



# MEMBERSHIP HANDBOOK

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## 1. Introduction

PTA is a grassroots association working exclusively to improve the education and well-being of all children and youth at home, school, and in the community. Virginia PTA (VAPTA) membership is as diverse as Virginia in culture, education level, and parenting style. By joining a PTA, a member automatically becomes part of the largest child-advocacy association in the state – more than 180,000 strong across Virginia.

PTA is a membership-driven association. People join PTA to show support for the work PTA does locally to benefit their child and community, and to support the work PTA does collectively to help children, families, and schools.

Every individual who joins PTA helps not only her or his own child, but every child. Imagine how strong a community could be if every parent, every teacher, staff member and administrator of a local school, and every community member and business leader got involved in PTA!

## 2. Duties of a nonprofit board member

Some, but not all, membership chairs are also members of their PTA's executive board. The local PTA's standing rules will state whether the person in charge of membership at that local PTA is a member of the executive board and may assign a specific title for the membership position. For the purposes of this handbook, all persons in charge of membership at a local PTA will be referred to as "membership chair" regardless of whether this person serves on the executive board or has a different title. If a membership chair does serve on the executive board, however, there are important legal duties to be aware of.

Each elected member of a nonprofit board has three legal duties, collectively known as their "fiduciary" duty. A fiduciary is a person who holds something in trust for another. A PTA board is charged with holding the well-being of the PTA in trust for its members. The three legal duties are:

- Duty of Care: to pay attention to the organization's activities and operations;
- Duty of Loyalty: to put the interests of the organization before personal and professional interests;
- Duty of Obedience: to comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws; adhere to the organization's bylaws; and remain the guardians of the mission.

## 3. Duties and responsibilities of the membership chair

There is substantial support available to local PTA membership chairs. In local PTAs that are served by a council, a council board member will be available to support the needs of local PTA membership chairs. In each region, there is a district director available to assist local PTA membership chairs. Please reach out to your council or district to ask questions and share ideas.

The duties of the membership chair include:

- Recruit a membership committee that reflects a diverse population. Include fathers, single parents, staff members, community members, and people from diverse cultures.
- Work with the committee to set a yearly membership goal.
- Plan membership campaigns.
- Prepare campaign materials.
- Work with the committee to make the work of PTA visible to the community.
- Plan and execute efforts to "brand" PTA activities and events.
- Arrange and advertise any membership benefits.

- Lead membership recruitment efforts.
- Collect and process dues appropriately.
- Enroll members using the VAPTA membership process.
- Work with the treasurer to send dues and remittance forms to VAPTA monthly.
- Continue to work on membership goals and campaigns all year.
- Check membership rosters frequently for duplicate entries.
- Maintain accurate membership records.
- Transition with the incoming membership chair.

## 4. Quick Start

As soon as you are appointed:

- Learn about being a PTA Leader. Attend training workshops at Virginia PTA events, webinars, District and Council events in your community.
- Follow Virginia PTA and National PTA on social media.
- Watch the National PTA Membership Basics E-Learning Module found on the National PTA website, [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org).
- Review and become familiar with your Local PTA's bylaws and standing rules.
- Request previous membership records from outgoing Membership Chair, Treasurer or Secretary.
- Contact your predecessor to determine what records and information (i.e. Procedure Book) can be obtained to know what has been done in the past. It does not always need to be a book, so it might be a flash drive, a shared electronic document or box of files.
- Form your Membership Committee! One of the first things you should do after being appointed as Membership Chair is to find a few people to help you.
- Plan how you will recruit members. Work with your committee to make specific plans on what needs to be done, who will do it, and exactly when it will happen.
- Complete a Plan of Work. A Plan of Work is a very important part of your duties that is required of every PTA executive board member. It contains all your plans and proposed budget for the coming year. The entire executive board reads all plans and either suggests changes or approves it. This helps all of you see how you might overlap and work together.
- Start keeping your Procedure Book - traditional or electronic - to provide your successor with everything you and your committee members do throughout the year.

## 5. Quick Information

- How much are dues?
  - Total dues collected per member is the sum of the following:
    - Council PTA dues = Amount determined by Council membership; if applicable
    - Virginia PTA dues = \$1.50 per member
    - National PTA dues = \$2.25 per member
  - Virginia and National PTA portion of dues (\$3.75 per member) are sent to Virginia PTA with the membership roster.
- Where do I send the rosters and dues?
  - Virginia PTA, 1027 Wilmer Ave., Richmond, VA 23227, Attn: Membership
- Where do I get membership cards?

- Virginia PTA provides membership cards to Local PTAs during the summer based on previous year's membership totals; cards should be distributed to members immediately upon joining. Additional cards may be requested from Virginia PTA Member Services.
- What is the membership year?
  - The membership term is July 1 through June 30. Membership cards expire on October 30, allowing a grace period (from July 1 to October 30) for our members to renew their membership. During the grace period, members are entitled to their full membership rights, including approval of the PTA budget and program at the summer or fall association meetings.
  - If someone wants to join the PTA for the coming school year at a Spring event (i.e. kindergarten round-up, 6<sup>th</sup> grade or 9<sup>th</sup> grade orientation, etc.), your Local PTA should hold those dues in escrow until July 1. After July 1, the rosters and Virginia and National dues for those members are submitted to Virginia PTA and the Local portion of the dues are reported as income for that month.
  - As each PTA is a separate and individual association, members having children in more than one school may pay dues to support the PTA in each child's school.
- When is the deadline to submit dues?
  - There is NO deadline to submit membership rosters and dues to Virginia PTA. Members names and dues should ideally be reported to Virginia PTA monthly.
  - There are deadlines to be eligible for Membership Awards. Please review those deadlines on the Virginia PTA website, <https://www.vapta.org/membership/membership-awards>.
- Do members have to pay Virginia and National dues at every PTA they join?
  - Yes. Each Local PTA is a separate non-profit association organized under the authority of Virginia and National PTAs and must be joined individually. Each member must pay the dues listed in the Local PTA's bylaws (national, state and local portions) at every Local PTA they join.
- Do "Life Members" have to pay dues?
  - Yes. Virginia PTA Honorary Life Memberships do not carry with them automatic rights to vote or to hold office in any PTA. In order to participate actively in PTA, an honorary life member must join a Local PTA by paying the dues and having his/her name included on the membership roster sent to the Virginia PTA Office.
- Who can view membership rosters?
  - PTA is a membership association. PTA respects the rights to privacy each member expects; therefore, Virginia PTA, Council, or Local PTAs do not release PTA membership lists to non-members or outside interests.
- What makes a person an official PTA member?
  - The members of a Local PTA are those individuals who have paid the local, state and national portions of the dues to the Local PTA, and whose names and state and national dues have been submitted by the Local PTA to the Virginia PTA Office.

## 6. What does Virginia PTA do, and where do membership dues go?

- Representation
  - VAPTA is a voice for children and families on state commissions and committees.
- Parent education
  - Provide networking opportunities with other parents and PTAs.
  - Resource materials available through VAPTA and National PTA.

- Workshops offered on issues that impact parents at VAPTA conference and Summer Leadership Training.
- Informed and trained leadership
  - VAPTA offers numerous leadership training opportunities and publications.
  - National PTA offers e-learning, publications, and other resources for leader development.
- Support
  - District Directors offer direct support.
  - VAPTA staff offers direct support.
- Technical services
  - VAPTA staff help with 990/990-EZ/990-N IRS forms.
  - VAPTA staff help with membership database.
- Programs
  - Ideas and resources for effective local programs.
  - National PTA Reflections Arts Program, School of Excellence, STEM + Families, Family Reading Experience, Healthy Lifestyles, and more.
  - Virginia Power Plates, Citizenship Essay, Scholarships, and more.
- PTAs in Virginia are eligible for special low rates for liability, fidelity bonding, officer liability, and property insurance.
- Advocacy training
  - Learn to advocate for children through classes, legislative assembly, district and state conferences, and publications.
  - VAPTA's VP Advocacy is available to support advocates with public policy and legislation.
- Publications, Take Action Virginia, and weekly Leadership News.
- Local PTAs share brand and name recognition as part of a state and national association with a history as a powerful group speaking on behalf of all children and youth for over 115 years.

## 7. Types of membership

PTA is an individual member association, which means Virginia PTA is an association of individuals who voluntarily join to support the work of PTA. Each individual member has rights within the organization and a voice in PTA activities. Some PTAs have explored innovative membership levels to increase membership, including “family” membership. To avoid confusion about how many “members” are in a “family,” we recommend different wording, such as “two-person memberships.” No matter how a PTA chooses to package membership options, however, the following must always be true: **one individual equals one membership, one vote, one card, and one database entry.**

### 7.1 Membership eligibility

Any living person may join a PTA, regardless of age, occupation, geographic location, familiarity with the school or district supported by the PTA, membership in other PTAs, or any other factor.

### 7.2 Individual members

Each person who joins PTA:

- Has her or his name and contact information entered into the membership database. This information must be reported to VAPTA and National PTA to initiate all benefits of membership.
- Pays dues. A local PTA chooses the amount it will charge for membership dues and includes this information in its standing rules. The total cost of membership must be sufficient to cover national,

state, and (if applicable) council per-member service fees for each person who is enrolled as a member.

- National PTA dues: \$2.25 per member
  - Virginia PTA dues: \$1.50 per member
  - PTA council fees (applicable only to those local PTAs that are part of a council): Amount varies. Contact the council membership chair for more information.
- Is entitled to all benefits of membership. All paid members, regardless of age, have the right to voice and vote at local PTA meetings. They also receive a VAPTA membership card that gives them access to member benefits.

### 7.3 Two-person memberships

To encourage more than one person to join at once, many local PTAs offer a two-person membership at a discounted rate. (For example, a local PTA may offer a single membership for \$5 and a two-person membership for \$8.) Any two people may enroll together to receive the discounted rate, which is why the term “family membership” is not recommended.

Remember that each person who joins is an individual member and entitled to all rights and benefits of membership. When selling two-person memberships:

- Ensure the two-person membership rate is clearly stated in your local PTA’s standing rules. Remember, this rate must be sufficient to cover the dues for each individual.
- Collect information for each individual included in a two-person membership and enroll each individual as a member. Provide enough space on your membership form for both names and corresponding contact information.

### 7.4 Teacher/staff memberships

As one strategy to encourage teachers and other school staff to join, some PTAs establish a special staff membership rate or scholarships for staff members. Keep in mind that staff members who join PTA are entitled to all benefits of membership. A PTA may not require a staff member to join a PTA to receive a grant funds or other funding allocated by the PTA’s approved budget.

To ensure members have complete information about PTA programs and activities, including legislative advocacy, it’s important that all contact information is included in the database. Because VAPTA’s communications sometimes encourage specific action with respect to pending legislative proposals, do not use teachers’ school email addresses. If teachers are reluctant to share a personal email address, they can obtain a free email address with many internet service providers.

### 7.5 Student memberships

Any PTA may accept paid student memberships. Other than their name, there is no difference between a “PTA” and a “PTSA.” A PTA does not need to change its name to “PTSA” to accept student memberships. Students who have paid membership have all membership privileges and responsibilities.

**Note:** Many PTAs have a clause in their standing rules that indicates that all students are considered honorary members without voice or vote. This clause is related to the laws around gambling activities, not to membership. It does not confer any membership privileges or responsibilities, nor does it prohibit students from becoming paid members of a local PTA.



## 7.6 Business memberships

Although a business cannot be a member of your PTA (e.g., Joe's Print Shop), the business owners or employees can be members (e.g., Joe Smith). As with all memberships, everyone joining a PTA must pay the membership dues and be enrolled in the membership database.

**Note:** A PTA may have "business sponsors" or "business supporters." This is different from membership. It must be in the local PTA's standing rules, and PTAs should avoid using the word "membership" when soliciting support or sponsors. These sponsors have no voice or vote.

## 7.7 Scholarships for membership

A local PTA may set up a restricted line item in its budget specific to membership scholarships, to be funded by designated scholarship donations or by specific events or programs of the local PTA when it is clearly advertised at the point of sale that proceeds from that event or program will go to the scholarship fund. These funds may be used to pay for partial or full financial assistance for PTA memberships.

- A restricted scholarship fund is created by a membership vote.
- Treasurers must track donations to the membership scholarship fund on a separate line item.
- PTAs may not use general funds to contribute to a membership scholarship fund. This is an IRS rule.
- A membership form may ask specifically for people to donate any amount to the membership scholarship fund to be put towards a PTA membership for another member or a staff member.
- Unused funds in the membership scholarship budget may carry over from year to year, but they may only be used to cover the cost of PTA memberships.

### Example: Scholarship requests/donations

- Scholarship assistance requested (completely confidential)  
100% assistance or partial assistance \$\_\_\_\_\_ (fill in amount)
- I would like to donate to the scholarship fund \$\_\_\_\_\_ (fill in amount)

## 8. Membership dues remittance process

All local PTAs (whether the PTA is part of a council or not) send monthly payments for state and national dues directly to the VAPTA office.

Submission will contain the following information:

- Total number of new/renewing members for that month.
- List of members included in the payment.
- Dues for state and national.

For most local PTAs belonging to a council, council fees are not included with state and national dues and sent to their council. For more information about council fees, contact the local PTA council.



## 9. Membership cards

Virginia PTA provides membership cards to Local PTAs during the summer based on previous year's membership totals; cards should be distributed to members immediately upon joining. Additional cards may be requested from Virginia PTA Member Services.

## 10. Membership planning calendar

Suggested tasks to complete each month:

- Recruit and enroll new members. Involve the membership committee, executive board, and other members in these efforts. Membership is everyone's job!
- Evaluate progress toward the membership goal at the end of each month and communicate this progress with stakeholders and members.
- Pay monthly membership dues to VAPTA.
- Send thank-you notes to new members.
- Write a newsletter article.
- Meet with the membership committee. Plan and implement any new approaches.
- Discuss with the treasurer the necessity to send in the membership dues monthly.
- Serve as gatekeeper for your PTA to ensure that all communications, events, programs, and offers of assistance are branded with "PTA." The more potential members understand about how much your PTA is doing, the more likely they are to join your PTA.

### July

- Read the *Membership Handbook*.
- Consult the membership page on the VAPTA website. Meet with the PTA president to discuss membership materials.
- Meet with the membership committee to review the results of previous years' campaigns and build new goals to present to the board of directors.
- Establish any membership benefits specific to the local PTA
- Review the budget for membership campaign promotions: posters, awards, prizes, leaflets, etc.

### August

- Register to attend the district fall conference membership class.
- Working backward from your membership goal, set incremental goals at periodic dates. Communicate these goals to the board of directors and membership committee.
- Plan a membership campaign centered around a theme. Develop a timeline of membership initiatives based on achieving the incremental goals you have set. Get the approval of the board of directors for your plans.
- Update your membership form to reflect the current year, theme, dues, and contact information. The form should always be available in at least four locations. (For example, on your website, in your school's main office, on your Facebook page, on the PTA bulletin board, in the PTA closet/office, etc.)
- Ask the superintendent, school board president, or mayor to proclaim September "PTA Membership Month."
- Send copies of your "proclamations" to your local newspaper and television station with an article on PTA parent engagement in your school.
- Set up a membership table on orientation days for students and parents. Stand in front of the table. Attach copies of your membership forms to clipboards to allow you to move around in order to best use your time and space.

## September

- Set up a membership table on the first day of school to welcome students and parents back to school. Stand in front of the table. Attach copies of your membership forms to clipboards to allow you to move around in order to best use your time and space.
- Be visible! Publicize and celebrate “PTA Membership Month.”
- Send a letter home (with the first packet of information from the school, if possible) inviting everyone to join. Emphasize past PTA accomplishments and future goals.
- At all events and in all communications, completely remove any reference to “volunteering” from your membership materials. There should be no mention of volunteering on the membership form or at the membership table. Any volunteer sign-up or table should be located as far as possible from the membership table.
- Work with your school administrator to be part of the school open house.

## October

- Send invitation letters to past presidents, former board members, your school superintendent, school board members, and other community leaders. PTA is for everyone!
- Work with your school administration to build a classroom incentive program that rewards all classes that achieve a pre-determined goal. Publicize this program at an assembly, with upbeat classroom visits, or by sending a letter home.

## November

- Revisit your overall and incremental goals to determine if you are on track to achieve them. Share this information and make subsequent plans with the membership committee and board of directors.
- Review last year’s membership roster for members who have not renewed and send them a special note.
- Distribute your membership form broadly once again.
- Register for the VAPTA Annual Meeting and Advocacy Conference.

## December

- Register for the VAPTA Annual Meeting and Advocacy Conference; before winter break.
- Membership numbers as of the end of December will establish the number of voting delegates from a local PTA to the VAPTA convention.

## January

- Plan a New Year’s campaign to start the year off right.
- If you haven’t done so, register for the VAPTA Annual Meeting and Advocacy Conference.

## February

- Plan a special celebration for PTA’s birthday month.
- Plan a special membership activity for “Bring Your Family to School Week”.

## March

- Plan special membership activities for the end-of-the-year celebrations.
- Make sure all members have been enrolled and membership dues paid by the end of March so that they can attend national convention as voting delegates.

## April

- Review this year’s membership campaign, make written recommendations for next year’s campaign, and submit a report to the executive board.
- Update the membership procedures book.

- Consider starting to offer pre-paid memberships for next year. To do so, add a line item to your budget and financial reports indicating “pre-paid memberships for next year.” The PTA would hold these funds. The membership dues would then be forwarded to VAPTA in July.

### May/June

- Thank all of those who helped with this year’s membership campaign.
- Register next year’s membership chair for the VAPTA Summer Leadership Training.
- Start planning next year’s campaign.
- Thank members for joining PTA in the last newsletter article and encourage them to join next year.
- Work with the treasurer to reconcile the membership dues collected.
- Download and print a copy of your membership roster. Use it next year to send membership renewal notices.
- Ensure members are all paid for and that the membership roster tallies with payments by the end of June.
- Close out the year by the June 30.

## 11. Membership challenges

Virginia PTA recognizes achievements to encourage membership enrollment early and throughout the year. Units that complete a monthly challenge will receive a certificate for the individual challenge and one entry into a drawing for one of eight (8) FREE Summer Leadership Training registrations for 2020. Units are encouraged to complete as many challenges as possible to increase the chances of winning. The prize drawings will be held the first week in June 2020.

## 12. Recruiting: How to get members

### RESEARCH

If you knew what you could say or do to convince non-members to join, how would your recruitment messages change?

Here are some ways you can gather that information:

- Research what has been successful for your PTA in the past.
- Look to the membership rosters and numbers from the past, who and how many people have been members.
- Look at your predecessor’s procedure book. There should be records there about past recruiting and how well their plans worked.
- Survey members to see what they want from your PTA.
- Quick surveys throughout the year help determine whether the members expectations are being met. Before you start to put together your specific survey, define your survey goals. In other words, what are you trying to learn or do? Assess programming needs? Determine satisfaction with the PTA? Grow membership? Or some combination of these or other needs?
- Pick and choose questions that match your goal.
- Only ask for information you plan on addressing (i.e., membership, volunteering, programs, etc.).
- Keep your survey to a very few short but informative questions. Short surveys are answered more often.
- Explain the purpose of the survey and thank members for their feedback.
- Be mindful of the timing of the survey (do not send out during busy seasons).
- Send it out to a sample group prior to the larger audience.

- Send the survey out as a stand-alone document.
- Consider using Facebook, Twitter, other social media to ask just a few questions more often.
- Prioritize the information you are requesting.
- Do not ask for information that can be gathered elsewhere.
- Keep all individual survey information confidential.
- Have a plan to communicate the survey results and next step plans. A sample survey is available at <https://www.vapta.org/membership/why-join-pta>
- Ask the Principal what they think would be successful in your school community.
- Connect with other PTA's Leaders in your community what they've done that's been successful.
- Speak to your Council Leaders to see what suggestions they can offer.

After doing your research, focus your invitation to join your PTA on what is important to the members of YOUR school community.

### 12.1 Plan

Based on your research and working with your committee, set SMART goals for recruiting members. Do you want a specific number ("A Voice for Every Child") or a percentage increase (20% more members than last year)?



Decide HOW to recruit members.

- Pick dates and methods for first membership drive (Registrations? Meet the Teacher event? Back-to-School event? Student folders? Emails? Social Media?)
- How will new members receive their Membership Cards?
- Discuss the entire year and make plans to keep recruiting members all year long.

### 12.2 Use these plans to complete your Plan of Work

A Plan of Work helps you make your goals SMART goals. A Plan of Work is written and very specific. It helps you clearly communicate to the rest of the executive board just how you plan to recruit PTA members, report how many members you have recruited, and how you plan to help engage those members.

There is a blank Plan of Work on the <https://www.vapta.org/membership/why-join-pta> website and the Membership Sample is on page \_\_\_ of this guide.

### 12.3 Why join PTA?

The main reason to join PTA is your child!

Use your PTA Membership to:

- **Get Connected.** PTA provides opportunities to meet and network with other parents, teachers, and school administrators. There's no better way to know what's happening in your child's school and community.
- **Speak Up.** PTA can be a way for you to be more effectively be the voice for change at your child's school.
- **Watch Yourself Grow.** As a PTA volunteer, you can use your skills and hobbies for a relevant cause while setting a good example for your child and all children in the community.
- **Give Back.** By becoming part of PTA, you will be part of the solution, to help make positive changes in your child's school and in the lives of many children.
- **Effectively Engage.** Spend quality time with your children through PTA programs, events and resources. Not only will you show how much you care about them but will also demonstrate the importance you place on their education.

\*From National PTA's Membership Basics E-Learning module. Look for this great resource in the "For Leaders" section of [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org).

### 12.4 Value of PTA membership

PTA is a grassroots association made up of parents, teachers and others around the state who have an interest in children, families and schools. PTA membership is as diverse as Virginia is in cultures, education levels and parenting skills. By joining PTA, a member becomes part of the largest child advocacy association in the state with more than 160,000 members across Virginia.

Joining PTA supports local, state and national efforts to improve the education of children and the lives of families. Membership provides the opportunity for individuals to raise their voices with others throughout the state and nation to protect children's rights. Membership ensures that PTA's voice is heard on issues affecting young people as well as providing opportunities for parent education, communication and leadership development.

Getting involved in PTA builds skills in leadership, communication and advocacy. Active members are a valuable community resource for starting and maintaining projects to benefit children.

People are more willing to join an association after understanding how it will benefit them. Be sure to promote the accomplishments of your PTA and the member benefits.

### 12.5 Crafting your message

- 1) **Hook** Begin with an interesting statement or unfinished thought. Make it personal.
  - a. We back the future.
  - b. We enable children's dreams.
  - c. We make teachers love us.

- d. We provide children with chances.
  - e. We make legislators pay attention.
  - f. We open doors.
- 2) **Line** Stop and Wait for the question. “What do you mean?”
  - 3) **Reel** Briefly explain your statement. Focus on what you want the listener to remember about your PTA.
    - a. We provide opportunities to expand students’ horizons.
    - b. We speak up about issues important to children’s health and safety.
    - c. We help support the world’s toughest job – parenting.
  - 4) **Prepare** Convey the value of PTA. Describe who you are and what your PTA does. I work with the PTA to:
    - a. Help all families be engaged in the education of their children.
    - b. Open doors for student learning opportunities in math, science and technology.
    - c. Raise funds to pay for field trips and send students to museums. Our students’ families would not normally be able to afford these kinds of experiences.
  - 5) **Serve** Describe why PTA is unique, how it operates, why it can provide better services.
    - a. We are the only child advocacy association that works for every child.
    - b. We engage the entire community to provide opportunities for all children.
    - c. We “build the village” that supports our students.
  - 6) **Engage** Explain why the listener should care. Explain what the listener can do.
    - a. If you join our PTA you can help us make every child’s potential a reality.
    - b. You believe in students and teachers, every voice matters. Join our PTA.

## 12.6 Message Do’s and Don’ts

### DO:

Be conversational  
 Make it personal  
 Listen carefully to the response  
 Show your passion  
 Be prepared for the next step

### DON’T:

Sound rehearsed  
 Be too general  
 Walk over the listener’s feelings  
 Be mechanical  
 Forget to close with your “ask”

Everybody can, and should, write their own recruitment message. Make them short and easy to remember and say. Get your entire PTA executive board to practice their recruitment messages at an executive board meeting.

## 12.7 Sample recruitment messages

- I can tell you care about children and PTA is here to help every child grow up well-educated, healthy, and able to achieve their potential in life. Our PTA does a lot of great things at the campus level and we would love to have your help, but it’s not necessary. Your membership and support – your VOICE -- makes us stronger when we work with district, state, and national governing bodies to develop ways to help all of our children. Your membership can make a difference for kids. Would you join our PTA?
- No, you don’t have to have a child in school. You just have to care about the future of children. No, you don’t have to come volunteer on our campus. We’d love to have your help when you have time, though. We’re a fun group and it’s a great way to feel more connected to your campus. The

most important reason to join PTA is that every voice speaking on behalf of children makes a difference. Your support is important to backing the future of all children. Would you please join our PTA?

- (For the student member)- Students are an important part of PTA. Our PTA does a lot great things to assist the students at the school. We need to hear from students to make sure we are working on things that really do make a difference. Being active in PTA not only benefits the school and other students, but it benefits YOU. You can learn leadership and life skills that will use for the rest of your life.

## 12.8 Who to recruit?

Who can join PTA? Anyone who believes in and supports our Vision, Mission and Purposes. Anyone who shares your passion for making every child's potential a reality.

It should go without saying that your entire community should be asked to be part of your PTA - not just your friends, not just previous members, not just the people who volunteer every day.

In study after study, the main reason people don't join PTA is because nobody asked them! ASK!! ASK EVERYONE!!! And recruit new members all year long. Each month, you might focus on different recruiting methods or on reaching out to different underrepresented populations (men, different cultural backgrounds, older families, students, families who have just moved to your school, community members).

On the following pages are some ideas for recruiting different groups of people. This is not an exhaustive list. The ideas listed are also rarely useful for only one group.

I'm sure you will think of more groups and more ideas. Please share your most successful ideas with the Membership Committee at [membershipvp@vapta.org](mailto:membershipvp@vapta.org).

## 12.9 Ideas for recruiting everyone

- Just ASK! Make as many personal contacts as possible. You and your executive board should make a point of Asking people to join PTA. Carry PTA envelopes with you.
- Ask the principal's permission to send PTA information home with students or to have it on the school's website. Leave membership information in the school office to be given to new families as they enroll.
- Use every form of communication available to you - School and PTA newsletters, websites, social media, email lists, fliers, posters, bulletin boards, marquees, and signs. Walk up and down the drop-off and pickup lines. Communication is important!
- Create a welcome letter to let parents know what PTA does for the school and their children. Update every grading period or at least at mid-year.
- Hold a membership contest between classes or grade levels.
- Offer discounts to members at PTA events that have fees.
- Coordinate a "new family social" with the first PTA meeting of the school year. Ask them to join PTA.
- Cut a picture of your school into the number of pieces equal to your membership goal. As members join, put the pieces together.
- Respect people's differing schedules when you plan events.



- Publicize your PTA's past accomplishments and goals for the coming year. Create a "BRAG BOARD" with pictures and fliers and programs that you can take to meetings and all school events. Make it attractive and interesting. People will want to join an active, involved PTA.

### 12.10 Ideas for recruiting inclusively

- Don't forget to ask groups that may not be familiar with the concept of PTA or are different in some way from previous members.
- Host a multi-cultural event.
- Elect or appoint an executive board liaison to represent different parent groups (Special Education, Talented and Gifted, ELL, Grandparents raising grandchildren, etc.)
- Recruit parents and translators to help with language challenges, provide headsets, hold bilingual meetings, etc. Translate information to ensure all audiences receive your message.
- Request leaders from other cultures or communities to assist in customizing materials to best reach their community.
- Make sure meetings and communications are welcoming and accessible to everyone. Consider meeting time, location, accessibility. Consider non-traditional families.
- Create a friendly climate. Choose activities that appeal to different groups.
- Invite "Families" not just "Parents" to join you
- Arrange activity times to fit the schedules of your community. You may need to vary the times of meetings and events to fit the needs of families.
- Keep your community informed and provide information of value.
- Organize field trips, arts and craft shows, sports events and food experience days as well. (Food experience days are events where children and parents cook a meal together with ingredients provided by PTA or contributed by members or area businesses.)
- Ask teachers to talk to parents during parent-teacher conferences about the importance of PTA.
- Survey the community to determine areas of interest for programs, etc.

And above all, include everyone in invitations. A personal request to join is the most effective recruiting tool. Let everyone know you want and need them to help all children reach their potential.

### 12.11 Ideas for recruiting men

Men have held important roles in PTA throughout its long history. President Theodore Roosevelt sat on the board of directors of the National Congress of Mothers (predecessor of the National PTA). Men have served at all levels of PTA and have been some of its best volunteers and spokespersons and leaders.

Men are directly involved in the care and education of children. Research shows that "4 in 10 mothers are now the primary breadwinner, leaving the largest number of stay at home dads in history." (Pew Research Center, "Parenting in America", 2015) It is vital that PTA welcome and include men through programs and activities addressing their needs and concerns.

- Use gender inclusive language to promote male engagement in all communications from PTA.
- Include fathers, stepfathers, grandfathers, uncles, and older brothers; all men that play a significant role in the lives of your students.
- Seek out male leaders for leadership positions.

- Host father events, clearly stating when publicizing that children can bring a father-substitute, such as a grandfather, uncle, or close family friend.
- Ask men who are members of service clubs, religious or community organizations to serve as liaisons between the PTA and their specific group. Consider joint projects.
- Provide activities that use their talents and experiences such as career day or vocational activities.
- Sponsor an orientation for fathers at the beginning of the year with a speaker and offer ways to become involved in their child's education.
- Create men-focused groups and events.
- Communicate directly to men.
- Challenge current male members to ask others to join.
- Respect men's time.
- Articulate the importance of men in education.
- Celebrate their engagement.
- Use the Male Engagement Toolkit at [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org).

### 12.12 Ideas for secondary schools

- It is especially important to survey needs to be relevant in secondary schools. Include the entire community - students, teachers, administrators, counselors and other staff in membership and planning activities.
- Include parents, students, and an administrator on the membership committee.
- Send a letter of invitation to join signed by the principal, student body president, PTA president, and the membership chair. Let people know you are prepared to work together.
- Have meetings at varied times when all parents, teachers and students can attend.
- Ask the art department to assist in developing posters and displays for the membership campaign.
- Have a greeter at the door and offer the opportunity to join PTA whenever parents are at the school.
- Put notices in the school mailboxes for each teacher. Remind them that PTA supports teachers, and let them know you are grateful for their support of PTA.
- Sponsor a contest among homerooms for the greatest total of members or with 100% membership, etc. (Do not list the names of students who have or have not joined.) These awards might include the following:
  - Coupons from local merchants (free fries, ice cream cones)
  - Passes to football games
  - Refreshments during a homeroom period
- Use the school mascot in promotional activities.
- Reach out to booster clubs to help coordinate activities.

### 12.13 Ideas for recruiting students

Students are our future. We all know that, but we often ignore that they are also the future of PTA. Students as young as those in elementary school can take on meaningful PTA tasks with adult supervision. Older students make great committee members and, in some cases, committee chairs. PTA can help them learn useful life skills while they are helping us achieve our goals.

- Elect or appoint students as executive board members. Emphasize the learning opportunities inherent in being a PTA leader.

- Set up a PTA/PTSA table on student registration days and other school events. Highlight activities that benefit students.
- Publicize the Virginia PTA Scholarship requirements.
- Many Councils and Local PTAs also offer scholarships to graduating Seniors who have been involved PTA members.
- Volunteering as a PTA member can provide service opportunities and hours.
- Involve students in the planning and execution of PTA events.
- Consider changing your meeting time to encourage more student participation.
- Challenge a nearby high school to a friendly student membership competition.
- Have students host the Membership table and invite their friends to join at open house, back to school night, orientations, etc.

### 12.14 Ideas for recruiting teachers and administrators

Remember to keep the “T” in PTA! Teachers often have experience on that helps us be more effective and relevant in our programs. They often know which parents or family members would be a good fit for a task or PTA position. We support teachers, and we need them to support us!

- Elect or appoint a teacher to the executive board.
- Enlist the help of the principal.
- Personalize invitations.
- Survey all teachers mid-year asking if they joined PTA and why, and if not, why not.
- Provide teacher scholarships for supplies, programs and/or events.
- Remind teachers of PTA’s vision, mission, purposes and that each campus is an independent PTA so joining at work is essential to support the campus even if they are a member at their child’s PTA.
- Hold a grade level or departmental membership competition.
- Challenge the staff at a nearby school to a friendly competition.
- Provide monthly drawings for teachers and staff who join with donated items from local merchants.
- Reward teachers and staff with a breakfast or luncheon when 100 percent membership is achieved.

### 12.15 Ideas for recruiting early childhood PTA members

An active, participating membership is vital for an early childhood PTA. In order to acquire members, the early childhood PTA must recruit creatively. Here are some ideas for help in recruiting members:

- Distribute new member packets containing fact sheets about the membership, parent education opportunities, newsletters, and activities in which your PTA is involved and a brochure about your group to every visitor. Be sure to include materials about how to join your PTA.
- Ask local pediatricians and hospitals to post or display membership information. Include PTA materials in packets that local hospitals give to new parents.
- Distribute business cards with a name to contact, which current members can give to potential members while out in the community. Your current membership is one of your PTA’s best assets.
- Ask permission to post fliers in community libraries and in child-oriented businesses.
- Include meeting notices in child-oriented publications in your community.
- Send newsletters to potential members or to interested organizations that might publicize your PTA.
- Create a website and share general information about your group.

- Create a parent's guide to local preschools with information, evaluations, contact's names and contact information. Publicize the fact that your group provides this information and how interested parents can use it. Make it available to your local library.
- Provide the chamber of commerce with information about your PTA.
- Ask local businesses to use their marquee to promote your activities and events.
- Join your community welcome committee. Put your PTA information in their welcome packets.

### 12.16 Ideas for recruiting community members

Schools are an integral part of our communities. What better way for community members to find out about what is happening in those schools than to join the PTA and support the students whose families live, work and shop in the community; the students who are the future of the community.

- Provide your executive board members with membership envelopes and encourage them to take them to all community functions, events and businesses.
- Write letters to city council, elected officials, and school board members encouraging them to join.
- Attend Rotary, Exchange, Kiwanis Club meetings and recruit their members.
- Host a PTA table at any/every community event.
- Invite senior citizens to activities such as school plays.
- Incorporate local community organizations and businesses into your activities and programs.
- Ask for donations to be used as giveaways and thank them publicly for their support.
- Send a letter to owners of local businesses and leaders of local organizations inviting them to join.
- Develop relationships with community groups, businesses, churches, newspapers and radio stations. Find business and commercial locations willing to display your PTA's information and to promote PTA among their employees/members.
- Request to display information at local community centers, libraries, businesses, etc.
- Ask the chamber of commerce to promote PTA in their newsletters and meetings.
- Include PTA materials in packets that local hospitals give to new parents.
- Ask a well-known local personality to serve as honorary membership chair.
- Set up a Reflections display at the local library or shopping mall.

### 12.16 Your membership committee

Recruiting all those members can be a lot of work! This is where your Membership Committee comes in. Nobody should be the only member of a committee. Working alone is selfish and a sure way to burn yourself out. Developing a good team and working with a Committee is critical to the Membership Chair's success and sanity! It helps make better plans, accomplish goals more easily, and build future leaders.

Remember -- Many Hands Make Light Work!

Here are just a few ways that Membership Committee members can contribute. I'm sure you can think of other ways for people to help you.

- Help with research and planning.
- Work at the membership recruitment tables at all school and PTA events.
- Serve as greeters.
- Invite staff participation.
- Distribute membership cards to members.
- Complete the membership roster-keeping accurate records of names and contact information of those who join.
- Recognize achievement.

- Write thank you notes to members.
- Maintain Membership recruiting in the social media.
- Review and evaluate past membership efforts.
- Set a goal for members to be recruited.
- Send invitation to parents, teachers, past PTA officers and members, life members and other prospective members.
- Create a Brag board with past accomplishments and goals for the coming year.
- Use PTA and school websites, as well as newspaper, radio and television and community resources to membership and the value of PTA.
- Ask businesses to donate space on signboards, marquees and cable television.
- Assign committee members to contact non-parent citizens/businessmen in the community to recruit as members.
- Complete any other activities that the Membership Chair cannot complete alone.

### 13. Record, recruit and remit

#### Record - The Membership Roster

This is a spreadsheet of all your members to date. Ideally you want to be able to access this information by last name, class, membership type or other ways for easy reference to check who is a member. This is especially helpful when confirming eligibility to vote or access to member benefits. Be sure to share copies of the roster with your Treasurer and Secretary. REMEMBER - this roster belongs to the PTA and should not be shared with anyone.

All membership rosters should note the type of member for each person: regular, faculty, student, community and life member.

#### Report and Remit

The busiest time to recruit members is usually at the beginning of the school year, but membership recruiting and reporting should be year-round.

There are NO deadlines to submit membership rosters and dues to Virginia PTA.

There are deadlines for Membership Awards. The Awards, their requirements and the deadlines change yearly. Learn more about these Awards on the Virginia PTA website.

Report quickly and report often. Members names and dues should ideally be reported to Texas PTA at least monthly.

- Forward the member roster and dues report form to the Virginia PTA Office with a check for \$3.75 dues per member.
- Report only the names of new members for which you are submitting dues at that time. Members who have already been reported to Virginia PTA should not be included on subsequent reports and rosters.
- Retain the Virginia and National portions of dues in escrow until distribution to Virginia PTA. The Local PTA treasurer reports the National and Virginia PTA portions of dues separate from the funds belonging to the Local PTA.

- Please work closely and carefully with your Treasurer to submit membership rosters and dues in a timely manner. Following National PTA's policy, Virginia PTA will not reimburse overpayments more than 90 days after submission.

## 14. Keeping and engaging members

Once you have recruited members, it is important to find ways to make them feel like they are an important part of a vibrant association. Engaging members not only makes them feel valued, they are more likely to renew their membership when given the opportunity.

Engaged members value their membership in your PTA. Their dues will seem like a bargain. They are likely to join again next year and invite others to join.

Membership Chairs work closely with Programs Chairs to share information about what members want and expect from their PTA. Work with Hospitality Chair to make sure that your PTA is welcoming and friendly to EVERYONE. Work with the Communications Chair to share PTA information and ask people to join.

### 14.1 Welcome new members

Make a good first impression of your PTA with new members as their experience will shape how they perceive PTA. Consider these questions:

- Have new members been introduced to the PTA leaders?
- Do new members receive information about PTA member benefits and services?
- Do new members know the PTA's goals and objectives for the year?
- Have new members been informed about upcoming projects and programs?
- Does the PTA know the special talents and interests of its new members? Is the PTA willing to utilize them?
- Are new members welcomed enthusiastically and made to feel part of the group, not only at meetings but also in daily activities?

Here are ways to make sure new members feel welcome:

- Send a letter to new members thanking them for joining and welcoming them to PTA.
- Make sure members receive a membership card as a receipt and tangible sign that they have joined a nationwide association that stretches far beyond their Local PTA.
- Provide a new member packet with PTA and school information, volunteer opportunities, executive board member names, and a calendar of events.
- Recognize new members by name at PTA meetings, in newsletters, on bulletin boards, etc.

Keyways to keep members:

- Communicate - Keep in touch with members all year long. Be sure that members know what the PTA is doing and what events are happening. If members feel connected, they will be more likely to rejoin your PTA.
  - Make personal contact as much as possible whether by phone or catching up at school
  - Send regular emails and/or newsletters to members
  - Send important school or community information to non-members as well as members (helps with recruiting as well as retention)
  - Make contact to offer volunteer opportunities - recruit help!



- **Involve** - Offer members opportunities to be involved and participate in PTA. They want to make a difference for our children. Engage members by creating volunteer opportunities and providing programs that will be of value.
  - Offer regular volunteer opportunities that vary in time commitment and skill level. Describe the jobs very specifically, including the amount of time required, so that volunteers know just what is expected of them
  - When possible, create volunteer opportunities by breaking bigger jobs down into several smaller pieces. This will engage more members as well as prevent burnout of others.
  - Ready! Set! Achieve! Programs are free and available through Texas PTA and give your parents/grandparents the tools they need to raise children
  - Bring in community programs that will support PTA families
- **Create Importance** - Make PTA important to members by being sure that the PTA name is on every event, flyer, and program that is sponsored by PTA. Make PTA visible! Members will return if they find value in the organization.
  - Have a large banner made for your PTA that can be displayed at every event which is sponsored by your PTA
  - Be sure all printed material has the name of your PTA clearly visible
  - Design spirit wear that includes the name of your PTA
  - Make sure your members know about your goals and accomplishments
  - Be sure to point out member benefits from voting rights to discounts
- **Recognize** - Show members how important they are to the PTA family through recognition and reward. Show your appreciation for their support and contributions. If members feel that they are an important part of the organization, they will be wanting to return because they feel needed. More information about some types of PTA recognition are included later in this section.

## 14.2 Ideas for how to engage your members

Never underestimate the value of a sincere “Thank you for joining PTA. Your membership makes a difference.” Attach a thank you note to their membership card. Perhaps have students make the thank you cards.

- Celebrate ALL your members throughout the year! Handwritten thank you notes from your PTA team/executive board members after a big event (or even a small one) is always a big hit!
- Host several ‘meet & greet’ opportunities for your membership to get to know each other at the beginning of each school year and each January. Provide a fun ice breaker/scavenger hunt along with light refreshments and a simple ‘thank you’ message from your PTA.
- Host a ‘volunteer orientation or volunteer kickoff’ in the fall and spring times for new and returning families.
- Share advocacy reports and updates from Virginia PTA via website and social media outlets.
- Connect with the grandparents in your community as they join your campus for National Grandparents Day each September.
- Spotlight the National Walk to School or National Bike to School event held each October and April as part of your campus healthy lifestyles campaign.
- Host either a family board game or reading night in the fall and springtime as fun ways for families to connect within your communities. Choose something that many ages and backgrounds can enjoy.
- Provide a FAQ section on either your PTA website or at your events such as --” I am not able to volunteer, why should I join? Your \$XX membership dues helps to support various programs,



presentations and help show your child/student that you are involved in their education.” And show pictures!!

- Partner with a nearby school in your feeder pattern for joint presentations and events that will bring both communities together. Get to see some familiar faces along with new ones too!
- Evaluate your membership by seeking feedback through surveys, social media or PTA website.
- Offer a door prize to members (not just attendees) at your PTA meetings -- must sign in and be present.
- Indicate on printed sign-in check lists how many years a person has been a member.
- Remember to thank members for the volunteer work they do.
- Host a Volunteer appreciation event at the end of the year. Give certificates and public thanks for work.
- Be welcoming to everyone when they come to all PTA events. Everyone likes to be welcomed with a smile and a friendly greeting. Being a greeter is a fabulous job for a new volunteer with limited time.
- Reserve seats at PTA meetings and programs for “Members Only”.
- Publicize tangible member benefits from National and Virginia PTA (discounts, participation in Reflections, eligibility for scholarships, etc.) to win!

### 14.3 Why didn't they renew?

Unless you ask, you'll never know. Before you write off those who haven't renewed their membership, try to discover why. A personal phone call is preferable, but a letter or email can sometimes work. Be sure to mention the accomplishments of your PTA and the benefits the member gains through their membership.

### 14.4 Celebrate your success

One of the responsibilities of Membership Chairs that is often overlooked is celebrating success, but it is critically important to engaging with members.

Success begets success. When you are successful, shout it from the rooftops! People want to be part of a successful group. Celebrating your success accomplishes two goals - both appreciating members and aiding recruitment. Sharing accomplishments also reminds members that their PTA is part of a larger association that does care about them.

- Share your success with your membership.
  - Have you reached a goal or new milestone?
  - Have you earned an award for staff, men, students, grandparents, community members joining? When your PTA receives an award, tell EVERYONE!
  - Don't forget to share the great things your PTA is doing with member dollars. Let them know that their efforts and dollars are directly supporting their child.
- Share your success with Virginia PTA.
  - Virginia PTA and your colleagues across the state want to know what's working in your community. The Virginia PTA Membership Committee is collecting and publishing success stories and wants to hear from you! What's worked in your community? Would you like some fresh ideas? Visit [txpta.org](http://txpta.org) and look for ways to share your membership success stories and read others' stories.
- Apply for Virginia PTA Membership Awards

- Reaching membership milestones
- Increasing membership
- Successfully engaging specific member groups
- Achieving special membership challenges
- Watch the Virginia PTA website each summer for criteria!

### 14.5 Honor outstanding members

Outstanding volunteers whose work benefits students and the PTA should be recognized in special ways. There are many ways to do this ranging from the very simple to very special.

### 14.6 Council PTA recognitions

Many Council PTAs have created their own awards and criteria for presenting them. Check with your PTA Council Membership Chair to see if they offer any special recognitions to PTA members or even community members who have made a special difference in the lives of children in your community.

### 14.7 Virginia PTA Honorary Life Membership

Virginia PTA has made available the Texas PTA Honorary Life Membership as one of the highest honors presented to individuals for outstanding service to children and youth. The recipient does not have to be a PTA member nor must the service for which the honor has been bestowed be connected with the PTA. The only requirement for receiving a Texas PTA Honorary Life Membership is that the recipient is making or has made a worthwhile contribution to the well-being of children and youth.

The fee for presenting the Honorary Life Membership Award supports the scholarship fund and helps ensure longevity of the scholarship.

### 14.8 Virginia PTA President Award

Recognizing those people who have continued to give outstanding service to Virginia PTA. This award may be presented at any time. The recipient must have received the Virginia PTA Honorary Life Member Award.

The fee for presenting the President Award supports the scholarship fund and helps ensure longevity of the scholarship.

### 14.9 National PTA Life Achievement Award

This award is the highest honor from the nation's largest child advocacy association to the person who daily lives out his or her commitment to children. The fee for presenting the Life Achievement Award supports the National PTA Endowment Fund and helps ensure the longevity of the association. Your honoree need not be a PTA member to receive the award. More information about this extremely prestigious award can be found on the National PTA website.

National PTA Achievement Award recipients enrolling in a PTA are not exempt from payment of any portion of PTA dues - National, Texas, or Local PTA. If they are both a National and Texas PTA life member, they should enroll as a Texas PTA life member.

Your Council PTA may also offer a celebration of these awards for all PTAs in their service area.

## 15. Membership Procedure Book

A procedure book is a compilation of all the information and material necessary for the effective functioning of an office or committee and should contain resources and a history of the activities of a particular office/committee. It encourages continuity of work and provides a firm foundation for the future.

The following information should serve as a good foundation for your procedure book. As with all training materials, use what works and feel free to make changes to meet your specific needs.

- Contact list/directory. This should include names, phone numbers, addresses, and emails for your PTA executive committee/board, committee chairs, and a contact sheet from Virginia PTA.
- Standing rules and a copy of the approved budget for your PTA.
- National PTA's Resources and sections of this Training Guide focused on membership.
- Plan of work this year. Your plan should include a list of committee members, your membership total from last year, your plan of action, goals, ideas, and budget for this year, and a way to monitor and/or evaluate your progress.
- Calendar or annual timeline of events and/or activities to promote PTA membership.
- A current list of your PTA members. Bring this list to all PTA meetings.
- Relevant National and Virginia PTA articles, publications, and information.

You may choose additional items to be included in your procedure book. Keep in mind that the procedure book is not "law." Each membership chair will have different priorities, ideas, and goals. Your procedure book is designed to make your job easier and help you in organizing membership ideas. It is also a history to be passed along to the next membership chair. You may want to create a separate annual binder in conjunction with your procedure book. The annual binder would include specific information regarding your membership campaign, copies of flyers and newsletter articles that were sent home, and other time-related materials such as meeting minutes, and annual calendar of events. This would create an easy annual reference while maintaining the much-needed function of the procedure book.