

PEER-LED SUPPORT GROUP HOST INTEREST INFORMATION PACKET

**7918 Jones Branch Drive, Suite 300, McLean, VA 22102
Phone 703.556.7172 ☐ Fax 703.506.3266 ☐ resolve.org**

RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association
Peer-led Support Group Host Information Packet

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Dear Prospective Peer-led Support Group Host,

Thank you for offering your time and support to RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association by volunteering to serve as a peer-led support group host.

As a non-profit organization, we depend upon volunteers like you to provide programs and services to women and men struggling to build their family. Peer-led support groups (PLSG) are a critical component of the services we offer. When an individual joins a support group it is often the first time they make a public acknowledgement about their infertility, so your support is critical in assuring participants that they are not alone and that help is available.

This application packet was developed to provide you with information we feel is vital to consider when making the decision to host a peer support group. Please review this information thoroughly and then contact us with any questions.

Please note that this information is proprietary to RESOLVE and we ask that you do not forward its contents to others without consulting your RESOLVE volunteer or staff contact.

Once again, thank you for volunteering to represent RESOLVE as a peer-led support group host. We appreciate your support!

Sincerely,

Barbara Collura

President/CEO

RESOLVE Peer-Led Support Groups

General Information

RESOLVE Peer-led Support Groups (PLSG) provide women and men with infertility with opportunities to meet others who are experiencing similar challenges to building their family, form friendships, build a support system and gather information and knowledge. In all of its many forms, PLSGs provide powerful physical and mental health benefits. In policy and practice, there are no barriers to participation in RESOLVE groups or activities based on race, religion, sex or age.

Peer-led Support Group Host Volunteer Job Description

The PLSG host is responsible for managing his or her individual PLSG, including providing a welcoming and safe environment, facilitating discussion among the group members and completing administrative tasks such as communicating with the group members, other RESOLVE volunteers, and the RESOLVE staff.

Responsibilities:

- Arranges a suitable meeting place for the group
- Develops and maintains the schedule of PLSG meetings for his/her particular group
- Provides contact information, meeting time, as well as any special details pertaining to the group to the local volunteer contact (this will vary depending on your area)
- Leads the group meetings following the RESOLVE guidelines outlined in the Host Manual (provided to new hosts following the application process)
- Creates a respectful and safe environment in which group members feel comfortable sharing
- Maintains the privacy of the group members
- Selects appropriate topics for discussion at meetings and makes sure that all attendees have equal opportunity for input
- Updates the members regularly with information about RESOLVE volunteer opportunities, upcoming programs (webinars, conferences, etc.) and other important issues (advocacy, fundraising, media opportunities)
- Maintains a roster of attendees and openings, and keeps RESOLVE's Volunteer Coordinator (supportgroups@resolveorg) apprised of any changes to the group
- Communicates with group members about upcoming meetings and changes.
- Tracks volunteer hours and submits meeting reports through RESOLVE's online platform, Better Impact, following each meeting. Monthly forms should be submitted no more than 30 days following the meeting.
- Accepts calls or emails from prospective PLSG members, and, if there is an opening in the group, invites them to join the next meeting. If there are no openings the host should refer the prospective members to other PLSG leaders in the area or to the local volunteer contact.

- Informs the appropriate local volunteer contact of any problems that may occur within the group, or with any individual member
- Determines, with appropriate input from the group, a procedure for the event that one or more group members become pregnant
- Helps to promote public awareness of the local RESOLVE programs and services to both the general community and fertility service providers with whom they come in contact

Running a RESOLVE Peer-led Support Group

Positive Aspects of Peer-led Support Groups: PLSGs have many strengths, including the following:

- PLSGs are an excellent alternative for individuals experiencing infertility but who do not feel comfortable seeking professional support for the challenges of family building. These individuals benefit by seeking interaction and support from their peers
- Some areas of the country have very few professionals who are knowledgeable about the emotional issues surrounding the challenges of family building including fertility treatments, adoption and the decision to remain childfree. In these areas, a RESOLVE PLSG is an excellent option
- PLSG participants often develop close bonds of friendship which last for many years
- PLSGs are less structured than professionally-led groups in terms of attendance and group boundaries
- Participation is free
- PLSGs can be a complement to one-on-one counseling from a professional therapist.

Challenges That Can Arise with a PLSG: A PLSG may have dynamics that can be challenging for an inexperienced facilitator. These include:

- Individual members may attempt to dominate group meetings and be excessively needy, thereby dominating meeting time and group energy
- Group members may not be able to address the needs of certain individual members due to previous life experiences, an unexpected medical crisis or other life crisis issues
- Issues of confidentiality may not be respected by group members
- Misinformation may be given or shared within the group
- Sub-groups can form and result in cliques but the host should strongly discourage members from meeting outside the group to discuss infertility issues as this will drain energy from the group and will not benefit all group members
- Members may misdirect the anger and frustration they feel from the challenges of trying to build their family at group members or by “bad mouthing” a particular fertility service provider, etc., thereby turning the meeting into gripe sessions rather than sessions that promote change through positive action
- The PLSG host may feel that he or she does not have adequate skills in group dynamics and/or in discussing mental health issues which may arise, that he or

she is being pulled down emotionally by the issues group members are facing or be discouraged by limited attendance at meetings or low response to requested RSVPs prior to a meeting

Becoming a PLSG Host

As with most local RESOLVE services, PLSGs are led by volunteers who generously give their time and energy to share the family building journey with others. In order to ensure this position is appropriate for a volunteer, RESOLVE has a straightforward application and training process. Some steps may vary depending on the volunteer structure in your local area, but the process generally proceeds as follows:

1. Determine need for a group in your area. Please check the listing for support groups in your area at www.resolve.org. If there is not group in your area, or you are interested in a specific topic (i.e., adoption, third-party reproduction, infertility at 40+) that is not addressed, then you may consider starting a new group.
2. Listen to a [one-hour recording](#) on how to start a peer-led support group. You can also find [this recording here](#).
3. Review this Host Interest Information Packet.
4. After you have read the Information Packet, [please sign-up to volunteer through RESOLVE's online platform, Better Impact](#).
5. Your application will be reviewed, and you will be contacted by a RESOLVE staff person or volunteer within two weeks to arrange a time to talk by phone.
6. Following the phone conversation, the staff person or volunteer will send you the Host Manual and you can submit your New Support Group Information. Group information will be reviewed and approved before being listed on the RESOLVE website in our [Support Group Directory](#).
7. The new host will work with the Volunteer Coordinator (supportgroups@resolve.org) to determine the details of the group (meeting date and time, location, etc) and begin promoting the group.
8. The new host becomes part of the RESOLVE network and has many new resources and support opportunities available to her/him!