

# WELCOME ABOARD

## People First Orientation Guide

PEOPLE
FIRST
OF ONTARIO



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# KNOWING PFO

A

## What is People First?




People First of Ontario is part of a national movement for men and women with an intellectual disability. As members, we work to support one another to make sure our rights as full citizens are recognized. We do this through peer support, sharing our personal stories, developing leadership skills, advocating for our right to choose where and with whom we live, and by ensuring that our voices are heard and respected. We work together to educate and influence communities and government to ensure that all people who have an intellectual disability are fully included and supported to live as equal citizens in Canada.

You can find People First Chapters in communities across Canada. There are also provincial and territorial Chapters and a National People First organization called People First of Canada.

The members of People First Chapters are people who have an intellectual disability. The Chapters are run and overseen by the members. Many Chapters have Allies. Allies are people who do not have an intellectual disability and support the movement. Most Allies are volunteers.

There are currently People First Chapters in 12 of the 13 provinces and territories in Canada. Currently, there is not a Chapter in Nunavut, but we hope to see a Chapter form there too.





B

## The Rise of People First in Canada

The rise of People First in North America had its beginnings in 1973 in British Columbia. The British Columbia Association for Community Living organized a conference for the first time with a panel of people who had been labelled. The people on the panel were living in an institution and wanted to live in the community. They wanted to have friends and learn things so they could live and work on their own.

Some people from the United States were at that conference in British Columbia. That inspired them to organize a whole conference just for people who had been labelled.

***In 1974*** there was another conference in Salem, Georgia. At this conference there was a lot of talk about the 'R' word and how it made people feel. People said they wanted to be seen as people first. When they started talking about what they should name their movement, the name "People First" made a lot of sense.

***By 1983*** there were local People First Chapters in every province in Canada, including Ontario. As more and more local Chapters formed, people started talking about organizing provincial People First Chapters. By 1991, there were provincial People First Chapters in every province.

C

## The History Of Deinstitutionalization



An institution is a place that takes a piece of your soul. You have no voice, no choice, no identity, and no dignity. The first institution opened in Ontario in Orillia in 1876 and became known as Huronia Regional Centre. At one time 2, 600 people lived there. By the mid-1970s, the government operated 16 institutions. More than 10, 000 children and adults lived in these institutions. Often times, institutions were places of fear in which people were punished and abused. We stand by those who are survivors and we mourn those who didn't make it out.

## People have the right to make their own decisions and choices.

In 1990, People First of Ontario heard about the deaths of 17 people in an institution in Brantford, Ontario and 16 people in an institution near Oshawa, Ontario. The Board of People First of Ontario was very angry about the deaths. They did not like the fact that the Government of Ontario was not going to hold an inquest. They were upset that the Ministry of Community and Social Services had stopped moving people out of institutions. The People First of Ontario board postponed its meeting and went down to the Minister's office, and had a sit-in in her board room. Eventually, they got to meet with her. The Government held an inquest. People First of Ontario worked with the Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped (ARCH) to represent its views at the inquest. The last institution closed in 2009. From the time institutions opened to the time they were closed, 50, 000 people lived and were forced to live in them.

## People are meant to live in community with one another.

Institutions are a result of a frame of mind that leads to the creation of a building. The building then becomes a place where like-minded people exert their power and control in ways that suppress others. Through lack of knowledge, education and support, parents were often pressured into placing their children into these facilities.

Because of this way of thinking, we have been taken away from our families and communities, and have been kept in institutional settings. We have been kept in sheltered workshops and schools apart from other people in our community. People have forgotten that we have DREAMS and NEEDS and ABILITIES. We all have something to offer.




*www.mcss.gov.on.ca/en/dshistory/firstInstitution/index.aspx*



# D People First & The Charter of Rights and Freedoms

People First members are sometimes referred to as "Self- Advocates." Self-Advocates are people who speak up for themselves. People need to know their rights. They need to stand up for their rights. People First members speak up about issues that are important to them and other people who have a disability. The rights that we speak up about are found in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.




## Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

- the Right to Life
- the Right to Freedom
- the Right to Control what Happens to your Body
- the Right to Equal Protection and Equal Benefit of the Law
- the Right of Choice
- the Right to Informed Consent (to know your choices)
- the Right to Have Things Explained to You
- the Right to Be Heard
- the Right to See a Lawyer or other Advisor
- the Right to Have Enough Money to to Buy Food, Have a Place to Live, and Decent Clothing
- the Right to Proper Medical Care
- the Right to Charge Someone if They Hurt You or Take Something of Yours
- the Right to Be Educated
- the Right to Apply for a Job and be Taken Seriously
- the Right to Safe Working and Living Conditions

# E Mission Statement of People First of Ontario

**WE DEVELOPED OUR MISSION STATEMENT BASED ON THE CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOM.**

- To promote equality for all persons who have experienced being labeled developmentally disabled.
- To assist each other in speaking up for ourselves and making our own decisions.
- To teach the community about the rights, abilities and strengths of people who have experienced the label of a developmental disability.
- To hold meetings and discussions for the purpose of organizing and educating people with a developmental disability.
- To increase the membership, help new Chapters get started and provide continuing support in order to further these objectives.
- To raise funds and acquire property for the purpose of People First.

- **To promote EQUALITY for all people.**
- **To assist other people trying to speak up for themselves and making their own decisions.**
- **To teach members about the RIGHTS, ABILITIES and STRENGTHS of People First of Ontario.**





# F Who's in Charge?

- The members elect the Board of Directors.
- The Board of Directors is accountable to the members and works on behalf of the members.
- The Board of Directors elects the Officers.
- The Officers form the Executive Committee.
- The Executive Committee is accountable to the Board of Directors.
- All accountability flows back to the members.
- Between 10 and 15 people are elected by the members.
- No more than 1 Director from each local Chapter.
- At least 1 Director must speak French and English.

## How People Become Directors

The past Presidents sit automatically on the Board.

The Board appoints (elects) from amongst the other Board members a President, Vice President, Second Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

## Nominations Committee

People First of Ontario has a nominations committee and those selected to serve on it, commit to one year. Recruiting new members or new board members happens all year long and we are always looking for people to be a part of our board or committees.





# THINKING ABOUT STARTING UP A GROUP?

## A Questions to ask yourself:

- Why do I want a People First Chapter?
- Where do I start?
- How much do I know about People First?
- Where will we have our meetings?
- Who can be a part of a People First Chapter?
- How will they get to the meetings?
- Who do I know that can help me start up a People First Chapter?





## B Forming a Board

### WHAT IS A MATRIX?

A Matrix helps organizations decide who would be good to sit on the board according to their level of expertise, knowledge, skills, and experience.

A matrix can help identify the needs and strengths of the people you want to be part of the board. This can help define clear recruiting priorities for board recruitment. What are some of the skills that board members need to have? You can start by making a list of the skills needed and then put it into a chart like this one.

### EXAMPLE:

| Name | Board Skills | Advocacy Skills | Writing Skills | Money Skills | Reading Skills | Computer Skills |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Joe | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Mark | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Julie | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | |
| Carolyn | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ |

Once you have put a matrix together for your board, you can develop a written job description. This will help you and the board members to understand and accept the specific duties and responsibilities that come with board directorship. Organizations find this very helpful in the long term because a job description is a written statement that clarifies each person's responsibilities. Job descriptions must be in clear, plain language, and state specifically what the expectations are for each position.
***http://www.createthefuture.com/developing.htm***



# C How to Attract New Members

People usually join an organization because they want to do something for their community or they need to find something to do to pass the time. Now you have to look at how to keep the members you have and encourage new people to come on board!

## Tips to Attract New Members and Keep Them:

- Be clear about what People First is and how people can get involved.
- Use lots of different media and text to invite members and communicate what People First is all about (I.e., books, brochures, videos, and posters).
- Host your meetings in the community (I.e. City hall, the library, malls, outdoors etc.).
- Bring in guest speakers to meetings.
- Appoint a membership committee.
- Give the membership chair one minute to speak to the group at every meeting.
- Find ways to make new members feel valued and important.
- Give aways are always fun! What about decals or bumper stickers or a welcome swag bag?
- Make some meetings social events.
- Host an Open House.
- Start a quarterly or yearly newsletter to recognize new members and summarize the Chapter's accomplishments.
- Honour outstanding members who are involved in the community by nominating them for awards (I.e. Maybe through your local Chamber of Commerce). This raises the profile of your Chapter and attracts more interest.
- Have members give talks at other organizations about People First and the work of your Chapter.
- Work on a community project with other groups.
- Write letters to the newspaper about the campaigns your Chapter is working on.

## Make it FUN!!

***https://greatideastoshare.com/2011/10/11/100-ways-to-recruit-new-members/***

***https://www.acep.org/content.aspx?id=22868***



# HOW TO IDENTIFY THE CHAPTER'S PRIORITIES

## A Steps to Take

1. Ask people what is important to them, and what they want to learn from being in the group.
2. Once you've discussed what every person wants to learn about, ask them to vote on what the top three priorities are.
3. It might be helpful to survey the group and ask how they would like to learn more about the priorities (I.e. guest speakers, hands on activities, research etc.).
4. The priorities need to connect to the priorities of People First of Ontario: Real Work, Real Homes, Inclusive Education and Legal Capacity.
5. Create a list of objectives or 'next steps' based on the top three priorities.
6. Identify the objectives that are most important to your Chapter.
7. Create another list of tasks that will need to be completed in order to complete those objectives and repeat this process for every objective you have.
8. Determine what objectives/ tasks are achievable for both short-term and long-term planning.
9. Develop a work plan.
10. A work plan is where the president of the board assigns tasks to individuals capable of completing them appropriately, with or without support, so as to make sure the objectives are met.
11. It is important to have and identify personal priorities that factor into the Chapter's day to day operation, play to your strengths when choosing these things, and know your limits.
12. At the end of each meeting, take what you've learned and put it into practice.
13. Allow some time at the next meeting to debrief or discuss the progress on the work plan.




# Important things to remember

Determining what your priorities are isn't as difficult as it may seem. It really is as simple as what's important to your Chapter. This is usually connected to what needs to be improved in the local community. For instance, if a priority of your Chapter is to make transit more accessible, then an objective or next step could be to talk to your community's transit manager. It's important to keep the priorities and objectives you're trying to complete manageable. If your Chapter tries to complete too many things at once, then it's going to seem like nothing is getting accomplished or that it's taking forever. When this happens, people tend to lose interest and may not do their part so tasks really won't get completed.

To have 3 priorities, all with the same timelines is too much to have on the go at one time. This is where your Chapter picks long-term priorities and short-term priorities. The long-term priorities aren't any less important, you just have longer (usually over a period of years) to complete them. The short-term priorities are done in a smaller period of time (usually weeks or months). Writing your priorities and tasks/objectives required for completion down in a work plan helps hold your Chapter accountable for what it said it would do, to sponsors, partners and their general members etc.





# B The Do's and Don'ts of Setting Priorities

## DO

- Make sure your priorities have a purpose and connect to the priorities of People First Ontario. If the priority has a purpose and meaning, then your members that are assisting will see the value in moving forward and getting the priority completed. This will also make it easier to recruit new members or supporters when needed.
- Assign tasks according the individual's abilities and community connections. In doing this, you prevent people from having to do jobs that weren't assigned to them, which can cause internal tension and resentment among Chapter members. This also gives the individual a feeling that they're contributing in a positive way (even if it is with support).
- Have deadlines and stick to them! Deadlines show participants the importance of getting tasks done in a timely fashion to ensure fulfillment of the priority. Therefore, having deadlines ensures continual progress.
- Get to know your members and encourage them to actively contribute according to their passions and strengths (.e. If you are good working with computers offer to do a reasonable amount of computer work for your Chapter).
- Encourage members who are done their tasks first to offer assistance to those who have not yet completed their tasks. Many hands can make for light work.
- Allow celebrations where appropriate. If you just accomplished a major priority, especially one that was more difficult, such as successfully pushing legislation through local/provincial/federal government, go out for dinner as a group. Remember to set a budget though, especially if you're using the Chapter's funds.
- Allow and ask for input from team members on the list of priorities. Someone may point out a fact the others did not think of.

## DON'T

- There's no "I" in team. You have a team of people so not any one person is doing everything and getting worn out.
- Continually push back deadlines. Pushing back a deadline once or twice when necessary is fine, but doing it repeatedly makes the deadline meaningless.
- Take on too much. If you have too many priorities your Chapter tries to take on at one time then people won't know where to start and nothing will get done.
- Dismiss people's opinions about the priorities they would like to see dealt with. This can cause tension among members.
- Lose focus about what your top priorities are. Being unfocused causes confusion among your team and can lead to lack of motivation.
- Settle for second best results when you know your Chapter can do better.



# C How Does it all Fit Together?



It's a good idea for your Chapter to form a team or working committee made up of the Chapter's members. This team can develop a work plan of the priorities they want to tackle on both a long-term and short-term basis. By splitting the priorities into long-term and short-term goals it lessens the pressure of having everything needing to get done at once. Lists give individuals an idea of how much work there will be and, as you cross stuff off, the team can see it getting smaller which shows progress. Have each individual identify their passions and strengths so you can assign tasks accordingly, therefore creating a positive environment and increasing the likelihood of success.

It is important to have deadlines. Talking about how long the timeline is on the projectt shows team members how much of a priority they need to make their assigned tasks. The shorter the timeline the higher priority a task is. Encouraging team members to help each other whenever or wherever possible is important in two ways; it decreases the time a priority takes to get completed and can bring the teams' morale up. Another way to boost morale is to celebrate major accomplishments. By celebrating major accomplishments people are motivated to do their best. (This can be said for any workplace, not just a People First Chapter!)

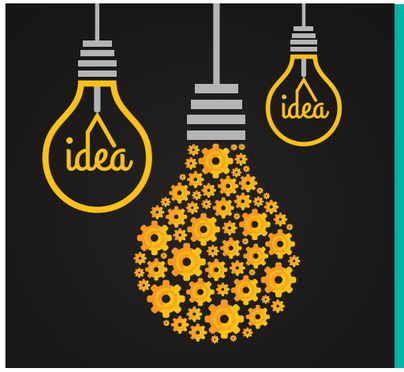
To sum it up, once you have identified your Chapter's priorities and timelines, work as a team and stick to deadlines. This ensures tasks are finished on time. To maintain focus as to the priorities you're tackling first, keep the priority list minimal. This avoids overwhelming people with too much stuff. Don't dismiss people's opinions as they may think of things the team as a whole didn't and don't settle for second best results when you know the team can do better.





# GROWING THE GROUP

## A Keep it Simple




Often times one of the biggest challenges with growing the Chapter is keeping members engaged and interested in the work for the long haul. Some great ways to keep members involved and excited about the work are:

**MAKE IT EASY TO PARTICIPATE**
Members will not want to come back and stay involved in the work if they are bored and feel that there is no room for them to share their input.

**WELCOME ABOARD**
Host an introductory Meet and Greet Info Session to help new members understand the organization and the priorities of People First.

**HELLO FRIEND**
Make sure that new members are welcomed and introduced at the start of each meeting. It might be helpful to put together a little welcome package or arrange to take them out for a coffee before the next meeting.

### STAY THE COURSE
Hold regular get-togethers for all members to review the priorities of People First and be part of new learning opportunities. Is there a workshop or conference coming up that people would benefit from attending? Why not host a teambuilding day or afternoon with your members?

### STEP UP
Encourage members to get involved and take the lead in Chapter projects. Each Chapter sets their own priorities that align with the priorities of People First Ontario. What is your Chapter working on and what are some ways that members can get involved?

### MENTOR NEWBIES
Team up newbies with experienced members to learn new tasks and responsibilities. It is really important that older, more experienced members have an outlet to share their wisdom in a way that does not discourage or turn off the interest of a younger or new member. One way to do this is to create diverse teams that mix experienced members with newer members based on shared interests and roles.

### GIVE A LITTLE LOVE
Thank people for coming and for the work that they do! Everyone likes to feel appreciated. Knowing people care about the work and time they have given, will make them want to come back for more.

### ALL IN
Structure your meetings in ways that are exciting and give opportunities for all people to participate. One person talking for most of the meeting does not make room for others to share what they know. Some Chapters hold their board meeting first to get through all the business and then follow up with the membership meeting.

### PUNCH AND PIE
Encourage your members to meet socially with others and take part in social events outside of the Chapter. Food is a big drawing card for people and unlocks conversations that might not happen otherwise.

### FACE TIME
The leadership team needs to spend time talking to members and getting to know new members. It is not enough to just see each other at meetings. Take the time to get to know people. Life happens to all of us and sometimes members need to be invited back to the Chapter if they have been absent for a while. Pick up the phone or arrange a visit to keep connected to your members.



# B Build Community Connections



It is so important that members get out in to the community and meet lots of different people. Sharing the work of People First with others in the community attracts future members, volunteers and possible funders. Be sure that all the members understand that they represent People First and that the relationships they build with others has the potential to hurt or strengthen the movement.

It is also important that members are involved at decision making tables in the community. This is a great way for the voice of People First to have a vital presence in the community and another way to meet potential new allies and friends who will help support the cause. It is also important for the Chapter to identify ways that community members can contribute to help support and further the work.

**“Always remember that the role of friends and allies of the Chapter is to work in cooperation with the members, not for the members.**

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