

NORML

Working to Reform Marijuana Laws

Chapter Starter Packet and Guidelines

**Contact: Chapters@NORML.org
Updated January 4th, 2018**

Table of Contents

Welcome	3
Considerations.....	4
Motivation	4
Chapter Introduction	5
Chapter Expectations.....	5
Expectations of NORML.....	8
Chapter Organization	9
Types of Chapters.....	11
Chapter Requirements	12
Next Steps and 90 Day Plan.....	16

Welcome

Hello, and welcome to the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws!

We are excited that you wish to become affiliated with NORML – the nation’s most respected and well known marijuana law reform organization. Starting a NORML chapter is one of the most effective ways you can help bring about marijuana legalization. NORML’s chapter network is the lifeblood of our grassroots reform and educational efforts.

NORML was founded in 1970 in Washington, D.C. as a consumers’ lobby advocating for the rights of responsible, adult cannabis consumers. Our organization has more than 150 chapters nationwide and internationally and has been a crucial player in the battle for marijuana law reform in the United States. Through the activism of our dedicated members, decriminalization and legalization measures have been enacted in numerous jurisdictions throughout the United States. In addition, the majority of the public now favors regulatory alternative to criminal prohibition. We have come a long way in our fight, and now you can help us finish it!

As a NORML affiliate or chapter, you will engage in educational outreach, lobby your local and state elected officials, and work within your community to bring awareness to the failings of prohibition and the benefits of legalization.

This packet provides the necessary information and resources to help you get your chapter off and running!

Considerations

Before starting a chapter, please take a moment to consider the ramifications of “going public” with your legalization advocacy. Even today, marijuana legalization still remains a hotly debated and polarizing topic in many areas of the United States. The “Reefer Madness” generation of myths, propaganda, and lies is something NORML has been fighting for decades, yet many people remain misinformed by marijuana propaganda. You can probably name a few people in your life right now that are be adamantly opposed to marijuana legalization. While their opinion should not guide your actions, consider the negative repercussions that may or may not come from your creation of a NORML chapter. Some people may think differently of you or automatically assume things of you as an unfortunate result of the negative stereotypes surrounding cannabis consumers. **However don't be discouraged.** You will find that many more people will rally to your side than will disapprove of you. And you will meet a ton of like-minded people through NORML outreach events, meetings, and actions!

Motivation

If you are reading this, we hope we don't need to tell you how harmful cannabis prohibition has been for America. Negative effects such as organized crime, high incarceration rates, racially biased arrests, high judicial costs, economic losses from imported hemp, and countless more problems are why we fight for legalization. Cannabis legalization is not just a criminal justice issue; it's an economic, medical, industrial, ecological, philosophical, and social justice issue that will drastically improve the world we live in.



Chapter Introduction

Chapters are our on-the-ground advocates that help push for marijuana law reform in their local city or towns. NORML chapters and members are the hands, feet, eyes, ears, and heart of the marijuana reform movement around the country. NORML has set up standards and guidelines in place to help keep our chapters running smoothly and helping the cause. Below you'll find our recommendations regarding how we recommend chapters be organized, the duties of the Board of Directors, the different types of chapters, and the nine requirements that every chapter must meet in order to be recognized as an official NORML chapter. Please read through this material so you can understand what it takes to run a NORML chapter, and get one step closer to starting your chapter.

Chapter Expectations

You might be having questions like “What does a NORML Chapter do?” or “What’s expected of NORML Chapters?” Well we wanted to answer those questions by outlining what National NORML expects of our chapters. As a chapter, you will have direct lines of access to National NORML through monthly conference calls, one-on-one leadership development calls, and access to the national network of chapter leaders to build mentorships and friendships with leaders throughout the country.

Represent the Positions of NORML

Representatives of NORML chapters are of national NORML, and therefore, ought not to take public positions that are in conflict with NORML’s core mission and/or principles, which you can read more about here:

Mission Statement:

<http://norml.org/about/intro/item/norml-mission-statement-2>

Principles of Responsible Cannabis Use:

<http://norml.org/principles/item/principles-of-responsible-cannabis-use-3>

Principles Governing Responsible Cannabis Regulation

<http://norml.org/about/intro/item/principles-governing-responsible-cannabis-regulation>

Build Membership

All NORML Chapters are expected to actively build their membership base, to expand NORML's reach, and to add volunteers/supporters to our ranks. The more NORML members we have, the larger of a driving force we will be for legalization!

Meet Fundraising Goals

NORML Chapters are also expected to set and meet their own fundraising goals throughout the year, in order to have the monetary resources to purchase merchandise and attend events. Each NORML chapter is expected to hold one fundraiser a year which proceeds are split evenly in support of the chapter and the national organization.

Hold Public Events

NORML is a consumer-based political advocacy group, so we have to be available to the public for questions and involvement. We expect each of our chapters to hold public events, whether they are meetings, concerts, bake sales, press conferences, town halls, debates, house parties, or fundraisers.

Build Coalitions

Building coalitions with other reform groups and organizations is vital to the growth and success of NORML Chapters. Each chapter should actively work towards collaborations opportunities with other local and state organizations, local business leaders to be information distribution hubs, and community and civic leaders of all stripes.

Engage Local Representatives

Cannabis legalization is a multi-faceted issue, but one of the biggest sides is building political power. NORML Chapters are expected to contact and engage their local, state, and federal representatives so that they are aware of a NORML chapter in their constituency. Asking your representatives for legalization viewpoints, promoting cannabis education, and urging their vote on legalization bills are crucial in the fight for legalization.

Communicate Regularly

As we have mentioned before, communication is necessary for any organization, especially NORML! Chapters are expected to keep in regular communication with National NORML and nearby organizations within the state. Each chapter in each state should know what the other in-state chapters are working on.

Represent Legalization Positively

As a NORML representative, you are what people will think of when they think of legalization. Remember to always be a positive image for legalization, and to avoid engaging in any activity that will look poorly on NORML or the national reform movement broadly.

Expectations of NORML

Now that we have gone over what National NORML expects from chapters, we need to introduce what our chapters can expect from National NORML:

Support

Our job here at National NORML is to give support to our chapters, so we are here to help you! NORML Chapters are encouraged to contact National NORML at any time with questions, concerns, or issues about their chapter. We promise to try our absolute best to help our NORML chapter leadership in any way we can!

Communication

Communication is key in any organization, and we want to encourage our chapters to communicate with us regularly! We host a monthly conference call open to all chapter leaders in order to share updates on national trends and calls to action as well as answer specific organizational questions that you may have. In addition to the monthly calls, we are constantly providing one-on-one leadership development calls. If you need help about a specific topic or problem that requires research, please reach out to the appropriate NORML staffer and schedule a time to talk.

Resources

In addition to support, we also want to share our resources with our chapters. While NORML does not currently have the funding stream to give money to each of our chapters, we want to help your chapter succeed by helping provide legal counsel, merchandise, event details, online technology platforms, and our decades of organizing experience.

Promotion

National NORML is successful because of our chapters, so we want to highlight the awesome work our chapters do as much as we can! We will use our social media channels, national email list, and national press list to promote your chapter and the various activities that you hold in order to build your chapter's web traffic and support.

Chapter Organization

Board of Directors (BOD)

The Board of Directors (BOD) is the central body of your organization, and is instrumental to the success of your chapter. To start off with, you will need to find at least four other like-minded people to fill the five necessary spots on your BOD. You can have slightly varying position titles and duties, but every officer's title and duties need to be present in the Chapter Bylaws.

1. Executive Director

The Executive Director is the main leadership role of the chapter. The Executive Director is central to the direction and organization of the chapter, and is responsible for the following duties:

- Managing chapter communication with the Communication Director
- Joining the monthly National conference call
- Filing taxes with Treasurer
- Providing positive leadership and vision in order to build the chapter

2. Deputy Director

The Deputy Director is "second in command" of the organization, and helps the Executive Director in all of their tasks when needed. The Deputy Director is also in charge of the following duties:

- Keeping the Bylaws and Mission Statement updated
- Standing in for ED for monthly National conference call if necessary
- Preparing agenda and running meetings in conjunction with the ED

3. Treasurer

The Treasurer is the financial manager of the chapter, making sure all of the money is accounted for and ensure that the chapter is raising money. The Treasurer's duties are the following:

- Updating monthly bank account statement
- Planning and execute the yearly chapter/national fundraiser
- Keeping records of merchandise, money, and membership dues
- Filing all applicable taxes with Executive Director

4. Secretary

The Secretary is the record keeper of the organization, and is intrinsic to the organization of the chapter. The Secretary is in charge of these duties:

- Updating and organizing the email list in conjunction with the Communications Director
- Updating the monthly Board of Director meeting minutes
- Updating and organize the chapter calendar
- Helping maintain all chapter records
- Planning time and venue for BOD meetings

5. Communications Director

The Communications Director is in charge of the chapter's public image and outreach to the community. The Communication Director is in charge of the following duties:

- Actively updating the chapter's social media accounts
- Running the chapter contact account with the Executive Director
- Talking to press and conducting interviews for the chapter

It is hard to run a good chapter without a good Board of Directors, so be sure to think long and hard about who you'd like to ask to be on the Board. However in following years the Board will be chosen by a democratic election process, so the positions are not permanent and changes can be made if the need arises.

General Membership

General members will make up the bulk of your organization, and are essential to the success of your chapter. They are your base of volunteers and activists that you will draw from for events and campaigns. General members also act as your eyes and ears in your community, as well as a voice for legalization advocacy on the ground. Members can be divided into committees or groups in order to focus on specific projects, events, or other activities to represent the chapter.

Typically chapters charge anywhere from \$15 to \$25 for annual memberships. National NORML membership is either \$5 a month or \$35 a year, yet dues paying chapter members are waived from paying a national membership as a way to incentivize local chapter development.

Types of Chapters

State Affiliates

State Affiliates, like Texas NORML and Virginia NORML, represent an entire state and are usually located in or near the capital of the state. There can be only one Affiliate per state, and are the main contact and voice for National NORML in that state. Affiliates aid in coordinating statewide legislation efforts, creating and organizing local chapters, and leading the charge for legalization in their state. Affiliates are also typically larger and have a broader reach than local and college chapters. The Executive Director from each local and college chapter also serves on the State Affiliate's Board of Directors, so that each chapter may be represented in state-wide decisions and policy making.

Local Chapters

Local Chapters, such as Northwest Indiana NORML and Central Florida NORML, represent a city, town, or geographical area. Local Chapters are crucial for large states where more chapters are needed to cover the wide ground area. The more local chapters there are per state, the more people we can mobilize for the fight for marijuana legalization! Local Chapters focus on making a powerful impact in their city or towns, like city ordinances or county decriminalization efforts.

College Chapters

College Chapters, like Purdue NORML and Iowa State NORML, are located on college campuses and are typically official student organizations of their college or university. College Chapters are unique because they have the potential to affect countries and communities all around the world, since college students are only temporarily living in the same geographical location. Members from a single College Chapter could have students from anywhere in the United States and possibly even all over the globe. College Chapters are also unique because college students typically do not have full-time jobs or families, so NORML members have the potential for more free time to devote to activism. However the leadership of a college chapter changes yearly, so turnover rate and legacy members are a challenge. College Chapters focus on getting young people involved in legalization and lessening penalties for cannabis use on their campuses.

NORML Liaisons

NORML Liaisons points of contact for NORML in an area where there is not currently enough interest to start full chapter. When an individual is interested in starting a NORML chapter in their local town but can't find four people interested in being on the Board of Directors, they can fill out an application with their State Affiliate and become a NORML Liaison. NORML Liaisons will be listed on the NORML website as a point of contact in that area, so if other people in the area check for a NORML Chapter they can have someone to talk to. NORML Liaisons are like seed-chapters or pre-chapters, hopefully they will grow into a full NORML Chapter.



norml.org

Chapter Requirements

Nine Requirements for Affiliation:

1. **Board of Directors Contact Information and Merits**
2. **Updated Bylaws and Mission Statement**
3. **Active Website**
4. **Active Chapter Email List**
5. **Active Social Media Accounts**
6. **Yearly Fundraiser**
7. **Monthly National Conference Call**
8. **Monthly Board of Directors Meeting**
9. **Monthly Bank Account Statement**

1. Board of Directors Contact Information and Merits

The first thing needed for a NORML chapter is a Board of Directors. The minimum BOD size is five (5) members, and the maximum size is twelve (12) members. The bigger the chapter size, the more BOD members may be needed to coordinate all of the various parts of the organization.

To be recognized as a NORML chapter, National NORML has to have updated contact information and resume for each member of the BOD. This is to ensure that we have direct, open lines of communication with each chapter and can make sure the most effective people serve on the BOD.

For more information about the Board of Directors, please see the Board of Directors section in the NORML Chapter Guidelines.

2. Updated Bylaws and Mission Statement

Once your Board of Directors is established, you will work together to draft your chapter's Bylaws and Mission Statement. National NORML needs to have an updated version of both of these documents in order for official chapter recognition. From time to time, slight changes of these by-laws may be needed in order to adapt to the shifting

laws and regulations pursuant to NORML's c (3) and c (4) standing or to reflect the policy shifts of government. Proper notification will be given in the event of these changes to made within 30 days and formal appeals against the adoption future changes are to be addressed to the Outreach Director or Executive Director of national NORML.

3. Active Chapter Websites and Updates

In order to best direct those interested in getting involved with your chapter and host critical reform-oriented information, all chapters are required to maintain a website of some form.

Your chapter will also need to have an active general contact email address, so that prospective members and press inquiries can contact the chapter leadership.

4. Updated Chapter Email List

One of the most crucial aspects of your chapter is your email list. The chapter email list is your main tool for keeping track of chapter interest and one of your primary methods of communication with the members of your chapter.

You should use your email list to inform your members of meetings, events, and legalization updates from National. Chapters have the ability to use the national email system at a reduced cost.

Each chapter is expected to submit their email lists to national NORML at least once every three months in order to connect new sign ups to the national newsletter and federal policy updates. If a chapter uses the national email system, this is not necessary.

5. Active Social Media Accounts

In today's modern society, social media is an incredibly important tool for reaching out to potentially millions of pro-cannabis individuals that we may not otherwise had been able to connect with. We require each of our chapters to at least have both an active Facebook and Twitter accounts. Accounts on Instagram, Youtube, Tumblr, Pinterest, and other sites are encouraged but not required.

6. Yearly Fundraiser

NORML requires that every chapter hold at least one fundraiser a year where 50% of the proceeds are donated to the National organization. This is to encourage chapters to hold events and increase publicity, but also to help National afford chapter-related costs such as conferences and tech maintenance, and general operations. Each new NORML Chapter is allowed a six month grace period before being required to hold a fundraiser.

Note: this is not to say that the chapter is not to hold as many events and fundraisers as possible. National is only expected to receive funds from at least one event.

7. Monthly National Conference Call

One representative from each NORML chapter is required to participate in a monthly National conference call. The conference call is an opportunity for chapter leaders to get connected to one another, and to forge regional and national alliances through advocacy. The call is also a place where National NORML can update our chapters on legalization efforts, social media campaigns, or events of importance.

8. Monthly Board of Directors Meeting

Each chapter is required to hold at least one Board of Directors meeting each month. This is to ensure that there is inter-chapter communication, as well as organization in the Board of Directors. Additionally, one representative from each local, college, or subchapter needs to be present at the State Affiliate's monthly Board of Directors meeting.

9. Monthly Bank Account Statement

Each chapter shall provide a copy of all financial statements on a quarterly basis or at the request of NORML staff. This is to ensure that money that is raised for legalization is being spent solely on legalization efforts, and that no money is being used for personal reasons.

Next Steps and 90 Day Plan

So your next steps going forward are to get five people on your Board of Directors, draft your chapters' Mission Statement and By-Laws, then apply to be an official NORML Chapter! Then you will work through the 90 Day Plan, which will be your guide to get your chapter up and running!

Steps:

1. File Chapter Application with National
 1. Five BOD Members with resumes
 2. Drafts of Chapter Mission Statement and Chapter By-Laws
 3. Interview with National NORML
 4. Review Chapter Guidelines

2. File Articles of Incorporation with the State
 1. Research how to apply for Articles of Incorporation with your state
 2. Apply for Articles of Incorporation, be it as a (c)4 or a (c)3 depending on your goals. See Chapter Guidelines or contact National NORML for more information

3. Establish bank account to manage funds.
 1. Request EIN number
 2. Finalize banking procedures between Treasurer and Executive Director

4. Build Online Presence
 1. Required: Website, Facebook and Twitter
 - i. Suggested: Instagram, Periscope, Google+, Tumblr, Pinterest
 2. Contact National for assistance designing Chapter Logo
 3. Develop full social media strategy and team managers

5. Plan regular NORML meetings
 1. BOD Meetings and Public Meetings
 2. Create meeting agendas, publicize meetings
 3. See Chapter Guidelines for more information

6. Introduction Letter to Representatives using NORML letterhead
 1. Send to City Council, State House and Senate, Federal House and Senate, and local NORML followers

7. Develop Fundraising Strategy(ies)
 1. Set-up online payment processor
 - i. Membership fees, ticketed events, etc options
 2. Plan a first fundraiser
 - i. Location and Venue
 - ii. Establish Goal (startup cost)
 - iii. Assign roles and responsibilities
 - iv. Create timeline
 3. Develop ongoing fundraising program, including the chapter-national partnership event.



Photo: Steve Dipaola/Reuters