

CONFERENCE OF PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS LEADERSHIP MANUAL

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION ON MENTAL RETARDATION

*This document describes the functions of the Divisions and Special Interest Groups within AAMR. It also contains the procedures by which these professional interest groups function and the roles and responsibilities of the leadership positions. This is an “evolving” document that will be revised periodically in accordance with the current structure and focus of AAMR.

2/12/03 (most recent revision)

THE CONFERENCE OF PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS (THE CONFERENCE)

WHAT:

1. The Conference of Professional Interests coordinates the Division and Special Interest Group (SIG) activities within the Association. Members of the Conference shall oversee programs of continuing education, promote membership and membership services at the Division and SIG level and other issues pertinent to the Division or SIG.
2. Moreover, the Conference is a link between Division and SIG members and the Board of Directors of the Association. The Conference often responds to requests from the Board of Directors and is welcome to make any recommendations to the Board on any general Conference, Division, or SIG-specific issues.

WHO

1. The membership of the Conference shall consist of the President and President-Elect of each of the Association's Professional Interest Groups. Each group will have equal status within the Conference. Presently, these Professional Interest Groups are: Administration, Communication Disorders, Community Services, Direct Support Professionals, Education, General, Gerontology, Legal Process and Advocacy, Leisure and Recreation, Medicine, Nursing, Nutrition and Dietetics, Occupational and Physical Therapy, Psychology, Religion & Spirituality, Social Work, Vocational Rehabilitation, Creative Art Therapies, Down Syndrome, Families, Health Issues, Mental Health Services, Multicultural Concerns, and Social/Sexual Concerns. The term of office for the Division Presidents and SIG Chairs is two years.
2. Three members of the Conference are elected in each year to represent the Conference on the Board of Directors of the Association. One such member will also be elected President Pro Tem of the Conference. The President-Elect of the Association assumes the position of Chair of the Conference.
3. In order for the membership of the Conference to change through additions, deletions, or the melding of Divisions and/or SIG's, agreement must be reached by a majority of the entire Conference.

[Adapted from the Constitution and Bylaws of the American Association on Mental Retardation. (1991), 3-4.]

DUTIES OF THE CONFERENCE OF PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS

1. Elect three members at the annual meeting for representation for a one year term on the Board of Directors of the Association. One of these elected members will also be elected President Pro Tem of the Conference.
2. Meet annually at the annual conference of the Association and at other meetings as called. The meetings shall be chaired by the President-Elect of the Association, or in that person's absence, the President Pro-Tem shall chair the meeting.
3. Respond to requests from the Association's Board of Directors.
4. Identify key issues for the association to address and make recommendations to the Board of Directors on relevant issues.
5. Participate in the ratification of amendments as indicated in the AAMR Constitution and By-laws.
6. Vote on any proposed action of the Board, which would affect the membership of the Conference.
7. Promote and support membership services and recruitment within one's area of Professional Interest.
8. Maintain a web page for each Division and SIG on the AAMR web site that provides current and relevant information for members.
9. Ascertain important issues and information from members within one's Professional Interest. Communicate directly with professional interest leaders and members in the Regions, States, Provinces, Student, and Local AAMR groups.
10. Communicate relevant information to one's area of professional interest members before and after official meetings of the Conference. This can be accomplished through the annual business meeting or dinner, retreat, newsletter, or web page. Mailing labels may be requested from the national office. Each professional interest group receives a monetary allotment from the Association.
(*Please note that Division and SIG leaders are encouraged to use electronic communication to the maximum extent feasible.)
11. Participate in conference planning as requested by the President-Elect of the Association and/or Board.
12. Solicit articles from professional interest group members for publication by AAMR as requested by the President Pro Tem.

13. In this position of leadership, promote the Association's mission to other professionals and lay persons not familiar with AAMR. This may mean representing the professional interest group and AAMR at other conferences related to one's professional interest group. Collaboration with other AAMR Professional Interest Groups and other professional associations is encouraged.
14. Submit names of candidates for Division Presidents and SIG chairs to the Nominations & Elections Committee.
15. The Conference will select a representative to serve on the Nominations & Elections Committee. This can be either an incoming, current, or outgoing Division President or SIG Chair.
16. Orient incoming Professional Interest Group Leaders (i.e., for one's own Division or SIG).
17. Serve as an ongoing consultant as Past-President or Chair for the next year.

**DUTIES OF THE CONFERENCE OF PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS
REPRESENTATIVES TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

1. Attend and participate in all Conference and Board of Director's meetings and conference calls as described in the "Duties of the Conference Representatives."
2. Assist with the preparation of the Conference of Professional Interests meeting agendas.
3. Assist the President Pro-Tem with orientation, special projects, and other activities as needed.
4. Assist the President-Elect as Chair of the Conference in the explanation and support of any recommendations brought by the Conference to the Board of Directors.
5. Serve as Board liaison to standing and/or ad hoc Committees as assigned by the Association's President.

DUTIES OF THE PRESIDENT PRO-TEM

1. Work with the President-Elect of the Association who serves as Chair of the Conference in planning and conducting the meetings of the Conference.
2. Assist the President-Elect in preparing the meeting agendas.
3. Assure that the Conference meetings are scheduled appropriately during the Association's Annual Meeting.
4. Assist the President-Elect in reporting recommendations made by the Conference to the Board of Directors.
5. Attend all Conference, Board of Directors, and Executive Committee meetings. As President Pro-Tem of the Conference, one becomes an automatic member of the Executive Committee of the Association.
6. Communicate with the Conference Representatives to the Board following Executive Committee meetings as necessary. Serve as Board liaison to standing and/or ad hoc Committees as assigned by the Association's President.
7. Orient new Conference incoming Leaders, including mailing them the Leadership Manual.
8. Participate in the planning of the Annual Meeting as requested by the president-elect and/or Board.

CONFERENCE OF PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS **ELECTION PROCEDURES**

1. DIVISION PRESIDENT

Division Presidents and SIG Chairs are elected every other year on the national ballot. Approximately one-half of them are elected each year. Only members of that Division or SIG may vote for a candidate. Prior to each election year that the position is open, possible candidates are solicited from the members of the Division or SIG. From this list of names, the Committee on Nominations and Elections selects the candidates whose names will appear on the ballot. The winner will be notified at the beginning of the next calendar year by the Executive Director of the Association and his/her term of office will begin the day after the last day of the next annual conference of the Association.

2. BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPRESENTATIVES

At the Annual Meeting a quorum of the members of the Conference shall nominate candidates eligible to be Board of Directors representatives. These eligible candidates are all Division Presidents and SIG Chairs. Each member of the Conference shall vote by secret ballot for three nominees, with representatives to the Board of Directors chosen by the majority vote. The term of office shall be for one year. Conference members shall remain sensitive to issues related to maintaining diversity in choosing candidates for representation on the Board of Directors.

3. PRESIDENT PRO-TEM

A President Pro-Tem shall be elected annually by the Conference. The President Pro-Tem shall be elected from one of three Board of Directors representatives. The election shall be by secret ballot and by majority vote immediately following the election of the three Board of Directors representatives.

4. SUBSTITUTES AND REPLACEMENTS

If any of the Board of Directors representatives (including the President Pro-Tem) is unable to fulfill his or her obligations, the President-Elect shall appoint a replacement based on the most recent election results.

**DIRECTIONS FOR CONDUCTING CONFERENCE OF
PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS MEETINGS**

1. Schedule meetings at the Mid-Winter Business meeting, the Annual Meeting, and others as called.
2. The Central Office staff are responsible for mailing out the agenda with input from the President Pro-Tem at least two weeks prior to the meeting.
3. The President-Elect shall chair the meetings with backup from the President Pro-Tem.
4. The President Pro-Tem assists with the orientation of new Conference members prior to the meeting.
5. Each Conference member is given the opportunity to verbally or in written form, express any pertinent issues such as membership, education, research, etc. that the Conference, as a body, needs to consider. This may be for informational purposes only or may require action in the form of a vote by the Conference members.
6. The President Pro-Tem and Conference Board of Directors representatives report on their progress and any issues based on their involvement with Board or special committee assignments that the Conference members need to consider.
7. Discuss and vote on matters on which action by the Conference is requested by the Board of Directors.
8. Discuss and vote on matters, which the Conference feels the Board of Directors should consider.
9. Discuss any special projects, which the Conference should undertake and assign members to Conference Committees as necessary.
10. The meetings of the Conference are open to all interested parties, but only Division Presidents and SIG Chairs as full members of the Conference may vote. The President-Elect may vote to break ties.

THE DIVISIONS

The Divisions are composed of representatives from 16 disciplines, which make up each Division. Presently, these Divisions are: Administration, Communication Disorders, Community Services, Direct Support Professionals, Education, General, Gerontology, Legal Process and Advocacy, Leisure and Recreation, Medicine, Nursing, Nutrition and Dietetics, Occupational and Physical Therapy, Psychology, Religion and Spirituality, Social Work, and Vocational Rehabilitation. When a person joins AAMR nationally, they may indicate one or more Division preferences. Beginning with 2003 membership there will be a small fee for each Division membership. Besides the member privileges granted by membership in AAMR, a Division newsletter may also be included as a benefit of membership in the Division.

Also, AMMR members are divided into Regions, States, and Provinces. Within each section there may be Division leadership. To find out if there is Division leadership at any other level, check in the AAMR Leadership information on the AAMR website at [AAMR Region/Chapter Web Information](#).

THE SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

The Special Interest Groups are composed of representatives from nine areas of interest, which make up the Special Interest Group. Presently, these are: Creative Art Therapies, Down Syndrome, Families, Genetics, Health Issues, Mental Health Services, Multicultural Concerns, Social/Sexual Concerns, and Technology. When a person joins AAMR nationally, they have the option of joining one or more Special Interest Groups. Beginning with 2003 membership there will be a small fee for each SIG membership. Besides the member privileges granted by membership in AAMR, a SIG newsletter may also be included as a benefit of membership in the SIG.

ORGANIZATIONAL GUIDANCE FOR DIVISIONS

CRITERIA FOR ESTABLISHING A DIVISION

Divisions should be organized around professions or occupational interests and represent a minimum of 200 active members within that disciplinary focus who make an application to the Board of Directors as prescribed in Article IX of the AAMR Constitution.

OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

Each Division shall have a President and a President-Elect elected for a two-year term. Vacancies in the office of Division President shall be filled by appointment by the President of the Association (By-Law V-F). Divisions should adopt goals/objectives in support of the AAMR's Mission Statement and Strategic Plan. Divisions may not have By-Laws that are in conflict with the National organization's Constitution and By-Laws. Division By-Laws, if adopted, should reflect the name, purpose and membership criteria the same as the AAMR has established for the Division. Divisions should communicate with its membership by means of Division Newsletters (which should be included in the Division web page), mailings and/or articles in AAMR's publications.

CRITERIA FOR DISSOLVING A DIVISION

The Conference of Professional Interests shall conduct an annual review of the activity level of each Division. Divisions deemed to be at risk for inactivity in AAMR Division activities or organizational affairs of AAMR will be placed on a Watch List. The President Pro Tem, in concert with staff of the national office, will gather information about the activity level, membership status, and leadership of Divisions on the Watch List. This information will be shared with members of the Conference in order to facilitate strategies to strengthen or modify the Division.

The President Pro tem will communicate suggestions to the Division membership and support the Division in deciding upon an action plan to increase active participation in Division and organizational activities. In the event that strategies for increasing the leadership and activity level of the Division are unsuccessful, the Conference may recommend to the National Board of Directors that the Division be dissolved.

When a Division falls below the recommended minimum required number of 200 active members and/or is no longer involved in AAMR Division activities or organizational affairs of the association, the Conference of Professional Interests could submit a recommendation to the National Board of Directors to dissolve a Division. Factors to be taken into consideration would include failure to secure leadership nominees, lack of response to annual conference development/call for papers, and/or self-initiated request to dissolve. The Conference of Professional Interests shall recommend a time frame for notifications and final action when a recommendation is made to dissolve a Division.

ORGANIZATIONAL GUIDANCE FOR SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

CRITERIA FOR CREATION OF A SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

Special Interest Groups (SIGS) represent a topic or area of professional interest in the field. They are created by having a minimum of 100 active members representing that specific topic or interest, sign a petition and present it to the Conference of Professional Interests for action, including a recommendation to the National Board of Directors. The petition to create a SIG should include: (1) A Mission Statement for the proposed SIG, and (2) Goals and objectives the SIG intends to accomplish.

OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

SIGS shall have a chair elected for a two-year term. Vacancies in the office of chair shall be filled by appointment by the President of the Association. SIG's shall have, when created and updated annually thereafter, goals/objectives related to the AAMR Mission Statement and Strategic Plan. SIGS shall participate in conference planning on the same basis as Divisions.

CRITERIA FOR DISSOLVING A SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

When membership falls below 100 active members in the SIG and/or the Group is no longer active in conferences or organizational affairs of the Association, the Conference of Professional Interests would vote to dissolve a Special Interest Group and forward that recommendation to the AAMR National Board of Directors.

*(This section will be revised after the Conference has had a chance to evaluate the impact of the new dues structure {e.g., end of 2003}.)