

## Strategies for Recruiting and Keeping Members

Visitors to weekly support group meetings represent your Affiliate's best new member prospects. Because of the weekly support they receive, along with the bonding and fellowship that grows from Support Meetings, these visitors have already 'joined' the group. Making the decision to become a member is a natural step for them, one you should encourage.

No matter how comprehensive your education programs, most graduates want to learn even more about such issues as housing, available services and benefits and current drugs and treatments. With their interest and motivation at its peak, NAMI education course graduates represent an equally important source of new members.

Your affiliate's ability to manage relationships with course graduates and support group visitors determines your affiliate's quality and growth potential. To interest prospective members in joining and remaining active in your affiliate, you should:

- Make sure all your members are aware of the critical importance of new member recruiting to your affiliate. Help them understand the potential of the support and educational programs to membership growth.
- Encourage affiliate members to drop in on education program session.
- Have membership forms available at all meetings.
- Plan an educational meeting related to course content soon after a course ends and invite all graduates to attend.
- Invite all course graduates to join your affiliate's support groups.
- Invite all support group visitors to enroll in upcoming education classes.
- Plan social events such as pot luck dinners, picnics, luncheons and awards dinners throughout the year and invite prospective members to attend.
- Add visitors' and course graduates' names to the newsletter mailing list.
- Follow up invitations with telephone calls to remind the prospective member of the event.
- Arrange for designated affiliate members to greet visitors and make sure they feel welcome.
- Pair established members as partners with new members to be sure they get the most benefit from their involvement in your affiliate and your affiliate gets the most benefit from their interests and skills.
- Involve new members early by personally asking them to complete a specific task.
- Continue to provide meaningful opportunities for participation and involvement for members at all levels.
- Avoid making general calls for project and program volunteers. Instead, get to know your members and ask one-on-one for their help with specific tasks suited to their interests and skills.
- Survey all affiliate members annually about their needs and interests and set priorities accordingly

Member recruiting and retention require a concerted effort by all members of your affiliate. In particular, board members, support group facilitators and course instructors need to work cooperatively to create and maintain an ongoing recruiting and retention program for your affiliate.