State Neurosociety E-Manual

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Introduction

Though not official chapters, the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) seeks to have an active relationship with state neurological societies. These state neurosocieties provide unique benefits to members at the local level. Benefits typically include continuing medical education programs, networking opportunities, coalition partnerships, and having a common voice on advocacy issues. To encourage the growth and support of neurosocieties, the Academy is committed to creating a mutually beneficial affiliation with all state neurological societies. Considering that no two neurosocieties are alike, this assessment is an on-going process.

Over the past eight years, the Academy's outreach to state societies has evolved considerably. In 2006, the Academy held the first annual State Society Leadership Roundtable to bring together neurosociety leaders and discuss common challenges. In 2008, a supplemental Roundtable session was held at the AAN Annual Meeting in addition to the full meeting. Coming together to share successful strategies and unique solutions has proven to be very worthwhile. The eighth annual meeting was held at the AAN headquarters in August 2013.

As a supplement to all that is learned from these meetings, the following e-manual contains resources created specifically to assist state neurological societies to started, maintain viability, and to thrive. The resources are intended to provide guidance to state society leaders and executives. Keep in mind that success looks different in every state. Good luck!

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Neurosociety Overview

Neurosociety List

State	Neurological Society	Website
AL	Alabama Academy of Neurology	
AZ	Arizona Neurological Society	http://ans.aan.com
AR	Arkansas Neurological Society	
CA	California Neurology Society	http://acn.aan.com
CO	Colorado Society of Clinical Neurologists	http://cscn.aan.com
KY	Commonwealth Neurological Society	http://cwns.aan.com
CT	Connecticut Neurological Society	http://cns.aan.com
FL	Florida Society of Neurology	http://fsn.aan.com
GA	Georgia Neurological Society	www.ganeurosociety.org
HI	Hawaii Neurological Society	http://hns.aan.com
IN	Indiana Neurological Society	http://ins.aan.com
ID	Idaho Neurological Society	
IA	Iowa Neurological Society	http://ina.aan.com
LA	Louisiana Neurological Society	http://lans.aan.com
MA	Massachusetts Neurologic Association	http://mna.aan.com
MI	Michigan Neurological Association	http://mina.aan.com
MN	Minnesota Society of Neurologic Sciences	http://msns.aan.com
MO	Missouri State Neurological Association	
NY	New York State Neurological Society	http://nysns.aan.com
NC	North Carolina Neurological Society	http://ncns.aan.com
NH	Northern New England Neurological Society	www.nnens.org
PA	Pennsylvania Neurological Society	http://pns.aan.com
RI	Rhode Island Neurological Society	http://rins.aan.com
SC	South Carolina Neurologic Association	http://scna.aan.com
TN	Tennessee Academy of Neurology	http://tnan.aan.com
TX	Texas Neurological Society	www.texasneurologist.org
VA	Virginia Neurological Society	http://vns.aan.com
WA	Washington State Neurological Society	www.washingtonneurology.org
WI	Wisconsin Neurological Society	http://www.wineurolsoc.com/
WV	West Virginia Neurological Society	

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Hosted Speaker Program

In 2008, the Academy formally launched a hosted speaker program to make speakers available to interested state neurological societies on timely issues. Neurosociety meetings play an essential role in promoting and advancing the profession of neurology. The goal of this program is to offer enhanced CME course options to neurosocieties and to keep Academy members up-to-date on relevant issues and activities.

Available Topics

Advocacy

- Academy Advocacy Update
- Get Involved

Medical Economics

- EHR—selection, implementation
- Electronic Tools
- General CPT Coding
- CPT Coding—neurodiagnostic
- E/M Coding
- Disease-Specific Coding
- ICD-10 Coding
- Practice Management—the business of neurology
- Payer Interactions and Contracting
- General MEM/AAN Current Initiatives

Practice

- Any current Academy Clinical Practice Guideline
- Patient Safety 101
- Malpractice & Neurologists: Patient Safety As Your Best Defense
- Quality Improvement & Neurology
- Maintenance of Certification
- Abuse and Violence in Neurological Care
- Doctor Can I Drive? Driving Issues in the Elderly?

The Academy covers all travel, lodging, and meal expenses for all speakers in this program. As a society, it is not essential to provide honoraria for a speaker; however, most societies pay hosted speakers the same amount as all other speakers at its meeting ($250–$1,000). Most often speakers are committee members, guideline authors, or issue experts. Occasionally staff speakers will be invited to speak. Please note that we are not able to accommodate every request, but chances of securing a speaker increase the further in advance one is requested. If your society is interested in having the Academy send a speaker on one of these topics to your next meeting, or if there is a subject you would like to be included on this list, please contact Dave Showers *dshowers@aan.com.*

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Website Content Management System

Since a website is essential to the success and presence of an organization, the Academy has been supporting website hosting and content management service for state societies since 2002. Currently, 18 societies have taken advantage of this service.

Opportunities:

- Advertise your meetings
- Promote your mission and goals
- Publicize your bylaws and board of directors
- Gain new members with online payment and applications
- Offer your newsletter to a mass audience
- Provide members with position statements on relevant issues
- Update members on current advocacy issues
- Access to Academy resources
- Upload media files (photos from events, clinical trials, etc.)

Academy hosted sites:

http://ncns.aan.com
http://mina.aan.com
http://nysns.aan.com
http://acn.aan.com
http://fsn.aan.com
http://pns.aan.com
http://lans.aan.com
http://cwns.aan.com
http://msns.aan.com
http://vns.aan.com
http://mna.aan.com
http://rins.aan.com
http://tnan.aan.com
http://ans.aan.com
http://cns.aan.com
http://ins.aan.com
http://scna.aan.com
http://cscn.aan.com

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Creating your website:

- Contact Academy staff about interest
- Submit your society's logo
- Staff will create two color templates for your review
- Design is created using chosen color template
- Review period—You have one opportunity to suggest changes
- Allow staff two months to complete your website

Website Content:

- Creating content and updating your site is explained in these comprehensive instructions.
- It is important to generate the documents and materials that will populate your site during the design process. Once your site is constructed you will already have information to upload.
- Contact your Board of Directors to find a site editor. The editor will receive a username and password from Academy staff. Staff will also schedule a call with the editor to explain the content management system.

Popular Pages and Content:

Mission	Board of Directors	Events	Membership Application
Membership Benefits	Research & Clinical Trials	Newsletter	Local Advocacy
Society History	Job Opportunities	Online Payment	AAN Resources

Contract:

All societies must sign a contract with the Academy.

Meeting Promotion

The following resources are available to help neurosocieties promote meetings:

Targeted E-mail Blasts

Using our grassroots communication software, the Academy can send an e-mail message on behalf of your state society to all the AAN members in your state. Please note that we cannot send meeting announcements to all US members. On average, 25–30 percent of these e-mails are opened, which is a slightly higher open rate than most non-profit blast e-mails. We can include your society's logo or branding (all images must be saved as URLs). We can generally send the messages out on your desired schedule; however, we may not be able to accommodate requests outside the scope of the Academy's guidelines for contacting members.

Sample meeting promotion schedule:	
Save the date!	3–6 months before meeting
1st Meeting Registration notice	6–8 weeks before meeting
Last call to Register	2–4 weeks before meeting

AAN Mailing Lists

The Academy offers up to two free mailing lists a year to state neurosocieties. Once the request is submitted, staff will send member mailing information in an Excel spreadsheet. Contact *dshowers@aan.com* for a mailing list.

AAN Website/AANnews Calendar

The Academy adds the date, contact information, and links for upcoming state neurological societies meetings on the *state resources* page. State society meetings are also included in the calendar of the monthly *AANnews*® publication.

Creative solutions

- Ask your State Medical Society to post your meeting on their website or publications.
- Ask neurosociety leaders or members to send the meeting notice to colleagues, universities, hospitals, clinics, etc.
- Ask your pharmaceutical representatives or other exhibitors to distribute meeting flyers to other offices or customers. *(Note: rules/customs vary state to state. FSN has had a lot of success using this technique to recruit for their Neurology for the non-Neurologist program.)*
- Recruit Office Managers to send meeting notices to their colleagues or regional organizations.
- Recruit PA's, nurse practitioners, or other meeting attendee targets to send meeting notices to their colleagues or regional organizations.
- Work with County or City neurological societies to promote your meeting. Offer to cross- promote their next meeting.

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Neurosociety Meeting Communication Template

Please allow up to three business days for Academy staff to process your request. Contact Dave Showers at *dshowers@aan.com* or (612) 928-6132 with questions.

When would you like your message to be sent?	***DATE:**
What subject line should the email have?	***SUBJECT LINE:**
Who should the email appear to be from? *(ie. meeting planner or society president)*	***FROM:**
***EMAIL BODY:**	

Please return completed form to Dave Showers at *dshowers@aan.com.*

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Exhibiting & AAN Updates

Exhibiting

Academy staff has been formally exhibiting at state neurological society meetings since 2004. Academy staff members are on track to be present at 16 meetings in 2013.

Both the Academy and your society benefit from this exhibiting relationship. For many AAN members it is the only opportunity they have to speak with Academy staff face to face. This is especially true for physicians who do not attend the AAN's Annual Meeting or Regional Conferences. It gives your society's members a chance to learn current Academy initiatives, membership benefits, and upcoming events.

Exhibiting allows Academy staff to gain knowledge of member needs and collect first-hand member feedback. In-person communication is important in the development of our grassroots advocacy network, and gives staff a venue to advertise our advocacy training programs. Although the percentage of state society members who are not members of the AAN is small, exhibiting also allows Academy staff to promote Academy membership.

Exhibiting involves one or two Academy staff members attending your meeting and offering Academy related resources and messages. Information is presented at a booth, similar to that used by other exhibitors. However, since Academy staff is there to offer Academy resources—not to sell products—it is advantageous for the Academy table to be located outside of the general exhibit space. The most desirable location is near the registration table where we have the opportunity to greet all attendees and are happy to provide registration support.

AAN Updates

Academy staff is also available to present the overall Academy message during an "Academy Update." It works best when this is included on the agenda ahead of time. These updates can include any of the following: overall Academy update, advocacy, medical economics, or practice management. It is best to allow 15–30 minutes on the agenda for these updates. If you cannot make time on the agenda, staff is always willing to present a quick 5-minute update.

Needs Assessments

A common difficulty experienced by state societies is a lack of member motivation and an overall misunderstanding or lack of mission for the society. For this reason, the Academy is able to assist societies by providing needs assessments of their membership. This allows the Academy to gather highly valuable data to help the society meet the unique needs of its members.

Each year, three needs assessments are offered free of charge on a first-come, first-served basis. If you are interested in a needs assessment for your society, please contact Dave Showers at *dshowers@aan.com.* Please allow Academy staff three months for the electronic assessment and data collection.

View an example of a Needs Assessment

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Sample Needs Assessment

Needs Assessment for New Statewide Neurological Society

ID #__/__/__/__/__/__/

1. How important is a Washington State neurological society to you? (Please choose only one)

☐ Very important ☐ Important ☐ Somewhat important ☐ Not important

2. Are you a member of the following organizations?

			If YES, for how many years?
a) American Academy of Neurology	☐ No	☐ Yes	_____
b) American Neurological Association	☐ No	☐ Yes	_____
c) American Medical Association	☐ No	☐ Yes	_____
d) County Medical Association	☐ No	☐ Yes	_____
e) Medical Society of the State of Washington	☐ No	☐ Yes	_____
f) Local neurological association	☐ No	☐ Yes	_____

If YES which one(s)? _____

3. Which of the following services, by level of importance, should a state neurological society provide?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Unimportant	Very Unimportant
a Monitoring WA legislative developments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Advocacy events at state assembly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Assisting with HMO contract negotiations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. CME courses for neurologists	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Coalition building with outside groups	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Educating the general public about neurology	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Training, assistance with computers in medicine	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Group purchasing program for office supplies, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. Group insurance plans (life, disability, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

j. Other _____

4. **If a state neurological society were formed to fulfill those unmet needs, how much would you be willing to contribute in annual dues? (Please choose only one)**

   ☐ $25 ☐ $50 ☐ $100 ☐ $150 ☐ $200 ☐ Other (amount) $_____

5. **If a Washington State neurological society were formed, would you be interested in volunteering to support the effort?**

   ☐ Yes (if yes, go to question #6) ☐ No ☐ Possibility

6. **If yes, in what capacity would you be willing to participate? (Please select all that apply)**

   ☐ Board membership ☐ Committee membership (Please go to question #7)
   ☐ Speakers bureau ☐ Other _____

7. **If you have selected committee membership in question #6, please specify the type of committee membership you are interested in (Please select all that apply):**

   ☐ Practice ☐ Medical economics
   ☐ Legislative affairs/advocacy ☐ Education

Thank you for completing this survey!

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Newly Established Neurosocieties

Neurosociety Structure

Operational Plan

A vision is one of the beginning elements of any society and lays the foundation for the society's goals and objectives. The commitment of leadership to attain the vision begins the enthusiasm and energy that makes the society a success. With a vision to lead the society and the leadership to guide it, the society will grow and develop into a strong voice for neurology.

A strategic plan should be developed out of the vision and set a plan for the society. It should examine the society's strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, mission statement and goals. The strategic plan should also look for the necessary actions to implement the strategies.

Leadership

Many possibilities exist for the structure of a society. The following is the title and description of positions commonly found in society structure. How the leadership is formed should be based on the needs of the society and desires of the organizing leadership. The leadership offices and duties should be outlined in the society's bylaws and/or constitution.

President

The term of the president is generally one to two years. One advantage to a two-year term is the continuity of leadership it provides the society. The responsibilities of the president usually include chairing meetings, sharing information on organizational needs and accomplishments, working with other leaders to identify needs of the society, appointing committees to achieve goals, serving as or appointing a media spokesperson, coordinating the preparation of a newsletter, setting the society's agenda, and representing the society at other meetings, as requested.

The President also works closely with the president-elect, when the structure includes such a position. When leaving office, the President should prepare a detailed assessment of the society's activities, including fiscal and legislative information; create a list of names, phone numbers, and addresses of all contacts that have been of service to the society; list all incomplete projects; and offer assistance to the new president for a smooth transition.

Vice President (President-elect)

The vice president, or president-elect, assists the president and acts on behalf of the president. The vice president also assumes the duties of the president in the event he/she can no longer perform the presidential duties. The vice president may also be given additional responsibilities, including long-rang planning, public relations, annual meeting, or committee chair.

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Secretary

The secretary's responsibilities include the recording and distributing of meeting minutes and accurate record keeping. Additional duties of the secretary may include keeping all working files, keeping updated society membership lists, and preparing meeting announcements and agendas.

When the secretary's term is complete, he/she should prepare a detailed written assessment of the position, create a list of names, phone numbers, and addresses of all contacts used by the secretary, create a list of incomplete projects, and offer availability for advice and consultations, as needed.

Treasurer

The treasurer handles the state society's finances, which include the reporting and accounting for all association funds. More specifically, the duties of the treasurer include paying the society's bills, keeping complete and accurate financial and tax records, preparing necessary budget information and financial forecasts, filing state and federal tax reports and returns, maintaining checking and investment accounts, authorizing investments and disbursements, recommending insurance coverage, advising the board on the status of outstanding dues payments, and preparing regular financial reports.

As the treasurers terms ends, financial reports should be prepared, signature cards on all accounts need to be changed to the new treasurer's name, and all financial files should be transferred.

Committees

An excellent way to get membership involved in the activities of the society is through committees. When selecting committees, the chairperson must be carefully chosen to ensure the committee reaches its goals. Qualities of an effective chairperson include good communications skills, good listening skills, the ability to control without dominance, knowledge of parliamentary procedure, and the time and resources to carry out the responsibilities.

The committee members should represent all areas of the general membership. It is also a good idea to have term limits for committees to allow for new ideas and viewpoints to develop. Committee members should be provided with information regarding their responsibilities, expectations, limits of authority, and financial and reporting guidelines.

The standing committees of the society and their responsibilities should be described in the bylaws and/or constitution of the society.

While committees can be formed for many reasons, the following list mentions some common committees in societies:

Annual Meeting Committee

The responsibilities of this committee include the organization and planning of all aspects of the society's annual meetings. This committee may also be the organization's liaison to other events such as the Academy (AAN/AANPA) Annual Meeting.

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Finance Committee

The finance committee develops and maintains the budget and other financial obligations.

Bylaws Committee

The bylaws need to be revisited and revised as the society grows and changes. This committee reviews the bylaws and makes and hears suggestions for changes.

Legislative Committee (Advocacy)

Relationships with state legislative and regulatory leaders and state legislative affairs are the focus of a legislative committee. This committee recommends goals for political activity and monitors any lobbying efforts of the society.

Strategic Planning Committee

The Strategic Planning Committee reviews the society's goals and objectives, and suggests strategies for its future growth and direction.

Membership Committee

This committee focuses on membership recruitment and retention activities, current member lists, and member involvement.

Communications Committee

A newsletter is one of the most effective ways to get members informed of the society's accomplishments and activities. The Communications Committee prepares the newsletter and distributes it to the membership. The internet is another useful tool for communications. The Communications Committee may also be responsible for the development of a website and monitoring of content.

Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee has the important task of developing the slate of candidates for leadership election.

Public Education Committee

The focus of the Public Education Committee should be to promote neurology in the general public. It deals with media and monitors developments, as well as develops public service activities to promote neurology.

Member Services

Many services may be offered to membership through a local society. The following list gives some suggestions:

- CME Courses
- Group Buying Program
- Legislative Advocacy
- Membership Directory
- Newsletters

In order to ensure that the society is meetings the demands and expectations of the members, periodic evaluations should be performed. Membership evaluations can measure how active the members are, how well communications efforts work, and what members would like that the society does not currently provide. Evaluating the performance of the society from the members' viewpoint is essential, since it is the members who form the base of the society.

Laws, Regulations and Organizational Structure

Early in the organization efforts, the leadership should file the necessary paperwork according to both state and federal laws. They should also draft the organization paperwork necessary to provide structure to the society. Laws and regulations vary from state to state, so the advice of an attorney may be warranted. It may also be of assistance to review other societies' paperwork, such as Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, and the application for tax-exempt status. Remember, federal regulations as well as state law must be taken into consideration. Helpful documents and examples may be obtained by contacting Dave Showers, Administrator, State Society Relations at the American Academy of Neurology Professional Association, at *dshowers@aan.com.*

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Checklist—How to Get Started

Preliminary Assessment—Key Questions:

- Has a neurosociety in your state previously existed?
  - If yes, contact former leaders for key documents, bank account information, tax returns, membership lists, incorporation information
- Are there active city, county, or regional neurology-specific groups in your state?
  - If yes, are they adequately meeting the needs of participating members? Would a state neurosociety compete or partner with these local groups?
- Ideally, what would a neurosociety in your state provide to its members? What would be its primary focus? How would you define success?

Getting Started—Checklist:

Research steps to establishing a non-profit organization

- Many elements go into creating a non-profit organization, even a simple one. Know what your options are before you begin.
- **Resources:** Free Management Library *http://managementhelp.org/np_progs/org_dev.htm*

Identify a core group of other interested individuals (potential Board)

- Keep the following factors in mind:
  - Balanced geographic representation
  - Mix of private and academic practice backgrounds
  - Age/experience diversity
  - Experience with CME, grant writing, website development, accounting, membership, public relations, etc.

Consider conducting a member needs assessment

- Request an AAN-template needs assessment
- Contract a third party to do a needs assessment
- Conduct your own needs assessment

Create a mission statement

- A mission statement defines why an entity exists
- **TIP:** keep it concise; no more than a paragraph
- Resources: *www.missionstatements.com*

Propose short and long-term goals

- What resources will be needed?
- What expertise will be needed?

Financial assessment

- Identify major initiatives and expenditures
- Develop an operating budget
- Establish dues structure
  - When/how will they be collected?
  - Will you need to open a new bank account?
  - Will you need an accountant?
  - **TIP:** Consider reduced dues for students & residents
- Identify sources of non-dues income (i.e. grants, exhibit space, etc.)
  - Decide if you want to solicit other income sources
  - Consider adopting rules to guide the use of industry support
  - See what other neurosocieties receive funding

Draft bylaws

- Bylaws define how the Board operates and the organization functions
- Sample bylaws—Pennsylvania Neurological Society

Determine if you need to incorporate

- Reasons to for an organization to incorporate:
  - To own property/bank account;
  - To ensure on-going existence;
  - To protect leadership from personal liability related to society operation.
- Articles of incorporation are a governing document that generally specifies an organization's name, purpose or mission, place of business, primary officers, etc.
- To incorporate, you need to file articles of incorporation with the Secretary of State or Secretary of
- Commerce (varies state to state).
  - **You'll need:** A Board of Directors and Board-approved articles of incorporation.

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Determine if you need to file for state non-profit/federal tax-exempt status

From the IRS website (*http://www.irs.gov/charities/index.html*):

- **State:** Non-profit status may make an organization eligible for certain benefits, such as state sales, property, and income tax exemptions. Although most federal tax-exempt organizations are non-profit organizations, organizing as a non-profit organization at the state level does not automatically grant the organization exemption from federal income tax.

- **Federal:** According to the IRS, to file as a tax-exempt organization you must be a corporation, community chest, fund, or foundation to receive federal tax-exempt status. Articles of association may also be used in place of incorporation. See IRS Publication 557 (*http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p557.pdf*).
  - 501(c)(3)—charitable nonprofit (most common type)
  - 501(c)(4)—civic leagues and social welfare organizations
  - 501(c)(6)—business leagues, etc.
  - **NOTE:** Being tax-exempt is not the same as being tax-deductible.
  - **TIP:** Allow plenty of time to research state and federal tax options and parameters. Consider seeking legal advice.

Assign roles and responsibilities

- Elect officers
- Decide on appropriate organizational model
- Consider forming committees to oversee major initiatives (meetings, newsletters, website, advocacy, etc.)

Plan tentative meeting schedule

Other Considerations:

- Develop advocacy and government relations strategy
- Build coalitions

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Helpful Resources

Article: *Before You Start a Nonprofit: The Essential Steps*

http://nonprofit.about.com/od/nonprofitbasics/bb/beforenonprofit.htm
– This article outlines the key considerations in creating a non-profit organization. Contains links to additional resources.

Free Management Library

http://www.managementhelp.org/strt_org/strt_np/strt_np.htm
– This site has comprehensive resources to start a non- profit organization.

Idealist.org

http://nccsdataweb.urban.org/PubApps/nonprofitfaq.php
–indexed collection of answers to Frequently Asked Questions about nonprofit organizations. Started in 1994, the Q&A in the FAQ is continually updated using new materials from many sources including online discussions.

United States Internal Revenue Service

http://www.irs.gov/charities/index.html
– This site has all the forms and regulations pertaining to filing and existing as a non-profit organization with the federal government.

Highlights:

http://www.irs.gov/charities/content/0,,id=96986,00.html
– FAQ about tax- exempt organizations

http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p557.pdf
– Tax-Exempt Status for Your Organization (IRS Publication 557)

http://www.irs.gov/charities/charitable/index.html
– Tax information for charitable organizations

http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f1023.pdf
– Form 1023

MeetingsNet

http://meetingsnet.com/medicalmeetings/
– this website has several discussion forums and resources specific to CME and medical meeting planning. Includes: best practices for getting grants, compliance with regulations, contract negotiation, and other helpful advice.

Existing Neurosocieties

Membership Recruitment and Retention

Members are essential to the success of all organizations. Therefore, membership recruitment and retention should be a top priority of your society. Recruiting new members is extremely important for the growth of your society, but retention is equally important; it takes less effort to keep a member than find a new member! Below are tips and strategies from a training session given by Mark Levin, CAE, CSP, at the 2008 State Society Leadership Roundtable.

Remember the three essentials to membership and growth:

- Personalize
- Customize
- Empathize

What can leadership do?

- To keep members, you must engage them
- Acknowledge applications and new members the day you receive them
- Explain the benefits of joining your society—don't assume that they know
- Make personal calls to inactive members
- Publish testimonial letters from every membership type on your website
- Publicize your leadership in state society wherever possible
- Set goals for new membership (i.e. every board member recruits three new members each year)
- Help members overcome these objections to joining:
  - I don't have time...
  - It's not relevant...
  - I can get the benefits without joining...

What are members thinking?

- Where will I find time?
- What is my return on investment?
- Is there a positive difference in my practice because of my association with this neurosociety?

Recruitment Strategies:

- Empathize
  - Offer the benefits of meeting attendance
- Discover their interests
  - Show them how they can become involved and provide input

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- Strength in numbers
  - More effective to say, "We represent 80% of neurologists rather than 50%"
  - You can accomplish more with members going in the same direction
- Peer to Peer
  - Feel, felt, found—"I know exactly how you feel, I felt the same way myself. I found that joining this neurosociety helped..."

Written communication should always be:

- Concise—you have 2.5 seconds to get their attention!
- Timely
- Professional
- Part of the effort, but not all of it!

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Media Relations

Media Interviews

Interviews with the media offer a prime opportunity to get your message to the public. The opportunity to participate in an interview may come about as the result of a press release or because of calls to your society from a reporter looking for topic experts, or data. In either event, the following recommendations can help you be prepared:

Preparation:

- **Plan and Remember Key Talking Points** – Make just two or three concise points
- **Know Your Audience**
- **Anticipate Tough and Controversial Questions**
- **Provide Information About You and Your Organization Prior to Interview**

During the Interview:

- **Don't Be Afraid to Repeat Key Point**
- **Expect Interruptions** – Make major points early as time may be limited
- **Keep it Simple** – Avoid using acronyms, complicated medical terminology, and too many numbers
- **Be Yourself** – Don't develop a different persona for the media interview
- **Stress the Positive** – When appropriate, relate good news and helpful information
- **Pause** – Briefly pause before answering difficult questions to avoid "ers" and "ums"
- **Don't Allow Distractions to Throw You**
- **Never Go "Off the Record"** – Everything is on the record when speaking to a reporter
- **Never Lose Your Cool**
- **Never Say "No Comment"** – People perceive this as a "guilty as charged" answer
- **Always Tell the Truth** – Never lie; make your answers straightforward and clear, but don't say more than you want to say
- **Prepare for the Unexpected** – Do not be surprised by changes in an interviewer's personality; an amiable person may become a tough investigate reporter on camera
- **Stay Within Own Area of Expertise** – Know that you don't have to know everything; don't allow yourself to be drawn to other topics
- **Stay Focused and Stay Calm**

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On-Camera Interviews

- **Ask Questions Before Interview** – It is okay to talk through questions you may have for the reporter before the intervie.
- **Wear the Right Clothing** – Wear comfortable and well-fitting clothing; black suits or white clothing may distort skin color due to light absorption and reflection, so blue is best.
- **Look at the Interviewer, Not the Camera** – During an on-site interview, always look at the reporter, not the camera; look interested even when not speaking—the camera may be on you; and if this is a satellite interview, or interview with no on-site reporter, look directly into the camera
- **Don't Worry About Stumbling** – If the interview is taped and you stumble, simply stop and ask to start over again; reporters want a good sound-bite, so if the interview is live, simply correct any misspoken words and continue on with your answer
- **Look Relaxed** – Sit in a relaxed position, leaning slightly toward the interviewer

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Interview Bill of Rights

- To know who is interviewing you and whom he or she represents
- To know approximately how long the interview will last
- To know the general subject matter or issue in advance of the interview
- To know who the other parties are being interviewed for the same story
- To have a public relations person present during the interview
- To be treated courteously
- To be informed when the story will be published or aired
- To have nothing recorded on audio or videotape without your prior knowledge and approval
- To stop the interview after a reasonable amount of time, after the key questions have been answered

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Bridging

- What's important to remember...
- Oh, that reminds me...
- That's not my area of expertise, but what I can tell you is...
- That's a good point. I think you would also be interested to know...
- I'm not sure...is the issue. I think...is what we're really talking about...
- Let me add....
- ....Which takes us back to....
- That's an interesting question. It leads me to...
- Before I forget...
- Before we get too far off the topic, I want to add...
- At this point, some background information may be helpful...

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Press Releases

- **Newsworthy** – Consider the "why should I care?" factor. The issue or topic should be new or related to an upcoming event, such as a Senate committee hearing or a floor vote. You may "tie-in" your story with an existing community event. Be aware of reporter deadlines. Call to find out specific details.
- **Know Your Audience** – The audience is the press, so it is best to include a brief definition of uncommon medical terms.
- **Prioritize Information** – Make sure the first 10 words of your press release are effective, as they are the most important. Use an inverted pyramid approach with the main idea at the top followed by important details, less important details. This is a good technique in case editors need to cut the story to fit space constraints; they can do so without losing critical information.
- **Clear and Concise** – Press releases should be one page answering who, what, when, where, why, and how.
- The information should be concise and interesting.
- **Include Contact Information** – Provide as much contact information as possible, including individual to contact, office phone, cell phone, pager, email, website address.
- **Accuracy** – Information should be 100 percent reliable and accurate. Never overstate your claims or invent facts.
- **Target Specific Media** – It is best to send your press release to a specific reporter. Call to find the name of the health, medical, government, or feature reporter, depending on your issue.
- **Human Interest** – Your goal is to arouse emotion without getting emotional (no exclamation points).
- **Local Focus** – The issue or topic should have a local angle. If it is a national issue, show how it is affecting the people in your community.
- **Visual Appeal** – Have photos or graphics available. Charts or graphs help explain statistics.
- **Personalization** – Provide quotes from authoritative sources and the people affected.

Examples of press releases issued by the American Academy of Neurology can be found at *www.aan.com/pressroom/*

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Media Venues

- Local newspaper
- State newspaper
- Local radio station
- State public radio
- Your peers
- Local Universities
- Contact the AAN
- Your Federal and state legislators
- Your State Society's website
- State medical society
- Local chapters of patient organizations

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Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor are used to endorse an issue, educate, or set the record straight. Most letters are written in direct response to another article; however, they can also be written to express a specific opinion. It is critical that letters to the editor be well researched, well written, and include some data that backs up the statement.

- **Timely Response** – Write a response in a timely manner. Attempt to respond via email the same day as the original article was printed.
- **Applicable** – Make the letter applicable to your community for relevance. Keep facts pertinent to the topic and concise.
- **Keep it Short** – Keep your letter short due to limited amount of space. For example, the New York Times requires such letters to be fewer than 150 words.
- **Strong Lead Sentence** – Begin with a strong lead that includes your position or point you are trying to convey and close with a strong sentence. Often letters cover one to two main points. Keep in mind what you want the audience to remember.
- **Sign the Letter**
- **Contact Information** – You must also provide your contact information so that the newspaper can verify the sender.
- **Follow Newspaper Guidelines** – Many newspapers have their letter guidelines available on their website if you want to check on specific policies.
- **AAN Endorsement** – If you wish to have the American Academy of Neurology endorse your letter, please submit to Angela Babb.

AAN Public Policy Resources

Legislative Issues

Focusing on topics affecting neurology on a legislative basis, each issue page comes with a tool kit (found in on the right of each page) providing background information, talking points, legislative outcomes, the Academy's position statement (if available), and other resources that can help with legislative research. These issue pages can also offer links to state issues, should a specific state be considering legislation on that issue.

Position Statements

A listing of position and policy statements developed by the AAN to help guide them and others in decision making.

Contact Your Legislator

An easy way to be make your voice heard on Capitol Hill, this unique software allows you to send a letter to your representatives in Congress in a few effortless steps. Members must have their AAN issued ID number to login.

Capitol Hill Report

A bi-weekly blog written by AANPA Legislative Counsel, Mike Amery, updating and educating members about the

Academy's ongoing efforts in Washington, DC.

Palatucci Advocacy Leadership Forum

Taking place every January, members are encouraged to apply for this interactive forum that will give them the tools to advocate for the critical issues important to them. Training includes the development of individual advocacy action plans with media and legislative training. Advocates have achieved success developing coalitions, obtaining financial support for research, lobbying for fair reimbursement, and organizing state neurological societies.

Neurology on the Hill

An event held every spring where members learn about health care issues affecting neurology, followed by a trip to Capitol Hill to meet with their Congressional representatives to explain neurology's issues and message.

Public Policy Education

Advance your knowledge of public policy and explore specific legislative topics through conferences, webinars, online learning, and a lecture series.

State Resources

A page dedicated to state neurological societies, here members can find when and where their next state society meeting is taking place, as well as a direct link to their state neurological society website.

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