For people new to PFLAG, this promise of confidentiality provides a level of comfort and trust. For long-term members, it serves as a reminder of PFLAG’s principles. Ultimately, it is up to your chapter to decide what guidelines fit your group best. However you shape your guidelines, attendees will feel more at ease knowing that the meeting is confidential.

Real-Life Examples

**PFLAG Seattle.** In order to ensure confidentiality and safety for every person in attendance here, and to make this a safe place for all in attendance to share their most personal story and request for assistance, we require all present to turn off their electronic devices. That is, every cell phone or other device that has the ability to record voices, take pictures, or record Tweets or notes entered by the owner, must be turned completely off for the duration of this meeting. We allow no barriers to hearing or telling the truth about a need for help or an offer to help.

**PFLAG Greater New Haven.** Who you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here.

**PFLAG Sturgeon Bay/Door County.** Confidentiality is a fundamental agreement for all who participate in PFLAG. Anything said in a meeting is confidential. What you hear and who you see stays here.

**PFLAG Phoenix.** Welcome to the support group meeting of PFLAG Phoenix. Please know that you are in a safe space and that you are surrounded by friendly and caring people who have walked the journey you are on, or are beginning. PFLAG membership is encouraged, although not required, to join us in support meetings or public functions. PFLAG began by one mother who was proud of her gay son, but today we embrace all colors of the diversity rainbow, and every person’s gender identity and sexual orientation is welcome. Either we are members of this community, or someone we love and care about is. PFLAG’s mission is three pronged: to support, to educate and to advocate, for, and on behalf of our families and friends. We may not agree at all times, but we try to be respectful and understanding of each other, and be aware of each other’s right to privacy, as confidentiality is important to many of us. As we share on a level we are each comfortable with, may we learn and support each other on our unique journeys of understanding and acceptance. Welcome Everyone!
Facilitation

Facilitators help communicate PFLAG’s unique brand of peer support by highlighting the personal stories and individual experiences that change hearts and minds. Well-facilitated meetings create a positive environment where attendees feel comfortable to share stories about their personal lives.

The best facilitators are good listeners and have had experience participating in a support group. Effective facilitators become familiar with the needs and concerns of different groups of people, including youth, bisexual people, transgender people, straight spouses, people of color, people with disabilities, and people of diverse faiths.

While there are no specific professional skills required to be a PFLAG support group facilitator—such as being a trained counselor or psychologist—it is important to understand your roles and responsibilities. As a support group facilitator you send a welcoming message to new attendees, provide structure so everyone is heard, and create a climate of trust. Facilitators help set the pace, the atmosphere of the group, and help keep the group on course. The facilitator makes sure that the conversation keeps moving and everyone has the opportunity to share. Facilitators are responsible for helping to bring the conversation to a close. It may be tempting to talk longer, many chapters have found that setting a time creates needed structure and keeps members coming back. End by asking people how they feel about their experience in the group or summarize the themes of the meeting.

Dos and Don’ts

**Do.** Help participants to interact with each other, gain new information, and build upon their experience.

**Do.** Encourage everyone to participate, but remembering that individuals participate in different ways.

**Do.** Manage or mediate conflict with an approach that’s firm, but friendly.

**Do.** Listen more than you talk.

**Do.** Be ready with information on local counselors, a crisis hotline, or professional therapists for those who need more comprehensive help.

**Do.** Conduct your support group as a peer-led support group. If one of your facilitators is also a therapist (or any kind of professional counselor), clearly communicate to attendees that the support group is not a place to seek and receive professional counseling.

**Don’t.** Become a content expert or a lecturer in a support group.
**Best Practices for Facilitating Support Groups**

**Allow people to pass.** No one is required to share, and this should be clear to attendees when you start.

**If your group is large, consider breaking into smaller groups.** This will help give everyone more time to share.

**Set a time limit to the support group.** An hour is plenty of time for sharing stories in a meeting. You are not there to solve every issue for everyone in the span of a meeting.

**Compile a resource directory of organizations.** Include LGBTQ/human rights/allied organizations, crisis hotlines, HIV/AIDS service organizations, youth service providers, multi-lingual service organizations, religious organizations, healthcare services, therapists, LGBTQ-friendly restaurants and clubs, and anything else you can think to provide for people who want information on services that aren’t provided by PFLAG.

**Respond without judgment.** Especially when questions or comments indicate opinions different than yours.

**Recognize expressions of self-harm or suicide.** Immediately direct people to the appropriate resources.

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**Support Group Structures & Alternative Approaches**

PFLAG meetings are like snowflakes. From far away, they all look very similar. As you get closer, you can see the uniqueness of each one. Every chapter has a monthly meeting format that’s a little bit unique. This section is going to focus on the commonalities. Your chapter meeting needs a time for people to share stories from their lives and feel supported, a time for people to learn about issues and information about LGBTQ community, and a time for people to have to opportunity to take action.

Currently the most common way to provide peer support in the context of your PFLAG meeting is through a support group. As people arrive, greet them and invite them to sit anywhere in the circle. Welcome everyone to PFLAG, explain the mission of the organization and read a confidentiality statement.

Start with introductions. Each person will briefly share the reason they are attending this particular PFLAG meeting. This is a time for the facilitator to pick up questions to ask the group and identify people for follow up discussion.

**Real-Life Examples**

**PFLAG Dayton:** Hosts an education program that lasts the whole meeting time and provides individual support for anyone who wants it during the education time.

**PFLAG Cleveland:** Food and social time happens before the meeting starts. The facilitators use this time to personally introduce themselves to anyone new in the room and welcome back returning attendees.

**PFLAG San Gabriel Valley Asian Pacific Islander (API).** Afternoon Tea with Asian Parents (ATAP) is arranged on a need basis for those parents of people who are LGBTQ, their families, and their children.
who would like more private and smaller group dialogue with others of similar culture, language, or dialect. Attendees chat informally and ask questions, while sharing their journey of acceptance. Flexibility with meeting place and group size are considered. The ATAP is generally culture-specific and language assistance can be arranged.
Education

Education about people who are LGBTQ provides an invaluable service in your community and will encourage longterm engagement. Educating your community about the issues that LGBTQ people, their family, and their friends face is a wonderful way to advance PFLAG’s mission and spread the word about the support you provide to families in need and your advocacy for full equality.
Educating your community about the issues that affect LGBTQ people and their families is a part of everything that your chapter does. Whether it is an advertisement for your monthly meeting, a post on your chapter’s Facebook page, a community event hosted by your chapter, or a chapter fundraising activity, you have the opportunity to educate your community about PFLAG and the meaningful work of your chapter. Education programs help to ensure that community members are well informed about the lives of people who are LGBTQ.

FAQs

Q: What types of educational opportunities should our chapter plan?
A: Educational programming can take a wide variety of forms including film screenings, educational speakers, panels, a review of new resources from PFLAG National, a PFLAG Academy Online webinar for your chapter, and more. What is really important is creating rich conversation using the information shared in the program. Encourage discussion after each program with prepared questions. Pay attention to the interests of attendees to help you recruit new volunteers and plan future chapter activities.

Q: Where can I find topic ideas for educational programs?
A: Assess your community to find topics. Think about the time of year. For example, the Transgender Day of Remembrance occurs annually on November 20. Your chapter could have a program on how transgender people are treated in the justice system. Connect with close-by chapter leaders, your State Coordinator, Regional Director, or PFLAG Natinal staff to learn more about new resources or materials. Look at the PFLAG National, Straight for Equality™, or LGBTQ organizations’ websites for additional ideas.

Q: What are some ways that our chapter can educate our community about PFLAG?
A: There are countless ways your chapter can educate your community about the work that you do, including:
- Advertising for your local support group and other publicity
- Creating a lending library
- Offering educational programming at your monthly meeting
- Updating your chapter website and social media page(s)
- Distributing your chapter newsletter
- Participating in advocacy efforts
- Writing letters to the editor and op-eds on important issues
- Offering presentations by the chapter speakers’ bureau at local schools, businesses, churches, annual community events, health care facilities, etc.
- Leading fundraising activities
- Participating in local, state, and issue based coalitions
Best Practices for Educational Programs

Plan in advance. This can be part of your chapter’s strategic planning process.

Get help from lots of people. Recruit chapter members to volunteer to help prepare educational programs that interest them. This can prevent one person from feeling burnout.

Practice Consistency. When you do educational programs as a part of your regular monthly meeting, ensure that the format of the meeting remains the same so that members can plan their time accordingly. If you are deviating from your normal agenda, advertise the change widely on all your chapter media.

Offer diverse topics for educational programming. People who are LGBQT face a wide variety of issues. Your chapter educational programming can bring some of the lesser known issues to the foreground.

Incorporate community education into other areas of your chapter. Your monthly chapter meeting isn’t your only opportunity to provide valuable education. You can educate while fundraising, at social events, at Pride, through op-eds, and so much more. As you read through the chapter manual, think of ways to incorporate education into other areas of your chapter.

Provide community education to individuals and families who are not familiar with PFLAG. Go outside of your own monthly meeting space. You may find that it’s a great way to get new people involved.

Educational Programs: Tips for Success

While many people may first come to PFLAG for support, it is the education and advocacy opportunities that keep people coming back with a desire to fulfill our mission. Monthly opportunities for education or advocacy will entice people to come to your meetings.

Educational programs can be easy and take little time to plan. Think about the topics that are interesting and provide helpful information to people in your community. It could be safety in schools, transgender 101 information, uncovering our unconscious bias, coming out at work, helping faith communities become affirming, and so much more.
Serve everyone. Expect that your audience will consist of people who need to learn terminology to those who have expert knowledge of LGBTQ issues.

Create educational programs that are relevant to parents with school-age children. It was typical 10-15 years ago for a person who’s LGBTQ to wait until adulthood to come out or disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity to a family member. Now there’s been a shift and so many people under 18 are coming out or disclosing to their families.

Provide opportunities for people to help out with planning the program. It’s a great way for people to get involved with the chapter. Giving people a chance to participate helps them feel engaged and like they’re contributing to the event.
Have a specific tale. Narrow your message by picking a distinct topic or story to share. Great topics include how you or others reacted when you or your child came out; coming out in the workplace or your faith community; challenges in the workplace; your relationship with your faith community; school stories; your first PFLAG meeting; or how the lack of protections for you or your LGBTQ child has impacted your life and theirs. Pick one of these topics and speak on that one topic—don’t try to cover too much.

Avoid reading from a piece of paper. Reading isn’t compelling or persuasive to many people. Practice so that you don’t need to read verbatim, to help people feel engaged in the story. This helps people feel like you’re engaged in the story. Look up and speak directly and confidently in a clearly audible voice. It’s okay to have some short notes to keep you on track, but reading word-for-word is rarely effective.

Keep it short. Telling your story in four to five minutes will help you and your audience focus and stay interested.

Focus on the important stuff. Keep your story relevant and focused on what is important—leave out superfluous details. For example, people want to know how you felt when your son told you he was gay, not what you were wearing that day.

Practice. Be sure to practice beforehand! Even though it is your story, practice helps keep your nerves at bay and your story concise.

End with a call to action. PFLAG stories often inspire people to want to take action. It’s okay to ask for them to do something at the end of the story. Use your story and the education you have provided to ask the audience to do something like learn about a specific issue in the LGBTQ community, give a donation to PFLAG, or support a particular piece of legislation.

Remember that you have a story to tell. Your own story will interest people—it is more personally and emotionally compelling than any statistic and it’s the best way to address people’s misunderstandings about LGBTQ people and their families.
Best Practices for Hosting a Panel

**Respond quickly to requests.** This will help establish your reputation as a responsive organization in the community.

**Identify the right mix of speakers.** Your speakers’ bureau coordinator or committee should determine the best participants for each event. For example, if you’re creating a panel discussion about safe schools issues, include a parent of a child who has experienced bullying, a teacher, and your safe schools coordinator.

**Train speakers in advance.** To ensure that your speaking engagements are effective, it is critical to offer training to the members of your speakers’ bureau. Training should cover how to tell a story, how to answer difficult questions, the typical agenda for a speaking engagement, and lots of practice. This could done at a chapter meeting, where everyone learns to tell their story as if speaking on a panel.

**Keep it concise.** Ask each speaker to share his or her story within a given amount of time. No one should monopolize the panel.

**Let the moderator field questions and maintain the flow.** The moderator should manage time, select the people asking questions, diffuse tense situations, and steer questions to individuals.

- **WWW** - PFLAG San Jose Speakers Bureau Cookbook
- **WWW** - Toastmasters International
- **WWW** - Five Basic Public Speaking Tips
- **WWW** - Mind Tools - Better Public Speaking
- **PDF** - Speakers Bureau Guide Julie Wilson
Advocacy joins support and education as the third cornerstone of PFLAG’s mission. The stories of our families’ lives are powerful. Our voices have helped move equality forward on important issues like marriage equality, family acceptance, safer schools, and workplace fairness. It is essential and uniquely valuable that we, as PFLAG members, continue to educate key deciders about the issues that affect our families.
No voice is more powerful or persuasive than that of a PFLAG member. As people who are LGBTQ, parents, family members, friends, and allies, we know firsthand the impact of discriminatory laws. Our stories of the pain that prejudice inflicts—and the joy that equal treatment brings—are enormously impactful to improve the community, whether it’s to urge a community center to be inclusive or to fix federal laws.

Whether at the local, state or federal level, PFLAG’s policy and legislative priorities include:

- ability for eligible children in care to be adopted or fostered in permanent homes
- anti-bullying efforts
- combatting efforts to use claims of religious liberty as a reason to discriminate
- housing
- healthcare
- non-discrimination at work
- safe schools

You can stay current on federal, state, or global legislative or policy actions with PFLAG National’s twice-monthly policy newsletter *Policy Matters*. All chapter members receive the newsletter by email.

**Chapter Advocacy Strategies: Getting Started**

Advocating through your chapter increases PFLAG’s visibility as a champion of changing hearts and minds. Here are just a few of the kinds of stories you can tell to advocate for LGBTQ equality:

- Coming out or disclosure (good and bad)
- Journey to acceptance
- Benefits of acceptance
- Experience with discrimination
- Journey as a person of faith
- Participation in local advocacy efforts
- Long-term benefits of a policy change
Playing by the Rules

PFLAG chapters are part of the group exemption as a 501(c)3 nonprofit and are prohibited from certain activities. Violating any of the following restrictions may result in the revocation of PFLAG’s IRS tax-exempt status.

- Endorsing or opposing individual candidates or political parties
- Participating in political campaigns
- Making contributions to campaign funds
- Issuing public statements in favor/opposition of elected officials or political parties
- Engaging in partisan discussions at meetings
- Conducting campaign outreach at meetings
- Selling chapter member email and/or mail lists to campaigns

Dos and Don’ts of In-Person Lobbying

Do. Know your legislators and their positions on issues, priorities, and voting history.

Do. Prepare talking points and bring data to support your position.

Do. Be courteous and professional. Dress appropriately, arrive early and use your time wisely.

Do. Tell a story that supports the need for the legislation or policy that you came to discuss.

Do. Bring family photos to show.

Do. Follow up with a thank you note and provide any information you promised along with a reminder of your request.

Don’t. Get nervous if something changes—where the meeting is, who you meet with, or if the schedule gets delayed.

Take Action at Home: Virtual Lobbying Strategies

Virtual lobbying is communicating with your elected official through a letter, email, fax, and/or phone call. You can also go online to connect in social media campaigns. One Voice Can Change the World is a great resource for effective ways to connect with legislators virtually.
Communications: How People Know you Exist

Good communications strategy enables your chapter to be visible in the community and makes a huge difference in the effectiveness of the support, education, and advocacy you can provide to those who need PFLAG most.
Think back to the first time you looked for a PFLAG chapter. What was your first impression of PFLAG? Did you call, email, or Google information about the chapter? Now, think about someone looking for your chapter today. Who will answer when they call? What will they see when they visit your website? When they visit your chapter, how will they be greeted? Will they be able to find the meeting room?

The way people find out about PFLAG, the work you do, and how they reach a chapter has evolved over time, however people still need to have easy access to information. When someone is looking for PFLAG, easy access and quick responses are the key. The more difficult it is to find your chapter, the less likely it is that the person will receive the support they’re looking for or attend a chapter meeting.

**Methods of Communication**

Putting effective methods of communications in place—even the basics—will help your chapter grow and thrive and fulfill your mission. In this section, we will show you some techniques that will help you communicate with your current members and reach out to potential new members.

**Cell phone.** This has become a popular choice among chapters. A pay-as-you-go phone is relatively inexpensive. The advantage is that a cell phone is easy to pass around so multiple volunteers can take turns answering the help line.

**Home Phones.** Some chapters use a member’s home phone as the chapter helpline. The advantage is that this option is usually inexpensive and convenient.

**Voicemail Services.** These services provide a personalized voicemail for callers to leave a message for the chapter. The advantages include a PFLAG-specific message and the freedom to provide several volunteers access to the system to share response tasks.

**Email.** Every chapter should have an email address. A shared email should be available to key members of your chapter. Don’t use a personal address. Use a provider like Gmail to set up a general email account with a clear and easy-to-remember address like PFLAGpleasantville@gmail.com.

**Chapter Newsletter.** Chapters create newsletters to communicate chapter and community information and LGBTQ news with members and supporters. There’s a lot of important information that can be included in your newsletter like details on your support meetings, a summary of the previous meeting, the contact information for chapter board members, a report from the chapter leader, a treasurer’s report, open volunteer positions, and the PFLAG mission statement. Including other features such as stories from members, book reviews, information about upcoming community events, information on open and affirming churches, national LGBTQ news, or LGBTQ history can keep people reading your newsletter and passing it along to others to learn more about the work of your chapter.

More chapters are going paperless than ever before to save money and resources. It’s easy to keep a list of email addresses and send the newsletter out electronically as a PDF. These services allow you to customize the look of your newsletter with the PFLAG logo and colors, choose the layout that you like, manage your email list, send unlimited messages per month, and track the results to see how many people are reading what you send and which links they are clicking.

Here are a few ways to create a chapter newsletter:

- Microsoft Word and Microsoft Publisher offer templates that are easy to use.
Mailchimp. MailChimp is one of the most-frequently used email applications, with customized signup forms that integrate into your website or your Facebook page, social sharing integration, and customizable templates. MailChimp is free for up to 2,000 subscribers. Paid plans are affordable, ranging from $10 to $240 per month.

Campaign Monitor. Create templates with Campaign Monitor’s template builder. They offer a variety of layouts, the ability to choose colors, customize your text, use a variety of images, and personalize messages. Campaign Monitor’s emails are automatically optimized for mobile. Signup is free. Campaigns start at just $9 per month.

SimplyCast. SimplyCast is an email-marketing platform offering custom templates for a one-time $99 fee. It’s free to use for up to 2,000 email contacts.

Constant Contact. Constant Contact starts at around $15 per month. They offer the ability to customize templates, post and track your emails on all your social networks, upload your chapter email list from Excel, Gmail, and Outlook, and track who’s opening, clicking, and sharing your emails.

Chapter Brochures. By creating a chapter brochure, you can provide valuable information about your chapter that can be easily distributed. You can include information about ongoing chapter programs, chapter meetings, and personal stories from parents, family members, allies, or LGBTQ people who have benefitted from getting involved with your PFLAG chapter.

Rack Card. The simplicity and size of rack cards make them a powerful tool. The standard rack card size is 4 x 9in. They fit into school counselor’s and organizations pamphlet racks plus they are convenient to pick up and carry. You get three per page for cost-effective printing. They should encourage connection to your chapter and how to get involved.

Business Cards. Business cards are easy to carry in a wallet or purse, inexpensive to purchase, easy to pass out or leave in inconspicuous places, and contain vital chapter information. You can involve chapter members by giving them a stack of cards to pass out when they meet someone who needs support or who’s interested in attending a PFLAG meeting. Include the PFLAG logo, your chapter name, and contact information including the chapter phone, email, website, and social media information. In addition, you can include your mailing address, meeting location, and meeting dates.

Best Practices for Communication

The most important thing to remember about your chapter email, web, social media, and services is that someone needs to be available to respond promptly. Imagine you are a parent in crisis or someone who is LGBTQ struggling with family acceptance. You build up the nerve to call or email your local PFLAG chapter and no one responds. This could be devastating.

Be responsive to those who contact your chapter. This helps fulfill one of the key components of our mission: support!

Coordinate a schedule for who answers the phone, responds to email, and updates your chapter’s online presence.

Pay special attention to holiday periods. Many people come out to their families
Be visible. Advertising your PFLAG chapter meeting doesn’t need to be expensive in order to be successful. Use all types of advertising and continue to always look for new ways to advertise. You can announce programs and events on community bulletin boards, in local newspaper community calendars, in other local newsletters like the PTA or the neighborhood association. Don’t forget that the Internet remains one of the first stops for most people today.

Be accessible to new audiences. Often, people who need PFLAG are not connected (or even ready to connect) with existing LGBTQ resources like newspapers or community centers. If that’s the primary place you’re advertising, they’re likely to miss you. Be sure to be visible in non-LGBT places like community newspapers and local websites.

Be specific. Publicize the details of your chapter meeting each month instead of something generic like “our chapter meets on the first Monday of each month”. The more detail you can provide about your services, program, format and goals, the better.
Put someone in charge. Ask someone to volunteer to keep track of different places to advertise and coordinate each chapter announcement.

Refine your strategy. Find out from new members and people who come to your meetings how they heard about your chapter. If you know what is working (and what isn’t) then you’ll be able to constantly improve your communications strategy.

Web & Social Media Presence

Online tools, such as websites and social networking sites, can be easy to use, inexpensive, and effective for people who are looking for information about your chapter. Take advantage of these tools to help build a base of supporters of all ages, recruit volunteers for projects, invite people to events and meetings, spread the word about PFLAG news, follow other chapters to see how they educate and provide support in their community, host discussions on LGBTQ issues, and support other LGBTQ and LGBTQ-friendly organizations.

Websites. A website for your chapter is a great way for people to find you online. Even a one-page site that lists only an image of our logo, along with your contact information, meeting dates, and meeting location can help people find you in searches.

If you maintain a more complex website with multiple pages—such as a list of your chapter leaders, the PFLAG mission statement, or a list of local resources—the most important thing is to ensure that your information is clear and current. The best way to do this is to take regular inventory of your website. Ask yourself: How easy is it to find contact information, meeting dates, and the meeting location? How up to date is the information? If you can’t find it in three clicks, you can assume a new person is going to have a hard time finding this information. If you’re promoting your chapter meeting from six months ago, it’s old information. If people get a sense that you’re not paying attention, they won’t either.

Social networking sites. Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest are great ways to communicate with members, supporters, and other interested community members. Each site serves a different purpose and can be useful to connect with others, support, educate, and advocate. Let’s take a quick look at these four, the most popular among PFLAG chapters.

- **Facebook** is by far the most popular of the social networking sites being used by PFLAGers. Chapters primarily use one of two functions, Pages or Groups. A page is an outward-facing page, branded by your chapter, on which you can post updates, photos, videos, and more. People can then comment on or share your posts, thereby spreading your content and, subsequently, spreading the word about your chapter. It is crucial that you set up an organizational page, not a personal page (such as the one you set up for yourself). A group is often used to have more of a discussion between members. A number of chapters use groups as a way to communicate with each other, and make their groups Private. These groups are marked as private, meaning that only those who are approved by the chapter can see them and participate in the discussion. This is an excellent way to create a safe online space to provide support.

- **Twitter** is another popular site for PFLAG chapters. It allows chapters to share links and messages in short 140 character (or less) bursts of information called tweets. In order to help people search for tweets relevant to their own interests, people use hashtags, which are keywords preceded by the hashtag (#). For example, if someone was interested in LGBTQ issues, they could create a tweet using #LGBTQ or search for tweets using #LGBTQ.
- **Instagram** is used most often by millennials, and is a photo sharing app, also driven by hashtags. Note that, Instagram does have a website, it is the mobile app that allows you to take and upload photos. The app is available for iPhone and Android. Search on “Instagram” in your app store to download and get started.

- **Pinterest** is a website that allows you to “pin” things online, just as you would pin them on a real life bulletin board, but instead, Pinterest saves all of your pins on your account so that you can access them easily.

Youth may out to PFLAG chapters through social media. It is not appropriate for individual members to extend or accept friend requests from youth. Make a clear distinction between your role as a PFLAG leader and your personal social media accounts.

PFLAG National staff is here to help you. Visit PFLAG Academy Online for previous social media training sessions, or contact the PFLAG National Communications Director for help.

**Media Engagement**

PFLAG members are powerful spokespeople. As family, friends and LGBTQ people, we provide an important perspective. By speaking out publicly in the media, you have an opportunity to reach a broad audience in your community with your message of equality for all. The material provided in this section will help you understand the basics of how to leverage local media to amplify your message.

**Build a Relationship.** For positive coverage in your local press, it helps to have a good relationship with specific people at your media outlets. Maintaining good media relations takes thought and effort. Keep media outlets informed of your chapter’s activities and opinions. Building a relationship means getting to know people in local press, being sure that they know you’re there and what you do, and personally keeping them updated when you have news.

**Build credibility with reporters by being a resource on LGBTQ issues in your community.** If you can answer journalist’s questions, they will call you when they need help. Be persistent, but respectful. Having a sense of when to pursue a matter and when to let it go will help you be seen as fair.

**Be respectful to reporters’ time and deadlines.** If you respect a journalist’s deadline, they’ll appreciate your effort and remember you when they need help.

**Look and listen for articles or TV reports in your area that relate to LGBTQ issues.** When the need to correct something or voice your opinion comes up, make sure that you do it respectfully. And when something positive happens, be sure to weigh in on it with a complimentary email, call, or letter to the reporter thanking them for their work.

**Keep a list of the reporters who you have identified as LGBTQ-friendly.** Be sure to contact them first when you have an event or something related to the LGBTQ community happenings in your area.
Press Releases and Media Advisories

Press releases and media advisories are the basic tools for getting information to reporters. Advisories should be sent about two weeks before an event and press releases three to four days prior. Media advisories give only the “who, what, where, when, and why” of an event. Press releases are more detailed and can provide an organizational position or statement rather than just logistical information. Prepare your releases with just enough information to make reporters want to find out more, but include enough information and be formatted for them to run as-is.

Both press releases and media advisories should:
- Have a catchy title and lead sentence
- Present the most important information first
- Present opinions, statistics, and quotes from spokespersons
- Always include contact information for a chapter media coordinator or spokesperson (name, e-mail, phone)

Letters to the Editor

Look for opportunities to write a letter to the editor of your local paper—it is one of the most widely read sections. Letters of support are just as important as letters responding to bias or misinformation. Newspapers usually print the guidelines for submitting letters to the editor, so follow the guidelines precisely. Many great letters never see print simply because the writer didn’t follow directions.

Best Practices for Letters to the Editor

**Be relevant.** Tie your letter to a story they’ve published or to an important event that did not get adequate coverage.

**Be timely.** Respond right away. Email, fax, or mail the letter to the “Letters to the Editor” department, or deliver it personally to the reception desk immediately. Don’t wait days before you take action.

**Be specific.** If you are writing about specific legislation, mention your local, state, or federal elected officials by name.

**Keep it short.** Letters to the editor are usually short—no more than 200 words. Keep it tightly written and to the point. If you go over, the likelihood that they will use your letter drops dramatically.

**Include PFLAG.** List your PFLAG chapter and title (if you have one) under your printed name. For example, “Jane Smith, President, PFLAG Springfield”.

**Include your information.** Include your address and primary phone number. Most papers will not run a letter to the editor unless they’ve verified the author.
Op-Eds

An op-ed, so called because of its placement opposite the editorial page, is longer than a letter to the editor—usually 500-800 words. These are more difficult to get printed than a letter to the editor, but can be very effective at conveying PFLAG’s message.

Promote PFLAG, if appropriate. In the text of the letter, include your helpline phone number and your meeting times if relevant.

Follow up. If you are submitting a letter to a small newspaper, follow up with a phone call to confirm that the letter was received.

Expect minor changes. There will likely be some editing by the newspaper for punctuation, style elements, and length.

Best Practices for Writing an Op-Ed

Pick the right author. Select someone whose story or voice is appropriate for the message you are sending. For example, if you’re writing about how parents respond to a loved one coming out, have a parent who has gone through the experience and can speak firsthand.

Offer a unique perspective. If you have a specific point of view and something fresh to offer, you are more likely to interest the publication.

Pitch the article ahead of time. Consider contacting the editorial board and making the case for why your perspective should be featured.

Follow the guidelines. Just like letters to the editor, many papers have specific guidelines for op-eds regarding length and deadlines.

Follow-up. Place a phone call to the op-ed page editor.

PFLAG National staff is happy to help draft press releases, review proposed op-eds, letters to the editor, or advise on media outreach.
PFLAG Brand

Every time you use the PFLAG logo, the world sees us as one unified organization. Every website, every business card, every piece of letterhead, every PFLAG banner—all of it strengthens our brand recognition and helps create confidence and respect for PFLAG. It’s more easily located and accessed by your community.
The best way to establish a recognizable brand is to be consistent and repetitious. Consider the Human Rights Campaign logo—the blue and yellow equal sign. On how many car bumpers, lapels, t-shirts, and store windows have you seen the blue and yellow equal sign? How many times have you seen variations on the HRC logo? Probably none, right? We all know the equal sign and what it stands for because it is used consistently and frequently.

Disciplined brand identity doesn’t mean that you can’t set your chapter apart. You can personalize the PFLAG logo within the guidelines and still maintain the consistency we all need to establish a recognized brand for PFLAG.

Check out these great examples of personalized PFLAG logos:

![Personalized PFLAG logos](image)

PFLAG provides a logo (which debuted in 2004) for use by chapters. **Chapters must use the existing PFLAG logo and may not create a new logo.** Chapters may personalize the logo to add the chapter name. This version should be used on all materials produced by chapters, members, and supporters. If you need help personalizing your logo, contact Brooke Smith.

Here are usage guidelines:

**Do.** Use only the digital art provided on the PFLAG website or by PFLAG National Staff.

**Do.** Use the official colors when reproducing the logo; this is critical to our brand recognition.

**Do.** You may add your chapter name to the area below or alongside the logo.

**Do.** You may resize the logo, but keep the height and width proportions the same.

**Don’t.** The logo should no longer say “Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays”.

**Don’t.** Alter or cover the design of the sunburst, heart and triangle.

**Don’t.** Add other graphic elements around or behind the logo that compromise visibility.
PFLAG Colors

CMYK: 4 98 89 0
Pantone: 185
RGB: 237 28 36
Web: #e52631

CMYK: 3 53 88 0
Pantone: 158
RGB: 244 118 33
Web: #ef8d39

CMYK: 1 12 84 0
Pantone: 115
RGB: 255 217 70
Web: #ffd944

CMYK: 76 100 33 26
Pantone: 259
RGB: 79 30 90
Web: #501f59

- WWW -
PFLAG Fonts

- WWW -
Logo and Guidelines for Use

- WWW -
Name Change

- WWW -
PFLAG Clinton Township Website

- WWW -
PFLAG Nashville Website

- WWW -
PFLAG New York City Website

- WWW -
PFLAG Salisbury Website
PFLAG National:
A Resource for Chapters

PFLAG is a true grassroots organization, so much so that PFLAG National was founded by a group of chapters in an effort to provide resources that make our chapters strong and help you to serve your communities. In this section, we’ll highlight some of the things that PFLAG National does and the resources we have to help your chapter grow.
**PFLAG National staff and volunteer leaders.** PFLAG elects volunteer leadership and pays staff to serve unique functions within the organization and all support your chapter.

- **Advocacy, Policy, & Partnerships.** Our Director of Advocacy, Policy, & Partnerships, Diego Sanchez, assists with advocacy on state and federal LGBTQ policy and coalition building.

- **Chapter Engagement.** Jamie Curtis, Jamelle Dooley, and Brooke Smith provide assistance to your chapter on the subjects of leadership, volunteers, members, programs, education, chapter responsibilities, and conflict.

- **Communications.** There are a number of ways that the communications team can assist your chapter when working with the media to amplify your message and develop an effective media strategy. We will share information on the best ways to work with the media and how to find local media. The Communications department works to make sure PFLAG’s name, brand and perspective are represented on national and local issues. We are always on the lookout for members to share stories with national press.

- **Learning & Inclusion.** Jean-Marie Navetta and Jamie Henkel focus on helping your chapter with ally engagement, diversity and inclusion efforts. The Learning & Inclusion team coordinates PFLAG Academy Online webinars.

- **National Board of Directors.** The board is responsible for the governance of the organization, setting PFLAG’s goals, electing the National President, hiring the PFLAG National Executive Director, and fiscal responsibility for the organization. Board members are volunteers and serve three-year terms. The 21-member group is elected in three ways: seven by PFLAG members, seven by the Regional Directors Council, and seven by the Board.

- **Regional Director's Council.** The council is the link to PFLAG chapters. These individuals share member perspectives and activities with the PFLAG Board of Directors and PFLAG National staff. Regional Directors are volunteers who serve two-year terms, limited to serving three terms.

**National Representation on Policy.** PFLAG National works to ensure that the unique PFLAG voice is heard loud and clear in discussions about legislation that impacts the LGBTQ community and their families. The PFLAG National staff represents the PFLAG community and advocates on a number of issues of national importance. Our policy staff is a fixture in DC where they lobby members of Congress and the President. PFLAG works in coalition with other organizations to bring about policy and cultural change.

**Crisis Management.** Crisis management is the process by which an organization addresses a situation that threatens to harm it, its stakeholders, or the general public. PFLAG National staff is here to support your chapter and has expertise in addressing a multitude of issues, including media and communication strategies. What you think of as unique to you and your chapter may be an issue we have worked on before. Leverage the strength of being part of the PFLAG network and contact us. We bring expertise and objectivity to work with you on the solution that is right for your chapter and community.

**PFLAG Publications.** PFLAG National produces a variety of publications and we offer them to chapters at a 50% discount. These publications address issues including family acceptance, coming out, transgender issues, safe schools, straight allies, and faith. Our publications are designed with the needs of chapters in mind and are great tools on which many chapters rely to provide education to new parents and communities. You can download free copies of the publications as PDFs or purchase them on our website.
Online Resources. The PFLAG National website is the hub of information and resources. Take some time to explore all of the great resources that are available there, including:

- Information about specific issues and policies that impact chapters
- Resources for working with the media
- Branding materials, including our logo (and usage guide) and templates for letterhead and PowerPoint presentations
- Free downloads of PFLAG’s publications and newsletters
- The PFLAG National Blog, constantly being updated with local and national stories of interest
- A place to subscribe to PFLAG’s great newsletters, action alerts, and press releases

Social Media. PFLAG National hosts PFLAG and Straight for Equality Facebook pages and Twitter accounts. Additionally, you can find PFLAG National on Pinterest, Instagram, and YouTube. Social media is one of the best ways for the public to stay connected to PFLAG National.

Partnerships and Coalitions. PFLAG coalition alliances provide subject matter expertise to augment these educational efforts through virtual and in-person learning opportunities. We work with policy/advocacy groups including:

- Advocates for Youth
- AIDS United
- American Atheists
- Bend the Arc
- Big Brothers & Big Sisters of America
- Center for American Progress
- CenterLink
- Child Welfare League of America
- Council for Global Equality
- Family Equality Council
- FosterClub
- Gender Odyssey
- Gender Spectrum
- GLSEN
- Hispanic Federation
- Lambda Legal
- Leadership Conference for Civil and Human Rights
Signature Programs

**PFLAG Academy Online.** PFLAG Academy Online is a free, monthly, PFLAG members-only training webinar. Benefit from PFLAG’s great learning options, informed staff, and input from other participants without leaving home. Sessions topics include issues like creating a thriving chapter, working with school personnel on creating safer schools, diversity and inclusion in chapters, conflict resolution, support group facilitation, ally engagement, and much more. Past sessions are available on-demand.

**Straight for Equality.** People who are not LGBTQ who advocate for the rights of those who are have always been the foundation of PFLAG. Historically, our focus has been primarily on people with a familial connection to the LGBTQ community (parents and family members). PFLAG National’s Straight for Equality project started in 2007 to engage straight allies who have no familial connection to the LGBTQ community through the Straight for Equality™ program. We work to invite, educate, and engage allies in non-political, everyday ways to transform culture.
Peer-to-Peer Networking: Listservs, Calls, Meetings, and Webinars

One of PFLAG National’s main objectives is to create opportunities for community and sharing between PFLAG chapters. With that in mind, here are some of the ways you can be connected in person, on the phone, and online.

**State, Regional, and National Calls.** These calls are organized by State Coordinators and Regional Directors for you to share ideas and concerns with other chapters in your state or region. Check with your State Coordinator or Regional Director for information on a call in your state or region.

**State Regional, and National Meetings.** Every other year, PFLAG National hosts a national convention. The Convention provides a venue for chapter members to come together to learn new skills, be briefed on important issues, and get a chance to network. Many PFLAGers who have attended past conventions will tell you that the experience had an enormous impact on their chapter and the work of PFLAG in their community. PFLAG National also works closely with local chapters and Regional Directors to host state and regional conferences. State and regional conferences provide a convenient way for local groups to get together to help build skills and connect with each other. If your chapter is hosting a state/regional meeting, contact the Chapter Engagement team for a state/regional conference planning guide.
Chapter Responsibilities

Over the last 40 years, countless individuals have worked to create a strong PFLAG network. PFLAG National and every PFLAG chapter have a responsibility to uphold the reputation of PFLAG as a place where people go to for support, to learn about LGBTQ issues, and advocate for the acceptance of all LGBTQ people. In this section, learn about the small things your chapter can do to help keep PFLAG strong.
Qualities & Standards

All chapter leaders agree to the following standards as a commitment to PFLAG.

Commit to work to fulfill the PFLAG mission in its entirety. Strive to offer opportunities to the general public through your activities, to give and receive support, to educate and become educated, and to advocate for the full acceptance of people who are LGBTQ, their families, and allies.

Commit to adhere to policies of PFLAG. The policies of PFLAG reflect the thinking and deliberation of the PFLAG Board of Directors, Regional Directors, chapter leaders and members. Issues are brought to the Regional Directors Council and National Office Staff from the grassroots network for thorough discussion and review. The Board develops position statements that become the policy of the organization. All PFLAG chapters must adhere to these policies and are encouraged to bring new issues to the Board through their Regional Directors and the PFLAG National Office.

Be accessible. Being accessible is as simple as listing your PFLAG telephone number or email (not a referral agency or church number) so the public can find PFLAG.

Do outreach. Outreach means taking an active role in finding others who need PFLAG’s support, education, and advocacy. It means being visible in the community. To fulfill our mission, we need friends and allies in every community. Your ability to work with both straight and LGBTQ communities in your hometown is critical to our success.

Become informed on relevant issues. It is critical that we continuously educate ourselves. Your ability and confidence will be greatly enhanced by staying informed on relevant issues such as language changes, school policies, and local, state and federal legislation.

Learn about and use the resources available through PFLAG National and other chapters. Within the organization, there are a number of resources for supporting and educating others. Seek out and use these resources. Attend conferences and training sessions, read the publications, communicate with and learn from Regional Directors, State Coordinators, other chapters leaders, and allies.

Learn about and use community resources. Your community has a variety of resources available. Seek out and build alliances with people and organizations that can help.

Commit energy, time, skills and funds to build the chapter and strengthen PFLAG. Being a PFLAG chapter leader means devoting time and energy to helping achieve PFLAG’s mission. We encourage you to find sources of revenue and resources within your community to support your efforts.

Fiscal Sponsorship. The IRS and PFLAG National dictate rules for fiscal sponsorship that need to be closely followed. Most likely, your chapter is not eligible to fiscally sponsor another organization. Check with Jamelle Dooley and Regional Director before you agree to fiscally sponsor another organization’s funding. Under no circumstances can another organization sponsor a PFLAG chapter.
Annual Filing Duties

Each year your chapter is responsible for completing tasks to maintain the quality and viability of your chapter and the PFLAG organization. These include membership roster updates, IRS reporting, PFLAG financial forms, and state reports. No matter how large or small your chapter, you must abide by the same financial reporting standards.

**IRS Annual Reporting.** Every chapter must file an annual report with the IRS. PFLAG National cannot file a report for your chapter. This form must be completed annually by February 15. The e-Postcard (990-N) is sufficient for most chapters with an annual income of less than $50,000. If your chapter income exceeds $50,000, you will need to file a 990. Use your chapter’s Employer Identification Number (EIN) to file with the IRS. Do not use PFLAG National’s EIN (95-3750694). If you do not file your e-Postcard on time, the IRS will send you a reminder notice. If your chapter fails to file for three consecutive years, it will automatically lose its tax-exempt status. The rules are strict and inflexible. You will be responsible for filing for reinstatement, which will require you to pay $400 to the IRS or discontinue operating as a PFLAG chapter.

**Membership Roster Updates.** Every year, your chapter is responsible for providing your chapter membership information to PFLAG National. By virtue of joining your chapter, your supporters are members of PFLAG National. Our online roster allows you to renew existing members, add new members, and update contact information for members. When you’re finished updating your roster and you are ready to send in payment for your chapter memberships, you can either pay online or mail a check to the PFLAG National office at 1828 L ST NW Ste. 660 Washington, DC 20036. If you send a personal check, reference your chapter in the memo line.

**Financial Statements.** Every year, your chapter will provide annual financial statements detailing your revenue, expenses, assets, and liabilities.

**Annual State Reports.** Most states require your chapter to file an annual report to keep your Articles of Incorporation current. Due dates and requirements vary and your chapter is responsible for completing the report. The best way to find information on your state’s requirements is to Google “Articles of Incorporation Annual Requirements in <insert your state>”. For questions on annual state reports, contact Jamelle Dooley, your State Coordinator, or your Regional Director.

Officer & Board Liability Insurance

As a chapter leader, you have a fiduciary responsibility for the well-being of your chapter. This responsibility may expose you to personal risk and liability. Chapter leaders should also review, discuss, and plan chapter work understanding that potential liability. It’s important to discuss what insurance coverage, if any, the chapter can obtain for board members.
Chapter Assessment. Insurance can be expensive but is often necessary. Here are three kinds of insurance your chapter should consider:

- **General Liability insurance.** Provides coverage for “negligent” acts. Negligence is doing something a reasonable person would not do under the circumstances or failing to do something a reasonable person would do.

- **Directors and Officers Liability insurance.** Provides coverage for “intentional” actions taken by an organization’s board of directors in their course of their leadership responsibilities.

- **Event Liability insurance.** Provides coverage for a specific event on a specific date, protecting the venue/host of the event from liability and property damage from the participants’ volunteers and activity.

Several factors may help you make the appropriate decision for your chapter. These questions will help you engage your board and membership in an informed conversation on whether your chapter should investigate purchasing insurance.

- What is your chapter financial health and size of budget? How does that impact consideration of insurance needed?

- Where do you meet or gather on a regular basis? Do you pay for your space? Does that space have any liability insurance that covers those using their facility? Are you named as additional insured? Do you have “Certificate of Additional Insured” listing your chapter?

- Do you have a written job description for your officers and directors? Does it list the responsibilities they will have in the position? Does it include term limits and process of selection? Have you distributed copies to all on an annual basis with acknowledgement of receipt by signature?

- Have your officers and board members all had background checks? Are they current?

- Do you have any paid staff for your chapter? Do you have an employee manual? Has it been reviewed with your employee. do they have a copy and did they acknowledge receipt by signature?

- Have you reviewed the Working with Youth Guidelines to determine if you have additional risk.

- As a chapter leader, have you reviewed and discussed your own personal insurance with your insurance agent? Your personal homeowners policies, including umbrella homeowner’s policies may provide individual protections.

Volunteer Protections. In 1997 President Clinton enacted some federal protections for nonprofit volunteers. It is important to understand that these protections may not be sufficient if your state does not have specific, similar legislation. Consult with your private or business insurance agents to find out how you are individually covered in your state. In addition, some homeowner policies protect a volunteer when doing work for an organization, but there may be limitations of coverage.

State Insurance Regulations and Protections. Individual states regulate insurance policies and practices. Be sure you are compliant with all requirements for the state.
Financial Checks & Balances

By putting a few easy practices in place, you can ensure that your chapter is fiscally responsible.

**Require two check signers** (who must be unrelated and not living in the same household) on your chapter bank account. You can make this a requirement for all or checks above a certain amount so large purchases can be verified by both.

**Reconcile the chapter bank account.** If there are multiple people with chapter debit cards and/or check books.

**Create a treasurer report for the board meeting.** Review the report with the chapter board at every board meeting. Every board member has a fiduciary responsibility for the chapter and people appreciate the transparency the chapter's financial position.

**Create a budget.** Work with all chapter leadership to establish and follow an annual chapter budget.

**Have a chapter specific bank account.** Chapter money should never be in a personal bank account.

**Record all income and expenses.** Any money that's given to the chapter needs to be recorded and reconciled with the chapter bank account. Establish the paper trail of expenses like receipts, emails, or bills.

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest exists when a board member is in a situation where their own self-interest and the interests of the organization might be at odds. Often people are unaware that their activities or personal interests are in conflict with the best interests of the nonprofit. For example, your support group facilitator is a therapist and is soliciting attendees to see them privately. Because of this, your goal should be to raise awareness, encourage disclosure, and facilitate discussion regarding anything that may be a conflict, and constantly encourage a culture of candor.

Chapters should have a written Conflict of Interest Policy. It calls on board members to disclose the conflict (or potential conflict) as well as prohibits them from voting on any matter in which they have a conflict. A conflict of interest policy should require those with a conflict (or who think they may have a conflict) to disclose the conflict or potential conflict, and prohibit interested board members from voting on any matter in which there is a conflict.
Chapter Board Code of Conduct

- The board commits itself and its members to ethical and businesslike conduct. This includes proper use of authority and appropriate decorum when acting as board members.

- Board members must avoid conflicts of interest with respect to their fiduciary responsibilities.

- There must be no self-dealing or any conduct of private business or personal services between any board member and PFLAG except as procedurally controlled to assure openness, competitive opportunity and equal access to “inside” information.

- When the board is to decide upon an issue, about which a board member has an unavoidable conflict of interest, that member shall absent themselves without comment not only from the vote, but also from the deliberation.

- Board members must not use their positions to obtain employment or compensation in the organization for themselves, family members, or close associates.

- Board members will annually disclose their involvements with other organizations, with vendors or any other associations that might produce a conflict.

- Board members may not attempt to exercise individual authority over the chapter except as explicitly set forth in board policies.

- Board members’ interaction with public, press or other entities must recognize the same limitation and the inability of any board member to speak for the board.

- Board members will respect the confidentiality appropriate to issues of a sensitive nature.

- Board members will be members of PFLAG who support the mission of the organization.

- Board members are expected to attend and fully participate in all scheduled meetings of the Board unless they notify the President in advance of unavoidable absence.

- Board members will be prepared to fully participate in the work of the board, including between-meetings work of board committees.

- Board members may be reimbursed for expenses related to carrying out their board responsibilities.

- Board members are expected to be knowledgeable about PFLAG issues and policies and be prepared to fully participate in the work of the board, speak on behalf of PFLAG or to respond to requests for public comment. They must make clear that they speak as individual board members.

- Board members are volunteers who serve without pay.
Conflict Resolution

The passion that people have for LGBTQ equality and the goal to effect change in your community sometimes leads to conflict. Understanding the causes of conflict, ways to prevent it, and what to do when this inevitable reality occurs will make you a stronger leader.
Conflict is a disagreement or difference of opinion between individuals or between organizations. In PFLAG, passion for change is high, and this energy will, at times, lead to differences of opinion. Sometimes, however, the conflict will happen if leadership isn’t strong enough. This section details a few ways to prevent avoidable conflict, and demonstrate leadership and creativity when it arises so that you’ll emerge stronger and more connected.

**Best Practices for Preventing Conflict**

**Practice transparency.** Misunderstandings can be avoided if all members can access information. Clear lines of communication and listening will ensure all voices are being heard.

**Have a leadership team.** Chapters cannot be sustainable if one person is driving, deciding, and executing everything.

**Be open different ideas and approaches.** Hear different ideas and possibly try them even if they are not “the way we have always done it.”

**Best Practices for Conflict Resolution**

**Don’t take sides.** Avoid drama especially by not taking sides in a situation where people are taking sides on an interpersonal issue.

**Don’t take it personally.** The mission of PFLAG and your involvement in it are personal, but think of yourself as a volunteer professional in your leadership role. Focus on the issues, not the personalities and always seek out commonalities and common ground.

**Step back if you’re involved.** If you’re part of the debate, acknowledge your role in the conflict, and then get help mediating the situation.

**Set ground rules.** Communicate that there are expectations when engaging in a dialogue to come to a resolution.

**Be persistent and encouraging.** Be aware that conflict resolution means keeping the dialogue going even when people push back.

**Take threats of violence seriously.** If you or anyone has a concern for their personal safety call 911 or local law enforcement.

**Consider threats of litigation to be serious.** Notify the chapter board and contact your Regional Director and Jamie Curtis immediately if there’s a threat of litigation.

**Accept that there’s rarely a straight line from conflict to resolution.** Know that sometimes conflict resolution does not end where you envisioned it. You may not reach a solution, but you’ll need to agree to disagree and find a way to move forward.

**Ask for help to resolve conflict.** PFLAG National Staff has worked with chapters on a wide variety of conflicts and can help. You can do so in your chapter, in your community or by reaching out to your Regional Director or Jamie Curtis.
Chapter Fundraising

For many people, asking others for money is uncomfortable. Many people were raised not to even discuss money. One way to get past this barrier is to understand that many people would like to support PFLAG’s work and are just looking for someone to extend an invitation. Support from a broad base of people can help your chapter provide services and resources to your community. This section offers guidelines and suggestions to help you become comfortable with asking for support—and making an effective ask!
Fundraising 101

A widely held myth is that corporations and foundations are the biggest sources for nonprofits. In reality, 88% of US households made contributions in 2011 (Giving USA Foundation). In other words, individual contributions are more accessible and available to your chapter than any other source of revenue.

Why is fundraising important? Fundraising provides resources to create and maintain programs, tools, and opportunities to advance PFLAG’s mission. Fundraising builds your chapter’s brand and creates recognition in your community for your chapter’s work. It gives chapter members an opportunity to network and create connections with new potential members, volunteers, and leaders. Each time you talk about PFLAG, you tell your story and PFLAG’s story. The more you participate in fundraising, the more comfortable you’ll become.

First, determine your needs. What are your chapter’s goals? Some routine chapter expenses that require fundraising may include:

- Telephone helpline
- Beverages and snacks for chapter meetings and educational events
- Space for chapter and board meetings
- Chapter promotions like advertisements, printing and distributing fliers, etc.
- Materials for your chapter library like publications, magazine and newsletter subscriptions, books, videos, etc.
- Registration for state, regional, and national conferences
- Speakers’ bureau trainings, materials, and travel costs
- Booth rental at community fairs and area conferences
- Scholarships for LGBTQ and ally youth

Identify donors and funding sources. The best way to raise money for your chapter is to directly ask people in your community for donations. Donors appreciate the opportunity to direct their money to things they care about that, which create positive change in people’s lives and in their communities. Start with people that you know and who know PFLAG’s work. Build a list of contacts you already have with businesses, business associations, service clubs, community foundations, faith community organizations, unions, persons of wealth, etc. People give because they either feel a personal connection to PFLAG’s mission, there’s a tax incentive, they receive personal recognition, but most importantly, someone asked them to give.

Make the ask. Learn about what inspires the donor to tailor your ask. Tell the perspective donor why they should care about PFLAG. Prepare key messages and materials. Ensure that everyone understands the goal of the ask and the strategy. Tell a short history of PFLAG and the chapter. Share a personal story about why you’re involved and what’s changed for you as a result. Talk about the specific problem, what PFLAG does to address the problem, and the resources that PFLAG needs. Explain the chapter’s financial needs and what the funds support. Include the budget for the project or for the chapter.
Best Practices for Fundraising

**Connect your fundraising to your goals.** Ensure that everyone communicates those goals clearly.

**Make giving easy.** For individuals, have donation cards, monthly pledge options, and membership forms available. Have different options for how to give, including in person, over the phone, by mail and online.

**Focus on creating a simple, powerful, and easy-to-use campaign.** Be short, sweet and visual.

**Use your existing communication vehicles.** Run special fundraising appeals in your chapter newsletter or in special mailings.

**Go beyond cash.** Financial contributions are most often needed to keep chapters doing their work, but don’t forget that some local businesses may be able to offer in-kind contributions to help support your efforts.

**Talk about your chapter’s commitment to the community.**

**Be persuasive, not pushy.**

**Anticipate questions and develop responses.**

**Ask open-ended questions to engage, learn, and cultivate relationships.** Think *friendraising*, not just fundraising.

**Listen and provide follow-up on unresolved issues.**

**Add new or renewing donors to email and/or mailing lists.**

**Follow-up with information about impact of the gift.** Be specific. For example, tell the donors that their donations allowed your chapter to distribute 1000 copies of the Cultivating Respect Safe Schools publication to teachers, principals, and counselors.

**Let people know that contributions to PFLAG are tax-deductible.** PFLAG is a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization. Send a receipt with your chapter’s EIN for tax purposes.

**Recognize donors.** A handwritten note will be noticed. Consider donor thank-you recognition like invitations to chapter meetings or events. Acknowledge contributions (with the donor’s permission) in your publications and events. Tie the gifts that they’ve made to specific accomplishments. For example, “With the support of John and Mary Jones, we were able to train and provide resources to 15 teachers in our school district this year through our Cultivating Respect program.”
Evaluate your effectiveness. How successful was your effort? Did you meet your goals? Did you raise funds? Did you make a friend for PFLAG? Did everyone feel prepared and comfortable? What were the positives? How can you improve next time? How can you start planning for next time?

Real-Life Fundraising Examples

- Individual memberships
- Local businesses
- Give button on chapter website
- Web funding sites (GoFundMe, etc.)
- Newsletter/email
- In-kind contributions
- Special events
- House parties
- Softball, volleyball, or golf tournaments
- Dinners, luncheons, banquets, barbecues, and fish fries
- Casino nights (if allowed in your state)
- Benefit performances
- Coffees, teas, cocktail, and chocolate parties
- Block parties
- Runs and walk-a-thons
- Rummage or garage sales
- Auctions, raffles, and lotteries (with prizes donated by local businesses)
- Ticketed movie screenings, concerts, dance presentations

- **WWW** - Guidestar
- **WWW** - Causes.com
- **WWW** - FirstGiving
- **WWW** - Just Give
- **WWW** - CrowdRise
- **WWW** - FundRazr
- **WWW** - Qgiv
- **WWW** - Network for Good
- **WWW** - Razoo
- **WWW** - GiveLet
- **WWW** - Classy
- **WWW** - The Foundation Center
- **WWW** - Fundraising 101 Skills for PFLAG Chapters
PFLAG Membership

Membership drives can help raise the money needed to fund your chapter.

PFLAG is a membership organization. Each year, you are responsible for conducting a membership drive and providing membership information to PFLAG National. By virtue of joining your chapter, chapter members become members of PFLAG National. Offer membership to everyone, even if they don’t attend meetings. It’s an easy way for someone to support the work of your chapter and to stay informed of your progress. You choose the amount of your chapter membership. You can set the amount of your chapter membership, but keep in mind that $15 of each household membership will be sent to PFLAG National. Chapter memberships typically range from $30-$50.

Best Practices for Chapter Membership

Ask everyone to join your chapter membership through letters, emails, and personal asks.

Be intentional in deciding when you ask. If you ask only during your membership drive, you can spend the rest of the year building relationships with current and potential members. Collect contact information at every chapter meeting.

Follow-up with information about impact of the chapter membership. Send a thank you note and let your members know how what you are doing in your community to create a safe and inclusive community.

Communicate PFLAG chapter and national membership benefits. When someone joins or donates to your chapter, they are also joining PFLAG National. Let members know about newsletters, discounts on conferences, and the work PFLAG National does on behalf of your chapter.