



“Prevention In Practice”

ADVISOR HANDBOOK

The role of the advisor is an extremely important one. The advisor serves as the communication link between SLS, the community, the school administration and the students.

Advisor Tips

The following are tips for advisors from the SLS chapter network

- * Let the students see you at meetings regularly. Be fully present.
- * Schedule a weekly time for your executive board or group of officers. If necessary, talk about group activities. If no activities are scheduled, use the time to be supportive with what is happening in the lives of students.
- * Ask for an agenda prepared before each meeting. This lets you give input on things to be discussed and also makes your leaders plan ahead.
- * When you return from a professional conference, share any handouts or thoughts about a program that you attended. This lets them know that you are continuing to learn, and want to share new thoughts with them.
- * Take key leaders out to lunch or dinner as a thank you for their efforts. This can be either formal or informal.
- * Help network with key administrators at school who might help your members with funding or positive community influence.
- * Help keep the chapter members informed with current events in the news that pertain to some of the educational objectives of the group.
- * Send letters to the parents of key members, expressing the value of the leadership skills of their son or daughter.
- * Feature your student members in the school district newsletter with photos or an article about the chapter mission, an activity, service project or award received by your group.



- * Encourage the chapter members to get involved with a community service project. Help them become involved in community activities that you might know about. Students sometimes can be out of touch with the community outside of the school.
- * Encourage your group to hold one of their meetings at a different place every now and then, to change the pace.
- * Offer to write recommendations (or solicit other school staff help) for outgoing chapter members who are involved in applying to college or job search.
- * Help the group set up an email account or Facebook page so they can discuss issues with other schools or with the SLS office. Give them access to computer time in your office for this purpose and others. Share the SLS website – <http://www.slsToday.org>; www.studentsleadingstudents.org
- * Take the lead in setting up a meeting between members and key members of the community (i.e., mayor, police chief, etc). Also help them network with other organizations at school, and keep an ear out so that your students are not duplicating other school efforts or stepping on the toes of others.
- * Be willing to confront members if you have heard through the grapevine that their personal behavior is in conflict with some of the group's values. This can be a positive experience. At the same time, encourage those members who have been making healthy choices in their own lives as role models for what they are trying to accomplish.
- * Encourage your group to work toward and apply for national, regional, state, community and school awards.
- * Constantly be on the lookout to recruit new members. Help students recognize opportunities to do this. Constantly be "bringing along" future group leaders.
- * Get together with key members before the beginning of the year, or after holiday break to have a goal setting and bonding day. If possible, hold this meeting away from school, perhaps at a park or other positive atmosphere.
- * Let the group fail ... once. Many groups have told us about the learning experience because something they worked on did not turn out as planned. The advisor can be a key part of that learning by supporting the group after the fact, and moving them from frustration to education, leading a discussion about what the students think went wrong and setting goals to keep the same thing from happening again. Processing successes and mistakes are learning opportunities that can provide a life-long effect.



- * Encourage the chapter members to keep a group binder documenting all the events in which they have participated throughout the year. Take pictures all year for the archives, and make a scrapbook together – each member completes a page. Have a slide show at the end of the year. Add photos, etc. to the chapter exhibit. All of this makes award applications, grant applications and press events interesting.
- * Give out awards for best event, outstanding member, hardest worker, first year leadership, membership recruiter, mentor, fundraiser, most organized, “unsung hero.”
- * Do everything in your power to help your students find resources needed to attend conferences where they can network and gain ideas from other SLS high school and middle school chapters or prevention organizations.
- * Help to get other school faculty invested in the group. This might mean getting the principal to attend an event, or getting other key faculty members excited about the activities of the group. Remember that the more support you gain from faculty and staff, the more you will gain from your advising, and the more the group will gain in terms of school image.
- * Make available the times and places for support groups in the community and encourage members to attend if applicable.
- * Give permission to the chapter members to try non-traditional programming (peer theater, sidewalk art, videos, sculpture, etc.), especially if someone in the group has an interest or talent in that area.
- * Take care of yourself. Advisors usually wear too many hats. If your students see you healthy, they will tend to copy you. If your students see you unhealthy, they will tend to copy you. Let them know how they can make your advisor role a better one, and be clear about what you can and can't do for them. Get support from other advisors.
- * Help students to centralize their efforts. Attempt to get a central office for your group.
- * Mediate, motivate, facilitate, but do not dominate. Get students together and excited about what they are doing, and step back and allow them to carry out their project.
- * Broaden their perspective. Create a partnership between your organization and other school offices to form well rounded programs.
- * Be the voice of reality. Let students know all of the possible challenges of a new project. Let them learn by doing, but at the same time, help them to avoid a disaster.



- * Help students get organized. Good advisors provide a sense of continuity and structure. Get a professional organizer to volunteer to train your group.
- * Update school library and department resources on prevention, safety and health.
- * Emphasize the need for training and goal setting. If this is not your expertise, find a resource to help your students do these things on a regular basis. Encourage learning on health issues, leadership development, and personal growth. SLS provides training in all of these areas.
- * Share Student Leadership Services' resources with your students. Show them the SLS newsletter on www.slsToday.org. Print copies for your group. Talk about resource materials available from SLS and other organizations. Encourage attendance at local, regional and national conferences, especially those planned and facilitated by students, such as the events that SLS plans.

Thank you for helping students live healthy and purposeful lives.