

Nine Beginning Steps To Starting A Chapter

1. Make sure that everyone understands what People First and self-advocacy are. Talk about why people want to meet as a group. Write it down. This is your mission statement. It is important that the members of the chapter have control right from the beginning, so that the group belongs to the members. Starting a group takes time, so that everyone will understand what is going on and can participate in starting the group.
2. Decide on the **responsibilities** that each person will have in getting the group going. Things that need to be decided are: finding a place to meet, finding transportation, publicity, the agenda, etc.
3. **Find** out how other groups work, and learn from them. Then make your own decisions about how your group wants to arrange things.
4. Decide on the rules for how you are going to work together. Things like how you will choose officers, if you will have dues, how you will vote, how you will choose an advisor. Write down what you decide. These are your **bylaws**. We have put the bylaws of one local People First chapter in this manual for you to look over, to get some ideas.
5. Work on developing team spirit. Work on how you will help people get over their hurt feelings when people have disagreements in the group.
6. Decide on the goals your People First chapter has. Write them down. This is the "goals" section of your strategic plan.
7. Decide on what you will do to **reach** your goals. Write this down too. It is your list of activities.
8. Develop **connections** with the **local** community. Be active and interact with others, both groups and individuals in the community.
9. Every so often, stop, and think over how things are going. Make changes when most of the members agree that something needs to be changed.

source: <http://oklahomapeoplefirst.org>