



How to be an Effective Advisor

The role of the faculty advisor in a SLS Chapter is unique and important if not critical for the success of the group. Many groups will be self-sustaining because of the enthusiasm and hard work of the students; but even with this, it is important for the advisor to remain as a leveling influence with whom the students trust and communicate. A good advisor can save a lot of disappointment for his or her students by alerting them to the pitfalls of some of their ideas or can encourage them to “go for” something that they have the ability to pull off but lack the confidence to try. The best chapters, of course, are those that have the best advisors and the best student leaders working together.

The following observations have been made by students and advisors about this critical role:

- The group must be student run. The advisor remains in the background providing structure, advice and council.
- The advisor helps to keep the group focused on three types of activities:
- **AWARENESS-** These are activities designed to communicate that your organization is present all around the school and that people in it care about one another. Examples would be pin days where all in the student body would be given buttons, bumper sticker days and poster campaigns that represent your organization.
- **EDUCATIONAL-** Many groups develop programs that they present to younger students as they approach high school age. These programs typically deal with subjects such as alcohol and its effects, what it is really like to be in high school and how to say “no” without turning off your friends. These programs require a lot of planning but have been found to be very rewarding by many groups. Remember that when a senior high student walks into a junior high classroom, it’s as though God came to visit them!
- **FUNDRAISING-** It’s not necessary to say much about this because high school students do it so well. Just keep in mind that you may need some cash to do other activities.
- A primary objective of high school groups is to develop “caring communities” in the high school. Advisors can help the group to keep this in mind.
- The advisor should avoid “do’s” and “don’ts.”
- Sometimes transportation is a big issue. The advisor can help students to network their resources in this regard.
- Advisors are instrumental in helping students “cut through the red tape” in their school and community.
- Remember to help students plan activities that are fun for the young people involved.
- Advisors can become more helpful when they obtain a good knowledge base on drug and alcohol issues.
- Chapter management skills such as consensus decision-making or parliamentary procedure can be taught by the advisor.
- Advisors can help groups set realistic goals.