

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A Compilation of Steering Committee Recommendations as Approved at MHLG Plenary Sessions

Overview

The Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG) is an advocacy coalition on mental health issues. The MHLG conducts one plenary annual business meeting each year, and most MHLG activity is conducted at the committee level. The Steering Committee and other standing committees may organize and schedule educational briefings, plenary business meetings, or other events throughout the year, as needed for matters of exceptional importance. A committee may invite all members of the MHLG to a meeting or function.

Annual Business Meeting

During its annual meeting, the full MHLG conducts the following business:

1. Elects individuals from member organizations as at-large Steering Committee members for one-year terms, by majority vote of those present and voting;
2. Establishes committees, with individual organizations signing up to participate; and
3. Elects an organization to serve as Secretary.
4. Elects an organization to serve as Treasurer.

Steering Committee

The MHLG Steering Committee is comprised of standing committee chairs, the Secretary and Treasurer and an unlimited number of elected at-large members. A Steering Committee Chair (or Co-Chairs) is (are) selected by Steering Committee members. The Steering Committee meets quarterly and at the request of the Steering Committee Chair. If two or more members of the Steering Committee represent one organization, they will share one vote in the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee's duties include:

1. Plan and implement the annual meeting.
2. Plan and implement general meetings, events or educational briefings (as needed).
3. As needed, authorize spokespersons to speak on behalf of the full MHLG.
4. As needed during the year, make recommendations related to MHLG policies and membership applications to be acted on by the full MHLG.
5. Coordinate the activities of the committees, in particular when there are overlapping committee jurisdictions.
6. Determine when a full MHLG document or position is needed and establish a process to produce it, subject to the same approval/endorsement rules as committee documents.

The Steering Committee Chair responsibilities include:

1. Convene the Steering Committee quarterly and as needed.
2. Act as liaison between organizations inquiring or applying for membership and the Steering Committee.
3. Compile and interpret MHLG rules and policies.

4. Assure implementation of Steering Committee plans.

The Secretary

The member organization serving as the MHLG Secretary shall include among its responsibilities:

1. Maintain MHLG rosters.
2. Distribute annual meeting notice.
3. Produce, store and distribute letterhead as needed.
4. Collect/process data for and publish annual directory.
5. Distribute rules on request.
6. Act as an administrative contact and referral service for the MHLG.
7. Produce full MHLG documents (not committee documents).
8. Serve on the Steering Committee.

The Treasurer

The member organization serving as the MHLG Treasurer shall include among its responsibilities:

1. Provide financial management as necessary, maintaining the MHLG bank account and reporting to the Steering Committee quarterly and to the membership at the annual meeting.
2. Send dues invoices to members and report to the Steering Committee on the status of payment.
3. Serve on the Steering Committee.

Financial Support for MHLG Responsibilities

To defray the costs of the Secretariat and other direct expenses, the Steering Committee shall require dues from each member organization, incorporating the availability of a hardship discount. Calendar year membership dues are \$250. Those organizations that have not paid their dues by April 30th lose their membership.

Committee Structure and Process

Committees form the operating structure of the Mental Health Liaison Group. While MHLG members are expected to participate in at least one committee, observers may participate at the request of the Committee Chair. Committees are governed by their majority, but may choose to operate on a consensus basis.

Committees have primary responsibility for conducting MHLG activities in their area of concern. This may include conducting meetings, briefings, or other events, as well as producing various documents, letters, or position statements, and communicating the activities of the committee to the MHLG. Committees are responsible for selecting their own chair(s) and/or spokesperson(s), who will act or speak on behalf of the committee. Procedures include:

Selection of Chair. Each year, one person from the new committee roster created at the annual meeting volunteers to call the committee's first meeting. At this first meeting, each committee (including the Steering Committee) elects a chair.

Use of Letterhead. For a document to become an official MHLG committee document, the endorsement of 50 percent of committee members plus one is required. For a document to become an official MHLG document, the endorsement of 50% of MHLG members plus one plus one is required.

Committee documents produced on MHLG letterhead identify the committee of origin and include a list of organizational endorsements. Committee Chairs are expected to provide the MHLG Steering Committee Chair with copies of documents produced by their committees.

Roster Revisions During the Year. Committee chairs are allowed to drop from the committee roster an organization that fails to participate in three sequential meetings. A member (organization) dropped from the committee roster would remain off the roster for the remainder of the year.

List of Committees. The following standing committees are established: Budget & Appropriations, Health Policy, and Social Services.

Membership

A. Membership Classes, Criteria and Roles

- (1) MHLG membership consists of national nonprofit organizations that have a representative in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Member organizations include those representing consumers, providers of services, families, advocates and professional organizations that can demonstrate a commitment to improving mental health services and/or research and are capable of cosigning MHLG advocacy statements consistent with the individual organization's policy priorities. Applicants for membership must be sponsored by a current MHLG member. Designated representatives from the member organizations form the body of the MHLG. Member organizations must make a commitment to active MHLG committee participation in Washington, D.C.
- (2) For purposes of defining internal MHLG organizational policy, each member organization is represented by one voting representative appointed by the national organization that he/she represents.
- (3) MHLG observer status is intended for national organizations, rather than for interested individuals, and observers are listed in the Directory, along with organizational descriptions. Observer organizations are expected to complete the same membership application form and procedures established for members but they need not have a representative in the Washington, D.C. area and are not expected to cosign MHLG advocacy statements. Observers are encouraged to attend and participate in plenary meetings of the MHLG but shall not have a vote. Observers may participate in committee meetings by invitation of the Committee Chair(s).

B. Membership Application Process

- (1) The MHLG Steering Committee considers all matters of membership. Upon recommendation of the Steering Committee, the MHLG shall consider inviting additional organizations into the membership.
- (2) New member organizations are accepted when approved by a voting majority of MHLG members as meeting the criteria set forth in item A(1) above.