



American MENSA®

LocSec Handbook

A Guide for Local Secretaries

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Getting Started: The Basics

Reflecting Mensa's British origins, the title is a holdover from the time when this officer was simply a secretary reporting to national Mensa. Although many Local Groups call their chief executives something else, to the national organization they're all LocSecs, short for Local Secretary.

LocSec is the traditional title for the chief administrative officer, but President or Chairman is equally acceptable. By AMC regulation, no group may have more than one LocSec, Chairman or President, though such an office may carry a dual title.

One of the best ways to prepare for the job of LocSec is to read your Local Group bylaws. These bylaws will provide you with information regarding the operation of your Local Group. Information provided in some sections of this handbook may vary from your Local Group bylaws so the bylaws should be read in conjunction with this handbook. If you do not have a copy of the Local Group bylaws available, please contact the National Office and a copy will be provided to you. Please note that pursuant to the Minimum Standard Bylaws (ASIE 2007-026), the then-current Minimum Standard Bylaws are included in every Local Group's bylaws at all times. A copy of the Minimum Standard Bylaws can be found on the AML Web site and are available in hard copy through the National Office.

LocSec Job Description

The Minimum Standard Bylaws (available either in hard copy from the National Office or on the Web site under Officer Resources, Policy Documents) have a generic job description of the LocSec which reads as follows:

"The chief executive officer of a Local Group may be titled Local Secretary, President, or Chairman, whichever the group prefers; however, no Local Group may have, as separate officers, more than one of the three. He or she shall be the chief point of contact between AML and the Local Group. The Local Secretary shall notify AML (through the National Office) and the Regional Vice Chairman for the Local Group within two weeks of the results of elections and of changes in the officers of the Local Group."

As part of his/her job, the LocSec routinely receives a lot of information from AML, including from the National Office, the AMC, the RVC and other sources. Part of the task of being LocSec is the passing of relevant information along to the appropriate officers or

other Local Group members. Communication with you membership is an important aspect of your position. Most LocSecs will publish a monthly column in their newsletter keeping members up-to-date.

Local Group Requirements

In order to receive its monthly funding allotment and to remain in good standing with AML, a Local Group must meet certain requirements which are spelled out in ASIE No.: 1995-024. This ASIE may be amended from time to time, so should you have any questions or concerns regarding any requirements please discuss them with either your RVC or to the National Office. The current ASIEs may be found online at the Inside AML Web page along with all other AML governance documents.

These requirements that Local Groups must meet include:

- Local Groups must have both a membership and a business meeting in each quarter, notice for which must be communicated to all the members of the Local Group;
- publish a regular newsletter or calendar of activities at least quarterly; and
- adopt, maintain and follow Bylaws, which have been approved by the AMC's Subcommittee on Local Group Bylaws.

Glossary

Similar to members of many other organizations, Mensans seem to have developed their own language. Below are some of the more common acronyms and phrases. Other acronyms will be discussed in appropriate places throughout this handbook. In addition, you can check out AML's Web site for more clues.

AG: Annual Gathering, the official name of American Mensa's national convention.

AMC: The American Mensa Committee, American Mensa's board of directors.

AML: American Mensa, Ltd.

Area Coordinator: A volunteer who welcomes new members, receives calls and questions from members and schedules events in a limited geographic area within the Local Group.

ASIE: Actions Still in Effect. Decisions rendered by the AMC or your local ExComm that will affect future

administrations and member issues. They are removed when they no longer relate to current policy.

ExComm: Executive Committee. The governing body of the AMC or a Local Group.

FSM: For groups that publish and mail a newsletter, this is often the name of the distribution/preparation event jokingly known as "Fold, Staple, Mutilate" and more accurately as "Fold, Seal, Mail."

GC/GCC: Gifted Children/Gifted Children Coordinator.

InsideAML: This Web site centralizes all of American Mensa's resources for local, regional and national officers.

LDW: Leadership Development Workshop (or Weekend). This gathering provides courses to improve the skills and knowledge of Local Group officers and any other Mensans.

Local Group: A geographically defined local chapter of American Mensa.

LocSec: (pronounced "loak-seck") Local Secretary, president of a Local Group. Reflecting Mensa's British origins, the title is a holdover from the time when this officer was simply a secretary reporting to national Mensa. Although many Local Groups call their chief executives something else, to the national organization they're all LocSecs.

M: A Mensan of either sex. Plural is Ms (pronounced "emz," not "miz").

National Office: The administrative headquarters of American Mensa maintains membership records and qualifications; keeps track of local officer information; provides monthly funding, membership labels and reports to Local Groups; and supports the AMC and the mission of the organization. Contact the office at 888/294-8035.

NomComm: Nominating Committee. Pretty much every Mensa group, from local up to international, has a NomComm in place to help identify and officially nominate candidates for office.

Owl: OK, you know what an owl is. Because the owl was sacred to Athena, Greek goddess of wisdom, it has become the unofficial mascot of Mensa. Over the years other unofficial mascots have included pelicans, unicorns, Opus the penguin and doubtless other things — but the owl is pretty solidly entrenched.

RG: Regional Gathering — what Local Groups call their annual, regional conventions, usually held over weekends throughout the year.

RVC: Regional Vice-Chairmen — members of the AMC elected by the constituents of each region.

SIGs: Special Interest Groups, which can be local or national. These are groups of members who get

together to enjoy and celebrate a specific -interest or hobby — everything from chocolate to skiing.

SIGHT: Service of Information, Guidance and Hospitality to Travelers. This network of volunteer hosts offers accommodations to Ms who want to visit their cities.

Young Mensans: Mensans under the age of 18.

American Mensa has members as young as 3.

New LocSec Checklist

- _____ Confirm that the National Office has been notified of officer changes.
- _____ Check with the National Office that all incoming officers have their email aliases established and that the incoming officers have been added to their relevant national elists and have a copy of their relevant handbooks.
- _____ Check with Treasurer to have prior LocSec's signatory duties are transferred to the incoming LocSec.
- _____ Re-read the Local Group bylaws.
- _____ Distribute bylaws to each officer.
- _____ Distribute a list to all officers sharing their additional phone numbers or email addresses beyond the one they list for all members, such as cell or work phones and edresses.
- _____ Check with newsletter editor about when the deadline is for your first column
- _____ Determine whether any appointed positions/committees need to be filled.
- _____ Review prior ExComm minutes.
- _____ Schedule first ExComm meeting.
- _____ Prepare agenda for ExComm meeting, including:
 - acknowledgment of prior officers;
 - carry over new business from last ExComm meeting; and
 - appoint any required officers or committees.
- _____ Set your goals for the term.
- _____ Enjoy your new position.

Meet the Executive Committee and Local Group Officers

Each Local Group must have at least three elected officers with a defined order of succession. Smaller groups may need to have their officers double up on duties. Larger groups may use committees to divide responsibilities. Some groups elect an Executive Committee, or ExComm, that committee then selects these officers from among its members. Other groups elect persons to fill each specific office. The titles of officers vary by group. Refer to your Local Group bylaws for your group's officer titles and job descriptions.

The second in command may be called Assistant LocSec, Deputy LocSec, Vice President, Executive Officer, etc., but other groups may simply designate one of the other officers to assume the LocSec's duties during absences. Other common officer positions include Area Coordinator, Membership Officer, Treasurer, Program Officer (or Speaker Seeker), Editor or Publications Officer, Public Relations Coordinator (or Recruitment or Publicity) and Secretary (or Recording and/or Corresponding Secretary/Scribe, although Secretary indicates additional duties besides recording and corresponding), Testing or Proctor Coordinator, SIGHT Coordinator and Gifted Children Coordinator. As required by the Minimum Standard Bylaws, all groups must have an Ombudsman. Some groups refer to the person as a Mediator.

It is important to notify National Office when any local officers change as this gets them on relevant elists and mailing lists, and the online officer directory. As LocSec you should be familiar with all officers' duties and responsibilities and you should, as time permits, review all Local Group officer handbooks which are available on the Inside AML Web site.

You will spend much of your time as LocSec working with various volunteers within your Local Group. As volunteers tend to burnout at some time, you should try to seek new volunteers for positions rather than piling more job titles on the same old people. You may want to try breaking some jobs up into smaller pieces so that more volunteers can get involved. This process is a great way to begin training new leaders.

Local Group Officer Job Description

Assistant LocSec

The Assistant LocSec presides at meetings in the absence or disability of the LocSec. The Assistant often heads special committees and/or performs tasks

assigned by the LocSec or by the ExComm, or may assume duties of one of the other offices. For example, some groups automatically assign the tasks of Programs Officer to the Assistant LocSec. In the event that the position of LocSec becomes vacant, the Assistant LocSec immediately and automatically becomes LocSec.

Treasurer

The principal duties of the Treasurer are the keeping of the accounts, the safeguarding of the Local Group's funds and the periodic reporting of the group's finances to the Local Group members and AML. Minimum Standard Bylaws require publication of a financial report in the Local Group newsletter twice a year and that bank statements must be provided to the LocSec or his designee quarterly. The Treasurer's Handbook outlines the duties and responsibilities of the Treasurer and sample reports. Although the LocSec need not learn the practical details of bookkeeping, some chapters in that handbook are quite important. The Treasurer's Handbook covers not only what types of accounts are recommended and how to set them up, but also prudent investment, checks and controls and the format of financial reports. The Treasurer's Handbook also discusses budgeting in detail.

Secretary

The title "secretary" implies some legal duties, especially for locally incorporated groups. For example, banks require the secretary's signature when opening bank accounts for a corporation. Most groups, however, need a Recording Secretary or a Corresponding Secretary, whether elected or appointed. Duties consist of recording the minutes, having them published in the newsletter (at least in abbreviated form) and handling official correspondence. Again, appearance is important and the Secretary may require help if lacking the skill or equipment to produce acceptable copy.

Editor and/or Publications Officer

Next to the LocSec, the Editor is the most prominent and influential member of the Local Group. The LocSec is the administrator while the Editor is the communicator. It is important for the LocSec and the Editor to function as a team. In most groups, the Editor is appointed because special skills are required that are not readily discernible from a campaign statement.

Power struggles between the Editor and the LocSec have resulted in a number of highly damaging encounters. Some groups elect a Publications Officer

who then, with the ExComm's approval, appoints an Editor. They feel the judgment of the ExComm may provide better results and, in addition, an elected Editor might feel accountable only to the members. This is a fallacy, because the editor is accountable to the governing body of the Local Group, as are all Local Group officers. Electing and appointing can both work, and your group has the power to do either as outlined in your local bylaws. The Editor is responsible to the governing body for the contents of the newsletter. It is of great importance that the Editor provide a forum for officers and members. It is not any individuals' newsletter — it is that of the members. Some Local Groups believe in keeping editorial opinions to a minimum to avoid arguments with contributors.

Proctors and Testing/Proctor Coordinators

Proctors and Proctor/Testing Coordinators are nominated locally but appointed nationally by American Mensa's Supervisory Psychologist following the recommendation of the LocSec or RVC.

Proctors are often the first members with whom candidates have contact and, therefore, they may influence candidates' perceptions of Mensa. Additionally, Proctors are charged with ensuring that Mensa's supervised tests are administered fairly and accurately, thus maintaining the integrity of the membership selection process.

Proctor and Testing Coordinators oversee the testing process for the group, coordinating and scheduling testing efforts. A Testing Coordinator has not yet met the requirements for proctoring and can coordinate testing but cannot test.

Due to state requirements regarding the practice of psychology, all Mensa Proctors are working under the license of Mensa's Supervisory Psychologist (unless they themselves are licensed psychologists). Therefore, it is very important that the requirements, outlined at www.us.mensa.org/certifications, are accurately documented and that Proctors always administer Mensa tests according to the standards established by the Mensa proctor manual and handbook.

Proctoring is a vital component of your Local Group health and is explained in Section 15 – Testing Program.

Gifted Children's Coordinator

The Gifted Children's Coordinator ("GCC") is nominated locally but appointed nationally by the National Gifted Children Program Coordinator. The National Gifted Children Program Coordinator will assume that GCC continues in office regardless of the expiration of the term of the governing body; however,

the position is considered a Local Group function and follows the procedures for term expiration, membership lapse and removal as with any other Local Group officer.

One of the cornerstones of Mensa is that there no requirement other than achieving an IQ score in the top 2 percent. However, there are special considerations that go with our members who are under the age of 18. Your GCC can advise you about them, and handle the calls LocSecs frequently get asking for gifted children information for your area. While the GCC may arrange whole family activities, publishing information about speakers or resources of interest to the parents or grandparents of gifted children on the web serves the whole membership of the Local Group.

SIGHT Coordinator

Service in Guidance and Hospitality to Travelers Coordinators are nominated locally but appointed nationally by the National SIGHT Coordinator. Unless informed by the Local Group, the National SIGHT Coordinator will assume that the SIGHT Coordinator continues in office regardless of the expiration of the term of the governing body; however, the position is considered a Local Group function and follows the procedures for term expiration, membership lapse and removal as with any other Local Group officer. The National SIGHT Coordinator will assume that SIGHT Coordinator continues in office regardless of the expiration of the term of the governing body; however, the position is considered a Local Group function and follows the procedures for term expiration, membership lapse and removal as with any other Local Group officer.

Program Chair

This office requires imagination, effort and dedication. Often, the Program Chair heads a program committee, with duties assigned to other members. The objective is to provide varied programs to draw the members. Success is measured by attendance and good responses. Some programs become so popular that they repeat annually. There is no end of possibilities for programs: tours, theater events, concerts, zoo visitations, car rallies, lobster feasts, pizza parties, speakers on thought-provoking subjects and many others. Glean ideas from other groups' newsletters which you can view online. This is an extremely important position as without exciting programs to attract members' interest, many a group has languished.

Membership Officer

The Membership Officer welcomes new members, holds new member parties and organizes activities designed to increase membership participation.

Assistants are often appointed for specific duties such as recruitment. In those groups that have a geographically scattered membership, area assistants are invaluable. While all positions are important, this position has a special importance. The Membership Officer is frequently the person that a new member deals with as they begin to explore the value of their membership. While the Membership Officer is the officer designated to interact with new members, it is the responsibility of all officers and members, especially the LocSec, to reach out to new members at all events. A new member who feels welcome will become a long-term member and an asset to the group.

The National Office sends each Local Group mailing labels, names, addresses and telephone numbers of all persons who have recently joined, rejoined, or moved into the local area in the last month. The LocSec may designate the recipient of such labels and printouts. In addition, the National Office mails a Prospect List and labels of candidates eligible to join Mensa. Most groups develop materials to send to these persons. Sample letters are available in the Local Group Membership Officer Handbook. Many groups follow up these leads with a telephone call and perhaps send copies of the next two or three Local Group newsletters. It is important that the materials sent to prospective members are of a quality that shows Mensa in a good light. Letters or emails should be friendly, but not gushy. The printing should be of good quality and spelling faultless.

Area Coordinator

When a Local Group is spread over a geographically large area or when serving sections of a large city, Area Coordinators are helpful to plan and implement activities in the sub-group area. The Area Coordinator shall also assist the LocSec in the administration of the sub-group. The Area Coordinator must reside in the geographic area contained in the sub-group area. If you do not currently have Area Coordinators, consult your bylaws about how to add appointed officers. See also the Area Coordinator Handbook for more about what they can do to grow a Local Group.

Ombudsman/Mediator

Even a small group may develop factions or power struggles or have conflicts between members. Therefore, each group must have an Ombudsman. The Ombudsman needs to be in place before the group experiences its first serious problem. There is a national Ombudsman to whom any member can appeal, whether there is a local ombudsman or not, but he routinely refers back any local problems that have not first been addressed by the local ombudsman. The Ombudsman must be an appointed officer. The term should be longer than that of the

appointing ExComm. The Ombudsman must not be a member of the ExComm and should not serve on the NomCom or Election Committee. Ideally, the Ombudsman has some mediation or counseling skills, and has had lots of experience both within Mensa and life in general. The Ombudsman should not be a special friend of anyone on the ExComm and must be a current member, but not necessarily otherwise active in the organization.

Webmaster

In today's world and with the increasing use of the Internet, the position of Webmaster is also increasingly important. An effective webmaster is a practitioner of communication as well as a technical guru. The webmaster is charged with creating and/or maintaining a Web site. The jobs of a webmaster include writing for the Web page, organizing the Web site's structure, responding to emails about the Web site and keeping the site up-to-date. As many of our prospective members come to us through web contact, it is extremely important that Local Group Web sites are kept current.

Member-at-Large

A Member-at-Large is an elected position that typically assists other officers fulfill their duties. A Member-at-Large can assume the duties of any vacant office if directed by the ExComm. The Member-at-Large typically has no set duties, but is assigned duties by the LocSec or ExComm as the need arises.

Public Relations Coordinator

The objective of the Public Relations Coordinator, by bringing the group's message, activities and results to the attention of the media, is to gain new members. An imaginative PR officer will develop publicity in newspapers, magazines, television, radio, cable and in-house public relations endeavors. Advertisements in media, posters, speakers' bureaus for local civic organizations, etc. can be used to spread the message. Materials on recruitment and public relations are available from the National Office. In addition, there is a staff PR Coordinator at the National Office whose primary function is to provide support for the Local Group's PR efforts. Each Local Group should appoint a PR Coordinator. It is the most effective way to generate publicity for the group.

Parliamentarian

Some Local Groups provide for the position of Parliamentarian to act as a resource for the ExComm as to the appropriate parliamentary procedure in various circumstances. While groups may not rigidly use Roberts' Rules, they can be helpful for large meetings, or if any business meeting involves heated discussion.

Past LocSec

The position of Past LocSec is filled by the most recent LocSec who is the person who served as LocSec immediately prior to the current LocSec. Should the appropriate person not be available or willing to serve in that capacity, the position typically remains vacant. Some of the reasoning behind creating this position include having another resource available to the current LocSec as well as keeping continuity of the ExComm in some manner.

Committees

Some Local Group bylaws create specific committees. The ExComm may appoint other committees as necessary for the efficient running of the Local Group. Some committees that are typically formed are a financial review or audit committee, a bylaws committee, an RG committee, an LDW committee, etc. A committee can also be formed to research a specific area of interest or carry out a particular event or goal. These committees would be created to fill a specific need and once their goal is achieved the committee should be disbanded. Committees may be chaired by a member of the ExComm or by a Local Group member.

Election Process

Elections must rigorously follow your local-group bylaws strictures. Elections must be held at least every other year, but many groups elect annually. Each group must have at least three elected officers. Most groups elect officers directly to specific posts. Sometimes a group chooses to simply elect an Executive Committee (or governing board) that

determines who among them will serve in the various offices. Each method has pros and cons.

Nominating Committee (NomCom)

Many groups have a Nominating Committee, appointed by the ExComm well in advance of the election. This committee makes sure that there is at least one qualified and willing candidate for each elective office. The Local Group newsletter publishes the NomCom's choices, and a call for nominations by petition from the membership.

Election Committee

The Election Committee regulates and conducts the balloting and in some groups, the voting method. They often set the length and other details of campaign statements to be published (unedited, but screened for gross misstatements) in the newsletter. Although the NomCom and the Election Committee may consist of the same persons, the Minimum Standard Bylaws demand that neither a current elected or appointed officer, nor anyone else running for office, may serve on either of these two committees. The Election Committee is also responsible for mail ballots, making sure that only eligible members' ballots are accepted and that ballots follow the prescribed rules. Such verification is also required for ballots delivered in person. It is imperative to keep individual votes secret. The Committee counts the ballots, certifies the results and makes decisions on any aspect that is unregulated and left to the judgment of the committee.

Running the ExComm Meeting

Setting the Agenda

Mensans love to express ideas and debate issues. While this is wonderful at dinner meetings, ExComm meetings can drag on endlessly and achieve little if the LocSec is unprepared to lead the meeting. An agenda adds focus to a group. As LocSec, you need to balance the need to discuss items with the aim of concluding a meeting in a timely manner. Even a simple agenda can help to keep discussion on task. Here are a couple of sample agendas. The more uniform an agenda can be made, the more useful it is.

Traditional Agenda	
1.	Call meeting to order
2.	Approve minutes
3.	Officer's reports:
	Treasurer
	Membership
	Publications
	Programs
4.	Old Business
	RG report
5.	New Business
	Mensa Testing Day
6.	Adjourn

In the traditional agenda format, items listed as new business will carry over to the next month as old business unless they come to quick resolution. Items should continue to appear on the agenda until they have been fully completed. In many cases, a summary report is also requested.

Event-Driven Agenda	
1.	Call meeting to order
2.	Approve minutes
3.	Treasurer's report
4.	Items for discussion:
	Annual Picnic
	Pledge Drive
	Mensa Testing Day
	Final RG details
5.	Adjourn

Some of the advantages of the event-driven agenda include its informality and the advantageous arrangement of discussion items. It is usually preferable to put smaller, less contentious items at the beginning of the meeting, leaving time and energy for those items likely to generate extensive debate among the ExComm members.

The best time to deliver the agenda and anything the officers need to read or study is about two weeks before the meeting. This gives the members of the Board time to read and think before the actual

meeting, and reminds them of what they need to do while there is still time to do it. The LDW Guide has additional information in the course outline on this and many other topics. Look for the Leadership Development Workshop Guide in the Handbooks section of Officer Resources.

Running Effective Meetings

Effective ExComm meetings are essential to the smooth running of your Local Group. You, as the LocSec, set the tone for the meeting. Smoothly run ExComm meetings reflect well upon the LocSec and the rest of the ExComm. Participants feel as if something has been accomplished, that their input was valued, that problems were solved and that future planning was addressed.

An effective meeting is organized with an agenda, is controlled by the Chair (the LocSec), has relevant discussion on issues and decisions are made as necessary, is friendly but focused and has follow-up work clearly delegated. A good meeting would attract new potential officers who value accomplishment rather than rhetoric.

When conducting an ExComm meeting, you should start and finish, on time. As Loc Sec, your role as Chair of the meeting is to:

- set the tone of the meeting as well as the agenda;
- keep the discussion on topic;
- make sure necessary decisions are made and bring closure to issues;
- help settle disputes;
- encourage people to participate;
- respect all people and their opinions;
- encourage all participants to contribute; and
- keep the focus on discussions on the issues and not on personalities.

Robert's Rules of Order

Robert's Rules of Order provide for fair and orderly meetings by setting forth common rules and procedures. Some Local Groups provide for a Parliamentarian to act as a resource for the ExComm. The Minimum Standard Bylaws suggest that either *Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised* or *Demeters* be used as a parliamentary authority. The applicable source must be set forth in the Local Group bylaws.

Either of these books or other sources are at most bookstores. The use of parliamentary procedure assists in controlling a meeting by provisions such as:

- A person has to be recognized by the Chair before speaking.
- No person who has spoken to an issue may speak on that same issue until everyone else who wishes to speak to the issue has spoken.
- Remarks must be directed to the Chair and the speaker must remain courteous.

Roberts Rules of Order includes many procedural rules which deal with various issues such as:

- Point of Information (directing questions at the speaker);
- Amending Motions;
- Withdrawal of Motions;
- Referring to Committee (existing committee or a new committee to be formed);
- Limit Debate (on a certain issue);
- Postpone to a Certain Time;
- Tabling Motions;
- Postpone Indefinitely; and
- other concerns relating to running effective meetings.

See www.jimslaughter.com for a two page summary that is all most LocSecs will ever need. This is also an excellent summary to give to new officers at the first ExComm meeting.

Planning and Goal Setting

Part of the job of the ExComm is to plan for the Local Group and set goals for the current term and to look into the future. As in most organizations, planning creates a more cohesive leadership and creates the structure to focus the ExComm on issues that are important to the Local Group.. Without effective planning, the ExComm may very well find itself being reactive to problematic situations instead of proactive and forward thinking. Holding a planning session early in each term sets the tone for the ExComm. It will help establish the tone for the term and may create excitement in the officers and members (potential volunteers).

While the Retreat Planning Guide, available in the Handbook section of Officer Resources, provides step-by-step direction to plan and facilitate a day-long retreat for the leaders of a local Mensa group, it may be used to guide your planning of a shorter planning session. A retreat is structured discussion that creates teamwork and focus. The purpose of the retreat is to create a purpose statement for the Local Group that outlines the group's mission, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the Local Groups operations, set goals from which the Local Group can launch focused, manageable improvement efforts, and set a follow-up plan and timeline describing when and how movement toward goals will be reviewed and adjusted.

Governance

Local Groups are autonomous bodies organized within American Mensa and subject to the requirements of American Mensa Ltd. and Mensa International Limited.

AML Documents and Policies

The Constitution, Bylaws and Actions Still in Effect are available either in hardcopy from the National Office or on the AML Web site in the Officer Resources section.

Constitution of Mensa

The Constitution of Mensa is the governing document for Mensa worldwide. All national groups must operate within the constraints of the Constitution.

American Mensa Bylaws

AML's Bylaws define the structure and governance of American Mensa. These bylaws can only be amended by a vote of the full membership of American Mensa.

Actions Still in Effect (ASIEs)

AMC actions are compiled into a list known as ASIEs. The ASIE's are maintained after each AMC meeting to keep it current by adding new actions and removing obsolete or superseded actions. Some of them directly affect Local Group governance.

Minimum Standard Bylaws

Your Local Group has a set of bylaws, approved by the national bylaws committee, under which it must operate. The local bylaws are crafted based on the Minimum Standard Bylaws defined within AML's ASIEs.

The Minimum Standard Bylaws reflect many years of Local Group experience. A good set of bylaws can minimize conflict. All local officers should be familiar with the bylaws and operate within their framework. To enable new groups to adopt a proven set of bylaws without having to "recreate the wheel", model bylaws exist that require only insertion of the group's name for official approval. Help in the composition of bylaws tailored to the group's special requirements is available from the national Bylaws Committee.

The national Bylaws Committee must approve all new bylaws, as well as all amendments. Send proposed bylaws and amendments to that committee before asking the local membership to vote on them. Local Groups may have to repeat the Local Group ratification if the Committee has not approved changes in advance. Some groups may have existing bylaws that do not

contain all minimum standard requirements. However, the minimum standards are deemed to be in effect whether or not the group's bylaws actually contain them. Any changes to the Minimum Standard Bylaws voted by the AMC become effective immediately in each Local Group. This is one reason why it is a good idea to update your Local Group's bylaws on a regular basis. Having to refer to your group's bylaws and then the Minimum Standard Bylaws may become confusing.

Local Group Bylaws and Actions Still In Effect

Being autonomous, Local Groups have the right to determine their own internal processes and procedures without undo constraints or arbitrary restrictions. The foundation for the operation of the Local Group is its bylaws. Bylaws are of the utmost importance in case of disputes; ombudsmen, legal counsel and courts of law place great importance on compliance with bylaws.

It is a good idea to provide a set of current bylaws to all local officers upon their election or appointment to office. Some groups distribute the bylaws to all their members on regular basis as well. Most groups also have their bylaws posted to the Local Group's Web site.

Many Local Groups utilize ASIEs to record actions of the ExComm and allow subsequent ExComms time to develop new ideas, rather than re-debate the same issues year after year. These should be kept in an accessible format and available to all officers and members. They may be included with the bylaws on the Local Group's Web site. Some groups call these actions CASIEs, with the "C" standing for Chapter, or Standing Orders.

Finances

Every group will have expenses and income. In this section, you will find a brief overview of many of the financial aspects of the Local Group. It is recommended that, except in the smallest of groups, a treasurer be elected to monitor disbursements. The Treasurer's Handbook is available online and from the National Office. Be sure your Treasurer has a copy of the handbook and you, as LocSec, you may also wish to familiarize yourself with the handbook.subhead.

Banking

Every local Mensa group must have a bank account. American Mensa deposits Local Group support funds directly into each group's bank account on the third Friday of each month. Confirmation of the amount and its breakdown is provided to the Local Group Treasurer. American Mensa's Tax Identification Number must be on the account to ensure that no one else has to pay the taxes on the account's interest income. The signature card should include at least one more signer than required to write a check or make a withdrawal. The additional signatory is typically the LocSec which provides that funds can be accessed in the event of a temporary absence of the Treasurer.

A checking account is essential to handle expenditures and receipts. If you have a large event such as a Regional Gathering, it is recommended that you have a separate bank account. Banks differ in their rules and it is wise to shop around. Accounts should be federally insured (FDIC or FSLIC). Service charges should be minimized by selecting a bank or credit union that offers "free" checking or by maintaining a minimum balance in the checking account or an associated savings account. In some cases, you may be able to convince the banker that the Mensa account should be free because it is a prestige account and because Mensa is a not-for-profit corporation (under Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(4)). Almost all banking can be done by mail. A few banks provide franked envelopes for this purpose — it doesn't hurt to ask.

Checks should be inexpensive. If the account you select does not include free checks, it is worth considering third party check printers. Quite a number of excellent sources are available. Opinions vary as to whether checks should carry the Treasurer's address. A preprinted address saves writing and is more easily accepted by some

merchants. However, if the Treasurer moves or is replaced, new checks must be printed. The Local Group's particular circumstances must be considered in making this decision. A few banks may provide free checks and accounts without service fees to not-for-profit organizations — it doesn't hurt to ask. A "FOR DEPOSIT ONLY" rubber stamp that shows the name and number of the account speeds processing. A few banks provide such stamps at no cost — once again, it doesn't hurt to ask.

Signature Cards

The outgoing Treasurer must arrange for new signature cards. This may require a signed resolution to the effect that the group's officers have changed. The bank can provide forms for the resolution. Banks with branches are usually willing to carry signature cards in more than one location. In the event that the outgoing Treasurer is not available to arrange for new signature cards, the bank may allow other signers to make changes. If not, you should contact the National Office for assistance in resolving the problem. It is recommended that bank accounts be set up to require more than one signature for disbursements. This is cumbersome and adds work for the Treasurer, but the extra safety may be required by some groups. Some groups find it sufficient to use one signature on the check, supplemented by a written policy on how much can be disbursed by the Treasurer without Executive Committee approval.

Blank checks should never be pre-signed. At least two signatures should be recorded on the bank's signature card, because the Treasurer may be unavailable when a payment must be made. The bank's signature card also specifies how many signatures must be on the check for validity. For example, a group may list the Treasurer and the LocSec on the bank's signature card even though only one or the other is required for the check. When two signatures are required for disbursement, three or more should be on record. Copies of signature cards should be retained in the Treasurer's file.

Separation of Duties

No one should sign a check to reimburse themselves. Most groups require at minimum two people be involved in dispensing the group's money except for revolving expenses; one person to approve the expense, and another to sign the check. It is wise to require prior approval for non-budgeted expenditures of any significant amount, as learning

someone has purchased something you wish they hadn't after the fact has no good resolution.

IRS Reporting

Most Local Groups are not separately incorporated and thus are exempt from filing tax returns. However, all Local Groups that have earned savings interest or dividends and which have used AML's tax ID number must forward a copy of all Form 1099s upon receipt from the paying institutions to the National Office for inclusion in American Mensa's records. Groups with gross income exceeding \$25,000 (receipts, contribution, etc.) in a year are required to file an annual return (Form 990) with the IRS for that year. Groups hosting AGs and large RGs are often subject to this requirement. Note that testing fee income and Local Group funds received from national dues are excluded from the Local Group's gross income because they are already included in AML's reported income.

In addition, Local Groups may be required to report income and cash on hand to AML in order to fulfill AML's IRS reporting requirements.

Financial Reporting and Annual Review

At least once per quarter, the treasurer must provide the LocSec with actual copies of any bank accounts that hold group assets. This must be the actual bank statement, not just the treasurer's report. Many LocSecs pass the statement around at meetings to the other officers as well.

At approximate six-month intervals, a financial report is required to be published in the Local Group's newsletter. This report needs to include schedules of income, expenses and balances for all funds under the control of the Local Group, including regional gatherings, scholarship and any other special funds.

Every Local Group is required to annually have a financial review. This review needs to be performed by one or more members who was not involved in issuing or collecting money during the review period. The timing of the review typically occurs soon after the end of the fiscal year. At this time, it may also be appropriate to do a spot-check of any physical equipment the Local Group may own.

Also, AML may require periodical reporting of finances to be made to AML. Any such requests will typically be forwarded to both the LocSec and the Treasurer.

Local Group Funding

The AMC provides funds for the operation of the Local Group. However, there are certain basic requirements to fulfill in order to obtain these funds. All qualified Local Groups receive a percentage of the national dues paid by their members. To qualify, a group must have approved Local Group bylaws that include all minimum standards, hold at least four ExComm meetings a year and four general meetings (social activities are considered a general meeting) and publish a regularly issued newsletter at least four times a year. Note that the requirements are somewhat different for groups of less than 50 members.

The RVC may recommend exceptions at his discretion. If a Local Group does not meet the criteria for qualification at the time of dues payment, the monies that would have been remitted to that group will be held in escrow for a maximum of one year. If the Local Group qualifies during that year, the AML will remit the held monies. Otherwise, they will revert to the general fund. Per-member funding is distributed monthly to the Local Groups. Additional family members who elect family membership dues generate the same per-member funding to the Local Group. The percentage funded to individual groups changes periodically. Contact the National Office for the breakout of current funding.

Other Sources of AML Funding

In addition to the routine Local Group funding, there are other sources of funding available from AML or through AMC members.

RVC Funds

Funds may be available from your RVC for support of ongoing Local Group operations, emergency situations, or special projects that benefit the membership of your group. RVCs have complete control over disbursement of these funds. If you want to know if funds or if funds are available, contact your RVC to develop a plan of action. When LocSecs request assistance, they generally must document such requests as to objective, cost and cost-effectiveness.

Communications Officer

AMC's Communications Officer has been authorized to make grants at his/her discretion to Local Groups for the purpose of obtaining a periodical mailing permit. This grant is only available to groups that are

currently mailing their newsletters by first or standard class mail.

Lapsed Member Mailing

Reimbursement for an annual contact to members lapsed within the current year is available. The National Office distributes lists, labels and forms in June that outline the procedure for reimbursement. Reimbursement is based on the number of currently lapsed members contacted and is, as of the date of publication, \$.50 per lapsed member contacted. Contact may be made through mail, email or telephonically.

Gifted Children Programs Grants

There are sometimes small grants available through the National Gifted Children Committee to support Local Group gifted children initiatives.

Testing

As of the date of publication of this handbook, the Local Group receives \$15.00 per administered test, plus postage. Some groups use a portion of this per-test fee to pay a stipend to the proctor administering the test. A Local Group may purchase the Mensa Home Tests from the National Office for a reduced fee and sell them for the regular price resulting in income to the Local Group. Many groups make a significant amount of money by testing regularly, which also gets publicity and grows your group.

Local Sources of Funding

Newsletter Subscriptions

On occasion, non-Local Group members may wish to subscribe to your newsletter. Often, these are former members of your group who have moved, but wish to keep abreast of happenings in their former group. Sometimes a quality newsletter or individual columnist spurs others to subscribe. Work with your editor and treasurer to develop an appropriate charge. You will also need some method for keeping subscription lists accurate and up-to-date, as well as for collection of payment.

Local Dues

Some groups have experimented by charging additional local dues to their members to help finance their activities. This method is undesirable and generally impractical. Most groups that have tried it soon discontinued it. If your group wishes to consider this option, remember your group may charge local dues only after approval of such dues in a referendum. However, local dues are unenforceable.

"Selling" of newsletter subscriptions to local members cannot be enforced either. Members are entitled to at least the calendar, whether they pay for a subscription or not. Moreover, the group's bylaws must include a procedure for exempting members from payment of local dues for good cause. Failure to pay local dues or newsletter subscriptions cannot exclude members from participating in events or voting in Local Group elections. Maintaining subscription lists and collecting monies adds a burden of record keeping. Either method creates a two-tier membership, a highly unsatisfactory condition.

Contributions / Donations

A few groups encourage donations from members. They may designate a certain amount as a fair share and seek to collect this amount from each member. Larger contributions are encouraged. Many officers contribute their postage, copying and telephone expenses. While it may be a practical short-term solution, this method often turns out to be unduly burdensome on officers. It may also keep some people from considering nomination if they fear it will encumber them financially. To ensure the longevity of your program, accurate records should be maintained of these "in-kind" services and donations.

Some groups give local scholarships. If you do this, remember that those who donate can only claim tax deductions to 501(c)(3) groups, which Mensa is not. The Mensa Foundation is such an organization and can manage local scholarships for you, which makes the donations deductible.

Door Charges

Charging admission, such as a cover charge, for Mensa functions is an accepted means of defraying expenses. If necessary, charge a small amount per person to enhance the treasury. To prevent freeloading, a person should be designated to control the entrance and, perhaps, to "sell" nametags. The underlying principle for such charges is to "let the user pay," rather than supporting the event from the group treasury when only a small percentage of members will—or can—attend such functions. Some groups will charge only guests of members and not to the members themselves. Many groups charge non-members a higher rate than members, which encourages those eligible to join and gives the members a feeling of "getting something" for their dues.

Fundraising

These ideas have worked well for other groups:

- At dinner meetings, round up the amount charged to provide a bit of surplus.
- Encourage donation of books and records for sale to other members.
- Design Regional Gatherings to give real value to the guests. This can result in sizable income with careful planning.
- Garage and rummage sales can easily produce several hundred dollars.
- Donated items can be auctioned off.
- Produce and sell publications, such as cookbooks.
- Offer T-shirts and other personalized merchandise.
- Providing a link to an online merchant, such as Amazon, on the group's Web site.

Many of these activities are enjoyable as well as profitable and as many members as possible should get involved in such team efforts.

Budgeting

A budget is necessary for good group management and to manage the expenditure of available funds. Following the budget is the responsibility of all officers. Too many groups wake up to the fact that they have run out of money when it is too late to do something about it. Severe restrictions may take the form of frantic money-raising schemes, reduction in the number of newsletter pages, or other emergency measures. The Treasurer should recommend that the ExComm come up with a budget as a group. Such a budget may be a simple, common effort. In larger groups, it may be departmentalized and based on objectives for the coming fiscal year.

Once the budget has been approved by the governing body, it is the Treasurer's duty to play watchdog. It is important to keep an eye on the relationship between disbursement from the National Office and your newsletter costs. Unless your group has well-established, ongoing revenue sources, your newsletter costs, including postage, must be equivalent to or slightly below this disbursement. It is tempting to go overboard publishing an extravaganza, with all the bells and whistles, but it often puts the group funds at peril. Even a small group can produce an award-winning newsletter and stay within costs. By encouraging members to subscribe to the electronic newsletter a Local Group can substantially reduce the cost of producing its newsletter.

The ExComm must approve contemplated over-expenditures and, in severe cases, revise the

budget. Retain the original budget figures for comparisons and post-mortems at the end of the fiscal year, or when compiling the new budget. Budget revisions may also be necessary when there are severe changes in costs, such as increases in printing or postage costs, or when a subset of the group splinters off.

When allocating funds, it is important to maintain a balance between active and inactive members. Inactive members, not to be confused with lapsed members, derive their benefits mainly through the local newsletter and the national publications, yet they pay the same amount of dues. Consequently, groups should use a large share of the fund to provide a quality newsletter. On the other hand, active members, because of their volunteer work, deserve good and varied programs.

Insurance

AML has purchased liability insurance that provides financial protection for Local Groups and individuals against liability claims arising from Mensa activities. Information about the limits of this policy is available from the National Office. Some facilities may require that they be listed as a named insured for the event. This can be done through the National Office insurance policy. Contact the National Office at least two to three weeks prior to the event.

All proctors are covered by Mensa's liability insurance while acting as proctors on behalf of Mensa. Proctors under 70 years of age are also covered by a policy that provides for accidental death/dismemberment benefits and accident/medical expense benefits while they are attending a testing session, or are traveling to or from a testing site.

In the event of any accident or occurrence that might involve one or both of these policies, the National Office and LocSec must be notified immediately. Failure to file a report could result in denial of coverage or denial of the claim, so a report should be made regardless of the amount involved. In addition, all lawsuits and summonses should be reported to the National Office so that a response can be prepared and filed within the time allowed.

These summaries are for information purposes only. The actual policy provisions control the extent of the insurer's liability and the handling of any claim. Mensa reserves the right to change the coverage provided at any time and without prior notice.

Chapter Communications

Local Group Newsletter

The Local Group newsletter is the glue that holds the Local Group together. The Editor's Handbook is a valuable resource for the Editor, Publications Officer and you, as LocSec. Your newsletter serves as the main communication device of the Local Group. It performs a number of functions. The newsletter transmits information through editorials, Local Group officers' columns and includes announcements from the National Office. Area Coordinators should submit regular reports on activities in their area to be included in the newsletter. Scholarship chairs can report on their activities and results. SIG Coordinators write about their interests and Gifted Children Coordinators report about news gathered from various sources. The newsletter serves as a timely reminder of these events and explains to new members how such functions can benefit them. Courtesy and reciprocity suggest neighboring groups publish notice of events being held by each other for the mutual benefit of both their members.

Publishing Requirements

AML requires that a Local Group publish a newsletter on, at least, a quarterly basis. Most groups publish between ten and twelve issues a year. Publication is typically on a monthly basis with a combined issue once or twice a year (i.e.: July/August). AML also sets for minimum contents for the newsletter requiring the following to be published as necessary:

- a calendar listing of the group's activities
- election information
- referenda and bylaws proposals
- Treasurer's reports
- Ombudsmen's official comments and findings

There are many other items which are recommended to be included. Please refer to the Editor's Handbook for more information.

Calendar

This is one of the primary functions of the newsletter and therefore is tied closely to group funding. At minimum, a newsletter must print a listing of the events planned by the Local Group. Either the Program Chair or a Calendar Editor will prepare the calendar for publication. In addition, frequently a weekly or bi-weekly reminder email is sent to members. Having a separate Calendar Editor is recommended so that someone other than the editor is up to speed and can publish at least a small newsletter, in an emergency.

Contributions from Members

The newsletter provides space for those members who contribute interesting materials such as poetry, puzzles, essays, letters, mini-biographies, as well as book, movie, theater and/or game reviews. "Meet the Members" type items are often favorites, and photos are an excellent way to get people to feel more connected to the group and willing to come to an event. Many members who are photographers are often pleased to let you use their pictures and photos of people, especially, tend to draw new members to read the newsletter and attend events.

Local Group Roster

While it may seem that the newsletter would provide a convenient vehicle for periodically distributing a local membership directory, electronic newsletter distribution makes it especially easy for mistaken distribution to lapsed members or non-members, potentially violating the privacy rights of members. Caution should be given to distributing rosters with the group newsletter, and a disclaimer should be distributed in the developmental stages of such a work to ensure that individual members' privacy needs are maintained and to give members the opportunity to update their PDQ with any changed to email addresses or other contact information.

Remember: when publishing a roster or membership directory, a Local Group must honor member preferences for data suppression and publication, as filed with AML. Members who have requested that their information be withheld should be given the opportunity to "opt in" and have their contact information included. Members under 18 cannot be included without the permission of a parent.

Groups may choose to recommend use of American Mensa's online directory (www.us.mensa.org/ directory), updated daily; store the directory behind a secure area online; or provide the directories on-request.

Publications Officer / Editor

If your group is a small one, the Publications Officer will likely be the same person as the Newsletter Editor. In larger groups, the Publications Officer acts as a manager or publisher while the Editor pulls together the newsletter proper. A good editor is essential for local membership growth. It is a demanding job and requires a number of skills. Therefore, most groups appoint an Editor rather than elect one. The Editor's duties and responsibilities are manifold. Briefly stated, the Editor is responsible to the governing body of the

Local Group, usually the ExComm. The ExComm is the publisher and responsible to the local membership for content. It is extremely important to establish the relationship between Editor and ExComm. Develop a clear written policy. This policy should spell out, in detail, what is the Editor's prerogative and what the ExComm determines. A clear dividing line often eliminates disagreement and conflict.

Electronic Newsletters

Many Local Groups are now providing their members with the option of receiving an electronic version of the newsletter instead of a paper copy. In order to receive the newsletter electronically, the member needs to change their PDQ to reflect this choice. In addition to saving the group the expense of printing and mailing the newsletter, this choice is frequently touted as being better for the environment. Some groups will provide a larger, enhanced version of the newsletter electronically and will frequently include color photographs on the electronic version. Please note, that even though they receive the newsletter electronically, the group may be required to send the issue containing the ballot by mail. Check your Local Group bylaws for your balloting requirements.

Good distribution mechanisms for electronic newsletters include e-lists, upload to the National Web site (www.us.mensa.org/newsletters), and email if the BCC field is used for distribution to prevent distribution of email addresses outside of privacy releases. Consult with the National Office regarding these options.

Editorial Policy

A National Publications Committee, composed of newsletter editors and LocSecs, has put together a set of editorial guidelines for use by Local Groups. These guidelines are offered to help Local Groups and their editors consider such legal and organizational principles as may bear upon their decision making. These guidelines should be adapted to suit the individual group. It is highly recommended that the Local Group set a standard for its newsletter to guide the editor in decisions, to define the relationship between the governing body and the editor and to avert disagreements.

Legal Matters

Although libel is covered in detail in a special section of the Editor's Handbook, AML's legal counsel added the following information to the model policy for editors to consider: Libel (or defamation) is not the only kind of lawsuit that might be brought against a newsletter in connection with a published story. Other actions include (but are not limited to) infliction of emotional distress, invasion of privacy and injury to property. A

typical emotional distress claim would allege that a published story, letter, or art piece was so extreme or outrageous that it caused the plaintiff severe emotional distress. Rev. Jerry Falwell won such a claim against "Hustler" magazine's publisher for an advertisement parody. There are at least four forms of invasion of privacy:

1. Unreasonable intrusion upon the plaintiff's seclusion, or solitude, or into his private affairs;
2. Public disclosure of true, embarrassing private facts about the plaintiff;
3. Publicity that places the plaintiff in a false light in the public eye; and
4. Appropriation of plaintiff's name or likeness for commercial purposes.

Letters to the editor are just as much fodder for lawsuits against a newsletter as are the stories it publishes. It all depends on such factors as whether the editor knew, or should have known, for instance, that the letter he or she published contained injurious falsehoods.

There is no First Amendment protection from in-house decisions not to publish; the First Amendment applies only to government action. "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging freedom of speech, or of the press . . ." ("Congress" has been expanded to include state legislatures.) The First Amendment applies to libel, invasions of privacy and similar lawsuits only to the limited extent that the courts will allow newspapers a certain degree of protection based on the public policy that the First Amendment represents. The First Amendment does not apply between editors and writers, or editors and publishers. Never make a decision to publish based on your expectation that you'll win the case in court. The cost of proving, for instance, that allegedly libelous statements were, in fact, true can be catastrophic on two levels. First of all, if you are not insured, the cost of mounting a legal defense can easily reach six figures. If you are insured, the insurer who defends you may refuse to sell you insurance in the future, cancel your policy outright, or raise the premium and deductible to the point where you can no longer afford insurance. No organization can stay in business without such insurance. In short, editorial decisions made in anticipation of putting on a good defense could leave you having won the battle but losing the war.

Other Local Publications

Membership Handbook

This is often an extension of the Local Group roster. Such a booklet outlines the basics of being a member of your Local Group. It will often include a list of commonly used local acronyms. It is good to get a copy of what new members are sent when they join so you do not duplicate what will be sent by National Office. It should provide details about commonly held functions, information about the ExComm members, how to run for office, etc. Many chapters maintain a new member's handbook that is distributed to new members. These handbooks are useful to supplement a new member's knowledge of Mensa both at a national and local level. Some of the information may also be on a chapter's Web site on the Internet. Information or items you may want to consider in a new member handbook or package might include:

- A list of chapter contacts;
- Photos of officers or just people at group events with full names;
- An idea of what kind of events goes on in the chapter; in particular, annual events;
- Information on how to get your own event published in the newsletter as well as a brief description of how to plan the event;
- Possible discount coupons towards a new member's first attendance at an event where a fee is collected;
- A list of common Mensa terms and acronyms (national and local);
- A list of local chapter groups or Special Interest Groups (SIGs), if applicable;
- Interesting information about Mensa at a national level or about nearby local chapters;
- Regional Gatherings (RGs);
- Mensa Education & Research Foundation;
- How to get a copy of the chapter's by-laws, or information on when the chapter's executive committee meets and is elected;
- Information on local chapter dues, if applicable;
- Gifted Children resources;
- Ombudsman resources;
- Information on how to subscribe to the electronic newsletter; and
- Information on any Local Group online forums and how to subscribe.

Area Coordinator Handbook

If the Local Group's area is widespread it may be necessary to form subgroups to ensure a diversity of programs and to reduce travel distances. To get started, one person must take the initiative and

arrange for vehicles for communication in their area as well as luncheons in restaurants or for informal get-togethers at home. Eventually, other members will sponsor additional events. If several such groups exist, appoint an Area Coordinator Chair. That person provides liaison with the ExComm, searches for proctors in the subgroup to administer tests and arranges for the Membership Officer to appoint area representatives. Area Coordinators are included in the Mensa Directory published semi-annually in the Bulletin. To be included, the name of the coordinator and of the area (or subgroup) covered must be provided by the LocSecs. Please refer to AML's Area Coordinator Handbook for more detailed information on Area Coordinators.

Local Group Web Site

Many groups have sponsored a Web site to aid in promoting their activities and enhancing communications. Care should be given to stay within the boundaries of what is allowable by law and society. Each group with a Web site must have a web contact. This person may or may not be the Webmaster for the group, but serves as the primary contact between the National Office and the local web presence. Also, the web contact should keep in mind that not all Local Group members have Internet access. Consider those members who may want the posted information, but who are unable to access the Internet by offering printed content as often as necessary or appropriate.

Many groups have established Web sites that have recruitment information. Don't overlook this valuable resource. If someone from your group develops such a site be sure to have it connected to the American Mensa, Ltd. Web site. There are instructions posted on the site to aid in linking your group's site. Please make sure that all of the information on your Web site is up-to-date with correct fees, contact information and National Office address and email information.

Hosting

Local Group Web sites can be hosting on AML's server or may be hosted on a private server. AML hosts more than 100 Local Group Web sites and assists with troubleshooting, setting up and maintaining those sites. While AML offers this service free to Local Groups and provides adequate space, they do not provide a complete range of services and do not have the 24/7 staff of an ISP. On the other hand, outside servers may cost the Local Group money, may not have support staff that understands Mensans' unique needs and, if the server is owned by the current Webmaster, there may be problems should that Webmaster choose to discontinue in that position.

Your Webmaster should consult with the National Office before any decision as to the hosting of a local Web site is made.

Calendar

Most groups that have a Local Group Web site include their calendar, either in part or wholly, on the Web site. Care needs to be taken that private parties are not listed except in the "members only" area. Frequently, the public calendar will state dinner at Bill's and members know who Bill is or can access the protected area for more details. Should you hold a public meeting in a public place and the public is invited, you may want to include more details and a way to contact someone for additional information on the event.

Security

We need to be aware of security issues relating to use of the Internet and protecting the privacy of our officers and members. AML Web Services offers email aliases for officers. These aliases are published to the public in various ways so that they may contact the Local Group. An example is:
LocSec@LOCALGROUP.us.mensa.org. Any email

received will be forwarded to your personal email account.

Any personal information that is placed on your Local Group's Web site needs to be placed in the protected area. Information to be protected includes membership rosters. Conversely, officers should be easy to contact and should list both a phone number and email address, if possible, in the "members only" section.

Online Communities

In addition to AML's online Community, many Local Groups have established their own online communications forums. Some groups use Yahoo! or Facebook groups. It is up to the Local Group to set the parameters of the group and to maintain control over the group, typically by vesting authority to an administrator. When crafting their policies, Local Groups are welcome to borrow freely from the Guidelines for Administrators of Internet Communication Services Supporting Functions of the National Organization. It is strongly recommended that this policy be included with the description of the group on the site.

Public Relations

Ideas for Generating Publicity

Good local publicity is beneficial in many aspects. It increases pride of membership to your local members and also increases membership inquiries from potential members.

Here are several possibilities for increasing public awareness of your group:

- Invite the local media to local events.
 - Place posters in colleges, universities and libraries. Many city libraries have a centralized distribution system that obviates the need for individual deliveries. Leave or mail brochures and Mensa bookmarks in bulk to school counselors, school psychologists and libraries for distribution.
 - Provide the public library's reference department with the group's name, telephone number and address.
 - Consider free newsletter subscriptions for some libraries or subsidize the cost of a copy of the Mensa Research Journal.
 - Try to obtain names of scholarship recipients such as high school seniors who receive National Merit Scholarship Awards and write to them.
 - Booths at fairs, festivals and gaming conventions present an excellent opportunity for the distribution of brochures and Mini-Tests.
 - Persuade local members to carry brochures with them wherever they go and to keep some in their car.
 - Target recruiting efforts to specific groups. Write to personnel directors of large companies or to editors of company house organs. Tell them about Mensa, what it has to offer and enclose a brochure.
 - Develop an extensive mailing list of radio and television stations, daily and weekly newspapers and college and university publications in your area for submitting articles and press releases.
 - Be honest and straightforward when dealing with the media. Make it known that you are interested in recruiting members and that you want to give the media help for an interesting story. Take the initiative rather than waiting for the media to contact you.
- To reduce the possibility of error, give the media as much information in writing as possible and include the Mensa brochure. Add a fact sheet on the Local Group itself and perhaps a question-and-answer sheet that presents the most interesting facts about national and local Mensa. Radio and television talk shows are usually receptive to having Mensans as guests. Offer yourself and/or several of your most active and articulate members to the media for such shows. Public call-in shows are particularly well suited to this purpose.
 - Get involved in local public broadcasting fund-raisers every year. This type of participation gives exposure and also, perhaps, an "in" with the station for possible appearance on other shows.
 - Radio and television stations are required to allot a certain amount of airtime for public service spots. It is likely that the stations will use your materials.
 - If a favorable story about Mensa appears in a national publication, photocopy it and send it to city editors of local newspapers and producers of radio and television talk shows. Include a memo, saying that readers/listener/viewers may be interested in knowing that there is a local Mensa chapter and suggest setting up an interview or an appearance.
 - Send news releases about your new members and newly elected officers to neighborhood papers in their areas, to house organs of the companies they work for, alumni magazines and even religious publications-but only with the new member's permission. Please confirm with the member/officer that you may release their name to the press.

The most important point to stress in any publicity or interview is what a fascinating thing Mensa can be. Mensa presents opportunities to meet people from all lifestyles and to share thoughts and ideas with persons one might otherwise never meet.

National Office Resources

The National Office is a treasure trove of public relations ideas and materials. They can provide your Local Group with the National Media Kit, which you should review and keep on hand, as well as additional

public relations materials. Should your Local Group want to staff a booth at a show or event, the National Office can help you with ideas and materials to have a professional booth which will reflect well on both your Local Group and AML. All you need to do is ask and the National Office staff will let you know what is available. Either the PR Coordinator or you should contact the National Office as early as possible so that there is enough time to prepare properly. Order bookmarks and posters well before they are needed to decrease the cost of shipping.

Press Releases

Press releases should be issued whenever your Local Group has a testing session scheduled and especially for Mensa Testing Day. The National Media Kit has instructions for creating press releases as well as a list of media outlets in your geographic area.

Press releases can also be used to "toot your horn" before or after an event, especially an event that benefited the public. Mensans participate in many community-centered events, such as food drives, literacy training, science fair, etc. On a "slow" news day and with advance notice, some papers or even television stations will send out a photographer and reporter. It is always a good idea for the organizer of the event to be familiar with the Media Kit in the event a reporter is present.

Preparing for an Interview

Each time you communicate with the media, you should have no more than two to three key messages. Contact information should always be one of your key messages. If you do not want to print contact information for your Local Group, use the national contact information, 800/66-MENSA and www.us.mensa.org.

When you decide on your messages, commit them to memory and make sure they are mentioned every time you communicate with the media. Your mission is to make sure that if the reporter remembers nothing else, he or she remembers your key messages.

Here are a few things to keep in mind when you're doing an interview with the media:

- Answer the question asked, then stop. Silence is ok.
- Try to weave your answers around the key messages.

- Don't repeat negative words. (Ex: If asked if Mensa is elitist, respond with "Mensa has a wide variety of members from all walks of life" instead of repeating the negative word "elitist" in your answer.)
- Remember the privacy of other Mensa members. If asked to give contact info. or a recommendation for others to interview, please refer back to staff for that information.
- Reporters have a job to do and so do you. Always be friendly, but remember their intention is not for you to be friends. Nothing is ever off the record.
- Remember that whatever you say could be perceived as being the opinion of all Mensans, not just your opinion.
- You don't have to answer questions that you consider to be too personal. (ex: What's your IQ?)
- If you don't know the answer to something, it's okay to tell the reporter that. Feel free to refer them back to the National Office.

Web Site Recruitment

Many groups have established Web sites that have recruitment information. Don't overlook this valuable resource; it is particularly helpful in recruiting younger members. If someone from your group develops such a site be sure to have it connected to the American Mensa, Ltd. Web site. There are instructions posted on the site to aid in linking your group's site. Please make sure that all of the information on your Web site is up-to-date with correct fees, contact information and National Office address and email information. If you cannot keep your Web site completely up-to-date, hot links to the AML Web site are probably better.

There are other means of recruitment available on the Internet. Some groups have begun listing testing sessions and public meetings on Craig's List and other listing services.

AML's Crisis Communication Team

A crisis is any situation where there may be widespread negative media coverage of Mensa, legal ramifications, or financial exposure for AML or any of its Local Groups. In the event that there is a crisis of any sort during a local, regional or national event please contact the National Office as soon as you are aware of the situation. A crisis could be a sudden event, such as a natural disaster affecting a hotel where a Mensa event is being held. A crisis could also be against the reputation of Mensa, such as a member

telling the media that he/she cheated on the entrance exam. In a sudden crisis situation, please work with local officials to secure the safety of Mensa members and their guests.

As soon as feasible, contact the National Office where the situation will be reviewed and the Crisis Communication Team may be activated. This team includes AMC members and staff. After contacting the National Office, please refrain from speaking with

members of the media until you receive further instructions. The Crisis Communication Team will provide accurate information to your local media as confirmed and appropriate. If the National Office is not open at the time of your crisis, AMC members are the ones to call. In this case, the region's RVC will be the first point of contact, the next will be the Development Officer, though all AMC members should have contact information for the Crisis Communications Team.

Calendars and Timelines

AML's Officer Timeline

The National Office provides the Local Group Officer Timeline in three-month increments, updated monthly. This timeline includes all deadlines for the next few months such as monthly mailing dates, funding dates, and address change deadlines. Also included is information relating to special mailings and miscellaneous items of interest such as office closing times for holidays and upcoming events. This timeline will include information from the Mensa Foundation. Frequently, testing specials and recruitment efforts will be detailed in the timeline. Access it online at www.us.mensa.org/timeline.

Local Group Planning Calendar

One of the main functions of the LocSec is to organize the group and keep it moving ahead. A tool many groups use is a simple planning calendar. List major events for your group and count backward to assure all deadlines will be met. A calendar of this sort will need to be updated on occasion as new events are added or older ones revamped. This is a useful planning tool that will help the LocSec stay on top of this multi-faceted job. An example is printed here for a fictitious group planning an RG in the fall.

Sample Planning Calendar

January

- Stress early renewals
- RSVP for winter brunch due

February

- Winter brunch
- NomCom selections due
- Remind members to renew

March

- Membership Renewal

- Line up teams for CultureQuest
- Campaign statements to editor

April

- Elections (Ballots printed)
- CultureQuest
- Get update from RG chair

May

- New officers

June

- Contact lapsed members
- Remind members of AG
- Get update from RG chair

July

- AG
- Recruit volunteers for pledge drive

August

- Public TV pledge drive
- Get update from RG chair

September

- Finalize all RG plans
- Publicize RG
- Begin promotions for Mensa Testing Day

October

- RG
- Mensa Testing Day

November

- Thanksgiving Open House w/ RSVP
- Post-RG volunteer party

December

- New Year's party
- Select new NomCom

National Office Services & Resources

National Office Contact Information

National Office staff members can be reached at 888/294-8035 or via email. To determine which staff member should be contacted regarding a specific issue, please review the National Office Staff list provided under the contacts tab of AML's web site. The Group Services Manager (LocalGroups@americanmensa.org) is usually a good place to start if you are unsure of who to contact.

Monthly Mailings

The National Office sends out a monthly mailing to several Local Group officers each month. The contents of the mailing may vary month to month. These mailings include lists and labels for prospects and candidates for membership along with listings of individuals who have recently joined, rejoined or moved into the local area. Questions regarding the distribution of monthly reports should be directed to the Group Services Manager at the National Office. Questions regarding content or formatting of monthly reports should be directed to the Systems Coordinator at the National Office. The majority of reports are available via email. Detailed information about reports can be obtained from the Inside AML Web site. The monthly mailing is usually assembled and mailed out between the 6th and the 9th of the month. However, this schedule varies from month to month, depending on how dates fall in the month and depending on other, last-minute events. The LocSec is the only person that can request which monthly material goes to which officer in his/her Local Group.

Inside AML/Officer Resources

The AML Web site contains many valuable resources to you. The Web site contains the "nuts and bolts" of being a volunteer. You will find information relating to the AMC, financial information, handbooks, policy documents and much more. *InterLoc*, the quarterly publication for officers and interested Mensans, is posted on the Web site. You can read and search back copies of the *Bulletin* and the complete *Mensa World*, and many other group's newsletters.

The Online Learning section contains a ready-to-use presentation called "Getting People Involved" which is a great discussion starter on how to find more members and volunteers for your Local Group. In Handbooks, the Leadership Retreat Guide is a

complete "how-to" template to plan your own officers' retreat, which can focus an enthusiastic ExComm or revitalize a stagnant group. There are handbooks such as this for many Local Group officers, and you can read or skim them to familiarize yourself with the best-practices for each. You will find information on how to get certified as a proctor or for food safety and the Mensa Name and Logo Guide. The Gatherings Handbook has tips and tricks for doing Mensa events of all sizes.

Inside AML also has the agenda for the next AMC meeting, minutes from previous meetings, and the Job Descriptions and reports from national officers, appointees, and committees. You will find electronic copies of most of the forms you will need and guides to how to use them. You can find contact information for the officers of all the other Local Groups and national officers. There are also links to Mensa International, from which you can access the forty-some other National Mensas.

LocSecs' Online Group

As a LocSec you may participate on the online AML Community through the Officers' ShareHouse. Past and present LocSecs are welcome to participate in this forum and share ideas and problem-solving techniques. Contact AML's Group Services Manager for details about signing up for this valuable program. This is a great resource for new LocSecs. The current and former LocSecs that subscribe to this elist are there to provide assistance, guidance and suggestions for new LocSecs. They also subscribe in order to have a readily available source of expertise for when they need help. There are also elists for most other officers. You should encourage your Local Group officers to join the appropriate elist.

AML Today

This newsletter is prepared on a monthly basis and emailed to all officers. *AML Today* contains a variety of informational topics of interest to officers. Some of the articles discuss renewals, testing incentives and AML statistics.

InterLoc

InterLoc is a publication for officers and other interested members. It is published as a part of the

Mensa Bulletin and contains articles relating to the operation of Mensa on the local, regional and national level.

Regional Vice Chairman

One of your RVC's duties is to act as a liaison between the Local Group and the AMC. The RVC has typically been involved with Mensa for a number of years and can advise you on national programs and policies. If unable to provide you with the requested information, the RVC will be able to refer you to the appropriate person either at the National Office or another appointed/elected Mensa officer.

International Journal

The Mensa *International Journal* is the membership magazine for Mensa International, Ltd., and is produced under the auspices of the Mensa International Board of Directors. The *International Journal* consists of two parts — a four-page *IJ* basic section and a four-page *IJ Extra*, containing additional articles and advertisements of interest to members worldwide. The basic section carries news from International Mensa and appears in national Mensa magazines 10 months per year. The *International Journal* is available online at www.us.mensa.org/IJ.

Local Programming

Some individuals join Mensa just for the pleasure of holding a Mensa card. Some join so they can attend regional or annual gatherings. Others join to be part of the national SIGs. However, many people seek out Mensa as a social group and look forward to interacting with others who can "follow the conversation." To this end local chapters usually have a variety of activities to offer members.

Active groups hold roughly one monthly activity for each 25 members on the roster. Many groups have one major meeting or program per month with other, more specialized ones to supplement. It is good to schedule recurring events — first Friday, third Tuesday — so people can plan their calendars. It should be made clear that family members, significant others and accompanied guests are welcome. Keep in mind not all events are suitable for children. With any Mensa function, the host is responsible for determining the rules of conduct. The LocSec, ExComm, or Program Chair may be the designee to determine any limitations above and beyond those set by the site (smoking, drinking, offensive behavior, etc.). Some newsletter calendars offer codes with their listings to give clues to the members (smoking outside, children welcome, BYO, wheelchair accessible, etc.)

Business Meetings

It is required that every Local Group must hold a business meeting at least quarterly. This meeting must be open to all members of the local chapter at which the chapter's business is discussed and enacted. In some chapters, each month there is a business meeting open to all members. Generally it has proven unwise to pair a business meeting with a party or speaker's meeting, though some chapters have been successful by timing one to follow the other. If you do, you should end in time to greet new members.

Speaker Meetings

Many groups hold monthly speaker meetings in a central location. This is often the function that draws the most prospective members, especially since many members and prospects look to Mensa for intellectual stimulation. Some chapters are lucky enough to have a member offer the use of his/her home for the meeting; others rely on public sites or meeting halls that require room rent. Some chapters have large financial resources and can treat the chapter to these meetings; others rely on donations at the door to cover

the cost of the site and whatever refreshments are provided. For ideas of topics or speakers, some chapters have a single Program Chair; others use a Program Committee. Occasional polls of the membership will yield ideas and contacts, as well as helping the members feel they are contributing to the chapter's well being. Members often make the best speakers.

Area Based Activities

In chapters covering a wide geographic region, it may be practical to offer activities in outlying regions in addition to centrally located meetings. Sometimes this is done through SIG activities, but it may also be orchestrated through Area Coordinators. It is important to look for Area Coordinators who are basically responsible and who can inspire other members to become active. Another approach used in some chapters is the zip code party. For this, designated Subgroup/Area Coordinators use the monthly membership roster to organize parties for their neighbors in Mensa. The Coordinator encourages members with a generous spirit to hold parties in their homes. The Coordinator has postcards printed and mails them to members who live near the host. Generally an RSVP is required, but may not be required based upon the host's wishes. The function may either be subsidized by minor contributions, or they may be BYO (bring your own) or pot luck.

New Member Parties

These may be regular meetings, with or without speakers, at which some fuss is made over new members. Some chapters have special functions to honor their new members, pairing, for example, a restaurant meeting with a presentation by officers and SIG leaders to give the new folks a quick overview of what the Local Group has to offer. Name tags, icebreakers and formal introductions may help people get their bearings. In addition, special efforts may be required to get the new members to come out to their first function. Sometimes, people who have joined within the last six months or year are phoned by officers or volunteers to get them to make the bold move to show their faces. The purpose of the get-together is to encourage new Ms to come to future functions and also to learn what they have to contribute to the group.

Local Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

Members with common interests or hobbies band together to form SIGs on a local level. Local SIGs can be informally run or can be set up more structured. For some members, such SIGs fulfill their primary purpose for joining Mensa. Local SIGs are generally small and meet in members' homes or at an establishment related to the common interests. Once started, a SIG will keep a percentage of the membership active and interested with little or no effort by Local Group officers. Local SIGs may have newsletters of their own or may contribute regularly to the Local Group newsletter or may be an online community. Some SIGs are based on shared professional interests, others on specific games or political points of view. In some chapters a board member, typically the Program Coordinator, has responsibility for coordinating and encouraging local SIGs. This provides a contact for those who want to start a local SIG and don't know how.

The general rules are that the SIG Coordinator must make every effort to attend all SIG functions and to be identified in the local newsletter as the contact. The financial activities and liabilities of SIGs may be on their own, separate from those of the chapter. Lists of Local Group members who share specific interests are available from the National Office. Other groups function in a similar manner by simply placing regular activities in the general group newsletter.

Gifted Children/Young Mensans

Mensans, having been gifted children themselves, take interest in the future of gifted children and gifted children programs. Some of our members are under the age of eighteen themselves. The National Gifted Children Program Coordinator serves as a focal point. Local Groups, too, often appoint such a coordinator, some of whom meet periodically with area school boards. Some coordinators set up mentor programs within the Local Group to stimulate gifted children by the expertise of interested adults in various professions and hobbies. Museum trips and other cultural/educational activities can be set up to provide events appreciated by the children. Casual events such as picnics or kite flying are great fun as well. Upon request, the National Office may provide lists and labels of members under 18 years of age. These lists are segmented by age "range," e.g. 3-7, 8-12.

Some groups make special efforts to provide activities for young Mensans through a Young Mensan Coordinator who will arrange for activities and who could eventually, turn over the leadership to one of the

young Mensans. Keep the cost of such activities low. Focusing on whole-family activities, as opposed to "drop off" activities, overcomes both legal and transportation problems, and is strongly encouraged. This group requires a lot of help, usually from motivated parents who derive support from banding together.

Given their geographic diversity, the young Ms may meet only for special events. Outdoor activities like bicycle trips, picnics and hikes are ideal. Other suggestions include museum, zoo, sightseeing trips, IMAX outings, laser tag, etc. When geography permits, group projects may be undertaken, either helping the community or studying the esoteric together. Honor classes and schools for the gifted provide a ready source of potential members for this group.

One often-neglected aspect of the GCC's role is to be the conduit of information to your young members and their parents and grandparents. Every state has a Gifted Children Association which you can find by visiting the NAGC (National Association for Gifted Children) Web site. Your coordinator should join your state organization; many groups pay for the membership. By doing this the GCC will learn of speakers coming to your area, scholarship opportunities, good books, gifted summer programs, where to get children tested, which schools have gifted programs, and more. Sharing these via a regular newsletter column reaches your entire membership. Although we would not think so from gatherings, the "average" Mensan is married with children.

In addition to a YM Coordinator, some groups have opened up leadership to younger members and have Teen SIGs on the local level as well as the national SIG. While these young members are frequently mature, care must be taken that they have the appropriate adult supervision.

Online Activities

While older members usually make friends in person and then follow up by phone or email, younger members may prefer to "check the group out," or even primarily participate, via electronic vehicles. Elists, forums and chat rooms are as legitimate a program of your Local Group as any other. If you are unsure how to get these going, ask the younger members to set it up and administer the group. This has the added benefit of getting them involved as volunteers.

Program Tips

Mensa is a social organization and even in those groups with a planned monthly speaker's meeting, it is generally the case that there is some rotation with discussion groups, regular dinner events, special events and holiday theme parties. The main idea is to have something that binds the group as much as possible on a regular and predictable basis. Some examples of special functions are costume parties, games nights, panel discussions, new member parties, old-timers night, etc. Other ideas include dinner meetings, TGIFs or FACs (Thank Goodness it's Friday or Friday Afternoon Club), zip code parties, open houses and lunch bunches to name a few. Some groups attend movies or plays together. Have one member reserve a block of seats and all meet for dinner beforehand. Arranging special tours of museums, galleries, libraries, industrial plants and other places of interests requires little effort.

Invite members of the media to speak. They are usually "glamour" figures that draw good audiences and perhaps generate publicity. Overall, try to balance programs among speaker meetings, open houses, game nights, parties, dinners, discussion programs and family activities like picnics, field trips, or movies. Make it clear that family members are always welcome. If the Local Group's membership is scattered over a wide area, consider breaking into subgroups, each holding its own meeting. Well-received programs could then be repeated in a different area.

Read other groups' newsletters for program ideas and check for results. Use *InterLoc* as a medium for information. Share your successes. Contact the public affairs department of local newspapers, radio stations, television stations, utilities, large companies, etc. for speakers. There are usually free services. Survey local members for their contact with potential speakers. Try to place such members into the Program Committee. Prepare and update a potential speaker listing. Get members to talk about their professions, experiences and hobbies. Payment for speakers should rarely be necessary, although there are no national rules against paying speakers. Places to check for speakers include universities, hospitals, medical centers and local media. Universities usually have a speaker's bureau. If not, check with individual departments. Such speakers rarely charge a fee. Chambers of Commerce issue directories of local organizations. Have your Mensa group listed and local organizations that have speakers' bureaus might approach you for speakers. The monthly meeting place should be centrally located. In a large city, you might make use of the local press club. This will also lend prestige to the activity. Give plenty of notice of speaker meetings and print a review of the program so those members not attending may be enticed to participate.

A growing awareness of the needs of the physically challenged has led some groups to note in their activity calendars whether an event location is accessible for all members. As many people suffer from allergies, you may also want to note on the calendar whether smoking is permitted or whether pets will be present.

National and Regional Programs

The diverse nature of Mensa groups offers a special challenge to develop a variety of interesting programs and opportunities for interaction between members. So far, no one has struck upon a golden formula for meetings that will consistently stimulate members to participate, but Mensa is not unlike other clubs that do not require attendance, in that regard. Variety and quality are both important features, but routine events draw people in for the long term. In this section, you will find a smattering of ideas that seem to work well for many groups. Many of these activities, awards and special programs have applications or forms that you may obtain from the National Office or by downloading from the AML Web site at us.mensa.org.

SIGHT

SIGHT's purpose is for Mensa volunteers to assist other Mensans who are traveling. The scope of the services offered ranges from short-term accommodations (two to three days is usually the maximum) to providing information on local Mensa activities and local attractions. Send names of prospective Local SIGHT Coordinators to the national SIGHT Coordinator, who will then conduct a mail interview, giving the prospective coordinator some insight into the operation. The National SIGHT Coordinator appoints the Local Coordinators. All contacts between prospective guests and local hosts go through the local SIGHT coordinators. The primary focus of SIGHT is toward the traveling Mensan who wants to meet other Mensans. This may involve lodging with a Mensan host. However, SIGHT is neither a travel agency nor a locator of "crash pads" for freeloaders.

A SIGHT guest should compensate coordinators and hosts for out-of-pocket expenses. If a group does not have a SIGHT Coordinator, the LocSec may try to field inquiries, but getting more members involved as volunteers is always better. SIGHT can only be successful through volunteer work. It has been the practice to assign this position to the LocSec if no one is specifically appointed, since the LocSec assumes all vacancies in national databases. This appointment then stays with the person and not the position — so if a person leaves the office of LocSec, they would still be SIGHT Coordinator unless they notify the National Office to change to the new LocSec. A SIGHT coordinator must be conscientious about replying promptly to all inquiries and helping visitors with all reasonable and timely requests. To find SIGHT hosts, publish periodic requests and questionnaires in the

Local Group newsletter. Many Mensans want to meet other Mensans and often the hosts make new friends that way.

SIGHT can give you the inside track on local sightseeing and the best restaurants. If socializing is what you're after, SIGHT will also put you in touch with your fellow Mensans and their local activities. If you're planning a trip across the country or overseas, SIGHT is here to help you coordinate it. SIGHT's purpose is for volunteer hosts to assist traveling Mensans with lodgings, trip planning, transportation and any other service the host feels comfortable offering. As a SIGHT guest you can call upon a SIGHT host in Paris to guide you on the Metro, rest upon a bamboo mat in Thailand, shop for bargains in Hong Kong, or spot penguins in Melbourne. As a SIGHT host you might collect a Russian from the airport, translate for a Spaniard, toss out a rollaway for a Belgian, or show a Hungarian the tourist spots. Interested Mensans need only to fill out a guest form or a volunteer form, then contact the Local, National, or International SIGHT Coordinator.

Gatherings

Many Mensa activities are centered on the idea of meeting new people and trying new things. Gatherings allow the opportunity to participate in a full round of such experiences in a structured setting.

Annual Gatherings

Since their inception in 1964, AGs have occurred annually, usually in early July, and they serve several purposes. First, they provide the time and place for the Annual Business Meeting, at which the AMC reports to the member on the state of the society. Members can bring up any business for discussion, including amendments to the national bylaws or to the international constitution. Secondly, the AG is an opportunity for Local Group officers to meet and exchange ideas formally in the Leadership Development Workshops and informally among themselves. The usual attendance at AGs is now well over 1600. Although there may be a day or two of "early bird" activities, programming starts in earnest on the first full day of the AG with workshops, lectures and meetings. There is usually a session with national officers.

There will be banquets, cocktail parties, dances and award presentations. Hospitality suites, game rooms and special events are ongoing throughout the

weekend. Aside from the Annual Business Meeting, the workshops and some programs, the main emphasis of the AG is social. If your group would be interested in hosting an AG, contact the National Office for a bid packet. Advance planning is imperative as bids are finalized three to four years in advance of the event.

Regional Gatherings

Initially RGs provided an alternative for members who were unable to attend AGs. RGs now abound and the choice is great. Most RGs are similar to the AG, but on a smaller scale. For groups that have never held an RG, much helpful information is available. Please refer to the Gatherings Handbook available online on the Inside AML Web site under Officer Resources/Handbooks. The National Office has a set of guidelines that explains how to bid for an AMC meeting at the RG. An excellent method for publicizing an RG is the free distribution of small ads to all Editors through the National Office's monthly Editor's and/or LocSecs' mailing. A group may take advantage of this service for one RG, one page, front and back, per monthly mailing. You need to provide one camera-ready copy for distribution, to the National Office for the current totals. Information will also appear in the *Mensa Bulletin*, if you fill out the Regional Gathering Approval forms and on the AML Web site.

Leadership Development Workshops (LDWs) and Retreats

Mensa relies on volunteers to survive. Volunteers need training and support to operate effectively. The Leadership Development Program as developed by the AMC is designed to provide an intense weekend of workshops, networking and fellowship. These workshops have been well received by most attendees and are considered to be of high value. If you are interested in hosting or attending a LDW, contact your RVC. The LDW handbook is available on the AML Web site or in hard copy from the National Office.

Putting on a Leadership Development Weekend is not nearly as much work as an RG because most of the people there are active volunteers who will jump in to help. If you offer to host an LDW you will usually find your RVC is happy to partner with you, and since it is in your area, your group will be the major beneficiary. Separate funding is available to sponsor LDWs. Contact your RVC for more information.

A Retreat is a less intensive and more informal session. Retreats are typically a full-day program that focuses on planning and goal setting, which in turn provides a strong foundation for ongoing activities. It is a chance to focus on the big picture outside the more mundane concerns of running the organization. These

are particularly valuable for new groups or those who are rebuilding.

While there is no set format for conducting a retreat such events usually entail having a chosen facilitator moderate discussion. Subjects often include development of a mission statement, goals for the year, membership development, newsletter themes and the like, and information on all these is in the Guide. These can be interspersed with icebreakers, team building or other fun activities. Again, the Retreat Planning Guide is available on the AML Web site or in hard copy from the National Office.

SIGs

Members with common interests or hobbies frequently form SIGs on the national level. There are more than 150 different SIGs in existence. For some members such SIGs fulfill their primary purpose for joining Mensa. The American Mensa Directory, published annually in the *Mensa Bulletin*, shows what an enormous range of interests Mensans have. An active SIG will keep a percentage of the membership active and interested with little or no effort by Local Group officers. National SIGs are in the purview of the SIGs Officer, a volunteer position. Most SIGs operate mainly on the Internet. Some national SIGs publish newsletters and sample copies are usually available for a nominal charge to cover postage. For more information on SIGs, please see the Special Interest Groups section of the AML Web site.

Mind Games[®]

Many Mensans are gamers. Mind Games[®] is an entire weekend dedicated to games. You will be expected to play a variety of games and provide your personal opinions on every aspect of every game you play and your opinions will be passed on to the manufacturer. And then you get the opportunity to take home one or two of your favorite games. Every year, approximately 200 Mensans participate and judge the games and five will be awarded the Mensa Select[®] seal. Past winners include Scattergories[™], Trivial Pursuit[™] and Taboo[™].

CultureQuest[®]

CultureQuest[®] promotes and tests cultural literacy from film to politics, music, literature, history, etc. Every spring, teams from across the US and Canada gather in their neighborhoods and for 90 minutes to compete for cash prizes and cultural literacy bragging rights. In addition you can subscribe to The

CultureQuest[®]-ion of the Day. Further details are available on AML's Web site.

Community Activities Program

For many years, Mensa Local Groups have been working to better their communities; the efforts of many Mensans have gone into these endeavors. Sometimes other members are aware of these efforts. Often they are not. Many times, local chapters undertake the program, without the knowledge of similar projects that have gone on elsewhere. Some members who do not typically come to social events will participate in community activities..

CAP identifies those activities that local members and local chapters have undertaken to improve their community. Specific efforts of the program will be to encourage Local Groups to assist their communities in areas most frequently identified with Mensa. These include programs such as primary and secondary education program support, gifted children programs, literacy programs and library support programs. Other programs Local Groups may be interested in pursuing in their community are educational radio and television, Olympics of the Minds, Future Problem Solvers, Science Olympiad and career day programs for students.

Local Groups will be requested to provide some information on how they accomplished their successes so that other chapters may share in the knowledge and not repeat the learning process. At the Annual Gathering, Local Groups will be recognized for their successful community involvement achievements. Award categories are for educational programs, for gifted children programs, for community service programs and young Mensa programs. Refer to the Community Service section of AML's Web site.

Mensa World Connect

Mensa World Connect is a worldwide program that pairs cities/groups around the world with "sister" cities/groups that would enjoy and possibly benefit from, the connection. These connections ideally will create greater awareness of the global nature of Mensa. Members of paired chapters could share experiences, wisdom, ideas, information, newsletters and possibly even visit one another. The program's benefits are limited only by the interest and imaginations of the participants. Matches could be made based on size of chapters, hobbies of members, similar names or physical features, parallel industries, or places members want to visit.

In the U.S., participating chapters might pick a country or city from which the first settler in their town derived, or the old city for which the "New whatever" was named. Each group can decide what sorts of connections they'd like and why. Participating chapters are not limited to just one sister chapter relationship. One of the first connections was Atlanta and Barcelona, because both have hosted Olympic Games. The two groups hope to connect with other Olympic-site Mensa groups, so quite a network could form. Additionally, the Atlanta-based chapter has another sister chapter relationship with Mensa Bulgaria. The program is designed to connect only chapters, not individuals (for that try SIGHT). Interested parties talk to their Local Group leadership and get them involved. The requests for chapter pairings must be made through the chapter LocSec in coordination with the national program coordinator. The coordinator facilitates and finalizes the pairing, then advises the international program coordinator.

Research Review

AML is supportive of research that furthers the understanding of giftedness and related areas. Mensa's membership may be an important resource to scholars and researchers in these areas. However, AML also respects its members' wishes regarding privacy and will not involve members in any research of dubious quality. Research review guidelines have been developed to permit these scholars and researchers to utilize our members and/or Mensa's database for research. Anyone who asks to use Mensa members as research subjects should be referred to the national Research Review Committee Chair. Please note that this does not mean you cannot survey your own members, but applies to all scholarly research, even if the researcher is a member.

Publications Recognition Program (PRP)

The PRP exists to confer awards upon Local Groups and members of AML for their official print and electronic publications and contributions thereto. It is a voluntary program that allows a Local Group with any level of editorial experience, regardless of group size or publication budget, to compete and win awards. The primary purposes of the PRP are to challenge and inspire Local Groups to produce publications and Web pages that are well-written, well-designed, informative and entertaining and serve as appealing and available forums for their members; challenge and inspire Local Group members to contribute to these forums; and recognize and reward Local Groups, editors,

Webmasters and contributors for these accomplishments.

Local Group Owls

The Owl Awards are designed to recognize Local Groups that display outstanding effort in the areas of membership growth and retention. The Innovative Owl award is presented to the group that demonstrates the highest membership retention compared to the prior year. The group demonstrating the highest percentage of membership growth is awarded the Prolific Owl award. These awards are presented annually at the AG.

Group of the Year Award (GOTYa)

GOTYa is designed to recognize and reward Local Groups' membership-related activities. It seeks to reward Local Groups for participation in all that Mensa has to offer. Accordingly, the GOTYa program awards points for participation in Mensa. Points will be earned for a variety of activities and accomplishments, such as participation in CultureQuest®, MindGames, the Community Activities Program, attending an LDW, hosting an AMC meeting, RG or AG and holding proctored testing, to name a few. It is a voluntary, competitive program open to all Local Groups.

Under the program, it is possible for Local Groups with any level of group tenure, group size, or geographic locations to win an award. The primary purposes of the GOTYa program are to: recognize and reward Local Groups for their accomplishments in fostering participation; challenge and inspire LocSecs and

ExComms, Local Membership Officers, Editors, Proctors, RG chairs and members in general to behave in ways that serve their local membership; and to encourage activities that promote positive, fun and intellectual experiences for our members, with an eye toward fostering healthy Local Groups and resulting in recruitment and retention of members. It is the intention of the GOTYa program that deserving Local Groups achieve recognition among other Local Groups and at the national level and by doing so, achieve wider acclaim and greater notoriety among Mensans and the general public.

Abbie and Salny Proctor Awards

Awards are given annually to recognize exceptional proctors and proctor or testing coordinators. Nominations usually come from the Local Group. Watch the Bulletin and AML Today for more information.

Gifted Children Coordinator and Group Awards

Each year the national Gifted Children Committee solicits candidates to recognize outstanding GCCs and Programs. Since most awards are given out at the AG, the nominations are usually due in the winter. There are also sometimes small awards available to groups to implement specific ideas. Contact the national GCC for more information about criteria and deadlines.

Mensa Education & Research Foundation

The Mensa Education & Research Foundation (the Foundation) is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. The Foundation is charged with identifying and fostering human intelligence for the benefit of humanity. More information regarding the Foundation is available on its Web site: mensafoundation.org.

Scholarships (National and Local)

A popular volunteer activity for Mensans is the scholarship program. Foundation scholarships, especially if coupled with additional local scholarships, can create much publicity and good will for the Local Group. The Foundation administers this program on the regional and national level and offers assistance for local programs as well. Many groups develop an individual program to suit the needs of their community. The easiest and most practical basis for making awards is to use the same format as the national awards. Consider giving the writers of the first, second and third best essays local awards. One group offers scholarships for summer school camps for gifted and talented children. Alternatively, the Local Group may come up with a new idea that is particularly well suited to local conditions and needs.

Since the number of local scholarship programs are proliferating, the Foundation has adopted protocols that enable Local Groups to establish local scholarships under the Foundation's umbrella, thereby providing tax deductibility for the donors. LocSecs receive scholarship information in early September, along with applications forms. It is a good idea to appoint a local scholarship coordinator to arrange for mailing and submission of the chosen essays to the Regional Scholarship Coordinator for the regional judging. The specific scholarships to be awarded change almost every year. The fall scholarship packet will have details regarding the scholarships offering in the current session. If your group has not been participating, do not assume no one is willing to volunteer. Many if not most scholarship chairs and readers come from members who may not be active in any other way. You might solicit volunteers in your monthly LocSec column to find them.

Awards

The Foundation has several awards programs which have been established to recognize research efforts in identifying and fostering human intelligence. These awards include Awards for Excellence in Research,

the Copper Black Award, Distinguished Teacher Award and the Mensa Press Award in addition to others. The Foundation actively seeks nominations for these awards. Further information regarding Foundation awards is available on the Foundation's Web site.

Mensa Research Journal

The Mensa Research Journal is published a minimum of three times yearly and is centered around a chosen theme impacting giftedness and intelligence. Subscriptions are available to Mensans and nonmembers alike.

Conversations with Mensa

The Foundation furthers its interest in providing education and recognition to people around the world by presenting conversations with experts in various fields. Topics covered include cosmology, ADD, women and creativity and future conversations will continue to be added. These conversations are available on the Foundation's Web site.

Mensa for Kids

The Foundation's award-winning Web site for kids includes educational and challenging games; resources for kids, parents and teachers, including lesson plans and study tips. The Web site can be found at www.MensaForKids.org.

Colloquiums

The Colloquium format provides a forum for serious discussion of a single topic. A Colloquium gives participants — both members and non-members — a unique opportunity to meet some of the country's leading speakers on the chosen topic. One has the unique opportunity to question their views and then to debate and discuss the topic in small groups among themselves. Topics have included "Earth in Mind: Fueling the Future," "Revolution in Cosmology," "Aspects of Humor," and "Weather or Not." Colloquiums occur irregularly, usually at two-year intervals. Colloquiums are developed by a team consisting of a Local Group and the Foundation working together.

Testing Program

Prospective members may qualify for Mensa membership in one of two ways: by submitting prior evidence or by taking the Mensa Admission Test.

Prior Evidence

To qualify for membership, prospective members can submit evidence of scores from prior intelligence testing. Many people find this a quick and easy way to qualify for Mensa membership, as they often qualify on tests they have taken at some point in their lives. All evidence of prior testing will be appraised individually and Mensa reserves the right to make the final determination of the acceptability of the test. AML accepts scores from approximately 200 different standardized intelligence tests. A list of qualifying scores for some of more widely standardized tests are listed on AML's Web site. Contact the National Office for any questions on other tests which may be acceptable. It is good to ask about prior evidence when people contact you asking to be tested as most candidates do not know about joining with prior evidence.

The Testing Process

Each month, many prospective Mensans are tested by our Proctors. The tests are scored at the National Office. An invitation to join Mensa is sent to eligible candidates, if the test scores have met the admission requirements. The testing session actually consists of two tests, and the candidate is qualified for membership if they qualify on either one. Prospects may not take the Mensa Admissions Test more than one time. A culture-free battery of tests is also available for prospects for whom English is not their primary language or who have a physical disability. All of these tests are paper-and-pencil tests and are only valid for candidates aged fourteen and above. Mensa accepts younger members, but does not offer a specific test for them.

The notice sent to prospects should specify the testing fee. Some groups prefer to have the payment ahead of time. In that case, the notice sent to the prospects should include a request that a check in that amount be sent to the Testing Coordinator or Proctor Coordinator at the time a reservation for the testing session is made and prior to the testing session. This almost certainly will ensure that the prospect will come and take the tests.

It is also acceptable to request the prospect to bring the fee to the session. If the prospects will be paying at the testing site, you should allow extra time to handle that and still be sure the testing session starts on time. All checks should be made payable to "American Mensa, Ltd." Some groups make more income for their Local Group by testing than from an RG. Having an active testing program is vital to growing your group. You should test regularly across your geographic area.

The Proctor Network

One of the most important elements of American Mensa is the Proctor system, which consists of Proctors who administer the supervised tests to qualify prospects for Mensa membership, and Proctor or Testing Coordinators, who respond to inquiries and schedule testing sessions. The proctor network consists of a Testing Coordinator or Proctor Coordinator and Proctors.

Make sure that the people who serve as your group's Proctors will be conscientious in maintaining the proper testing atmosphere, will project an appropriate image and, in the case of the Coordinators, can send out letters that are clear and direct, with proper spelling and punctuation. While Proctors are appointed at the national level, they must be nominated by the LocSec. AML depends on you to be scrupulous in recommending only trustworthy Proctors. If you ever feel someone who is already a Proctor should no longer be, contact the Admissions Manager immediately. If our ability to test candidates is compromised we could lose our ability to qualify future members nationwide.

Even a small group should have at least one alternate Proctor. The assigned Proctor could become ill or have an emergency the day of a test session. If you have an alternate Proctor who can fill in, the session need not be cancelled. Also, if more than a dozen or so people are to be tested at one time, a second Proctor should be present to help and to ensure the integrity of the test conditions. And finally, the Proctor certification system requires an experienced Proctor to train new Proctors. If your group has none, the RVC can assist, but it is much easier to never get down to a single Proctor. One formula is that you should have one Proctor for each one-hundred members, but that may not be enough in very spread-out groups.

Beyond enabling a scheduled test to take place, having a number of Proctors makes it easier for you to

ensure that tests can be held in various locations and at various times. If your group has four or five Proctors who can give tests in each of the different areas your group covers and at different times, you stand a much better chance of attracting people to the test sessions. Ideally, no candidate should have to wait more than two weeks to be tested or travel more than thirty minutes to the test site.

Testing Coordinator or Proctor Coordinator

The Local Group must have a designated Testing or Proctor Coordinator who handles all the scheduling and paperwork for the Local Group Proctor network. A Testing Coordinator or Proctor Coordinator fulfill the same duties except a Testing Coordinator is not a Proctor and; therefore, does not administer tests. A Proctor Coordinator must be a Proctor who has been appointed by the National Office before the Local Group can install them in the position of Proctor Coordinator. Since the Testing Coordinator does not administer tests, the person may be appointed by the LocSec and it is not necessary to submit an application to the National Office for approval. A Local Group needs only one Coordinator (either Testing or Proctor). If no Coordinator is assigned, the LocSec assumes the position of Testing Coordinator until the National Office is notified that one has been assigned.

The Testing/Proctor Coordinator receives the names of applicants for testing from the National Office. The Coordinator's name also appears as the main contact on all notification letters to the prospects. The Coordinator then contacts the applicants, sets up test times and places, in cooperation with local Proctors. The Coordinator makes test reservations, collects advance fees and ensures that there are sufficient test booklets. Finally, the Coordinator is responsible that the packages of completed tests are mailed to the National Office for scoring; however, typically, the Proctors themselves will mail the tests.

The Coordinator works with the Proctors to locate testing sites, makes sure Proctors have ample testing supplies on hand and is responsible for remitting the testing fees to the National Office.

Proctors

Although many people join Mensa on the basis of prior evidence, the Proctor will often be the first Mensa contact for prospective members of your group. The

work performed by the Proctor is of incredible value to Mensa, contributing in large part to the healthy growth of the society. The Proctor's perspective and opinion of Mensa often determines whether or not successful candidates accept membership.

Proctors, while selected at the local level, must be appointed by the National Office under the aegis of the national Supervisory Psychologist. Before being appointed, the Proctor must have an undergraduate degree due to the requirements of the vendor of the tests we use and be trained by an experienced Proctor. Proctor candidates usually observe another proctor giving the tests, and then give them with an experienced Proctor observing them. Additional details and application forms can be obtained from the National Office and from the Proctor Handbook.

By checking membership data, the National Office can provide a list of educationally qualified potential proctors in the Local Group's area. The Local Group reimburses Testing/Proctor Coordinators and the Proctors for actual expenses incurred. In addition, some groups pay a portion of their per test revenue to the proctors; this is a Local Group decision. Further information regarding proctors and the testing process are available in the Proctor Handbook.

Testing Supplies

After each testing session, supplies for future use should be ordered from the National Office in ample time for the supplies to be shipped. Proctors should usually keep a supply of the Wonderlic, Mensa Admissions and culture-fair tests on hand. Testing materials are available from the National Office and may be ordered through AML's Web site.

Mensa Testing Day

Mensa Testing Day is held annually during the month of October. Testing sessions are scheduled for the two weeks before and after the official Testing Day. National publicity is generated by the National Office and Local Groups are strongly encouraged to seek local publicity. Over the years, thousands of candidates have participated in this event.

Membership Issues

A prospective member's first contact with Mensa is usually one of the following people:

- Membership Officer
- Regional Contact
- Proctor Coordinator or Proctor
- Newsletter Editor
- Web Contact
- Publicity Officer
- LocSec

Be aware that the National Office will give the LocSec's name to any prospective member (or anyone with a general question) as a contact for that chapter. The LocSec is also always the person of last resort when other contacts are not available.

Membership Processing

Sometimes a new member will have problems with the processing of paperwork at the National Office. When this happens, the LocSec should, if necessary, intervene to help resolve matters locally if possible, or contact the National Office if the new or potential new member cannot or will not contact the office. Be aware some candidates may claim the National Office has failed to respond to avoid announcing publically that they failed to qualify for membership.

Refer to the following for general timetables:

- A Mensa brochure, including the Mini-Test, is sent the next business day after the National Office receives a telephone or web inquiry.
- Mensa Home Tests are scored and responses are mailed to the individual within 10-12 business days.
- Supervised tests are scored and reported to the individuals tested within 10-12 business days. Additional delays for the prospective members may occur when Proctors do not mail in the tests promptly. At the same time, the candidates are notified whether or not they qualified. Mensa does not provide actual I.Q. scores because the trend is for states to consider that practicing psychology without a license.
- The contact information of successful candidates are sent to the LocSec (or designated contact) together with address labels monthly. This method now permits the Local Group to follow up through mailed

material. Letters, telephone calls and perhaps invitations to one of the activities should now be considered for members who have qualified. The National Office again contacts successful candidates after 90 days if they have not joined by then.

- Prior evidence applications are processed within 10-12 business days. Prospective members must authorize the release of test scores from the appropriate testing center. The National Office cannot obtain such evidence without the prospects written request. Some testing centers will not send the evidence directly to the National Office. The evidence is sent directly to the prospect, who must then forward it. It is better for the individual to obtain the evidence directly from the testing center.

Once offered membership, the candidate need only pay the established dues to become a member; membership is administered on an annual basis (the fiscal year is 4/1-3/31). Membership cards are disbursed to new, renewing and reinstating members on a weekly basis. If lost, replacement cards can be obtained through the National Office. An increasing number of members are opting for Life Membership, which relieves them of renewal concerns.

Former members of Mensa are always welcome to reinstate their membership. It is helpful to ascertain any former names and the lapsed member's address that was used when that individual was last a member (and/or the membership number, if possible) to simplify verification. Local Groups can be very helpful in actively recruiting former members for reinstatement. Additional family memberships are available as well at a discount when two or more Mensans have the same home address and are members of the same Local Group. Additional family members receive limited benefits in return for the cut rate. For example, only one Bulletin will be distributed per household.

LocSecs should be aware that all local chapter officers, whether elected or appointed, who fail to renew their membership lose their standing within American Mensa until they renew. The National Office will contact the LocSec of each chapter for any local chapter officer who fails to renew. If the LocSec fails to renew his or her membership, the Assistant LocSec becomes the acting LocSec, until the LocSec renews.

Recruitment

Recruiting is a specific function and, to be successful, demands an energetic leader for its execution. Publicity is an important part of recruitment. You must let people know your group exists if you are to encourage people to join. Above all, answer inquiries promptly! You may only have a narrow window of opportunity to get someone involved.

Retention

Retaining members is one of the biggest challenges facing the Local Group. People join Mensa for a variety of reasons and many of them just "give it a try." Persuade them within this first year that it is worthwhile to belong to the organization, or they may drop out at renewal time. In June, the National Office provides lists of currently lapsed members to the group and subsidizes the group for mailing follow-ups. Diplomatic follow-ups on lapsed members should result in some lapsed members rejoining, but also in providing insight into the reasons for dropping their membership. The National Office also provides, upon request, lapsed member lists and labels extending past the current year. There is no charge for these requests, but there is also no additional funding provided outside of the Lapsed Member Mailing.

Contacting Prospective Members

A new member list and mailing labels, as well as labels for members who have recently moved into the area, are provided monthly. The Local Group or Local Group contact can then arrange prompt invitations, mailings and follow-ups. It is a membership officer's primary duty to welcome new members to the chapter, but the LocSec should also be involved. Introduce new members to each other and to older members. Avoid forming old-member cliques or the new members may feel left out and never return. Likewise, avoid inundating new members with more "interesting" tidbits than can be absorbed in one session. Referring to officers by first name only is also off-putting to someone who does not know who "John" is.

Many groups arrange for new member parties (which current members also attend). Asking a new member to suggest a favorite spot such as a local restaurant for

an event will also make a new member feel more comfortable when attending a first event. A number of groups pin a "My First Time" button onto new members to introduce them and to facilitate mixing. Likewise, consider providing name-tags or buttons for active chapter members or officers, to help new members associate faces with names. The LocSec, Membership Officer, or other contact should consider direct contact with a new member—if not at an event, then by letter, phone, or email.

A new member who is contacted soon after joining is more likely to become active. Many new members are hesitant and nervous about their first meeting. They will feel more at ease if they know someone who will be there, even if they met only over the telephone. The Newsletter Editor or Membership Officer should consider sending a copy of the current issue of the newsletter to the new member, since it may be weeks before they get their first mailed local newsletter.

Greeting New Members

Most of us were nervous before our first Mensa event. Some of us needed help over that initial hurdle. An incentive, coupled with an invitation to "bring a friend", can stiffen his/her resolve to attend. Consider offering free attendance fee for speakers' meetings, waiver of "kitty" fee for in-home events, allowing a "2 for 1" discounted admittance if they bring a friend, etc. Many groups have a designated New Member Coordinator or Committee whose purpose is to make the new member feel welcome. The Coordinator or a representative might regularly attend the functions where new members are likely to show up (monthly gatherings, the downtown lunch, the pub-crawl, the movie night) and make the new member feel welcomed. Or, this committee/person could call and specifically invite the new member to a function.

Don't forget to also ask for help. The majority of Mensans are, statistically, introverts. A shy member will find a request to "come help me set up snacks" less intimidating than an invitation to "come meet all of us." New members should be invited to become active volunteers in addition to being passive attendees. You will have a higher success rate seeking new volunteers from among those who have joined recently.

Credits

This edition of the LocSec Handbook was updated by Lori Norris with help from Jean K. Becker.