

SURVIVING YOUR YEAR(S) IN THE HOT SEAT

A Beginner's Guide To APHA



Barbara Levin,
MD, MPH

ISC Chair

Welcome

Quick Tip

Prior to beginning your term, make sure you have selected a:

- Membership Chair
- Program Chair
- Newsletter Chair
- Nomination Chair

Congratulations! Perhaps reality didn't hit when you agreed to run for section office, but you now have the distinction of serving at least three years in a leadership position -- as a section chair-elect, chair, and immediate past-chair.

Each of those job titles entitles you to participate as a member of the Intersectional Council (ISC). The ISC is comprised of others in exactly the same section positions as you, this group meets annually at the Annual Meeting to discuss issues of concern to section leadership. Typically, ISC convenes the Saturday and Sunday before the Annual Meeting's official opening. The Intersectional Council (familiarily known as ISC) elects its own leadership, known as the ISC Steering Committee (ISC/SC).

The ISC represents the interests common to the APHA Sections; and facilitates relations between them and other groups within APHA.

Inside this guide:

Welcome	1
Appointing Leadership Positions	2
Communications Responsibilities & Opportunities	5
Financial Responsibilities	6
APHA Structure: Membership Driven	7
APHA Structure: Staff	9
Now What?	11

The ISC/SC's job is to provide lines of communication between Association and sections throughout the year, not just at the Annual meeting. The ISC/SC also works to support section leaders; to link section needs with Association resources; to provide access to other sections' success stories on programs and operations; and to fulfill other responsibilities as assigned to it by the Governing Council or other Association units.

One member of the ISC/SC will be appointed as your section's own liaison. This individual will be in regular contact to see whether you have particular needs, interests, etc. that ISC/SC can meet. While the ISC/SC liaison can be a useful lifeline, you will find that the ease and the success of your year(s) as a section leader depend primarily on you. This manual was born as a result of section leaders' realizing that reality, and bemoaning: "If only I'd known..."

To help you through your year in the hot seat, ISC/SC prepared this *Beginner's Guide to APHA*.

Our hope is that this guide will help to launch you in your new position, and to guide you in identifying where to go for further information and support. The APHA website, the ISC Leader's Corner option (listed under Sections), is a veritable archive of information from which to draw. There you'll find presentation and in-depth discussion of reports, bylaws, handbooks, resolutions, policy papers – virtually everything APHA does. But

that's part of the problem: there is so much on the website, it can be daunting and difficult to know where to find the 'quick answer.' And that's where the *Beginner's Guide* comes into play.



John Wayne and Gordy Schiff (Past Chair) at Medical Care Mid-Year Meeting

This manual is intended as a taste of what's available to you via the website and staff resources. It does not and is not intended to be the reply to all your questions. Instead, it is intended to be a quick reference and support for you in your leadership role. We also recognize that it is not a finished document. After you've read and (we hope) used it, we welcome your ideas about additional information you'd like to see included. The more we learn about what we don't know, the more we can help you survive your year(s) in the hot seat.

Being a Section Chair: What to Do and How to Do It

Appointing Leadership Positions

"Since the section 'buck' officially stops with you, your life as chair actually revolves around certain core responsibilities."

Being Section Chair is an executive management position. Your job is to help the section set its goals and objectives then to accomplish them. There are 13 criteria by which sections are measured. Working toward those goals and meeting the needs of the individual members is what makes sections thrive. You, as chair, don't need to do everything. But you do need to think creatively and effectively about how others in your section can help you.

On first glance, being section chair seems fairly straightforward. There are only two events that require your appearance. First, you're expected to attend a section chairs-elect training session. Held in Washington, DC at APHA headquarters, your attendance is reimbursed by APHA. Your other in-person responsibility is to run your section's business meetings at the Annual Meeting. Sounds easy, no? But there's more...

Since the section 'buck' officially stops with you, your life as chair actually revolves around certain core responsibilities.

To begin with, each section is required to prepare a work plan at the beginning of the year, and to present a report at the end of the year. As section chair, making sure these reports are put together and filed with the APHA Component Affairs department is your responsibility. The work plan is a statement of what the section would like to achieve during your year of leadership. The section report provides an update on what worked well and challenges faced. Frequently, an online survey format is used to ease the preparation of both documents.

Beyond this set of responsibilities, there are a number of other key functions to the chair position. The extent to which you are involved in these operations varies by personality and section. All sections, however, require their chair to make appointments to certain key positions internal to the section. This minimum set of appointed slots includes a:

- Membership Chair
- Program Chair
- Newsletter Chair, and
- Nominations Chair

You're probably wondering, what about things like Governing Council? Aren't those also

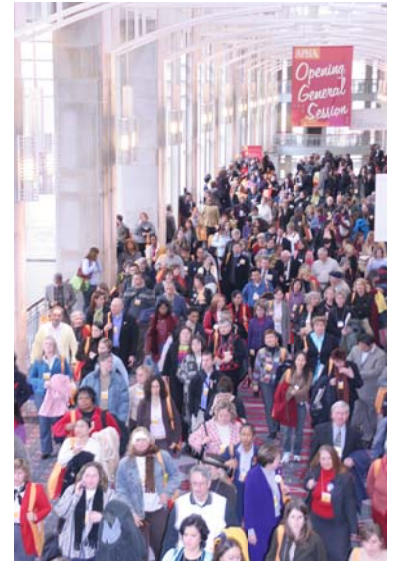
leadership positions? You're right. Other leadership positions do exist at the section level. As a rule, however, those 'other' slots are elected positions (e.g., Governing Councilors and Section Councilors). These elected positions are definitely part of the leadership landscape of your section. Working with the Section Councilors in particular, can assure better functioning of your section. The Governing Councilors present a "face" of your section to the broader APHA community; this is also true of individuals appointed by you to association-wide committees and task forces.

In contrast to elected positions, committee chairs are typically appointed by the Section chair. Some sections have established traditions (e.g., that the Chair-Elect serves as Program Chair) governing which people slide into which spots. As a chair-elect, you need to confirm how your section handles these key positions. And you need to think sooner rather than later about individuals best suited to all appointments for which you are responsible. The people, who are already serving in these capacities may agree to serve another year. If you're willing to have them continue, ask them. There are strong arguments to be made for continuity. At the same time, however, you may want to use committee appointments as a way to involve new members, to bring new ideas into section leadership, and to rotate off people who (quite frankly) didn't do what they had promised. So what are the jobs of your core 'appointed' crew?

The **Membership Chair** participates on the Association's Committee on Membership. In the best of all possible scenarios, this person is on a first name basis with APHA's Membership Services director. The Membership Chair works to generate interest in the section among would-be members; finds out why people change sections or drop their membership all together; alerts section committee chairs to new members interested in joining their work, and related activities. In some sections, the Membership Chair may also be responsible for the section social and the section booth. How does your section handle these two—social and booth—important functions? Who does what? Is there an existing section materials? Who has it? How does it move from last year's meeting to next year's site? Who is taking care of finding a location for the section's social? Who is handling the catering for your social? Many of us move into leadership positions without ever thinking about questions such as these. Typically, the Membership Chair is responsible (whether individually or with other section members) for answers to these questions. No members, no section. So pick shrewdly for this slot.

The Committee on Membership, an APHA Committee, includes all section Membership Chairs. This Committee meets on Wednesday morning of the last day of the Annual Meeting. And your appointee should plan to stay through Wednesday to attend. The specific Annual Meeting involving your Membership appointee will be the one at which you move into your position as section chair. In other words, if you become the section chair at the 2030 Annual Meeting, you are responsible for the 2030-2031 program year. The Membership Committee meeting involving *your* Membership Chair will be part of the 2030 Annual Meeting.

In the eyes of many, you can't have a Section without a program at the Annual Meeting. For all intents and purposes, your **Program Chair** (sometimes a two-person position) IS the Annual Meeting. Without this person, you have no program. The section Program Chair attends an APHA training – at APHA's expense – on the Thursday immediately after the Annual Meeting ends. This session covers virtually everything program-related to be done over the coming year. It, admittedly, is a lot to digest. Be sure that whoever serves as your Program Chair attends this session. If that's not feasible, you will be well-advised to attend the session yourself. If you become section chair at the conclusion of the 2030 Annual Meeting, you are responsible for the 2031 Annual Meeting. The training for your Program Chair will occur immediately after the 2030 Annual Meeting.



“The Annual Meeting is one of the most opportune times to recruit new leaders in your Section.”



The members of the Student Assembly are a great resource.

Constructing a section's program has been simplified tremendously since many responsibilities are now completed online. It would be misleading, however, to deny that the Program Chair still negotiates a huge territory. Included in this important work is coming up with a cadre of reliable section members to review abstracts for the Annual Meeting; assigning abstracts to reviewers; grouping papers to form coherent sessions, which also must be titled appropriately; deciding which submissions work best as posters, roundtables, delivered papers, or panels; negotiating with APHA and other sections, if more sessions are desired; crafting special sessions, and related functions. The task is labor intensive but for a condensed period of time, peaking from spring to immediately before the Annual Meeting. Because of the workload potential, some sections opt to have two Program Co-Chairs, with one person serving as the veteran and the second, as the lead for the next program year (a Program Chair-Elect, if you will).

There are no bylaws governing the ways that sections must manage their program. Think creatively on how to fashion the position of Program Chair, and more good people may be willing to serve. As section chair, you can assist your Program Chair(s) by staying in regular contact with him/her; helping to convince section members to cooperate in the review process; even handling the more troublesome emails/calls that the Program Chair receives. You also can't assume that a program just happens. Periodic follow-up with your section Program Chair(s) will assure that your section's program is a quality statement about your section's efforts. One of the true joys of APHA work is combining efforts with other sections and Special Interest Groups (SPIGs) to present a collaborative program. While joint sponsorship is rather easy, developing cross-cutting presentations among sections is somewhat more challenging.

Awards represent an important part of section life at the Annual Meeting. Awards are a wonderful way to acknowledge members' contributions, to gain visibility in the world of public health, and even to bring the section to the attention of outsiders. The nature, number and criteria for awards differ across sections. What is constant, however, is that without an **Awards Chair** you have no awards. The job is not hard but can involve several layers of coordination, such as: advertising the section's awards, collecting nominations, managing reviews, handling publicity and coordinating with Component Affairs. These are all the responsibilities of an Awards Chair and definitely not something you will have time to do personally. Include this position on your 'to do' list – due to Component Affairs by January of your year as chair.

Just as online capabilities assist the Program Chair, so too the **Newsletter Chair's** life has been simplified by working online. But someone still needs to ride herd on the stories to produce, making sure text is appropriate to the medium and that the newsletter's space is used effectively. Remember that your section newsletter goes to people outside the usual leadership. Keep those people in mind when working with your Newsletter Chair. Is the section newsletter a major source of information for people outside the inner circle of your section? Do you, as chair, want to have a regular "Letter to the Section"? Is the newsletter attractive to students? Students are your section's future. If the newsletter doesn't grab them, you have a problem. Is the newsletter doing a good job with section publicity?

Given the different functions served by an effective newsletter, you can see how the job of Newsletter Chair is key to your section's vitality. Find someone who will produce the minimum two newsletters per year, and who will attend to the deadlines that APHA sets for each newsletter. But also identify a Newsletter Chair who doesn't need to 'stay between the lines' in coming up with content that can be a powerful PR message for your section. Each year, the Annual Meeting includes a special training and orientation for incoming Newsletter Chairs. Your Newsletter Chair appointee should plan to attend this training as part of the Annual Meeting at which you move into your position. If your Newsletter designee cannot attend, either you or a trusted representative should plan to be present.

"Is the newsletter attractive to students? Students are your section's future. If the newsletter doesn't grab them, you have a problem."

Then there is the **Nominations Chair**. Leadership development is key to the ongoing success of all sections and SPIGs. Unless you want to be chair forever, you need someone capable of pulling together a slate of individuals appropriate to your section's leadership positions and reflecting the diversity of your section. Some sections expect the immediate past chair or secretary to automatically fill the position of Nominations Chair. Clearly, it's in your own better interest to find out your section's expectations. You, more than anyone in the section, will be in contact with an array of your section's membership. Talk to your Nominations Chair about possible names for each elected position. Think about how positions can be used as a section career ladder, with service in one position being a testing ground for the individual's movement into other, more demanding section leadership positions. And if your section expects you to become Nominations Chair (in all the free time you'll have after being section chair), make sure you also keep a running list of people to ask – and not to ask – when it's your turn as Nominations Chair.

In your thinking about potential candidates, remember to consider multiple measures of diversity: e.g.—a mix of practice and academia, geographic locale, ethnicity, gender, etc.

Of course, sections will also have appointed positions other than the ones described here. And those positions play a meaningful role in section life. However, those comprising your core appointments – Nominations, Newsletter, Program, Membership – will be critical to your section's life. Without their functions, you have no section. So the sooner you consider who best fits each position, the healthier your section and the happier you'll be.

Communication Responsibilities and Opportunities

Beyond your responsibilities to find people for key section appointments, the section chair serves as the section's voice. When APHA has questions relating to your section, *you* receive the queries. When APHA looks for people to provide testimony or to comment on proposed advocacy activities that impact your section, *you* will be among the first called. You also will be the person most likely called when section members are unhappy (Why didn't my paper get accepted?), have pet issues to consider, etc. This element of your work load is not particularly difficult. But it can feel demanding. Consider delegating enquiries to other section leaders to distribute the load. In so doing, you help yourself and help to develop the section's leadership capacity.

To maintain section spirit, to brag about the section's activities, and to minimize disgruntled members, think about using communication channels both within and outside your section.

The Annual Meeting is one way to reach out to and communicate with section members. Use your section's booth at the Annual Meeting, your business meetings, and (if available and appropriate) awards ceremonies to spread the word about all the good things your section is doing. Make the Annual Meeting a showcase for enticing folks to become more involved. Most sections also have a social function as part of their Annual Meeting festivities. Perhaps you can recruit people who are more comfortable with the party than the more organizational or scholarly portions of your section's life. The section social also can be a focus for external communication and possibly a fundraiser. Some sections sponsor "silent auctions" or other such events. Fundraising is a new area of concern for section leadership and will be discussed in greater detail later (see below). Some sections work with publishers familiar to their field, receiving complimentary books to raffle; others work to collect personal donations or other supports from relevant commercial and professional groups to make the event more successful across multiple dimensions. For additional information on fundraising, please review the *Guidelines for Gifts & Donations*.



Betty Bekemeier (ISC Past Chair) and Marjorie Buchanan at Public Health Nursing Section Mid-Year Meeting.

"To maintain section spirit, to brag about the section's activities, and to minimize disgruntled members, think about using communication channels both within and outside your section."

The section newsletter, while officially not your responsibility (thank goodness for Newsletter chairs!), is another means to communicate with your membership. How about crafting a regular "From the Chair" column, to inform folks of what you're doing? Each section is entitled to at least two newsletters per program year and is allowed to send up to three emails a month. Use them! Broadcast emails and your section's website are ways to reach out to members. Maybe you need people to review abstracts for the Annual Meeting; to moderate sessions; or to act on an advocacy policy alert. With APHA staff support, use all the means available to you to reach your membership for whatever needs you have. Personal emails are also a valuable communications tool.

In addition to section-wide communication channels, you will need to consider how to manage negotiate communication specific to your section's leadership. Periodic conference calls are critical to keeping everyone informed, and to ensuring that important section work is done. If you (or another section member) cannot host conference calls, APHA Section Affairs staff will work with you to arrange conference calls at reasonable rates. A section leadership list serve is yet another vehicle for staying in touch between in-person meetings. If you think about life in APHA, we spend less than 10% of our time in face-to-face contact as an Association. The more you communicate with leadership and members, the better things will be. One caution: we're not suggesting that you burden people with emails and phone calls. APHA is a volunteer organization, and we need to respect the limits to volunteers' time. However, targeted communication is critical to getting your job done and done well.



Financial Responsibilities

At the time you agreed to run for Chair, did you even think about the fact that most sections do NOT have a treasurer? In other words, along with your other duties, you hold the section's purse strings. As section chair, part of your job is to monitor how the section's dollars are spent. Each section receives an annual allocation from APHA based upon the number of paid members in your section as of August 31 each year. [That same number will determine how many the number of governing councilors to which your section will have.] All APHA-provided funds disappear at the end of the fiscal year-June 30. If you haven't spent all the allocation, you cannot retain it for use in the next program year. So think wisely about how you allocate these funds. Also be mindful of the calendar governing reimbursements. To use money from a specific program year, requests for reimbursement must be received by Component Affairs staff by June 30. It won't matter that an expense was accrued during the proper time frame.

If the request for reimbursement is submitted too late, it will not get paid.

The lesson to be learned: Pay attention to the APHA calendar distributed by Component Affairs. To avoid inappropriate use of your section's money, you, as chair, you must authorize all requests for reimbursement. To do so, you need only to sign-off on the APHA reimbursement form (obtained from Component Affairs).

Beyond its APHA allocation, each section has the option of creating a separate enrichment fund, which is a pool of money that will carry-over between program years. Development is a new area for some sections and some have been very successful in creating such funds, then using them wisely for section projects. While not one of the regular appointments discussed previously, the position of fund raiser might be one of those additional appointments to consider during your year as section chair. Are there folks

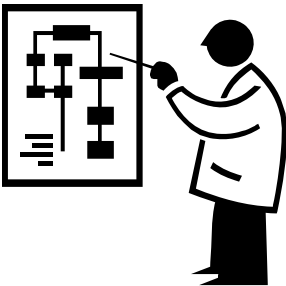
"If the request for reimbursement is submitted too late, it will not get paid."

willing to donate to the section? Is there someone particularly skilled at organizing an auction? What about a section celebrity event? This extra pool of money (sometimes called a *section enrichment fund*), is yours to use in ways you think most helpful to the section: e.g., to provide student scholarships; to cover the cost of section awards; to pay for guests' tickets at a section luncheon. Opportunities are limited only by your creativity and the amount of money you can collect. While extra effort goes into amassing these discretionary funds, the work pays off. This separate, section-only enrichment pool of money is 100% in your section's control. Approval of your section leadership team is a critical piece of your decision making process in developing and using these funds. This enrichment fund development will survive your term, assuming funds remain, and is a bit of a legacy of your efforts. Component Affairs and the new Association-wide Development Director are available to provide guidance with this part of your job.

APHA Structure IS Membership Driven

While understanding the "ins' and "outs" of your own section it is critical to being a section chair, your ability to work with APHA will be nonexistent without a useable knowledge of the Association's structure. Be prepared. APHA does *not* follow a clear-cut organizational plan. So the more you understand the layers of staff and volunteer leadership interactions, the better equipped you will be to make your section an effective player in the organization's life. Here goes.

APHA membership is sorted among 27 **sections**, 53 state **affiliates**, 6 **special primary interest groups** (SPIG). In addition, there are units known as **caucuses** and **forums**; any one member can belong to an unlimited number of these groups. Each unit attracts members based on different disciplines or interests. In addition, APHA has a **Student Assembly** (SA) specifically intended for student members. Someone from this group will be appointed as a SA liaison to your section. The more you bring your student liaison and other students into the life of your section, the more dynamic your section can become.



Of all membership options, sections are APHA's basic organizational unit.

Currently, there are 27 discipline-based sections. Within each section, officers are the chair, chair-elect and secretary. The definition of 'section leadership,' with some variation across sections, typically consists of its officers, elected section councilors, and the immediate past chair. Other appointments [e.g., section committee chairs] may also figure into section leadership. However leadership is defined in your section, these people embody the section's governing voice. On APHA policy matters and Association elections, your section's elected Governing Councilors also will be key actors.

If you've ever been a Governing Councilor, you know that the **Governing Council** is much like APHA's Congress. The Governing Council derives its voting members from APHA's primary membership constituents, i.e., the sections and affiliates. While there are 53 state public health affiliates, there are 53 affiliate councilors on Governing Council. The number of section Governing Councilors will be determined by your section's total membership as of August 31 each year.

Members of the Governing Council elect APHA's officers and its Executive Board. They

also vote on association priorities, policies, resolutions, bylaws, and related matters of organization and governance. Governing Councilors are expected to attend all Governing Council sessions at the Annual Meeting. To maximize a section's impact at Governing Council, some sections appoint a Section Whip or Captain to negotiate vote trading as well as to organize your section's review of proposed resolutions and position papers. This individual also can work with Governing Councilors (or other section members, if needed) to assure your section's presence and participation is appropriate, in all hearings for proposed resolutions/position papers. In the best of all possible worlds, everyone elected to Governing Council will attend every Governing Council session. But that is often not a reality. As a consequence, as section chair, you would be well-advised to poll all Governing Councilors well before the Annual Meeting to establish who is and is not attending. Among those attending, is everyone able to attend all Governing Council sessions? Don't ask these questions only once. Last minute changes happen. For everyone who is unable to attend – whether the entire meeting or a single Governing Council session – be clear as to who will hold the Governing Councilor's proxy. Your section's voice is avoidably diluted if all elected Governing Councilors do not attend Governing Council. This situation is avoidable. As section chair, you are best positioned to make certain that absent Governing Councilors' documents are collected and that their proxies are assigned.

The **Executive Board** is comprised of 24 members who hold fiduciary responsibility for APHA. These 24 individuals, some elected and some appointed by virtue of positions on other organizational units, direct the organization's administrative efforts, supervise APHA's committees and boards, and provide leadership during periods between Annual Meetings. The Executive Board includes APHA's officers: the President, President-Elect, Past President, Chair and Vice-Chair of the Executive Board, Treasurer, and Speaker of the Governing Council. Chairs of the Education Board, Science Board, Intersectional Council, Committee on Affiliates, Student Assembly and Action Board are non-voting members of the Executive Board. Your section will be assigned one elected Executive Board member as its liaison. It can never hurt to keep your Executive Board liaison informed of section activities. Include her/him in conference calls, invite him/her to a section business meeting. The liaison is yet another way to stay informed and to garner support for your section's efforts.

The **Intersectional Council (ISC)**, of which you now are a member, brings together all section chairs, chairs-elect and immediate past chairs to represent section interests within APHA. The ISC's business is conducted as a group of the whole during the Annual Meeting and by a **Steering Committee** elected from ISC membership between Annual Meetings. If you are interested in becoming a member of the ISC/SC (Intersectional Council Steering Committee), submit your name when ISC members are invited to place their names in nomination. Beyond your liaison to the Executive Board, you also will be assigned an ISC/SC liaison. A companion unit, the **Committee on Affiliates (CoA)**, includes individuals (many of whom are also section members) representing 53 different geographic locales. Together, ISC and CoA are the heart of APHA's membership activities.

While not officially leadership bodies, APHA's committees and boards provide important guidance to the Association's operations. As a section chair, expect to be asked for nominations from your section to serve on these bodies. Actual appointments will be made by the President-Elect of the organization with input from relevant Committee chairs and the Chair of the Executive Board. Working knowledge of these bodies is useful, to enable your nomination of people appropriate to the tasks.

- The **Action Board** is APHA's policy body. Including representation from all sections, the Action Board helps set the Association's policy priorities and puts into action resolutions passed by the Governing Council.



Linda Rae Murray, MD,
MPH
APHA President



Melvin Shipp, OD, MPH,
DrPH
APHA President-Elect

Quick Tip:
If your section has an unresolved issue, contact your ISC Steering Committee representative.



Patricia Markham Risica (Past Chair) and Lisa Sutherland at Food & Nutrition Mid-Year Meeting

- The **Education Board** is charged with overseeing APHA's continuing education opportunities. The Education Board examines educational programming not only for members, but also for public health professionals and the public. Your section's Continuing Education liaison (lucky you, another Chair appointee) should expect to interact with the Education Board.
- The **Science Board's** job is to confirm that APHA's policy (professional and public) derives from appropriate scientific foundations.
- The **Publications Board** oversees development and marketing of APHA's publications, and
- The **AJPH Editorial Board** keeps its collective eye on oversight and recommendations for the *American Journal of Public Health*.

In case you're not sufficiently confused about APHA's organizational structure, you'll be pleased to know that you're not done yet. APHA also has an inventory of key committees. Around the time of the Annual Meeting, you will be hearing about activities involving the **Joint Policy Committee** (JPC). This group is charged with reviewing proposed resolutions or position papers. Its members run hearings at the Annual Meeting to collect feedback on proposed resolutions/position papers and, with that information in hand, make recommendations for Governing Council action. Other committees include **Equal Health Opportunity, Membership** (which includes your section's Membership Chair), **Women's Rights, Program Planning** (including your section's Program Chair(s)), **Awards, Nominating** (which collects nominees for Association-level elected positions), and the **International Health & Human Rights Committee**.

APHA Structure: Staff

APHA's **Director of Component Affairs** is your key resource inside the organization. Know this person. Know her/his phone number. Know what makes her happy because s/he – more than anyone else in APHA – will contribute to your success as a section chair. The Director of Component Affairs is your conscience, your banker, and your nudge. When it's time to submit names for nominations, when your section hasn't provided material for the latest Newsletter, the Director of Component Affairs (or member of that individual's staff) will be knocking on your door. When you need a blast email to go to members, when you need to organize a mid-year meeting, the Director of Component Affairs is the go-to person. The Director of Component Affairs is also the person who shepherds requests for reimbursement through APHA's system. While APHA may boast of more than 25,000 members, its staff is far less plentiful. So please be considerate in what you request and when you request it. Component Affairs will provide you with an Annual Calendar. It should be part of what guides you throughout your time as Chair. And if you heed it, you'll also support Component Affairs in all it is expected and tries to accomplish.

While Component Affairs may be the most important people to you as section Chair, they are not the only staff you need to know. As a membership organization, APHA cannot rely solely on efforts of its member volunteers. The **Executive Director** is the face of the organization on a day-to-day basis. The Executive Director works with APHA's leadership to pursue the Association's advocacy agenda; with the President of the Association, the Executive Director makes sure APHA is present at all meaningful public

"The Director of Component Affairs is your key resource inside the organization.

Know this person.
Know her/his phone number."

202-777-2483

health events. The Executive Director also oversees the daily operations of the Association.

Membership Services will be your best source of information on who are your current members, who has dropped their membership, and who are your new members. If you want to target mailings to specific members (e.g., students only), Membership Services is the place to go.

In the best of all worlds, **Convention Services** will interact more with your Program Chair than you. However, you may need to pinch hit so be sure to understand what these staff can do for you. Without Convention Services, we have no Annual Meeting. And you would have no place to hold business meetings, scientific sessions, luncheons or any of the other functions your section conducts each year. Convention Services works closely with your Program Chair (and, indirectly, you) to let you know such things as how many sessions you've been allocated; which hotel is your designated headquarters; and, if the section's social occurs in one of the designated APHA meeting hotels, the location of your social. As section chair, your most direct contact with Convention Services results from your section's catering needs. Remember, you are responsible for how a section's funds are spent. So if you plan to spend money on serving coffee for a brutal 7:00am business meeting, you need a catering request. If your section sponsors a luncheon, you need catering. Or if you are planning the section's social in one of the APHA meeting hotels, you need to work through Convention Services for that catering bill as well.

Government Relations is the advocacy heart of APHA. The professional staff within this office will work with corresponding membership units to assure that APHA's policies and resolutions are put into action. Government Relations works to inform the Congress of what is in the best interests of the nation's health. Government Relations can also partner with you in your section, to help section members become more effective advocates and to organize specific advocacy initiatives. Occasionally, legislation arises with particular impact on a section. Contact Government Relations. Let them know your concerns. And they, in turn, can help you make an effective stand on the matter. Government Relations can't do it all. You need them and they need you and your section's expertise. As section chair, think about identifying individuals within your section according to their substantive expertise. When Government Relations requests your section's response to a proposed letter, coalition, whatever, be ready to respond with input from one of your section's advocacy specialists.

The Nation's Health staff is yet another part of APHA that needs you and that you, too, may need. On occasion, a member of *The Nation's Health* may contact you for information about something for an article. Give your section a boost. Respond and gain some useful press. But don't always wait for them to come to you. Is there a section initiative you think is worth publicizing? Are you particularly proud of a section accomplishment? Contact *The Nation's Health*.



Georges Benjamin, MD FACP
Executive Director



Susan Polan, PhD
Associate Executive Director,
Public Affairs & Advocacy



Frances Atkinson, MSM
Director of Component Affairs

Now What?

After reading and thinking about the various things discussed in this guide, running away may feel like your best course of action. Please don't. Instead, get to know your peers. Often other section chairs and previous chairs that have gone before you in your own section are our best resource for support. They may have faced the same problem, and already figured out a solution. Surf the APHA website. It includes manuals, updates, phone numbers, just about anything you need in more detail than presented here. Ask for help from your liaisons – whether Executive Board, Intersectional Council or Student Assembly. Call Component Affairs. In fact, before you do another thing, add Component Affairs to your speed-dial and email address book.



Gail Bellamy,
PhD

ISC Chair-Elect

It is understood that your primary goal is to survive and thrive in your term as section chair. However, we also hope that your section involvement will not stop there. Think about all the things you wished you'd asked before accepting the nomination. What wisdom could have (should have?) come from your predecessor, to make life as chair less worrisome? The more of these tips ("If only I'd known") that you collect, the more suggestions for survival you will have for the future leader who follows you as section chair.

Breathe deeply. You will do fine and have fun. Really.

[No ISC/SC member, section chair or APHA staff was harmed in the preparation of this manual.]

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