

Chapter Advisor Guide

There is no right way to serve as an advisor of an Active Minds chapter. However, we do have recommendations that can serve as a guide for you and your chapter leaders to determine what your relationship is like.

Included in this guide:

- Who can be an advisor
- Expectations / roles of the advisor
- Conversation checklist for establishing and checking in on the ongoing relationship with the advisor and chapter leaders

EVERY CHAPTER MUST HAVE **AT LEAST ONE ADVISOR** AT ALL TIMES.

Some schools may not require a club / student organization to have a staff advisor, but Active Minds requires that every chapter has one.

WHO CAN BE AN ADVISOR?

Advisors have to be employed by the school where there is a chapter and are often faculty members.

Graduate students (i.e. Graduate Assistants) must be a co-advisor with oversight from a full-time or permanent staff member. Their support is invaluable, however they cannot serve as sole chapter advisor.

Advisors are typically school counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses, public health professionals, health educators, or in another helping-profession role at the school. Having an advisor with some relevant mental health background or personal lived experience can support chapter leaders in their mental health advocacy. This is not a requirement, but it is recommended.

MAKE SURE YOUR CHAPTER CONTACTS ARE KEPT UP TO DATE via our [Contact Update Form!](#)

CO-ADVISORS

Active Minds highly recommends co-advicing as a strategy to support the success of a chapter, especially as staff members are spread thinly in their roles. This can help provide additional support to the chapter while also easing the burden on a single advisor.



EXPECTATIONS OF A CHAPTER ADVISOR

At their core, Active Minds chapters are designed to be peer-to-peer mental health advocacy groups. However, **youth and young adults need a balance of challenge and support for growth.** Advisors provide this balance, and we hope that all chapter advisors find ways to engage with their chapters that feel right for them.

The right balance is for advisors and chapter leaders to decide on together, though we recommend that following general elements be involved in your role:

1 MEET

Set up meetings with chapter leaders (or sometimes called “executive or leadership board”) and find avenues for communication. “Regularly” is subjective, and could mean weekly, biweekly, monthly, etc. This can be determined by the advisor and the chapter events and activities as they are able to / is agreed upon with chapter leaders.

2 NAVIGATE

Help navigate school processes and policies for space reservations, budget requests, or other needs.

3 TRANSITION

Aid in leadership transition process to assure smooth chapter operations from year-to-year.

4 MEDIATE

Mediate concerns or issues that arise within the chapter or among members / leaders.

5 SUPPORT

Support students in setting goals and building skills for growth, programming, fundraising, and more.

6 ENSURE

Ensure that chapter leaders and members are aware of local and national mental health resources, should they need to refer a friend or peer to formal support.

7 FACILITATE

Facilitate connections within the school and community to elevate the chapter’s mental health advocacy. For example: is there a wellness or mental health committee at the school where an Active Minds leader can have a platform?; can the chapter’s efforts be celebrated with school leadership?

HIGH SCHOOL ADVISORS

Being an advisor is different for collegiate chapters and high school chapters.

High school advisors may do more event planning, mentoring, and administrative tasks. Being involved in an Active Minds chapter can give high school students the opportunity to build skills like event planning, working collaboratively, and educating their peers. This may require a commitment from the chapter advisor(s) to be present and create intentional opportunities for this kind of development. Chapter leaders can also build skills for decision-making, advocacy, and organization by driving the strategy of the chapter in partnership with the advisor(s). Active Minds recommends co-advisors as a helpful option to support the balance of these responsibilities for chapter success.

CONNECT WITH ACTIVE MINDS NATIONAL STAFF!

THE CHAPTERS TEAM IS AVAILABLE TO PROVIDE ADVISORS WITH SUPPORT TO HELP THEIR CHAPTERS SUCCEED.

Reach out to schedule a meeting, share wins, brainstorm, or ask about anything else on your mind. Email us at chapters@activeminds.org!

CONVERSATION CHECKLIST FOR ADVISORS AND CHAPTER LEADERS

It's recommended that chapter advisors and leaders have an open and clear conversation about expectations of each other 1-2 times per year (at the beginning and midpoint of the year, for example). "Leaders" here can include whomever the advisor will be meeting regularly with throughout the year (i.e. chapter president/VP, other members of the "executive board").

It's helpful for everyone to have time to reflect before meeting, so both leaders and advisors can answer the questions below in preparation. The meeting can consist of reviewing the questions to come to consensus about the nature of the advisor / chapter relationship.

SOME COMMON QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Feel free to add your own questions or eliminate ones that don't apply.



STRUCTURING YOUR CHAPTER

How often should the chapter advisor(s) and chapter leaders meet? If regular meetings have been happening, how are they going? Should they be more or less frequent?

Keep in mind that varied and frequent (1-3 times per month) interactions between a chapter advisor and their chapter improves the overall chapter experience.

There are many logistics to keep track of when operating a student club/organization. Which of these logistics would be helpful for the chapter advisor(s) to keep in mind or remind chapter leaders throughout the year? Examples include completing Active Minds requirements like the Chapter Reports or staying in good standing with school processes for clubs/organizations.

How many chapter meetings, events or other opportunities should the chapter advisor(s) attend on a regular basis? What involvement do chapter advisor(s) have in these activities?

What other expectations does the advisor(s)/chapter leaders have of each other? This may include things like timelines around communication (i.e. responding to emails within 48 hours, emailing during business hours only).

GUIDANCE FOR CHAPTER MEMBERS

How meaningful have meetings between chapter advisor(s) and chapter leaders been? What can make this time more meaningful?

What kind of guidance should the chapter advisor(s) provide to chapter leaders/the chapter as a whole?

What, if any, training coaching, or mental health content knowledge can the chapter advisor(s) facilitate/arrange for chapter leaders or the chapter as a whole?

ELEVATING THE CHAPTER

What opportunities are available for chapter advisor(s) to celebrate accomplishments of their chapter within the school community? Examples may include through the school newspaper, newsletters, or in staff meetings. How do chapter leaders want chapter advisor(s) to celebrate their work?

What, if any, school-wide, community, or policy advocacy opportunities can the chapter advisor(s) facilitate for chapter leaders? Examples may include a school-wide mental health committee or advisory board, community mental health advocacy opportunities, or grant/scholarship opportunities.

How can chapter advisor(s) elevate the profile of their chapter within the school? Are there administrators open to discussing school-wide mental health efforts?

WHAT OTHER QUESTIONS WOULD YOU ADD TO THIS CONVERSATION?