



## Chapter Elections and Officer Transitions

As time quickly approaches for many chapters to elect their Board of Directors for a new term, the question arises as to how this is done. Each chapter determines their own 'term of office' but the dates should be consistent from year to year for better planning and scheduling of elections. The most common terms of officer are Sept – Aug (in line with the Fiscal year) or Jan – Dec to go along with a calendar year.

Before beginning the election process, the first step to take is to read your chapter bylaws. Below is copy from the Model Bylaws but the local chapter bylaws may have a few adjustments.

***Don't forget to update the National Office with the newly elected officers!*** Complete & send the **Officer Update Form** ([www.cmsa.org/PDF/Chapters/ChapterOfficerUpdateForm.pdf](http://www.cmsa.org/PDF/Chapters/ChapterOfficerUpdateForm.pdf)).

### **Some Key Points to Remember** (based on the Model Bylaws):

1. The President appoints the Nominating Committee – which is announced to the membership 6 months in advance of the Annual Meeting.
2. The Committee will seek nominations from the members at least 60 days prior to the date of the election held at the Annual Meeting, allowing 30 days to seek nominations.
3. The Committee must verify the qualifications of each candidate running for office
  - a. Current Membership
  - b. Case Manager Member, or voted in as a Special Member.
  - c. Plus, any local policies or job description requirements
  - d. Candidates not meeting these qualifications should not be included on the ballot.
4. Nominees must have prior consent for the nomination before being placed on the ballot.
5. Ballots are sent out to all **current** *Individual* CMSA Members at least 30 days prior to the Annual Meeting.
  - a. Remember, the new Model Bylaws allow for electronic voting. Check to make sure your Bylaws have been adjusted to allow this. Do not exclude non-email members. They should still receive a ballot by mail or in person.
  - b. Maintain returned ballots to ensure that only members vote and that no one votes twice.
6. New Officers should be announced at the Annual Meeting. Voting can conclude at this meeting or have already been closed prior to the meeting. (Check to see if your Bylaws allow nominations from the floor).
7. Officers will take office immediately after Installation. (This can take place at the Annual Meeting or a special meeting held at a later date).
8. A time should be set aside for the old BOD to transition and train the new BOD. This could be done at a Board Retreat, a Membership Meeting, or as simple as a Board Meeting. At this time, books and materials should be passed from old officer to new.
9. Committee Chairs are not elected offices and may be appointed by the President, with approval from the BOD.
10. During the year, empty Board positions may be filled by the vote of the Board. The person would fulfill the position through the original term.

**Sections of the Model Bylaws** (check local Chapter Bylaws to see what your Chapter currently has in place):

**ARTICLE X**  
**SPECIAL AND STANDING COMMITTEES**

**Section 5. Nominations.** The Nominating Committee, acting in accordance with ARTICLE X, Section 2 of these Bylaws, shall present to the membership, at least thirty days before the Annual Meeting, one nomination for each seat on the Board of Directors that is vacant or expiring. Additional nominations may be made from the floor at the Annual Meeting.

**Section 2. Nominating Committee.**

- a. The President shall appoint a Nominating Committee which shall consist of five members entitled to vote not holding office, of whom not more than three shall be past presidents of the corporation but one of whom shall have served on the Nominating Committee the previous year. With the approval of the Board of Directors, the committee members shall be announced to the membership six months in advance of the Annual Meeting.
- b. At least sixty days prior to the Annual Meeting, the Nominating Committee shall invite suggestions from the membership for those offices and directorships which are vacant or about to expire, allowing thirty days for suggestions. The Nominating Committee shall then nominate candidates for the required offices and directorships of the corporation as provided in these Bylaws and report such nominations at least thirty days before the Annual Meeting. Said nominations shall be voted upon at the Annual Meeting by the Members entitled to vote as these Bylaws prescribe.

**ARTICLE VII**  
**OFFICERS**

**Section 1. Officers.** The officers of the corporation shall be a President, a Vice President, (some chapters have a President-Elect) a Secretary and a Treasurer. The Vice President, the Secretary and the Treasurer shall be elected by the membership at the Annual Meeting of the corporation and shall serve until their successors have been duly elected and assume office. Following the conclusion of the Vice President's (or P-E's) term, the Vice President shall automatically succeed to the Presidency at the adjournment of the Annual Meeting.

**Section 2. Qualifications for Office.** Any Case Manager Member or Special Member entitled to vote and in good standing shall be eligible for nomination and election to any elective office of the corporation.

**Section 3. Nomination and Election of Officers.** In accordance with the procedure specified in ARTICLE X, Section 2, the Nominating Committee shall prepare and submit to the Members entitled to vote at the Annual Meeting a nomination for each of the offices subject to election. Any person so nominated shall have consented prior to nomination. Additional nominations may be made from the floor.

**Section 4. Term of Office.** Each officer will take office immediately following Installation and shall serve for a term of one year or until a successor assumes office. Each officer will serve concurrently as a member of the Board of Directors and as a member of the Executive Committee.

**Section 5. Vacancies.** A vacancy in any office due to death, resignation, removal, disqualification or otherwise, may be filled by the Board of Directors for the unexpired portion of the term.

**Section 6. Removal.** Any officer may be removed by a two-thirds vote of the Board of Directors whenever in its judgment the best interests of the corporation would be served thereby.

## **ARTICLE VIII**

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Section 1. Authority and Responsibility.** The governing body of the corporation shall be the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors shall have the supervision, control and direction of the affairs of the corporation, its committees and any publications; shall determine its policies or changes therein; and shall actively prosecute its objectives and supervise the disbursement of its funds. The Board of Directors may adopt such rules and regulations for the conduct of its business as shall be deemed advisable, and may, in the execution of the powers granted, delegate certain of its authority to the Executive Committee.

**Section 2. Composition.** The Board of Directors shall consist of the President, the Vice President, the Secretary, the Treasurer, and nine Directors entitled to vote of the corporation who shall be elected as herein provided and who shall be in addition to the four officers, and the immediate past president of the corporation. The immediate past president shall serve a one-year term on the Board of Directors. *(The total number of Board of Directors must be at least 5. Bylaws can be adjusted accordingly with approval from National).*

**Section 3. Manner of Election and Term.** The Directors subject to election at the corporation's Annual Meeting shall be elected by vote of the members entitled to vote. At the initial Annual Meeting, the nine Directors to be elected shall be divided into three classes to serve terms of three, two, and one years respectively. Thereafter, three Directors shall be elected each year for a term of three years or until their successors have been elected and assume office.

**Section 4. Reelection.** No member of the Board of Directors who has served a **full** three-year term shall be eligible for reelection until at least one year shall have elapsed. *(This references anyone who was elected for a three-year term and filled it. Anyone running for one-year terms consecutively could continue to run according to the DC Statute. Chapters can change the bylaws to reflect their position on this with approval from National).*

### **What Questions Should Be Asked Of Potential Board Members and Officers?**

The objective of board recruitment is to find willing, able, and committed board members. How do you know if a candidate is going to be the right person for your board? You can never be 100 percent sure but you get close if you ask direct questions. Here are some samples:

- Why are you interested in our organization?
- Why are you specifically interested in serving on a board?
- Do you have any previous board service, leadership, or volunteer experience? Are you presently serving on other boards?
- What kinds of skills or expertise can you offer? How will the organization benefit from your participation? How do you think we could best take advantage of your expertise?
- What do you expect us to do for you so that your experience turns out to be satisfying?
- What kind of time and financial commitment will you be able to make? Are you willing to serve on committees and task forces? Can we expect you to come to board meetings regularly? Would you be able to make a personal contribution?

## Successful Volunteers Like...

- Assignments that fit their talents and personality and represent the types of work they like to do.
- Assignments with definite parameters and clear guidelines regarding the job he/she is being asked to do.
- Assignments with finite completion dates
- Being asked to undertake an assignment.
- Leaders who identify particular volunteers for a task. Most people view a general "call for volunteers" as an evasion of leadership's administrative responsibility.
- Assignments that call for a worthwhile contribution. A member who is given a trivial assignment or placed on a committee with nothing to do will become disinterested.
- Responsibility for the assigned task. Never divide an assignment between committees or the task that is "everyone's job, turns out to be nobody's job."

## Officer Installation Ceremonies

Make a formal transition between the old and the new board. This helps define when one has stepped down and the other has formally taken over. Plus, it gives the membership an opportunity to see their new leaders and know who is responsible for next year's activities. **For a sample of Installation ideas**, download the following template: <http://www.cmsa.org/PDF/Chapters/OfficerInstallationCeremonyTemplate.pdf> or visit [www.cmsa.org](http://www.cmsa.org), Practice Resources, Chapter Resources and Chapter Leadership Resources. *CMSA Chapter Board Pins* are also available for purchase at [www.cmsa.org/PDF/Chapters/ChapterPinOrderForm.pdf](http://www.cmsa.org/PDF/Chapters/ChapterPinOrderForm.pdf).

## When Should the Chapter Have a Board Retreat?

Board retreats are special meetings organized around an issue too significant to be handled properly within a normal meeting agenda. Most boards can benefit from an annual retreat simply to strengthen relationships and focus on future challenges.

Here are some topic areas that are ideal for a retreat setting:

- Conducting a board self-assessment
- Orienting new board members
- Refreshing board members' understanding of their responsibilities
- Strengthening of board relationships and team-building
- Preparing for strategic planning and refocusing on the mission and vision
- Working out a critical issue (merger, major division among board members)

## Tools All Chapter Leaders Should Use

The website is full of Resources for Chapter Leaders to get them started in the right direction. All Chapter Leaders should be directed to these Guides to become familiar with the processes involved in Chapter Operations. These guides cover everything from the operations of meetings, job descriptions, membership recruitment, and many other 'How To' topics. Below is a highlight of a few of those listed at [www.cmsa.org](http://www.cmsa.org), click on Membership, then Chapters..

- 10 Common Tax and Legal Mistakes
- 10 Things Boards Must Know
- Board of Director Roles and Responsibilities
- Chapter Membership Report Guide
- Chapter Operations Guide
- Chapter Program Planning Guide
- CMSA Booth Guide
- Dealing with Board Issues
- Educational Meeting/Conference Planning Guide
- Officer Installation Ceremony
- Recruitment and Retention Manual (membership)
- Treasurer's Guide
- Volunteer Leader Issues and Recruitment

## Improving Officer Transitions

### Why Your Chapter Needs a Leadership Transition Program

Things may be going well enough with your chapter, and you may not think it necessary to have any additional programs. Yet most chapters lose momentum at each officer transition, and the individual officers face a great deal of stress from ineffective transitions. A strong *Leadership Transition Program* will help your chapter to:

- **Transfer** Significant Organizational **Knowledge**
- **Minimize Confusion** of Leadership Changeover
- Give Outgoing Leaders a **Sense of Closure**
- **Utilize** Valuable Contributions of **Experienced Leaders**, often the Most Neglected Members of Your Group
- Give New Leaders **Insights to Special Expertise** of the Outgoing Leaders
- **Increase** the **Knowledge** and **Confidence** of Incoming Leadership
- **Minimize the Loss of Momentum** and **Maximize the Efficiency** and Accomplishments for the Group
- Make Leadership Transitions **Less Stressful**, Both for Leaders and for Chapter

### Developing a Chapter Leadership Transition Program

Whether you know it or not, your chapter already has a Leadership Transition Program -- it's probably just incomplete. You do the minimum: hold elections and officer installations. Now for the rest of the story....

As with any program:

- **Start Early!** Make a plan during the term, long before the transitions actually begin.
- As with all programs, you will need to **tailor the program** to fit your chapter. Review and adjust as you go along.
- **Try, and be patient.** The rewards may not be immediately obvious, but almost anything you do will help!

## Specific Ideas for a Leadership Transition Program

OK, so you've decided to improve your chapter's leadership transitions. Great, now what do you do? There are lots of possibilities! Brainstorm with some folks from your chapter and see what you can come up with. Here's four successful techniques that really work. Of course, you will need to adapt these to your chapter to make them work best for **you!**

### Transition Meeting

Each chapter should encourage a meeting between the outgoing and incoming officers, to be held soon after elections. This will give an opportunity for the new to learn directly from the old, with the entire meeting focuses on transfer of information. It sounds so simple, but it is surprising how many new officers never really get to talk about the office with the incumbent. To help make the meeting as productive as possible:

- **Before** the meeting, the outgoing officer should **write** down their thoughts on the position, and each newly elected or appointed officer should prepare a list of **questions**.
- At the meeting, officers should **discuss** these thoughts and questions, and **review** the contents of the **officer notebook**.
- **Think** through questions, suggestions, and ideas before the meeting. This will make the meeting time much more fruitful.

### Record Keeping

The chapter should supply each officer with a **permanent** notebook. That's the easy part. Now, each officer must make the effort to keep **proper documentation** of their office. Like many programs, this is most difficult when first established. Once a precedent of documentation exists, and the benefits become clear, it will be much easier to maintain proper records for future officers. Included in the Officer Notebook should be:

- Chapter Bylaws
- National's Leadership Guides for that Office
- Job Description - A Description of Role as an Officer
- Goals and Objectives - both for the Chapter and for the specific Officer, along with an indication of those achieved, reasons for those not achieved, and those ongoing.
- List of Events, Tasks, Deadlines, etc. required for the office
- Budget Information, including proposed budgets and actual expenditures
- Status Reports for Ongoing Projects
- Resource and Contact Lists, with Addresses and Phone #s
- Copies of Significant Correspondence

- Previous Meeting Minutes / Reports
- A Narrative of Problems Encountered, along with Solutions Tried and their Results
- Any other local documents that will help this Officer be successful in their role.

Be sure this information gets passed to new officers from year to year. Through this, each new leader will have a wonderful picture of the history of the office. By learning from the successes and failures of all those who preceded them, they can be more effective sooner, and won't spend time re-inventing wheels.

## Executive Board Orientation

Soon after elections, hold an "Executive Board Orientation" meeting for all new officers to meet together to discuss their plans, questions, and thoughts about their new offices.

- In an effective chapter, the executive board works not as individuals, but as a **coordinated team**. A little time put into general discussion and laying groundwork will go along way in facilitating this coordination.
- This meeting makes an excellent time for a forum or **workshop** relating to **leadership**, perhaps facilitated by a leadership professional, chapter officer, or past officer.
- Try to have the Orientation a minimum of two weeks before the new terms begin. That way you can hit the ground running when the new term begins!
- This meeting is also a good time for new officers to **review** their own **personal leadership style**, and recognize weak spots needing work. It's much easier to think about this early than to learn the hard way "under fire."
- This meeting should emphasize **planning** and **goal-setting**. Executing an office is much simpler and much more enjoyable if there is a clear vision of what you are working for.
- For an effective executive board, **teamwork** is a top priority throughout the year.

## The Rest of the Chapter

An often overlooked component in Officer Transitions is the Chapter. The entire membership is responsible for each officer's success.

- Don't confuse chapter **officers** with business **managers**. Officers are still members of the group with the same needs and feelings as every other member.
- Election to an office does not endow an officer with **special powers** or capabilities. **Officers** are **humans**, too!
- Officers are **not single-handedly responsible** for planning and implementing a chapter's programs. Every member has responsibility here!
- Continuous and **open dialogues** are essential in an effective chapter. Each officer must be **open** and **responsive** to suggestions, ideas, and questions from everyone, and each chapter member must **provide** ideas, suggestions, and **support** for their officers.
- All chapter members should **participate** in chapter planning and help officers to **implement** the **goals** established.