

# **Pioneer Partners**

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## **GENERAL**

This Practice provides information on the role of the Pioneer Partner and the tremendous contribution our Partners and families can make to Pioneering. It also provides a guideline or model for Pioneer and Partner leaders in incorporating Partner involvement at the various levels of the Association.

## **PARTNERS IN SERVICE**

Long valued for the unique and vitally important volunteer resource they provide, Pioneer Partners became an official part of the Association family in 1973. Originally limited to the spouses of Pioneer members, the definition of Pioneer Partner was expanded in 1995 to allow “another family member or any individual designated by the Pioneer” to serve as the Pioneer Partner. Over the years, chapters, councils and clubs have devoted considerable attention to enlisting and increasing the participation of Pioneer Partners and families in furthering the Pioneer tradition of service, loyalty and fellowship.

In June of 2004, Pioneer delegates voted to change the role of Partners. Where once Partners were prohibited from voting or holding elected office and were exempt from the payment of dues, the June 2004 vote provided the option for Partners to vote and hold elected office. If elected to office, Partners are required to pay membership dues during their term.

## **PAYMENT AND COLLECTION OF PARTNER DUES**

Partner dues are the same as the dues paid by Regular Members. Partners elected to serve in office should submit their dues payment to their chapter president. The chapter president should send \$5 to Association headquarters (P.O. Box 31888, Denver, CO 80201). In addition, the name, address, telephone number, e-mail address and chapter name/number of the Partner should accompany the check. In subsequent years for as long as the Partner is in office, Association headquarters will render a bill for dues to the Partner and will send \$10 to the chapter or Group Vice President.

At the core of the Partner program is the concept that members, their Partners and families – as well as the Association and the community at large – benefit most when all the diverse elements of Pioneering work together, side by side, to improve the quality of life in those communities.

Associate Membership is the ultimate recognition of the invaluable relationship between Pioneers and their Partners in contributing to the success of the organization. Associate Membership, which is granted to the Partner of a regular or Life Member upon that member’s passing, is a tribute designed to recognize the Partner’s contribution and provide a means of encouraging the Partner’s continued association with Pioneering.

## **ENGAGING PARTNER AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT**

*Points of Light Foundation* research shows more and more people would like to give something back to their community, but increasingly, few have the time. What little discretionary time exists in our lives is often spread incredibly thin. People want to spend it with their families, invest it in their children. Family volunteering fills both of those needs, and more. By volunteering together, families enrich their relationships with one another and gain insights into the diversity and challenges of other human beings. Children, particularly, learn the lifelong lesson that by giving to others, they put their own problems in perspective. And, the children of volunteers are more likely to become the parents of volunteers.

For these reasons and many others, Pioneer entities should make an effort to choose community service projects which lend themselves to family participation.

In support of our commitment to family and partner involvement in Pioneering, the Association and its member benefit providers extend Pioneer Member Benefits to the Partner and often other family members of Pioneers.

## **PARTNER LEADERSHIP**

### ***At the Local Level***

While Partner can now hold office, it remains important for Pioneer chapter, council and club officers and community service chairs to maintain a focus on engaging Partners and families and retaining their involvement in Pioneering. Encourage an active Partner voice in the consideration and selection of community service and fellowship programs. Lend an attentive ear to Partner issues and a supporting hand to their efforts.

Developing Partner leaders who will champion the cause of family involvement is an excellent place to start.

While not all units have formalized these positions, each chapter/council/club is encouraged, to the extent possible, to provide some structure through which the unit can facilitate the process of attracting and involving Pioneer Partners and families – and incorporating their skills, abilities and interests into the core of the unit’s service and fellowship programs.

Just as those in Life Member representative positions help provide a voice in Pioneer matters for that invaluable segment of the membership, a Partner representative position, part of the unit executive committee, is ideally suited for this purpose. These leaders, and those taking Partner leadership roles at the group, council and club level, will carry the primary responsibility for communicating Partners’ interests and enhancing their involvement in ongoing activities.

The function, size and scope of the Partner leadership structure should be tailored to meet the needs of the Partner and family involvement population within the unit. In some

regions and chapters, Partner representatives form a team or a committee to address Partner and family issues from a broader perspective.

The chapter/council/club's Partner representative, which is typically a Partner but may be a regular or Life Member, serves as a liaison between the local Partner population and the unit's executive and community service committees. The person appointed by the unit president or executive committee to serve as the Partner representative should:

- Be well informed on Association policies and Pioneer activities
- Possess the ability to communicate, organize, and motivate
- Desire to foster the objectives and goals of the Pioneering among the chapter's Partner population, and
- Be available to attend executive committee meetings.

Partner representatives share equal status with the chairs of the other committees of the unit. Often, the chapter-level Partner representative chairs the chapter's Pioneer Partner Committee, which typically consists of all the Partner representatives within the chapter structure. Partner committees are often established at the council and club levels as well. These will typically consist of the Partner representative and a core of committed Partners.

The chairperson's primary role is to maintain a regular dialogue with the unit representatives, communication that provides a basis for periodic reports to the chapter executive and community service committees regarding Partner issues, activities and accomplishments.

### **The Group Partner Representative**

Some groups have found it beneficial to extend the Partner Committee approach to the Group level, creating a chain of Partner leaders that runs to and unites all levels of the organization.

The Partner or designee of the Group Vice President, for example, sometimes serves as a Group Partner representative or spokesperson. Any Pioneer or Partner can provide this liaison function, however. In this role they encourage the appointment of Partner leaders at each chapter, council and club and look to provide an interface, fostering an exchange of information between those leaders, the group association vice president and the Association Executive Committee. The Group Partner representative, like the chapter Partner Committee chair, supports Partner leaders and champions issues related to Partner and family involvement in Pioneering.

### **Primary Leadership Goals and Responsibilities**

The primary duties and responsibilities of the Partner representative are as follows:

1. *Be Visible* – Being known as the Partner representative and being available to your constituents are key to success. To do this, Partner leaders should:
  - Participate in as many projects as possible – others will follow your lead
  - Attend unit leadership meetings – your presence is a strong message of support
  - Take advantage of training sessions offered by your unit and others
  - Maintain a contact list of key Partner contacts
  - Ensure that Partners and other Partner leaders always know where to reach you.
2. *Assess the Partner environment* – How strong is the unit in Partner and family participation? Do Partners and families feel involved and welcome to participate? Are the projects undertaken reflective of Partners’ interest, abilities and the time they have available to contribute? Are there enough Partner-driven projects? Are there too many?
3. *Communicate* – Establishing and maintaining productive working relationships with key unit and project leaders is equally vital.
  - Discuss the status of the Partner and family involvement within the unit
  - Create a dialog with other Partner leaders to learn potential new methods for improving levels of Partner and family participation
  - Take every opportunity to share the ideas and success stories you have gathered from other units
  - Stay in touch with your chapter leaders as a constant source of suggestions, ideas and insights into upcoming new projects.
4. *Develop a Strategy* – How can the unit achieve greater Partners and family involvement? Working with unit leaders and key Partner participants, marshal a plan for maximizing the contributions of this important segment of the membership.
5. *Set Goals and Objectives* – Convert your strategy into action. Having sought out input on Partner activities, seek now to establish a plan or program for the upcoming year. Whether your goal is to increase Partner participation hours by 10 percent or the number of Partners and family members participating by 100, remember to make your goals SMART:
  - Specific
  - Measurable

- Action-oriented
  - Realistic, and
  - Time-bound.
6. *Celebrate Successes* – Recognize and celebrate the contributions of Partners and families to the Pioneer cause whenever possible. Remember that relevant and timely recognition helps increase participation! Some additional tips:
- Thank you notes are a lost art
  - Unit web sites, e-mails, and newsletters can highlight Partners and families and boost involvement
  - Partner of the Month awards can help in developing new Partner leaders.
7. *Learn* -- At the start of each Pioneer year, examine the strategies, goals and objectives from the prior year with an eye toward lessons learned. What worked well? What can be improved? Share your findings with unit leaders and other Partner representatives.