



# **Guide for State Sibling Chapters to Increase Diversity**

*Created by the SLN Diversity and Social Justice Committee*

## **Introduction:**

The Sibling Leadership Network (SLN) is a national nonprofit with state chapters dedicated to supporting siblings of people with disabilities across the lifespan. The mission of the SLN is to provide siblings of individuals with disabilities the information, support and tools to advocate with their brothers and sisters and to promote the issues important to them and their entire families. The SLN state chapters are the grassroots of the organization and where state and local connecting and information sharing happens. The SLN is interested in reaching more siblings and ensuring that the interests and needs of siblings from all backgrounds and identities are supported.

## **Purpose:**

The purpose of these strategies are to provide some starting points for sibling chapters to consider in order to be more intentional about supporting a diverse membership. These strategies specifically address some ways to identify people and communities that are not yet involved and evaluate ways to create an inviting and welcoming space for anyone to participate in and benefit from chapter activities.

## **Defining Diversity:**

We are thinking of diversity in a broad sense that can include many different aspects of identity such as race, ethnicity, age, disability, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, language, citizenship status, place of residence, political affiliation, and religion.

## **Strategies/Steps:**

1. Assess current chapter membership— Think about the people who are part of your chapter's leadership and broader membership and begin considering some of these questions:
  - a. What common characteristics do you think people in your chapter have? (e.g., Is your chapter primarily made up of women? Are most of your members siblings of people with certain types of disabilities? What other identities are well represented?)
  - b. What areas could your chapter focus on to increase diversity? (e.g., Are people from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds represented? Do you have brothers engaged in your chapter? Are you welcoming of people from different religions to participate?)
  - c. Compare chapter demographics to state/city demographics in order to determine potential areas of outreach. (Hint: Census.gov can be a great resource!)
2. Consider some of the self-assessment resources offered by the National Center on Cultural Competence: <https://nccc.georgetown.edu/assessments/>
3. Based on your assessment, set goals for your chapter to be as inclusive as possible.

## Outreach Strategies for State Sibling Chapters to Increase Diversity:

- Develop relationships with people from the community you are focusing your outreach. If it is a certain organization, encourage your members to attend their organizational events and invite people from that organization to participate your events.
- Consider having written information translated into other languages that meet the needs of your local communities.
- Consider distributing information in various ways – brochures, videos, digital media and in accessible formats (learn more about accessible formats here: <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/people-with-a-disability-in-the-community/accessible-goods,-services,-facilities-and-events/accessible-information-products/using-and-providing-accessible-formats>).
- Identify and reach out to leaders in organizations (provider agencies, religious organizations, advocacy groups, etc.) that serve the communities with whom you are trying to connect. Consider pairing up or co-sponsoring events with these organizations and ask them to share information with their membership about your chapter.
- Consider developing an orientation session or activity that welcomes all members to the organization. When new members join your chapter, ask about their interests and strengths and what they hope to gain from the group – try to incorporate everyone’s interests into the work of the group. Create an evaluation about members’ perceptions and experiences with the group and whether it is meeting their needs.
- Offer your Board and staff cultural competence training
- Be mindful of where your meetings take place – Is it in a location most people can get to? Can a person attend without having to make a purchase if they don’t want to? Is the space physically accessible?
- Offer meetings and activities at different times to meet the needs of different schedules. For example, some people may be working during the day, some people may have religious commitments on the weekends, and some people may have caregiving responsibilities in the evenings.
- Find ways for all members to connect and provide input to chapter leaders, including those who are not able to attend meetings.
- Recruit members in different regional areas.
- Consider how you can help foster sibling support in areas of the state beyond from those where the leaders reside.
- Engage in ongoing learning about diversity and social justice issues. Here are a couple articles to get you started: <https://medium.com/@safespacesdc/intersectionality-isnt-just-a-buzzword-here-s-how-to-put-it-into-practice-8bb8dd1a3aa3> and <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2017/03/30/colleges-need-language-shift-not-one-you-think-essay> - .WN02IzSFIB4.facebook
- Consider taking the implicit bias test here: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>.



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