



STATE CHAPTER HANDBOOK

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I. ASHT REFERENCE MATERIAL

The American Society of Hand Therapists (ASHT) is a non-profit, international organization made up of certified hand therapists, certified or licensed physical and occupational therapists, and certified or licensed occupational therapist assistants or physical therapist assistants specializing in hand therapy. ASHT is celebrating 28 years of growth with nearly 3,000 members.

ASHT MISSION STATEMENT

To advance the science of hand therapy through communication, education, advocacy, research and clinical standards.

ASHT VISION STATEMENT

To be the recognized leader in education, publications, clinical standards, advocacy and research in the hand therapy field.

ASHT MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- ASHT's newsletter, *ASHT Times*, which keeps you abreast of activities within ASHT and the world of hand therapy
- Free quarterly subscription to the *Journal of Hand Therapy*
- ASHT membership directory listing and complimentary copy of the directory
- Discounted prices on ASHT products and publications
- Reduced registration prices at educational events and conferences
- Access to the "members only" section of www.asht.org
- Regular e-mail updates providing news and information about the Society and industry
- Networking opportunities to share information with other hand therapists

Charter chapter benefits

Use of ASHT logo

Advertising meetings on website/newsletter

Mailing list

Insurance coverage for the board

At some point in the early life of your chapter, the planning stage comes to an end, and you are ready to begin your chapter in earnest. The following basic requirements are necessary in order to be recognized as a Chapter:

- The Chapter must have a board of directors (at least 3 people)
- The Board of Directors must adopt bylaws that govern how the chapter is to be run, and those bylaws must be approved by ASHT.
- The chapter must be incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in the state of origin, or when the chapter represents a region, one of the states of its area.
- The President of your chapter must execute the Chapter Charter Agreement between your chapter and the American Society of Hand Therapists.

With these fundamentals in place, you can jump right in to getting your chapter off the ground. You will need to recruit members for your chapter, present effective meetings, and motivate your volunteers to help operate the group and provide the services you plan to offer.

A. ORGANIZATION

1. Description of How a Chapter Helps the Society, Industry, and Profession

ASHT Chapters and National are first and foremost PARTNERS, working for each other's benefit. As partners, we must carefully DEFINE and CLARIFY our mutual and separate goals through open and continuous communication.

A chapter provides members with more individualized and timely attention, and represents local members on a national level. As the National organization grows and asserts itself in advocacy and public affairs arenas, the importance of our state chapters grows exponentially. The chapters are on the front lines and can make the important grassroots changes the Society as a whole cannot.

ASHT has long been dedicated to supporting the exchange of information among hand therapists. With the formation of chapters, chapter members will be able to share ideas and solve problems common to hand therapists within a specific region. An ASHT chapter will provide a vehicle through which hand therapists in a close geographical region are able to share common concerns, develop local educational programs and pool knowledge.

2. Purpose of Chapters

There are many reasons to start a local ASHT chapter. They meet a wide range of needs including:

- The need to interact and share information with other area hand therapists
- Keeping abreast of the constantly evolving health-care industry
- Maintaining open channels for exchanging ideas
- Obtaining additional educational opportunities
- Centralizing networking opportunities
- Providing a grassroots advocacy vehicle for industry change

Generally speaking, ASHT chapters are considered not-for-profit, a status that may be officially recognized by the IRS. Any benefits or resources gained by chapter activity must be for the good of all chapter members, not for the benefit of specific individuals.

You need to plan ahead, but in the first few months you should not try to initiate all the services the chapter may eventually offer.

3. Planning Your Chapter

It is important to decide how the chapter will fill its members' needs.

Answer the following questions during planning sessions:

- Will chapter meetings provide training and answer questions from members that they can apply to their everyday operations or will meetings be more of an informal information exchange?
- What is the nature and purpose of chapter (which must include education)?
- What format will you use for meetings? When, what, where?

Set up a plan of action and determine the following:

- Future meeting dates and logistics for your chapter
- Specific designated assignments for steering committee members: planning the first chapter meeting, generating attendance for the meeting, starting a mailing database, obtaining speaker(s), etc.

4. Meeting Agendas

A possible agenda for the first official chapter meeting might be:

- A. Introduction of the steering committee/board of directors and explanation of the purpose of the chapter. Explanation of the dues structure, membership categories, geographical area, number of meetings per year, etc. Note that you are required to have at least three "directors" on your board, who may also be officers.
- B. Present the program. The entire board should be very familiar with its content. Provide your new members with excellent material that will encourage them to join the chapter and attend subsequent meetings.
- C. Review, presentation, and adoption of chapter bylaws.
- D. Keep a good attendance record (including name, home address, work address, phone and fax numbers, e-mail address, ASHT member number, etc.). This will become your membership and mailing

database. You have name badges on hand (pre-printed and blank), including hometown, in order to ease introductions.

- E. Discussion of various meeting topics and selection of future meeting dates
- F. Assignments to committees (if applicable)

5. Funding Your Chapter

Chapters usually fund activities by charging membership dues. Dues can finance the production of a chapter newsletter, promotional materials for the group, and for mailing expenses, supplies, equipment, speakers and various other services the chapter will be providing.

For simplicity, most chapters choose to renew all members at the same time each year, prorating the annual fees to cover the months between enrollment and annual renewal.

6. Financial Responsibilities

ASHT National does not provide start-up funds for state chapters, so your steering committee will need to be creative in order to cover costs incurred before incorporation. You can talk with the State Chapter Liaison or HQ staff liaison for help brainstorming.

The Treasurer of your chapter shall be the financial officer for the Chapter and perform all duties that pertain to the office of Treasurer and those that may be assigned by the President. He/she shall have charge and custody of and be responsible for all funds of the Chapter.

Further, but not in limitation of the office, the Treasurer's primary duties shall be to:

- Record all monies received and distributed
- Collect monies.
- Keep full and correct account of receipts and disbursements in the Chapter books.
- Deposit the funds of the Chapter in a bank account designated by the Chapter board.
- Dispose of Chapter funds as may be ordered by the Chapter Board, taking proper vouchers for such disbursements.
- Whenever they may request it, render to the Chapter board an account of the financial condition of the Chapter.
- Prepare and file all reports required by statute.
- Report to IRS

7. Chapter Checking Account

The Treasurer and perhaps the co-signature of the President or other officer(s) of the Chapter are required to open a checking account in the name of the Chapter. Once you have filed for incorporation, your chapter will be issued a tax identification number, which the bank will require. All income generated in your Chapter should be deposited in the Chapter checking account.

As a chapter, you will generate income by the following means:

- Chapter membership dues
- Chapter meetings
- Special sessions (i.e. educational seminars, workshops, etc.)
- Non-member meeting attendance registrations
- You may choose to mail your newsletter to non-members, who most likely would be charged
- Donations

8. Getting the Chapter's Volunteer Support in Place

In addition to running successful meetings, your chapter must set up some kind of personnel structure in the first few months. No matter how dedicated and enthusiastic the chapters' founders are, you will not be able to do all of the work. To ensure the health of the chapter, the core group members need to avoid burnout and need to share responsibility democratically.

In addition to the officers elected at the core group planning meeting, you might consider appointed positions. You may wish to hold elections and change appointments once a year to help achieve a healthy turnover within the group.

What positions does your chapter need? Most need at least a handful of people in the active leadership to distribute the labor. The formality of the structure you set up depends on the size and structure of your group. Large groups will require a more elaborate structure than small groups. In any case, you don't need to establish all positions from the Chapter's inception. It is better to take one step at a time and not to move beyond the actual needs of your group. Determine the baseline services you want and have the resources to establish them. Then set up and fill the appropriate positions, which might include:

- ❑ A publicity manager to help recruit new members and get the word out about meetings and special events
- ❑ one or more meeting coordinators to plan and run meetings, including organizing any workshops and training programs the chapter intends to provide
- ❑ A newsletter editor and perhaps an assistant editor to acquire articles and manage the production of the chapter's newsletter (if applicable to your chapter)

Whatever structure you deem appropriate, whether it is simpler or more comprehensive than that outlined above, be sure to use the jobs within the group to involve members and create member unity. For instance, by appointing energetic members to formal positions in your chapter, you give them recognition and you increase the likelihood that they will have a long-term involvement in the chapter.

It is important that the thanks given to volunteers come not only from you, but also from the entire group. Acknowledging volunteers at meetings and in newsletters, rewarding "Volunteers of the Month," and otherwise providing public praise for a job well done will not only sustain your existing volunteers, but appeal to potential contributors as well.

II. LEGAL

Chapters are an invaluable and integral part of the ASHT structure, and the granting of a charter allows the chapter to be recognized state chapter of ASHT. However, from a legal standpoint, chapters are separate, independent entities and are solely responsible for their own activities. Each chapter is a separate legal entity, which must not only comply with ASHT requirements for chapters but also must perform all legal obligations incumbent upon any self-governing organization.

A. Relationship between ASHT and its Chapters

From a legal standpoint, the relationship between ASHT and its chapters is a contractual one. That is, there is considered to be an agreement between ASHT and its chapters pursuant to which each has certain obligations. For example, chapters are required to submit to the ASHT headquarters office an updated membership listing quarterly. In return, the chapter receives certain benefits, including the right to use the ASHT name and logo with permission.

From a positive standpoint, the above-described ASHT chapter structure gives chapters a significant amount of autonomy and independence in conducting their affairs. Unlike other associations, ASHT does not control the day-to-day affairs of its chapters, nor does it wish to do so. Of course, there are other significant benefits to being an ASHT chapter. However, this structure also means that chapters cannot necessarily rely on the national association in areas such as liability insurance, financial assistance, legal protection, etc.

B. Incorporation

On balance, from a legal standpoint it is better for a chapter to be incorporated rather than unincorporated. This is primarily because members, including individual directors and officers, of an unincorporated association may be held personally liable for the debts and other contractual obligations of the organization. There are other disadvantages to unincorporated status (such as the fact that statutory provisions for unincorporated

associations are generally fragmentary and inadequate in almost all jurisdictions) but clearly liability is the most significant.

C. Procedure for Incorporating

Incorporation is controlled by statute. In the U.S., each State has its own corporate law.

Each State and Province requires the filing of a document, called a certificate or Articles of Incorporation. This document is filed with the Secretary of State. This certificate or Articles of Incorporation becomes the basic governing document of the corporation and is subordinate only to State, or Federal law.

Articles of Incorporation typically is a simple document (usually no more than four pages) which includes basic information such as the name of the chapter, its general purposes, an initial board of directors, etc. The applicable Secretary of State's office may have forms that can be easily followed.

Whether or not a chapter wishes to seek the assistance of an attorney in the incorporation process is a decision for each chapter. While incorporating is not a complicated procedure, if no one associated with the chapter has ever been through that process, it may be helpful to at least have some guidance. In order to reduce the legal fees, the chapter may want to prepare the Articles of Incorporation as best as it can prior to meeting with an attorney and simply have the attorney review the document and make any corrections or deletions. Most attorneys also have standard forms and they should not have to spend more than a few hours at the most on preparation and filing. In addition to legal fees, usually there is a filing fee of \$100 - \$250 (US) to file Articles of Incorporation. Incorporation can be effected in a short period of time, often in 2-3 weeks.

It also should be noted that bylaws, while required by ASHT, need not be filed with the Secretary of State.

D. Registered Agent

All corporations must have a registered agent. This person is the official "contact" of the corporation for communications from the State and other third parties. For example, annual report forms are sent to this person.

While the role of a registered agent is largely passive and rarely burdensome, it is very important. Significant documents, including notices of lawsuits, often are transmitted to the corporation through the registered agent. If the individual originally designated as the registered agent ceases involvement with the chapter, but the Secretary of State is not notified of a replacement, these vital documents can go undelivered to the chapter, with potentially adverse consequences.

Therefore, chapters should be conscientious in ensuring the registered agent position is held at all times by someone who is responsible and is active in the chapter. As an alternative, there are companies that, for a fee, will serve as registered agents. These companies have the advantage of not being as transient as individuals.

E. Employer Identification Number/Business Number

Every chapter must have a taxpayer number, referred to as an employer identification number (EIN), even if it has no employees. This is particularly important with respect to opening and maintaining a bank account. In addition to the fact that most banks now require organizations to have an EIN before they will open an account and process checks for the organization, even absent such a requirement, the only alternative to an EIN would be to use the social security number of one of the officers of the chapter. The disadvantage with this approach is that the bank will consider all funds to be funds of that individual, and will report this to the Internal Revenue Service for tax purposes, resulting in potential tax liability as an individual. In addition, disputes as to the ownership or control of chapter funds may arise if an individual's social security number is used.

An EIN can be obtained by filing the IRS Form SS-4, which is available from the Internal Revenue Service, including in downloadable form from the IRS website, www.irs.treas.gov.

F. Tax-Exempt Status

ASHT is a nonprofit organization. That is, unlike business corporations, its goal is not to generate dividends for stockholders. Certainly ASHT makes every effort, and is legally permitted, to have excess revenues over expenses. That is, ASHT may make a "profit." The term "nonprofit" technically means that an organization has no shareholders, and it does not distribute any profits to shareholders, investors, or other individuals in the form of a dividend.

ASHT Chapters will be granted a tax exempt status under the provisions of Section 501(c) 3 of the IRS Code, which covers “scientific” or “educational” organizations.

Like an exempt business league, a scientific or educational association seeking tax-exempt status must be organized and operated so that “no part of [its] ...net earnings...insures to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.” In addition, three other criteria must be met.

1. The chapter must be organized and operated “exclusively” for one or more exempt public, rather than private, purposes. IRS defines “exclusively” as meaning “substantially.”
2. No “substantial part of the activities” of the association may constitute “carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting, to influence legislation.”
3. The group must “not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements), any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.” Thus, scientific and educational associations, unlike business leagues, must limit lobbying activities and avoid political activities. This does not mean, however, that your chapter is prohibited from participating in grassroots advocacy as sanctioned by National ASHT.

Scientific and educational organizations under Section 501(c) 3 enjoy “most favored” tax-exempt status in the same category as churches, schools and charities. In addition to freedom from payment of federal income taxes on revenue related to their exempt purposes, contributions to such organizations can qualify for tax deductibility by donors as charitable contributions.

Scientific and educational groups often have more favorable postal categories, with correspondingly lower postal rates, and may receive exemptions from state or local real estate taxes that may not apply to business leagues.

Obtaining 501(c) 3 Exempt Status:

The IRS Code contains provisions, which permit a parent organization to obtain a group tax exemption for its affiliates, such as chapters. The law permits ASHT to obtain the signature of each chapter that wishes to be included in the group exemption on a simple consent form. ASHT Headquarters will then file a letter with the IRS stating that it had obtained permission from its chapters to include it in a group exemption.

G. Tax Returns

A. Taxes

It is critical that the Treasurer of your organization keeps comprehensive files and that these files are consistently transferred to each successive Treasurer and President.

With a tax exempt status as a 501(c) 3 corporation, the following rules apply:

B. Form 990

Chapters only need to file this form with the IRS if they average \$25,000 or more annually in gross receipts. If you take advantage of the group exemption ASHT offers, this form is filed through ASHT Headquarters.

Gross receipts include dues revenue, money collected to pay for all expenses, donations solicited for all expenses, and anything else related to the business of the Chapter.

C. Form 990 T

This form must be filed if a chapter raises \$1,000 or more in unrelated business income. Typical examples include instances where the chapter conducts a fundraiser or sells raffle tickets to support the cost of a guest speaker.

D. State

Most state governments follow the federal rules for tax purposes. A few are different, however, and some Secretaries of State do require that annual reports of your income/expenses be filed. Be sure to check with a local tax consultant.

E. Audit

Your chapter will be responsible for conducting an annual audit.

H. Other Filing Requirements

In addition to tax filings, chapters that are corporations will be required to file an annual report with the appropriate State agency, usually the Secretary of State. This is usually a simple form that requests basic information, such as the names and addresses of the chapter officers and directors. It is standard as well for States to require that a modest annual fee (usually around \$100) accompany the annual report when filed.

While completing and filing the annual report is not burdensome, it is important. Failure to do so can result in the corporate status of the chapter – and the protection and benefits such status affords – being revoked.

I. Liability Insurance

ASHT carries liability insurance coverage for its chartered chapters.

Here are two possible situations where your Chapter officers could face a liability suit, based on actual examples from other charter organizations:

1. At the Chapter's annual golf outing, a member runs a golf cart into a tree and is severely injured. The member sues the golf course, the chapter, and all the officers.
2. A woman member is elected vice president of the Chapter and serves in this position for two years. She is, however, passed over for president and retired from the board. She files a sex discrimination suit against all other officers of the Chapter.

J. Bonding

Bonding is a specialized kind of insurance that protects the chapter in case of misuse or mishandling of funds by “insiders”, typically officers and directors. Bonding is usually offered by the same insurance carriers that offer liability insurance. Any officer who is responsible for handling chapter funds probably should be bonded, such as an officer who signs check requests, signs checks, or is otherwise directly responsible for the chapter's finances. Again, INNUA suggests that chapters seek out insurance carriers who are familiar with the work and needs of professional associations on the local, state, and/or national levels.

K. Recordkeeping

There are five general categories of records that should be maintained by a chapter.

1. Corporate records. These include articles of incorporation; bylaws, including all amendments; minutes of all board of directors, executive committee, and membership meetings; and all annual reports filed with the State. These records should be kept on a permanent basis.
2. Tax records. These include all tax or information returns, as well as any correspondence with the IRS or State or local taxing authorities.
3. Financial records. Budgets, balance sheets, financial statements, bank statements, and canceled checks should be maintained for at least seven (7) years.
4. Insurance records. Policies should be kept on a permanent basis. Document related to claims should be maintained for six (6) years following resolution of a claim.
5. Contracts. Written contracts, such with a meeting facility, should be retained for at least three (3) years following termination or completion of the contract.

L. Publishing

Most chapters publish their own newsletter or other informational piece that is distributed to the members on a regular basis. Some also have their own websites. There are three basic legal issues that chapters should be aware of in connection with these activities.

The first is copyright. Generally speaking, a chapter may not reproduce, in print or online, materials previously published in other forms, such as a magazine article, without express written permission to do so.

A second concern is defamation. Statements that are critical of an individual or company can be harmful and considered libelous. Extreme caution must be exercised in this regard.

Finally, chapters that accept advertising in their publications or on their website should not do so in an arbitrary, discriminatory, or anti-competitive manner. That is, as a general rule, anyone wishing to advertise should be permitted to do so.

III. BYLAWS

We have included a sample of Chapter Bylaws. These Chapter Bylaws follow ASHT's Bylaws and may be amended; however, should you choose to amend the proposed bylaws, please keep in mind that the amendments must be reviewed by the ASHT State Chapter Chairperson and require the approval of the ASHT Board of Directors. No Bylaw amendments may be made without the prior approval of the ASHT Board. You will note that there are blanks that you will have to fill in, and once completed, return the signed Bylaws to ASHT Headquarters.

VI. INVOLVEMENT WITH THE ASHT ORGANIZATION

From a legal standpoint, the relationship between ASHT and its chapters is a contractual one. All Chapters must sign the ASHT Affiliate Agreement (see attached) in order to be a recognized state chapter. If at any time the Charter Chapter should not meet the requirements outlined in this agreement, the Board of Directors of ASHT shall have the authority to revoke the Chapter's charter and their affiliation agreement if Chapter is determined to be guilty of conduct contrary to the best interests of ASHT, or in conflict with the bylaws, policies or procedures of ASHT or the Chapter bylaws. Additionally, once a Chapter has been approved to receive its charter, there are certain documents which must be submitted annually in order to maintain the charter. These items include:

A. Officer Roster

During **January** of each year, your chapter must submit a form that includes an updated list of officers, and their contact information, to ASHT Headquarters. Attachment 1.

B. Bylaws

Any amendments to Chapter Bylaws must be submitted for approval to the State Chapter Committee.

ASHT Logo

Written authorization of the Association must be obtained prior to the use of ASHT's name, marks and logos for any purpose other than ASHT business. However, ASHT members, speakers and presenters may acknowledge their participation in ASHT including awards received, in their vitae, biographies and resumes.

ASHT's name, marks or logos shall not be used where such use could be construed as an endorsement of a company, person, product service or activity unless there is a written agreement or contract between ASHT and company or individual.

It is important to always use your own chapter name, rather than ASHT's name, on all correspondence and other written or printed material. Because ASHT and the chapter are separate legal entities, the chapter may not purport to make any representations on behalf of ASHT or bind it to any agreements or contracts. Similarly, ASHT may not make representations on behalf of the chapter or bind it to any agreements or contracts.

Annual ASHT Conference

If an ASHT annual conference should be scheduled in your Chapter area, you will be asked to become involved. Many options for your Chapter's involvement include providing speakers, volunteering staff resources, sponsoring solicitation, and addressing local marketing needs.

VII. CHAPTER PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Program Patterns and Options

Each Chapter is a little different in how it develops its programs, but the common element in each successful Chapter is that the programs respond to members' needs and ability to participate.

Here are two "typical" patterns of activity you might consider for your new Chapter:

Pattern A

Every other month, the Chapter holds an evening meeting in a popular hotel that is conveniently located in the Chapter area. At each meeting there is a "social hour," followed by dinner and an after-dinner speaker on an issue of interest. Those members who wish to stay for questions and discussions do so.

Pattern B

On the third Thursday of each month, the Chapter holds a luncheon meeting in a central location. There is an open bar for 20 to 30 minutes, followed by a buffet lunch and a one-hour program. To participate, members have to be away from their jobs just 2½ hours per month.

Obviously there are many options available to your Chapters, and the patterns described above are just suggestions. The important thing is to find a pattern that suits the needs of your members. If your steering committee is uncertain about members' preferences, conduct a short written survey at your first Chapter meeting or through the mail to find out how members feel about issues like meeting times and locations.

Program Content

The subject matter of your programs is one of the keys to your success as a Chapter. To succeed in this area, your program planners must know your members and the issues important to them as professionals.

Here are some suggestions to keep the Chapter "on-track":

1. Take an annual survey of members and draw a ranking of preferred topics.
2. Get 5 - 10 key members together for a brainstorming session on program topics.
3. Use critique sheets at every meeting so members can evaluate that meeting's program and also suggest future topics.

Remember to keep programs varied to make the Chapter appealing to a broad spectrum of ASHT professionals.

Speakers

State Chapters generally use "volunteer" speakers from local communities who do not charge an honorarium. In many cases, the members of the Chapter are the most frequent speakers. Members of ASHT, especially members of the ASHT Board of Directors, are also good speaker candidates.

Consultants who are comfortable speaking in front of large groups can usually be relied upon to refrain from any heavy-handed "sales pitch", and may be an excellent resource. Consultants tend to maintain a deeper knowledge level in their area of specialization. Consultants also see an advantage in speaking to your Chapter, and will often make a time commitment to prepare their presentations. Be clear in advance about any expectations you may have regarding the presentation.

We suggest that you strive for a balance in the types of speakers that present at your meetings, rather than relying too heavily on any one particular category of speaker. Try to involve other members of local communities for programs on issues that are not strictly related to ASHT but nevertheless may be important to your members. Programs on subjects like "Managing Stress," "Time Management," and "Quality Client Relationships" can also work well, but make sure that the speaker is well-qualified.

Choosing Meeting Times

Often, Chapters select the same day each month (the second Tuesday of each month, for example), hoping that this will help attendees remember the meeting. Other Chapters choose to vary the day of the week for each meeting to avoid potential meeting conflicts with allied groups that meet the same day each month. Assess the needs of the potential attendees in your communities and select dates accordingly. Also, obtain information from members about the time of day that would be most convenient for them. Most Chapters are consistent in setting a time for all meetings, but variety in meeting times might work best for your Chapter.

Be sure to select dates at least two, and preferably three, months in advance to help your members plan their participation. The selection of dates in advance will allow the program chairman some latitude when approaching a speaker.

Choosing a Location

The best site would be a centrally located restaurant, hotel or private club. Investigate several possibilities, being sure to inquire into private meeting space capacity, audio-visual capabilities, and varied menus with a range of prices.

It is important to find a facility that demonstrates a desire to serve your group. A big convention hotel may not give your local group the attention and support you deserve, but a smaller hotel might regard you as an important client. A facility that works well with you can help your meetings run successfully.

Given the size of many Chapter meetings, you should not expect much leverage in negotiating with hotels or restaurants. If you can commit to using a given facility 10 to 12 times a year, you may be eligible for some consideration, such as a waiver of charges for meeting space and/or audio visual support.

Charging for Programs

The cost of your meetings normally will not be an issue for your members as long as the expense is reasonable and the programs are worthwhile. Your objective should be to cover all out-of-pocket costs at a minimum of expense. A well-managed program series should certainly not drain your Chapter treasury, but rather contribute to your available funds.

These are the costs you should attempt to recover in fees for any given meeting:

- Meals and cocktails (if served)
- Meeting space
- Audio-visual rentals
- Speakers' fees (if any)
- Cost of advance promotion for meeting

It is wise to request advance registration and payment if there is someone in your organization who is willing to handle this administrative task. Advance registration allows you to plan with greater accuracy when considering the number of meals to be served, etc.

Most hotels/restaurants will require you to give them a guarantee figure at least 48 hours in advance of your meeting. If you guarantee that 50 of your members will attend, you are liable for payment of 50 meals even if only 30 people attend. Most facilities will prepare food for 5% to 10% above your minimum guarantee at no penalty to you, so you have some protection against "over-selling" the meeting. By requiring advance registration, you can avoid wasting the Chapter's funds on guaranteed meals that no one eats.

Advance payment simplifies your bookkeeping and avoids the complications of maintaining an Accounts Receivable.

Announcing Your Meeting

Meeting announcements should be sent out about one month prior to the meeting. Publicity will also be given to your event in *ASHT Times* if information is received in time for inclusion.

You should include the following information in your announcement:

- Time and place of meeting
- Speaker(s) and topic(s)
- Cost (also note whether pre-paid reservations are required)
- Name, address and phone number of person handling all responses
- Date and speaker for the following meeting (if known)

Meeting Agendas

A possible agenda for the first or second Chapter meeting might be:

- A. Welcome and introduction of speaker's table
- B. Introduction of ASHT, Chapter's Purpose, and a status update
- C. Adoption of bylaws (these should be mailed to members in advance)
- D. Election of Officers and Board of Directors
- E. Speaker and Discussion period

VIII. CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Next to chapter meetings, newsletters are probably the most common and useful service chapters provide. A chapter newsletter is a wonderful tool for soliciting new members and engaging current members.

ASHT suggests that each chapter have a newsletter, which would be funded from the chapter treasury and sent to its members. Newsletters can be produced monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly. Obviously, newsletters require an up-front investment in dollars and someone's time, and they do not bring income as do educational programs, conferences, fundraisers, etc.

However, they do "pay off" in many other ways, including the following:

- As a regular communication link, they help "weld" the chapter together.
- They help promote chapter and Society activities.
- They provide a place for recognition of outstanding individual or collective chapter accomplishments or activities.
- They provide a key service to non-attendees of meetings or for those who cannot regularly attend chapter meetings and activities.
- They offer a chance for expression and creativity to those chapter members with skills and/or interest in publications, publicity, and writing.
- They offer a grassroots supplement to Society publications such as the *ASHT Times*.

Newsletters involve at least four processes:

1. Editorial – getting articles
2. Design and production – putting the newsletter together
3. Printing

4. Distribution – getting the newsletter to members

Despite the labor involved, even a small chapter can produce a newsletter by following two simple pieces of advice: Start Small and Be Resourceful.

A. **Format vs. Content**

In general, what goes in a newsletter is more important than how it is presented. Concentrate on content primarily and on format secondly.

As you are just starting your newsletter, don't worry about expensive paper, color, lots of pictures, etc. While these may be pleasing to the eye, it is the NEWS of your newsletter that will capture and maintain your members' attention and keep your members active.

Some chapters, big and small, may want to take advantage of current technology and distribute their newsletters via fax and/or e-mail.

Some suggested content ideas include the following:

- Announcement and promotion of future chapter meetings, social events and conference information
- Announcement and promotion of national Society meetings, social events and conference information
- Achievements, accomplishments of individual members, such as employment promotions, job changes, honors and/or awards
- Short features on occupational health subjects
- Recognize new members and guests with short "welcome" articles or lists
- Briefing of the past meeting
- Question & Answer column – questions and answers voiced at meetings
- Product evaluations can be extremely useful to members, often helping them to make purchase decisions

In addition to the above, Society Headquarters as well as the State Chapter Liaison should be on each chapter's mailing list so they are kept up-to-date with the most recent information your chapter is providing.

B. **Reprint articles from other publications**

Many chapters are willing to share their articles with other groups, so long as permission is obtained first from the author or publisher and proper credit is given when the article is published. You can also obtain permission from trade publications. You can get your chapter on a mailing list with suppliers and other groups connected with hand therapy. Press releases from suppliers and announcements of industry events can be valuable to members when incorporated into a newsletter.

C. **ASHT Times and Web**

As a service to state chapters and all ASHT members, the Society now runs a column in the Society newsletter and retains a web page devoted entirely to State Chapter News and State Chapter Work. Headquarters will solicit information from the chapters for inclusion in these areas, but chapters are encouraged to regularly send updates to HQ via fax or e-mail.

Starting a new ASHT Chapter is very rewarding, yet sometimes an overwhelming experience. We are here to help with this development. Should you have any questions throughout this initial startup process or at any point of your chapter development, please feel free to contact ASHT Headquarters by calling 312.321.6866 or by emailing us at asht@smithbucklin.com. We look forward to working with you on this endeavor!