



COUNSELORS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Chapter Handbook & Toolkits

Counselors for
תיקון עולם
justicia social
العدالة الاجتماعية
social justice.

CSJ Chapter Handbook

Welcome and Introduction



Welcome to Counselors for Social Justice!

We are excited that you have chosen to establish a chapter of CSJ. As you begin, we would like to orient you to the organization and some of our hopes for the future of social justice in the counseling field.

The first part of this document is the Chapter Handbook, which outlines the basic steps for becoming a chapter and gives you ideas for how to start getting organized. The second part of this document contains the Startup Toolkit, which is more in-depth information needed for specific phases of development of your student chapter.

The CSJ Membership Committee oversees the chapter charter process. The Membership Committee is your point of contact for forming chapters and is tasked with tracking chapter charters and CSJ membership. They are available to assist you in this process.

CSJ welcomes you! If there is anything we can do to assist you, please let us know!

Sincerely,

Counselors for Social Justice Membership Committee

membership@counseling-csj.org

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About Counselors for Social Justice

CSJ Mission

Counselors for Social Justice acknowledge systemic barriers within our society and profession that impact clients, students, counselors, schools and communities. We use personal and collective activism as a vehicle to address disparities through collaboration with communities and schools, as well as involvement in the political process. Furthermore, we incorporate our activist identity into our roles as clinicians, educators, and researchers by building relationships within the schools and communities in which we work, addressing institutional and educational barriers, and teaching and producing research that addresses inequities and promotes social change.

After reading this, you might be wondering what is unique about social justice in counseling. Social justice counseling represents a multifaceted approach to counseling in which practitioners strive to simultaneously promote human development and the common good through addressing challenges related to both individual and distributive justice.

Social justice counseling includes empowerment of the individual as well as active confrontation of injustice and inequality in society as they impact clientele as well as those in their systemic contexts. In doing so, social justice counselors direct attention to the promotion of four critical principles that guide their work; equity, access, participation, and harmony. This work is done with a focus on the cultural, contextual, and individual needs of those served.



Benefits of becoming a CSJ member

Joining Counselors for Social Justice comes with many benefits to the counseling field, your community, the national and global movements for social justice, and many others. Some of the benefits we have identified and that are important to us are listed below.

- Staying current on social justice oriented trends and policy issues in the field
- Subscription to the [Journal for Social Action in Counseling and Psychology](#)
- Access to the [CSJ newsletter](#)
- Inclusion in the conversation occurring on the CSJ listserv
- Networking opportunities with social justice minded graduate students, faculty, and professionals
- Opportunities to engage in social justice leadership skills
- Opportunity to apply for the CSJ Social Justice Counseling Grant

See the [Counselors for Social Justice website at counseling-csj.org](http://counseling-csj.org) for more!

Becoming a CSJ Chapter

Orientation and Information

Counselors for Social Justice sees the establishment of chapters as serving an important role in enhancing counselors, students, and communities. Towards this end, we offer our assistance to helping you create and maintain a successful chapter of CSJ.

We recommend reading the following article. It will provide some ideas and insight in the development of a student chapter of CSJ in the context of the educational environment.

[Brady-Amoon, P., Makhija, N., Dixit, V., & Dator, J. \(2012\). Social justice: Pushing past boundaries in graduate training. *Journal for Social Action in Counseling and Psychology*, 4\(2\), 85-98.](#)

A note on student chapters

For those starting student/university chapters, it's important to note that becoming a CSJ student chapter is different from becoming an official university student group. We encourage student/university chapters to also become official university student groups, however they are not the same process. Being an official university student group brings the resources and benefits of being 'official' as part of your school. Being a student chapter of CSJ means you are 'official' as part of Counselors for Social Justice and recognized within our organization. Being a student group within your university is not a requirement of becoming a chartered chapter of CSJ. However, your university may require it in order for your student group to become a CSJ chapter.

Communication

Having a central point of communication is vital to the successful establishment and maintenance of a chapter. We recommend developing a chapter Facebook page, a Google Sites page or a simple website, or similar social media. This helps in developing a sense of community and allows for easy dissemination of information, ideas, and for organizing events/meetings. Another idea might be to create a Google Group (similar to a listserv) which allows for communication for all members.

Organizing

Some CSJ members have asked about how to start a CSJ chapter, be it on a college campus or a local group of professionals working within your state or local region. This is an important question, because we know from history that any successful movement has to be organized. Thus the questions: How do you pull like minds together to float the possibility of forming an organization?



Here are a few suggestions to get started:

1. Hosting a lunch or an evening viewing and discussion of a video on social justice and counseling, followed by an introduction to starting a chapter. Here are a few videos that are on YouTube:
 - [The devolution and evolution of the social justice counseling and advocacy movement](#)
 - [Using the ACA Advocacy, Multicultural, Social Justice and LGBTQIA Competencies](#)
2. Hosting a panel discussion of counselors and social justice advocates in neighborhood groups to talk about the relationship between social injustice and counseling (e.g. Black Lives Matter), followed by an introduction to starting a chapter
3. Partner with a local advocacy group to put on a forum related to social justice and mental health.

The CSJ website at www.counseling-csj.org has some resources that can be printed and used as literature on different subjects related to abuses in our society and other topics around which a CSJ chapter may want to organize. Resources can be found [here](#).



FROM FRANNIE NEAL, UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

“Find local organizations interested in similar social justice issues, and collaborate with them. Create effective marketing strategies (via social media, newsletters, email listserv, and other methods) to disseminate important information to membership. Find engaged university advisers who are willing to help. Create sustainability practices to ensure smooth leadership transitions.”

Tips from Chapter Leaders

FROM BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY

“Collaborate with other organizations on campus with similar interests and hold officer meetings monthly or at least check in by email monthly. This is a student chapter of CSJ involved in bullying reduction trainings at middle schools, therapeutic boarding program, LGBTQ safe zone training, recruiting counseling students to attend film screenings related to social justice issues, working with the homeless population in Boise, participated in the NAMI walk, helping with the “dreamers” campaign (supporting children of undocumented residents in Idaho who have to pay out of state tuition even though they have resided in Idaho their entire lives), and are beginning to meet with Idaho Legislators through the Idaho Counseling Association.”

FROM RACHEL WHITE, WRIGHT STATE

“My biggest tip for new chapters is to expect to do a TON of work the first year and to have very engaged faculty advisors. Another tip is to make sure you immediately become a university/college organization. There are so many university resources that we couldn't touch until we were officially recognized. I think another good tip is to get really involved with any local counseling groups to begin networking in the field before you graduate. I've already been tapped to be President Elect of our local Counseling Association because of being involved with the Chapter and the group. I went to them as a student to say "how can we help you all in the field?" and it's just blossomed into opportunities I never would have imagined.”

Steps to Becoming a CSJ Chapter

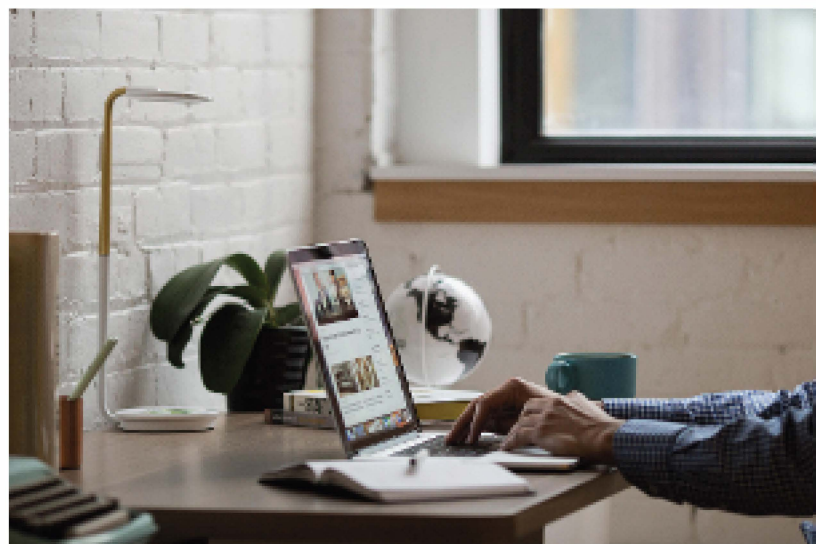
Now that we've provided some background information, here is how you will make your CSJ chapter official.

Preparing:

1. Create a **Chapter Constitution**.
See the detailed guidance on creating a constitution in the Startup Toolkit below.
2. Complete the **Chapter Agreement**, which can be found linked from the CSJ website and also [here](#).
3. Submit the information required for the **Chapter Application**, which can be found linked from the CSJ website and also [here](#).
4. Email your Chapter Constitution and Chapter Agreement form to the CSJ Membership Committee at membership@counseling-csj.org with the subject line of "CHAPTER APPLICATION"

The Membership Committee will review your materials. If complete, these materials will be forwarded to the CSJ Board for final approval. The CSJ Board meets monthly, so you can expect to hear a decision within two months. If the materials are incomplete, the Membership Committee will be in touch to request additional information.

After your completed application has been approved, your chapter will receive confirmation of your chapter as active. Your chapter approval is then active for **one year**, with renewal done yearly through the submission of the Annual Report each May, which is described in the following section.



We ask that you update us with any changes to contact information that we will post on our CSJ website. Please email membership@counseling-csj.org if you have a change in leadership or primary contact, or if we can help out in any way.

CSJ Chapter Toolkits

These Chapter Toolkits will help you with the important tasks to complete at each stage of development of a volunteer-run organization:

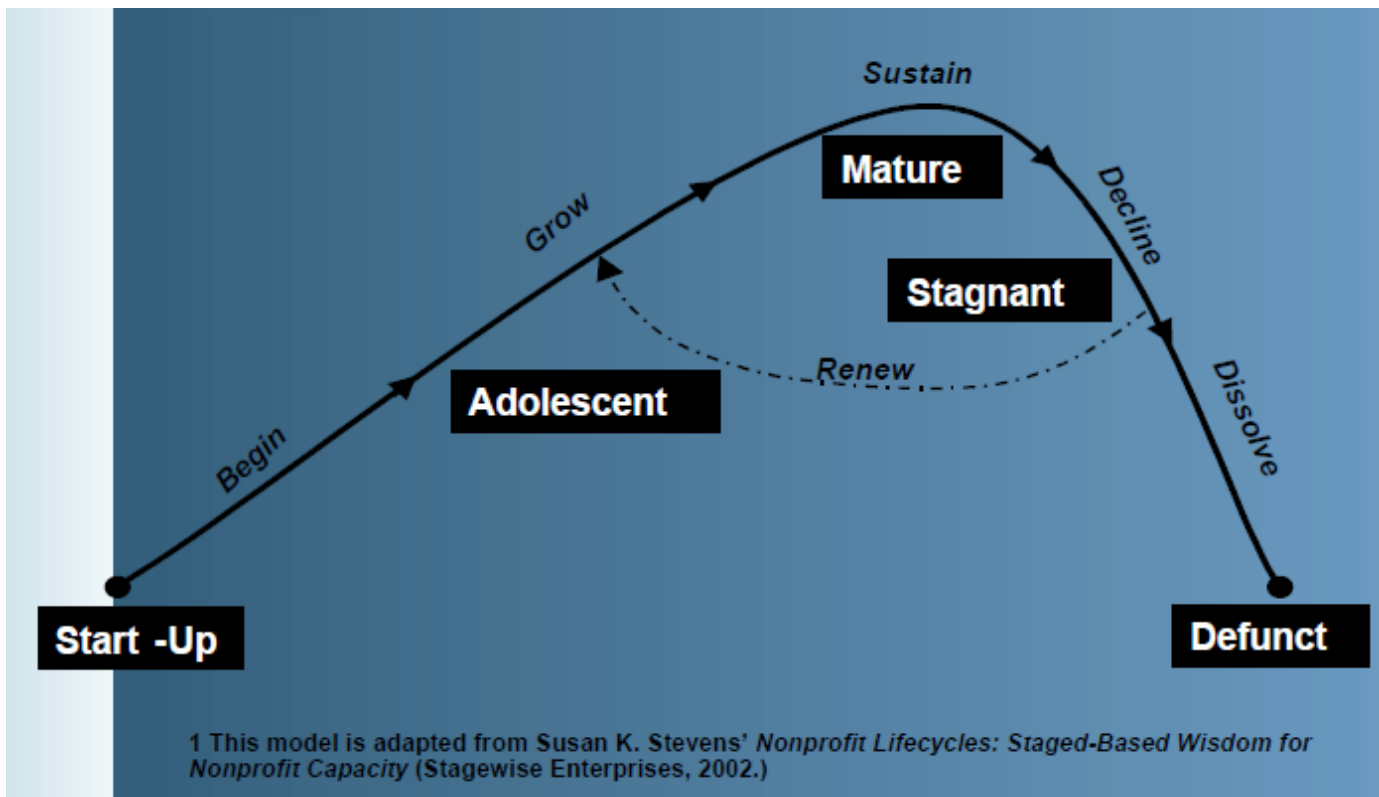


Diagram from <https://www.nhnonprofits.org/content/organizational-life-cycle-stages>.

Here's what you will find in the following pages:

1. Start-Up Toolkit: Launching Your Chapter
 - Forming your founding team
 - Choosing a name
 - Defining your mission and vision
 - Writing your Constitution
2. Growth Toolkit: Building and Growing
 - Increasing membership
 - Nurturing engagement
 - Organizing for action
3. Sustaining Toolkit: Ensuring Longevity
 - Holding elections
 - Planning for smooth succession to new leadership

Start-Up Toolkit

Any organization benefits from having its purpose well defined and clearly communicated to its members. This purpose and the principles that the organization abides by are captured in the founding documents: The Constitution and the By-Laws.

Since you need to have a Constitution in order to apply to become a CSJ chapter, then this Toolkit is organized around the process of writing that document.

Each section of the Constitution will be capturing the important decisions your founding team makes about how your chapter will be organized. Therefore, if you go through the guidance below for defining the different sections of your Constitution, you will be simultaneously developing the foundation for your organization and how it will be governed.

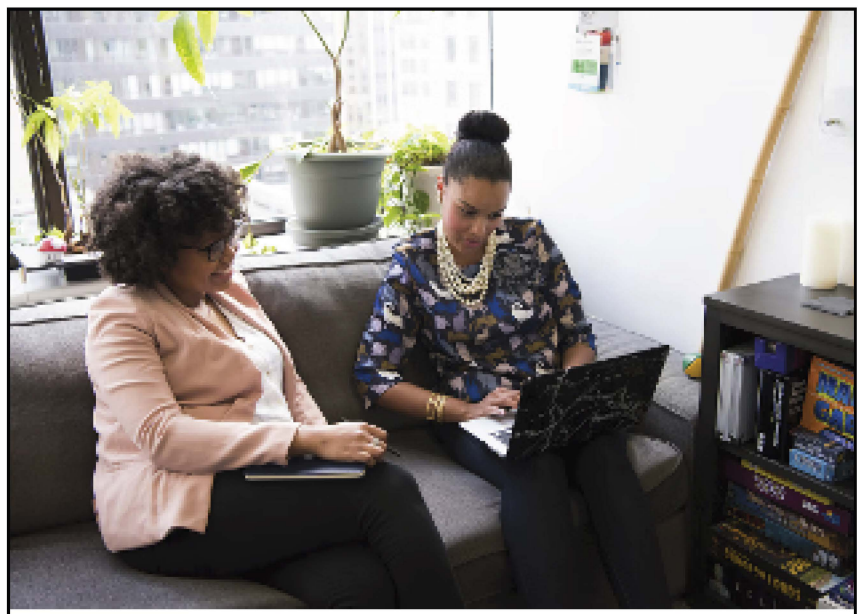
Your Chapter Constitution & By-Laws

To become a chapter of Counselors for Social Justice, a Constitution needs to be submitted with your application. The Constitution is the founding document that lays out the parameters by which the chapter will be organized.

If you are forming a student chapter: Many student clubs must go through a formal approval process within their university before applying as a chapter of CSJ, so the Constitution can potentially be used for both processes.

The Constitution is such an important document that it should be created collaboratively by your founding team. That's why we're providing guidelines and ideas for you to consider, as you build out your own, rather than simply sharing a sample document. Each chapter is different, and this will allow you to create the infrastructure of your chapter in a way that meets your needs and purposes. You might even want to use a consensus-based sociocratic method for discussing and agreeing on each of the Articles in your Constitution. See the section below on Organizational Models for a brief introduction to sociocracies.

The primary purpose of the Constitution is to get your chapter up and running, by defining what the chapter will be and do. After you have developed and grown as a chapter, you may find that an *organizational manual* is also needed – but don't worry about that right away!



The organizational manual would capture the policies you're using to manage things. Many chapters never write an organizational manual, and they do just fine. The organizational manual is most useful for chapters that grow larger, and to help with transfer of duties and on-boarding when new officers are elected. The Constitution is not the place for the detailed policies and procedures that your chapter will manage itself by.

The Constitution captures the essential purpose of what the chapter will be and do, and the framework by which it will be governed.

While the Constitution is a formal document, it also is one that you can make your own, to serve the needs of your specific students and the ideas you bring forth for your chapter. Remember that the Constitution and By-Laws can always be changed later through a vote of membership, and actually they should be reviewed regularly, to make sure that they are accurately capturing what the members want the organization to be and do.

General Guidelines for the Constitution

1. Write in broad terms that allow for flexibility. Your by-laws will determine the more concrete policies for the organization, and you can also have an operating manual that covers the day-to-day tasks.
2. Write in gender-neutral language. The APA recommends the use of “they” as a singular pronoun. Example: “If a new member wants to join, they can fill out an application.”
3. For state or regional chapters: Check with your state counseling association, to see if they support the ability to have a division within their organizational structure. If so, find out how to become chartered through them at the same time.
4. For student chapters: If your school also requires that a student club have a founding document like a constitution or charter, then consult those requirements first, in order to incorporate them in when you draft this document. You can only have one Constitution, so make sure it meets all of your needs!

Developing the Constitution may feel like a difficult task, but once you understand the requirements, it shouldn't be so hard to pull it together. The following pages provide ideas for what each section might include.



Article I: Chapter Name

This section of your Constitution can be super straightforward, just one or maybe two sentences, something like this:

The official name of this organization shall be <Chapter Name>. The organization will use this name or the acronym <Chapter Short Name> in all materials.

The name of your chapter is up to you, however it needs to be clear that it's a chapter of CSJ, and for student chapters, the chapter name needs to identify your school somehow.

Suggested naming conventions:

- For state/regional chapters: "<state> Counselors for Social Justice"
- For student chapters: "Counselors for Social Justice - <school name> Chapter"

It is not mandatory to use the suggested names. When you submit your application, the Membership Committee will confirm that the name is not already being used by another chapter. You can contact the Membership Committee at membership@counseling-csj.org with questions.

Article II: Mission & Purpose

Defining the mission of your chapter can be so helpful! It may seem obvious that you're creating a group for *social justice*, but that term means different things to different people and in different contexts, and there are many ways you can work towards social justice as a group.

The *mission and purpose* should be clearly stated in terms of what the chapter seeks to accomplish together. The mission statement therefore is the "what" of the chapter: What will you do together, what will you achieve? Page 4 shows the CSJ Mission if you want to refer to that as you develop the mission for your own chapter.

See below for a description of a *vision statement* which you might optionally also want to develop, which focuses on the "*how*" in describing the ways you will accomplish those things.

Here are some ideas to consider including in your Mission & Purpose section.

For student chapters:

- To provide community and connection for students in your program interested in social justice, as a means of peer support
- To provide additional training and education beyond what your program's curriculum offers in multiculturalism, aspects of identity, and systemic oppression, such as through guest speakers

For all chapters:

- To help members build their professional identities as social justice advocates by practicing skills of advocacy
- To present the latest research on social justice and advocacy
- To create a forum for discussion on types of advocacy: individual, policy, collective, and others
- To organize together to take action within your school or your broader community on matters of inequity and social change
- To implement social justice in the specific way that your chapter defines it (which is totally up to you!)

You may feel excited by all of these possibilities, and there's no real harm in defining an aspirational mission statement for your chapter. However, you'll notice that each one of these examples requires a specific focus and organizational effort. New chapters usually find that it's easier to gain traction when they have a focused approach to their organizational purpose, especially in the beginning. If you write your Mission Statement in language that is very broad like "the chapter will advocate for social justice", then you may want to have a defined process in your operations manual where every year, the leadership team comes up with very specific goals and objectives for how that mission will be met.

Remember that your chapter has leeway to work on a specific named issue or initiative even if it is not explicitly defined in the Constitution. The Mission Statement just needs to be broad enough to encompass your intentions, while hopefully also being specific enough to help members understand your purpose in coming together.

Vision Statement

It is not necessary to have a *vision statement* but you may find it useful to develop one. The *vision statement* can incorporate your ideals or values, and how the chapter will grow or evolve, or where it wants to be in the future.

The *vision statement* is often aspirational and captures a view of the world that the organization is striving to create.

What can your mission and vision do? They can keep you focused, they can assist with continuity in leadership as they provide a touchstone to guide new officers, and they can help you develop a Call to Action when you talk about your chapter with students.

Here are examples from the ACA:

VISION | OUR IMPACT

Every person has access to quality professional counseling to thrive.

MISSION | WHAT WE DO

Promote the professional development of counselors, advocate for the profession, and ensure ethical, culturally-inclusive practices that protect those using counseling services.

Article III: Affiliation

You can describe your affiliation with the national CSJ organization with language like this:

<Chapter Name> will seek to be affiliated as a recognized chapter with the national Counselors for Social Justice organization, which is a division of the American Counseling Association.

For student chapters, you could state your affiliation with your school, perhaps in a sentence like this:

<Chapter Name> became a formally recognized student organization at <School Name> by registering with <campus office> on <date>.



If your chapter will be part of your state counseling association, then a sentence like this might be appropriate:

<Chapter Name> became a formally recognized division of <State Counseling Association Name> on <date>.

Article IV: General Membership Criteria

Here you will define who can become a member. The one mandatory requirement is that your members are already members of the Counselors for Social Justice national organization. You might want to include a statement that each prospective member's active CSJ membership will be verified by the Chapter Secretary when their application for membership in your chapter is processed.

Any other criteria for membership are up to you. For regional chapters, you may want to require membership in your state counseling association.

For student chapters, membership might be open to:

- Any student in your specific counseling program
- Any student in your program or related programs on your campus (e.g., if your school has a master's in counseling and also a master's in social work)
- Any alumni of your program
- Any faculty and staff in your program (may or may not have voting rights)

Some colleges and universities may require that every student club have membership open to all students at the whole school, regardless of their educational program, in which case you will simply define that as part of your criteria.

Instead of having the option for alumni to join as regular members, you could designate a non-voting Alumni Ambassador role instead, then define what an Ambassador might do in terms of providing connections out into the professional community of counselors and agencies.

Within your organizational manual, you might want to also designate if there are requirements to become a

member, such as attending two of your meetings before joining.

Many chapters prefer not to put up obstacles to membership, but in some cases it may be helpful as part of your membership recruitment process, so that you start to nurture engagement from the beginning. Again, this should



probably not be in the Constitution, but instead can be covered in your manual.

Also within the General Membership Criteria section, you may want to include non-discriminatory language, such as with a sentence like:

Membership shall be available without regard to gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or romantic interest, race, ethnicity, culture, nationality, immigration status, disability, religion, political affiliation, or belief.

Include a section defining situations that would result in termination of membership. For example, you might want to state that members can resign their membership; they will be dropped for non-payment of chapter dues (if you have them) or if they do not stay active with National CSJ; or they can be suspended for ethical violations or non-compliance with the ACA code of conduct, based on a vote of eligible members.

Article V: Voting Membership Criteria

For student chapters, the CSJ National guidelines require that three-fourths of the voting membership must be students. If you allow other categories of membership, such as faculty, staff, or alumni members, then you'll need to define if they have the right to vote, and based on national guidelines, will need to always preserve the ratio of at least three-fourths of student members within the membership body.

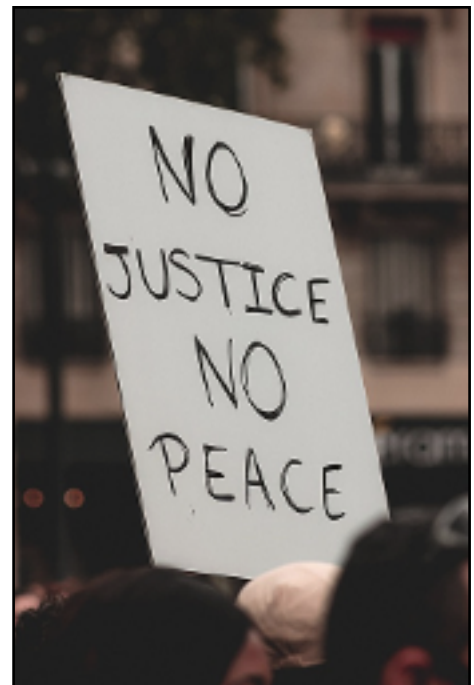
You might want to include a statement that only members who are active and in good standing with the Chapter and with CSJ National are eligible to vote in chapter elections.

Article VI: Duties and Privileges of Membership

This can be as simple as saying that membership entitles the member to participate in all chapter activities and events.

You can also say that members have the right to provide recommendations for actions and policies of the chapter, to participate in any and all actions and activities, to nominate chapter leaders, to participate in elections, and to serve on the leadership team if elected.

In the organizational manual, you could expand the expectations and be more specific around describing expectations for members, such as around attendance at a certain number of meetings each term. You might also want to define whether members have the right to represent the chapter in external relationships.



Article VII: Duties, Authorities, and Qualifications of Officers

The Constitution should name the positions that comprise the leadership team and describe their functions. This section also describes how the leaders are chosen. You might call this group of members the Leadership Team, the Chapter Council, the Board, or the Leadership Circle, or another name that your group decides on.

Traditionally, the minimum organizational structure needed for such a group would be a Leadership Team consisting of these roles and standard functions:

- **President** - organizes the leadership team and communicates with membership; calls meetings to order and proposes the agenda
- **Secretary** - creates meeting agendas by soliciting agenda items from leadership team, writes and publishes the minutes of each meeting (may also keep the membership roll, or this function could be handled by a Membership Director for a larger chapter)
- **Treasurer** - handles finances including collection of dues (if any), management of income from fundraisers, payment of speaker fees, overall budgets, and reporting. If your chapter will not require members to pay chapter dues, and your university does not financially support student clubs and organizations like this one, then the Treasurer role may not be needed for your chapter.

The actual titles and organization of your leadership team are up to you. For example, you may have role-sharing via co-leads in any of these positions. You may choose the name Chairperson instead of President. Or, you could use the title of "Vice President and Secretary" or any other naming convention you wish.

The Constitution does not name the actual individuals who will hold these roles in your chapter. Instead, it defines the roles and identifies what each position will be responsible for. For student chapters, which are usually student-organized and student-run, the Constitution for student chapters should indicate which positions may be held by non-students (e.g., alumni) and which must be student only.

An odd number of people in the leadership roles can help prevent voting gridlocks.

Officer Responsibilities

The Constitution and By-Laws should specify who is authorized to act on behalf of the chapter and what process is needed to conduct official business. The by-laws should include the basics of oversight and good governance.

For example, you may want a statement that goes something like this:

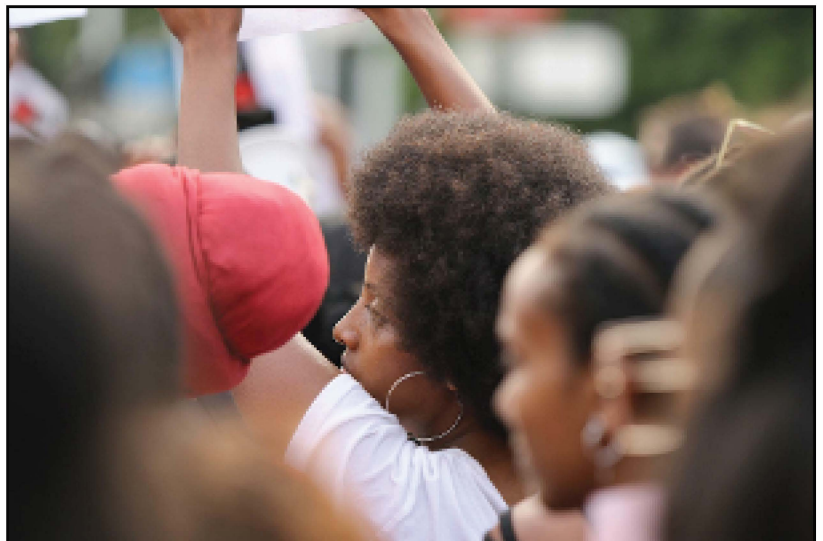
The activities of this chapter shall be conducted under direction of the Student Leadership Team with support and guidance from the Faculty Advisor. The elected leadership shall be authorized to act on behalf of the chapter pursuant to these articles. All leaders will act ethically and in the best interests of the membership.

You may also want to include a list of responsibilities for all officers collectively, such as to:

- Understand and uphold the Constitution and By-Laws of this chapter and of CSJ
- Listen to members and solicit input, ideas, and positions on issues that matter to them.
- Attend and participate in chapter meetings, committees and activities.
- Guide, organize, and implement programs and activities according to membership requirements and desires.
- Report to the membership on activities and progress on initiatives.

Expand this to identify what other duties you define to be important for all of your chapter leaders to perform.

Each individual office should also have a list of duties and responsibilities named, specific to its function.



Other key roles that you might want to define upfront in the Constitution could be:

- **Membership Director** to maintain membership records and lead the recruitment, application, and on-boarding processes, including verification of National CSJ Membership (these are critical tasks, so designate that your Secretary will do all of this if you choose not to have a Membership Director)
- **Communications Director** to handle social media, website, emails to members and other marketing, outreach, and coordination
- **Programming Director** to lead planning, organization, and promotion of events and activities (some chapters could choose to have this be a Programming Chairperson who runs a Programs Subcommittee – since this tends to be a very large task, and is core to the organization)

For a new chapter, all of these functions might be managed by the President (which means that it's important to watch for burnout in the lead role!).

One reality to keep in mind as you identify who is best to serve in roles and what functions are needed is this: Many people join CSJ because they want to take action, and they are interested in organizing and *doing stuff* together. This energy is key to harness into the chapter's activities!

However, in order to have a successful chapter that is sustained over time, specific managerial functions are needed to keep the chapter itself running. Often, those who launch the chapter really want to get down to the work of activism. Don't overlook the importance of the administrative aspects of keeping the chapter running. There are nuts-and-bolts tasks like setting up meetings and lining up speakers which need to occur if you're going to attract new members.

Those who put in the work to keep things organized may go unappreciated at times, because those tasks tend not to be as exciting or fun as the grassroots activism might be. However, all of these are equally important if you're going to have a chapter that grows over time and serves your community effectively.

Eligibility for Office and Duration of Term

Ideally, you would want a member to be active in the chapter for a period of time before qualifying for election to office, so that they can become familiar with how the chapter is organized and run, and they feel they are a part of membership and are in sync with the current culture and working style of existing members and leaders. Then once elected, in order to have continuity of leadership, officers would be in place for a one-year term. This structure is strongly recommended for state and regional CSJ chapters. The eligibility and term duration should be specified in the Constitution.

For university chapters, such terms may be more difficult to implement. Based on the realities of the academic calendar and the regular turnover that occurs when student members graduate, you may decide to structure the requirements for office more flexibly. Here is an example:

To qualify for being nominated for election to a leadership office, a member must be active (defined as attending at least half of the regular chapter meetings and activities over the past three months) and in good standing (defined as up to date on dues with our chapter and National CSJ, and also in good academic standing with the program).



Therefore for student chapters, the term of office could be either a one-year term, or it might need to be shorter. For example, if your program has rolling admissions and continuous start dates throughout the year, then students may be graduating on a frequent basis, which makes it more challenging to design long-duration terms of office for the leadership roles. You may want to designate six-month terms for each elected position.

Example language could therefore be:

Student leadership positions will be for six-month terms, with elections held in October and March every year.

In all cases (both student chapters and regional chapters), the best scenario is to have staggered terms, where some officers will be continuing on in their positions at the same time as other officers come in new, so that there is continuity of leadership, and not complete turnover of everyone all at once. This staggered term isn't always possible, but it can help significantly with succession and lets the organization maintain its momentum more easily.

The Role of Faculty Advisor for University Chapters

For university chapters, the role of Faculty Advisor should also be defined within the Constitution. The Faculty Advisor needs to be accessible to the Leadership Team and committed to the goals of the chapter. The Faculty Advisor may be a liaison to school administration, and can assist the chapter by navigating the larger school system, to help procure access to resources or facilities as needed, and to make connections for students in pursuit of chapter objectives. The Faculty Advisor should stay informed by attending chapter meetings, or by working behind-the-scenes as a consultant to the Student Leadership Team for those chapters that are more student-run. The Faculty Advisor should model advocacy in action for the students, while looking for opportunities to support the development of leadership and advocacy skills in the Leadership Team and all chapter members.

Since we're talking about Faculty Advisors... The following information need not be included in your Constitution, but we wanted to offer some suggestions on this important role for your group.

Who should you ask to be your advisor?

Obviously you'll want to pick a professor who is in alignment with the goals of social justice, and who has time, energy, and availability to support your student chapter. The Faculty Advisor needs to be a member of National CSJ, just like all other chapter members.

What resources are available to Faculty Advisors?

The National CSJ Membership Committee is available to Faculty Advisors seeking support in serving their student chapters. Please reach out to us at membership@counseling-csj.org if we can help out.

Working as a Team: Dividing up tasks

Communication is key - especially as you start to grow! A lot of headaches and missteps can be avoided by laying out who will do what.

Student Leaders and Faculty Advisors all should have regular conversations about roles and responsibilities. Walk through all the tasks of running the organization and identify who owns each piece.

For example, Who sends out the meeting invitation to members? Who decides on topics for meetings? Who sets the agenda?

Who creates any slide deck you might want to use, and who reviews it and offers suggestions? Do you have a process to check materials you create for implicit bias and unintended messages? Having the Faculty Advisor involved in this step might be helpful.

See more ideas in Options for Managing Your Chapter and How to Run Meetings.



Article VIII: Selection and Removal of Officers

For university chapters, as defined by CSJ, “All officers must be current, regularly enrolled students in good academic standing at their universities” so this language should be included in your Constitution.

For programs with one graduation date per academic year, then you can build your chapter election cycle and leadership terms around the academic calendar. This is subject to the length of terms for your officers. If one-year roles, then elections for student positions are commonly held in the Spring, to allow for training and on-boarding of new leadership while the existing leadership finishes out their term. Then, the new Leadership Team starts at the beginning of the next academic term and is in place for a one-year term.

For state or regional chapters, you can define your criteria for serving as officers.

For any type of chapter, in this section you should designate the timing and frequency of elections. Define how nominations can be made, and when and how elections are held and ballots can be cast. The details can be covered in your organizational manual.



The Constitution and By-Laws should cover such things as:

- The process for removal of officers is typically designed as needing a vote of all eligible members. You should designate if a simple majority (50% of eligible members) or a greater majority (e.g., two-thirds) would be needed.
- Defining how an officer can resign their position. This might be as simple as submitting their resignation in writing to the Leadership Team.
- The process for appointing or electing an officer in the event of a vacancy. This can be an appointment of a qualified member as made by unanimous vote of the existing Leadership Team, or a special election could be run for this purpose. This Article of the Constitution should specify how these situations would be handled.

By now you may be wondering, how do you run elections? At the end of this toolkit is a one-pager on the basics for managing an election.

Article IX: Frequency of Meetings

This Article in your Constitution is intended to name a *minimum* number of meetings that will preserve the functioning of your chapter as a viable organization. However your chapter may find it useful to meet more often than you designate here.

In order to be considered an active, functioning chapter, CSJ National requires meeting twice per year. You can include that in your Constitution, or you might want to require meetings at least once every quarter. Again, this is the minimum that you're designing into your founding agreement. You don't necessarily want to overcommit the number of meetings you'll hold by specifying too many in the Constitution. Remember, as officers, you're committing to uphold the Constitution, so make the Constitution easy to uphold!

To build momentum in activities and ensure enough new members are attracted to your work, to ensure for continuity of the organization, then a more frequent meeting schedule is usually helpful. Most chapters try to meet once a month, with a standing meeting set on the calendar, such as the third Thursday of the month, or the second Tuesday, etc. Again, these details do not need to be spelled out in the Constitution. The purpose of this Article of the Constitution is only to designate the minimum frequency of meetings. You can specify this as simply as "This chapter will hold a full membership meeting at least once every quarter."

Then, the Leadership Team can decide on the best schedule for the chapter to use to



Additional Possible Sections in Your Constitution

These additional sections are not required by CSJ, however they may be worth including:

- Language on how to modify the Constitution and By-Laws. For example, you could specify that changes can be made by the vote of the simple majority (50%) of membership, or you could define a greater majority such as two-thirds vote.
- Guidelines for use of funds, if membership fees are collected, or if the chapter is able to secure funding from your university as part of its support for student organizations.

The Constitution can also incorporate your values:

- You could have a statement on equity and diversity.
- If your founding team is all white, you could include a sentence recognizing that. It would also be useful to make a plan (separate from the Constitution) for what you will do to increase representation within your Leadership Team.
- The Constitution could have a preamble or introduction where you make a land acknowledgement.
- You could include a list of values in the preamble or introduction, such as an invitation for all members to be respectful, kind, and compassionate in all interactions, and to be conscious of dynamics of power, privilege, and identity, and to strive for humility, learning, and growth, or whatever other values are important to your founding team that you want to bring forth into the culture of the chapter.

Remember, the operational manual can cover the nuts and bolts of day-to-day policies. Items presented in the Constitution and By-Laws will require a vote of membership to change. Specify those items that are integral to the purpose and basic means of organization for the chapter within the Constitution and By-Laws.



FAQs for the Start-Up Phase

1. Can we hold meetings before we get approved as a CSJ Chapter?

Yes! Getting your application approved is important, but don't let that stop you from moving forward with your organizational tasks. Building excitement within your community for what your chapter will do can be so helpful, so absolutely, have meetings, talk with potential members (students and faculty, or other counselors) about what you're doing, and start to get your organization off the ground!

2. Do we have to hold elections for the first people to take on leadership roles?

Nope! Once you get your founding team together, they can agree on their initial roles and self-appoint, in the process of building out the Constitution and getting the application in to the National CSJ team.



Maintaining Your Chapter

Annual Report Due May 31st

In order to maintain the affiliation as a CSJ Chapter, each chapter will complete an Annual Report online through the national CSJ website, to provide updated information about your chapter, your accomplishments, and your goals.

The Annual Report is due annually on May 31st, to cover the previous year.

You may find the link to the Annual Report submission form on the Getting Involved -> Chapters page of counseling-csj.org or click here to go straight to the Annual Report form.

An email will go to your chapter contacts from the CSJ Membership Committee reminding you of the deadline.

Chapter Changes

Any changes to chapter constitutions must be approved by the CSJ national Board of Directors. Forward your changes to the Membership Committee, who will review and forward on to the Board for approval.

If you have a change in your leadership team, please submit the new names and contact information right away to Membership Committee at membership@counseling-csj.org.

Staying Involved with National CSJ

Participate in Chapter Town Halls and Showcases

Chapter Town Halls offer opportunities for chapters to connect with one another and with CSJ leadership. We hold virtual chapter town halls twice a year, in Fall and Spring. We also hold a Chapter Showcase and Best Practices event in the Summer. You can watch our 2020 Chapter Showcase here: [CSJ Chapter Showcase & Best Practices 7/8 Recording](#)

Share Your Chapter Events

Do you have an event or program that you would like for CSJ National to feature? Please share it with marketing@counseling-csj.org and we will recognize your event or program on our website and various CSJ platforms. We welcome your input, involvement, and suggestions. Email the Membership Committee: Membership@counseling-csj.org

Growth Toolkit

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT IS KEY

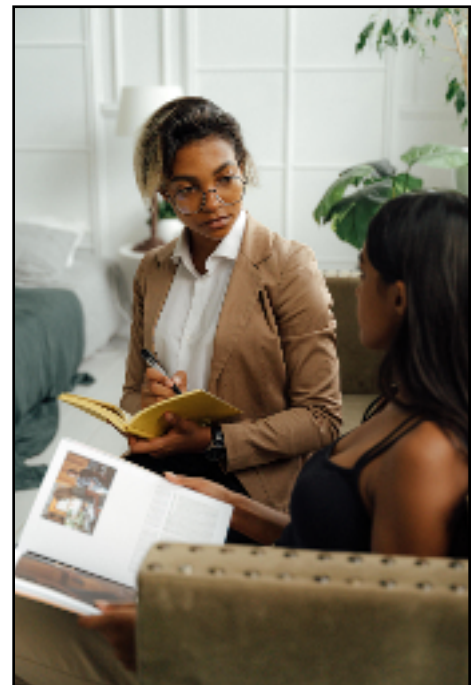
Member engagement is the most important task for all of your chapter leaders. If you make a priority of nurturing new members to come into the organization, then you'll be able to support the mission and ensure longevity.

Helping someone who is *interested in* social justice to become a *member* of your chapter and then becoming *actively engaged* should be a primary focus of the Student Leadership Team and given attention through regular discussion. This is how to make a chapter not only function, but thrive! A key benefit of this is the excitement that engaged members bring to the initiatives that your chapter puts on. It also helps to ensure a pipeline of new leaders coming up from the membership, so that continuity of leadership in the chapter is easier, when student leaders graduate and move on.

Helping new members become part of your Counselors for Social Justice chapter helps them build their professional identity as social justice advocates, and it helps them feel a part of something significant – which is your community of engagement! There are specific steps you can take to help this process to occur.

Define a member on-boarding process

One of the most important functions in the chapter is to bring new members in, to help them become oriented to how things work, and to find ways to get them involved. Having a defined process to nurture prospective members through these steps can help with retention and build momentum around your chapter's activities. Having a high-touch process whereby those who express interest in your chapter are shepherded through the process of applying for membership, with outreach and reminders about meetings, can



Sample member on-boarding process

The process can be simple, but it is helpful if it's clearly written out. Even something as straightforward as this can be useful:

1. New member orientations held twice per year
2. Announcements about membership opportunities in the chapter placed in the student newsletter every term
3. Prospective member inquiries responded to within 48 hours (or one week, or whatever is doable for your membership director - just make a commitment to respond to these quickly, to start nurturing the relationship from the initial point of contact)
4. Contact information collected at all meetings via a sign-in sheet
5. Personal follow-ups from a student leader to all new people who attend their first meeting, with invitation to apply for membership

Have a designated new-member contact. This can either be a Membership Director, or it can be a role that rotates through the Student Leadership Team. The new-member contact is responsible for following up with inquiries from prospective members in a particular period, say, within three days, or within a week.

Member engagement is the most important task for all of your chapter leaders.



There is often a lot of excitement when someone discovers your organization for the first time, and they have energy that has brought them into your group. Make the most of that opportunity and nurture the relationship from the beginning. Having a designated person who is responsible for staying connected with prospective members and inviting them along to meetings and events can be a great way to build community together.

Create a standard Welcome Email

Having a set process for bringing new members into the chapter can be helpful. This can come through a standard communication to new members so they know the basics about how the chapter is run and can come to meetings, and also a set process for letting existing members meet the new ones.

If you develop a welcome kit or even just a simple email capturing the essential information about your chapter, then it's easy to share it whenever someone contacts you about joining. Here is a sample that you can modify to meet your needs:

Thank you for your interest in [Counselors for Social Justice Chapter Name]. We're so excited that you might want to join our efforts to raise awareness and take action for equity in our community. We are a university chapter of the national Counselors for Social Justice organization, which is a division of the American Counseling Association. Our Facebook page is at:

<https://www.counseling-csj.org> The national CSJ website is at:

Our university chapter at [school name] was established in [year]. We have about [number] members.

We meet on [time and location, such as "on the first Tuesday of each month at 7pm in Room 411"]. All are welcome! You need not be a member of our chapter to attend.

Advocacy is an important part of the work of counselors, and we are committed to increasing awareness of social issues and learning skills to become social justice change agents.

[Counselors for Social Justice Chapter Name] has a variety of projects underway, including:

- Project A
- Project B
- Project C

The effort that we're most proud of our work last quarter, when we organized to... [describe]. It is because of the qualities of [list several strengths or values of your chapter, eg *energy* or *enthusiasm* or *commitment* etc] that made us successful with this.

What are you most interested in working on? What type of social justice initiative is most meaningful to you? You can reply back to this email to share that with us, and please also attend our next meeting, we would love to hear about it!

Applying for membership in Counselors for Social Justice is simple. The process is [describe].

We know how busy students can be, and we want to make it easy to participate in our CSJ chapter. We ask that all members try to attend at least one membership meeting per term to stay active in the chapter.

If you can't make it to our next meeting, we can put you on our email list, so that you hear about future opportunities.

Your contact for questions about CSJ and how to get involved is [Name] [Email]. Feel free to reach out if we can be of assistance! We can't wait to have you as part of our community.

Signed,
[name]
Membership Director

You may also want to design a process to follow when a member application comes in. For example, you can have an announcement go out to the membership list or the group chat introducing the new member, so that everyone knows their name and can greet them at the next meeting.

Simple & Free Marketing Ideas

- Be sure your chapter is listed in the school's directory of student clubs, and keep the contact information current
- Write an article about your chapter and ask your school's admissions team to post it on their blog and include it in their new student welcome packet
- Create a 3-minute Intro to CSJ video. This is easy to do using Zoom! You record yourself giving an overview of your chapter, then put the video on Vimeo or YouTube and share the link
- Invite active members to name your CSJ chapter in the signature block of their email messages - something like "Ask me about Counselors for Social Justice!"

How to increase engagement: The importance of a Call to Action

You can use the concept of a *Call to Action* in multiple ways. This is where marketing intersects with engagement, it's how you communicate purpose to your membership and help people find their place within your organization.

Whenever a new initiative is proposed, try to identify a *Call to Action* as part of it. In other words: What do you want your audience to *do* when they hear about your idea?

This can obviously change, as the details of the proposal get worked out, however if you're asking for people to step up, then it often helps to have clarity around the expectations of what they will be doing and what benefit it may bring. It's also important to define how much time you're asking for, over what duration.

Those interested in social justice tend to be interested in change, so in what ways will your proposed initiative help others?

Options for Managing Your Chapter: Organizational Models

Hierarchical Model

This is the most common form of organization you are likely familiar with. The so-called democratic model of the United States is hierarchical in nature. In the context of a CSJ chapter, a hierarchical model would have regularly-scheduled elections where members are nominated for officer roles. An election is held, and for each office, the majority vote wins. The elected officers then work to represent the membership in the actions they take on behalf of the chapter, in organizing events, meetings, and activities for the benefit of all.

Consensus Decision-Making

The Board of Directors for the National CSJ organization uses Consensus Decision-Making as the model of governance. This was chosen specifically for its appropriateness in a social justice oriented organization. You can find out more about Consensus Decision-Making at <https://www.consensusdecisionmaking.org/>



Sociocracy - A Circles-Based Model

A sociocracy uses consensus, where all voices are heard in major decisions, and discussions are held until all significant objections are resolved. You can find resources on the web for sociocracy, and [Wikipedia has a good overview](#).

Note that even within a sociocratic governing model, there will be a smaller group that holds responsibility for organizing the needs of the chapter and managing its operation. This can be defined as its own *circle* within the sociocracy.

Sociocratic principles are not difficult to understand, however you will need to allocate time into your chapter's founding to explain this method of functioning and get buy-in for using it. If the circle is large, then it can also take a long time to work through the process together for every decision. You might decide to use circles for specific processes or decisions that are especially sensitive, meaningful, or critical to the way the organization is run. If the chapter grows large, you might also choose to use a consensus method yet not require unanimity with each decision. Define these governing principles upfront and use a voting process to agree on them at the outset of your chapter's operation. You can always change them later with a vote of membership.

How to Run Meetings

Purposeful meetings

All meetings should have a purpose designated beforehand, and this should be captured in an agenda, so that members know what to expect, and that you can keep focused and accomplish things together. You probably will want to set up a process where the Student Leadership Team holds a planning session before each full membership meeting.

An agenda need not be complicated. It can simply be a list of items to discuss that you circulate by email beforehand. The Chapter Secretary should send out the agenda with the meeting invitation, especially if there are plans to take a vote or any discussions for chapter activities will be held.

You can of course also have purely social meetings, too, that don't have a formal structure and don't need an agenda at all. These should be an addition to the meetings where you work on action-based initiatives together or have educational experiences as a group. Be intentional about how you ask for members' time and give your members a reason to keep coming back!



The agenda

Here is a sample of a simple agenda for your meetings:

The Board of Directors for the National CSJ organization uses Consensus Decision-Making as the model of governance. This was chosen specifically for its appropriateness in a social justice oriented organization. You can find out more about Consensus Decision-Making at <https://www.consensusdecisionmaking.org/>

<p style="text-align: center;">[CSJ CHAPTER NAME]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AGENDA</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Monthly Meeting of Leadership Team</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[DATE AND TIME]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[LOCATION]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Call to order by President2. Approve minutes3. Report by President4. Report by Membership Director5. Report by Treasurer6. Old business<ol style="list-style-type: none">A. Discussion and decision on participating in National CSJ Town HallB. Finalize speaker schedule for next term7. New business<ol style="list-style-type: none">A. Annual Report due to CSJ National in MayB. FundraiserC. Letter-writing campaign8. Updates and actions on succession planning for graduating officers9. Updates and actions on diversity initiatives10. Adjourn
--

Minutes of meetings

Any meeting where votes are held or decisions are made need to be documented. The Chapter Secretary should capture the minutes. If the Secretary is not present at a minute, be sure to designate someone else to do the minutes instead.

Meeting minutes are a little different than simply taking notes. They don't have to be verbatim, and they can summarize what a full discussion covered, instead of detailing out what each person said. They mostly need to be a record of what the topics were, and every decision that was made.

Meeting minutes should record all who were in attendance, and whether they were members or guests (provided your chapter allows guests at your meetings). Capture the time that the meeting was called to order and by whom (this is usually done by the president), and the time it is adjourned.

If any vote is taken, be sure to capture the exact wording for the motion and who made it, and who seconded it, then capture the vote count (number of ayes in favor, nays against, and number abstained). The minutes should be stored as part of the permanent records of the organization. You can do this on a shared drive or fileserver. All members should have access to the minutes of all meetings.

If you don't get to all the items on your agenda, just make a note of that in the minutes and carry the pending items forward into the next meeting's agenda.

“If one really wishes to know how justice is administered in a country, one does not question the policemen, the lawyers, the judges, or the protected members of the middle class. One goes to the unprotected—those, precisely, who need the law’s protection most!—and listens to their testimony.”

-James Baldwin

How to Manage Elections

Here are the basics for running a traditional anonymous election process in order to select the next group of officers for your chapter. This may seem daunting but it's fairly straightforward. You don't have to get any special equipment or print ballots on fancy paper.

There are different ways to hold elections, including ranked-choice voting, or you could use a consensus method, or hold voice votes. The style and manner you implement is up to you. The basic outlines for how elections are run should be captured in the Constitution.

At minimum, the Constitution should specify:

- When elections will be held. This can be designated with language such as “the last meeting of the spring term” if you have annual elections and all elected officers serve for a full year. Or, if you have members graduating at different times during the year, then you may need to hold elections more frequently, in which case you could say “in the October and March meetings” or whatever language makes sense for your chapter.
- How candidates can be nominated. Candidates might nominate themselves by volunteering, or if you have a large chapter with many members, you could create a nominating committee to seek out nominees and present them to the membership. Most student chapters are small enough that candidates volunteer to serve in a specific role, and then the election is held almost as a formality (but it's still an important formality, don't skip it!).
- The method by which ballots can be cast or the votes placed. This can be specified as an online vote or by paper.
- The way that winners will be determined, such as by simple majority.

Running elections with anonymous ballots is recommended. Even if you have a small chapter, it's wise not to use voice votes for elections of officers. (A voice vote is when everyone is present in the room and holds up their hand or says “yes” or “aye” to indicate that they are in favor of the action.) By anonymous ballots, members are better able to freely express their wishes for who serves them in a leadership capacity.

Holding Your Election

1. Notification of upcoming elections and call for candidates.

About 4-6 weeks before your planned election date, put out a notice to all members (by email is fine) where you tell them which positions will be vacant, with a description of each, the length of the term, and the time commitments required. Inform them that nominations are being accepted.

This call for nominees is important. Write this email with the enthusiasm that you have for the chapter, to bring excitement to the process and get members interested in stepping into a new role. Invite interested members to contact current officers about the roles.

If you allow members to nominate each other, then of course reach out to the nominated person to see if they're interested. Otherwise, a member can self-nominate. This can be done by asking them to submit a quick bio or candidate statement, and maybe a photo, which you can include on your ballot.



2. Prepare the ballot with the nominee information.

If your chapter meets in person, then you can use a paper ballot. Include each office with a vacancy, and the candidate name(s) and optionally their bio(s). Include a “write-in” section for each vacancy. Note that for state CSJ chapters, the counseling association within your state may have its own process for nominating and voting which your chapter will need to comply with.

Here is a sample layout for a paper ballot:

Sample Ballot for CSJ University Chapter	
<p>Instructions: Please mark your choice for one candidate for each office. You may write in the name of any active chapter member instead of the named candidate.</p>	
<p>CHAPTER CO-PRESIDENT</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mary Aguilera</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> _____</p>	<p>CHAPTER SECRETARY</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Jin Li</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> _____</p>
<p>CHAPTER CO-PRESIDENT</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Derek Washington</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> _____</p>	<p>MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Ashley Green</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sam Peralta</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> _____</p>

3. Conduct the Election

Only active, current members of the chapter should be in the meeting room at the time of the election. Designate one of your officers who is not currently up for election as the administrator to count the votes, or your faculty advisor.

If you meet online or need to run your election online, you can do so using a survey tool like SurveyMonkey. Be sure to set up the survey settings to only permit recipients of the emailed survey link to submit.

Finding Candidates

You may be wondering how you get people interested in serving on your leadership team. The best way to do that is to ask them! This is a main reason why the member engagement tasks are so important, as discussed in the Growth Toolkit below. By nurturing relationships with prospective members and turning them into active members, then you will have the engagement and commitment that are the pre-requisites for service as an officer of your CSJ chapter.

Many members may be reluctant to volunteer for a leadership role, either because they are nervous of time commitment, or because the role seems daunting. Having descriptions written out of each position can help with this, as it gives you something to share with members who might be open to doing more. A common reason for reluctance to serve is “I don’t know how to do that job.” De-mystify the position by having those descriptions available.

Then, identify who in your membership might be a good person to fulfill the role, and ask them!



Continuity Toolkit

PLANNING FOR LONGEVITY

Ensuring Continuity When Leaders Graduate

A delicate time in the evolution of any new organization is when its current leaders depart and a new group of leaders steps in. Based on the academic cycles, many student clubs experience a precarious phase when the original founders approach graduation, sometimes leaving a void when new volunteers haven't yet been identified to keep the momentum and energy of the chapter going. It can be intimidating to try and step into the shoes of an outgoing president who has been doing a great job in building up an organization from scratch!

One of the risks when you have a new team coming in is they find that they're starting things from scratch. Without good continuity planning, there's a high likelihood that the old team takes all of the institutional knowledge with them.

This can be mitigated with good organizational management practices – which is often the boring tasks, but the important ones. For example, from the beginning of your chapter's operation, try to keep up with things like minutes of meetings, and keep your member roster up to date with current contact information for everyone. Store these in a central location like on a Google Drive where all officers have access. This will make it easier to do the transition to the new officers when the time comes.

Ideally you'll have some overlap from when the election is held, to when the next leadership team takes over. If you stagger these events, then it allows for some cross-training and mentorship from the outgoing officers to the new ones.

Stay focused on succession planning

Here are a few ideas to help support succession planning as a part of running the chapter:

- Consider having a standing item on the agenda for each meeting that covers the need for succession plans. This keeps it top-of-mind for the leadership team, so they can all be conscious of the need to be tapping new members for leadership roles.
- Identify a role of Alumni Advisor. One idea to help with succession is to have a formal position on the Leadership Team for anyone who has served your chapter as an officer to stay on board after they graduate as an advisor to the ongoing team. This role need not be an elected position, it can be an appointed one, which simplifies the process of who can serve and how. Write a formal functional description for this role like you do for the others, including qualifications of service (such as having served as an officer at some point while they were still a student), and also possibly having it be a non-voting role.
- Sometimes members might be willing to step forward into a co-lead role, while being reluctant to take on the position by themselves. Look for ways to break up the duties and create collaborative leadership opportunities.
- Publish job descriptions so that prospective leaders can see what's involved in each position. Include an estimate of how many hours per week or per month each role requires.

A new Leadership Team needs time

Whether you have all-new officers coming together to take over as a brand-new leadership team, or you are welcoming one or two new officers into an existing leadership circle, you will be coming together *as a new team*. It can be very helpful for group cohesion and to facilitate teamwork that you spend time bringing everyone together through some specific team activities, when the new officers take over.

This can be especially important when integrating just one new member into an existing team, in order for them to feel welcome and help them to find their place. No matter how many are new and how many are continuing, you may want to dedicate half of a meeting or even a special activity around get-to-know-you type experiences.



In addition, having a formal on-boarding process for new officers coming onto the leadership team can be really helpful. This should be more than simply sending emails or documents to the new officers. Instead, it should be done in an in-person meeting or by phone or video call. Schedule these meetings as soon as your election results are known. You might want to pair each new incoming officer up with a current officer, who will be their “on-boarding buddy” and will be responsible for helping to train them on their function.

Also, watch for difficult group dynamics that sometimes develop. It’s common when new people come onto a team that’s been functioning for some time that power struggles may occur – even when everyone has the best of intentions and is eager to work together. Sometimes, ideas from the new person are too quickly dismissed, with comments like, “Oh, we tried that last year, that won’t work” or “We don’t have enough money for that.” Another thing that can happen is that the group might be used to working at a certain pace, and the new person is not understanding the projects being discussed or the jargon or lingo being used. It may be useful to slow things down during the first few meetings with the new officers, to offer extra explanations and be sure that all ideas are being heard and entertained. Even if an idea doesn’t seem like it would be viable, try to capture it on a list for further conversation instead of dismissing it outright. One of the key tasks involved with integrating new members and making the team feel like a working group is to be sure everyone is being heard, and that the history of the existing group is shared.

Be Creative

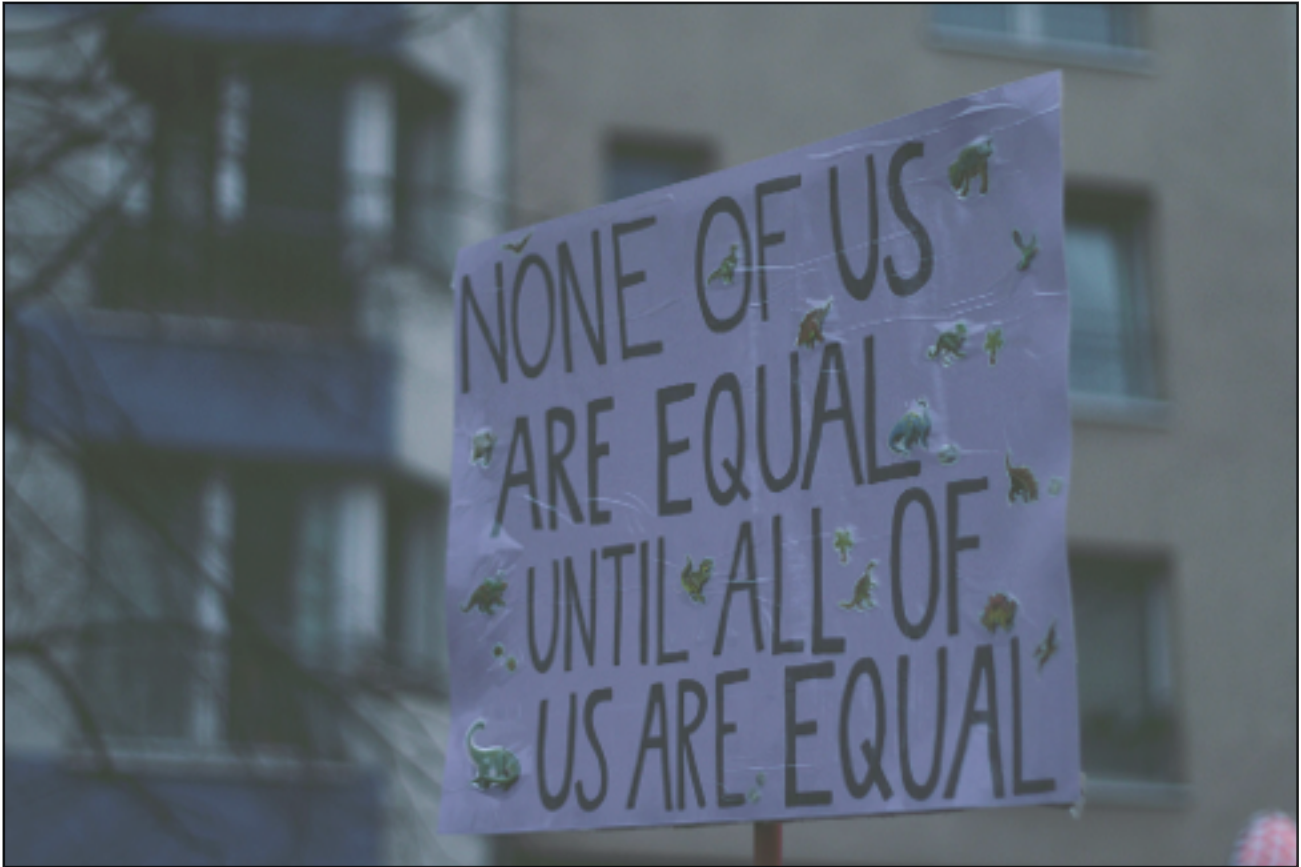
Sometimes it may be useful to change the way your chapter has been run in the past, in order to accommodate the working styles or skillsets of new contributors. For example, perhaps the person who founded your chapter was handling so many things at once, that when that person stepped down, it made sense to have two people share the same role. You can go from a President to a Co-President model in this way. Note though that this change would require that your Constitution be updated, which needs to be done with a majority vote of all membership. It’s totally possible to make such changes, though, depending on who steps forward and wants to help lead your chapter today.

Or, you could have a single officer in the position, and have a committee beneath that person to help divide up the tasks. This organizational structure would not require a change to the Constitution. There are usually multiple paths to getting things done, and it’s fine to make things work as you need them to for your purposes for what your chapter is doing.

For University Chapters: The role of the Faculty Advisor

Often a student chapter has the most continuity based on the participation of the Faculty Advisor within the leadership team. However, even though your Faculty Advisor is part of your chapter, don't lean on them for the organizational tasks of running the group. They can be instrumental in keeping things going especially during your leadership transitions, but remember that their primary role should be to help support your chapter's social justice efforts. The Faculty Advisor should not be the one running the chapter itself. Faculty at most graduate schools tend to be very busy with a wide number of projects and service roles (especially faculty of color and women). Keep your lines of communication open with your Faculty Advisor and be considerate of their time.

It may be necessary for the Faculty Advisor to help keep your chapter operational during times of transition by guiding the leadership team on how things are done, but that should not be the norm. Build processes into your chapter so that you have a regular flow of new members, new officers, and new projects that are all student-run.



Questions or issues come up? We want to help!

Starting a new organization can be complex, but it can also be rewarding! We know that sometimes challenges arise. If the Membership Committee at National CSJ can be of assistance, please feel free to reach out! Email us at membership@counseling-csj.org and we can try to support you in your situation. If you have ideas for what else we could cover in this Chapter Toolkit, we'd love the ideas! Please send them along.

Good luck to you in growing your chapter of Counselors for Social Justice! We are all in this together and we so appreciate your efforts to advocate for change.