

## LEADERSHIP

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**QUESTION:** “We continue to hear about post-polio clinics and what they can offer, but many are miles from our community. Members of our group want to know what help is available closer to home.”

**ANSWER:** I smell OPPORTUNITY ! Talk about serendipity—this is a polio group leader’s dream. Out of nowhere comes the perfect project for a group committee to tackle!

Leaders are always searching for undertakings that energize members, add spark to their lives. We can sit around talking about the problem only so long before we begin to lose people. Leaders are charged with rocketing our groups out of the doldrums. Studies show that an antidote to such maladies as depression and low self-esteem is getting active. Good leadership can offer groups a bit of much-needed pizzazz for individuals to grab hold of.

Committees have a special function in polio groups. They work well because members get to use their unique talents, and yet everyone can participate on some level. It can be stimulating—and a real hoot—to work together toward a worthy goal, and at the same time lend necessary purpose to meetings. As many of us have discovered, without a worthwhile reason for being, groups simply die.

Projects can be revitalizing. All of a sudden it’s the “Oh boy! Let’s put on a play in the barn!” sort of thing. Something meaningful the gang can do. Something exhilarating. And this would make a doozy of a project:

Members want to know what help is available closer to home? Well, why not find out? Form a committee—maybe even one with subcommittees! Let them define the parameters. For instance:

- **What territory will the search cover?**
- **What categories will it encompass?**  
Will it be medical care, equipment, equipment repairs, advocacy, personal services, housing, entertainment, vacations—or what?
- **How detailed should each category be? Will the list be all-inclusive, or merely name those known by members for excellent quality?**

*Health care*—PTs? OTs? RTs? Orthotists? Home care? Visiting nurses? Accessible/warm pools? Doctors in certain specialties? What should go on the list?

*Equipment*—chairs, scooters, braces, crutches/canes, chair glides, chair lifts, cushions, bumper lifts, vans? What? Rent or buy?

*Equipment repairs*—Who can fit the brace into shoes well? Who can handle the electronics on a power chair? Who does van conversions? What else?

*Advocacy*—Need help interpreting the ADA ? Need a lawyer? What?

*Personal services*—Does a grocery store deliver? A pharmacy? Need someone to prepare meals for your freezer? Household help? What?

*Housing*—Accessible apartments, condos, houses, motels, hotels? What?

*Entertainment*—What's fun to do and still accessible? Which restaurants? Zoos? Theaters? Parks? Museums? Sports events?

*Vacations*—What companies offer accessible cruises, tours?

● **How will the committee get needed information?**

Ask all members of the group to submit their recommendations within listed categories to the committee? Divide into subcommittees to investigate possibilities for each category?

Visit sites? Get info by telephone?

● **Should the committee devise a system for reporting findings? A format with uniform questions? A checklist?**

What items should be covered? Name of company? Address? Phone number? Hours?

Name of manager? Type of Service? Specialty? Accessibility details? Price ranges?

The committee decides what to do and how to do it. They may need a little boost now and then, a time frame, cheers from an admiring leader, pizza. But THEY make the decisions. They might want to publish a pamphlet or a fold-out chart or a "Polio Survivors' Guide to Easier Living" on their website. It doesn't matter. Whatever they come up with will be terrific—because everyone needs it, and they did it, and they had a rousing good time working on it.

Everybody wins!

P.S. Next Project? A Manual of Guidelines: What to Look For When Choosing a ...

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