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CHAPTER GUIDE

SECTION XIII:

RESOURCES

COUNSELING

When a chorus is out of tune musically, members immediately stop, analyze the situation, and fix the problem. Left unaddressed, mole hills suddenly become mountains and disagreements become battle fields. Symptoms of unrest may appear in the form of sporadic attendance, secretive phone calls, demanding members, or argumentative meetings.

To keep your chorus harmonious, be alert for possible problems and actively participate in conflict resolution. Below are several different levels of conflict resolution to consider, beginning with the most basic.

Use Listening Skills to Reduce Conflict

Sometimes people just need to let off steam or verbalize their feelings to someone who cares and is willing to listen. Too often, the parties involved in an argument spend most of their time talking instead of listening. As a chapter leader, it is your responsibility to give the speaker your full attention and to clarify her position using open-ended questions. Listen for the “real” reasons underlying the problem. If the member has a valid complaint, try to fix it. If not, empathize and take time to rationally explain why the complaint cannot be fixed or changed at this time.

Take It to Your Board

Use your chapter board of directors (or your management team) as a sounding board if you think a potential problem is brewing. It is the board’s obligation to act in the best interest of the chapter, so examine the issues carefully. First, state the problem clearly. Next, write down possible solutions and discuss the ramifications, both good and bad. After discussion, select the best solution and prepare to implement it. Keep members informed and involved in the decision-making process.

Your Regional Leaders as Allies

You have heard the expression, “You can’t see the forest for the trees.” That old adage reminds us that sometimes we are so in the thick of things and so emotionally involved that our judgment becomes a bit off center. Maybe you need a reality check, a good listener or a piece of sound advice. Contact your regional management team—they are only a phone call away.

International Counseling

After examining all other options for conflict resolution, a chapter may request that a counselor be provided by international. In such instances, the International President, in consultation with the Executive Committee, will assign a counselor best qualified to intervene and achieve a successful result, given the particular circumstances.

Counseling visits can be costly, so requests for such visits should not be taken lightly. Because the International Board of Directors believes that a chapter's commitment to the success of a counseling visit should be equal to that of the international organization, one-half of the cost of portal-to-portal transportation and one-half of the housing for a counselor will be the responsibility of the chapter requesting the visit. (Chapters that are financially unable to bear the cost may request that the assessment be waived due to financial hardship. The International President/ Executive Committee will consider waiving or reducing the assessment on a case-by-case basis.)

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