



COUNCIL
FOR MILITARY SPOUSE CLUBS

10 Guidelines

for Military Spouse Club Advisors

What is the different between Honoree & Advisor?

The primary difference between an Advisor and an Honorary President and Honorary Vice President is:

Honorees are usually the cheerleaders and advocates for your organization.

- Within the organization, Honoree's praise volunteers for their hard work and encourage excitement about upcoming events.
- Outside the organization, Honorees are also cheerleaders, representing the Club to those who may want to join, to the community that may want to support, and to those individuals and organizations that may benefit from something the Club is or will be doing. They are usually not expected to stuff envelopes or make centerpieces, but it helps to lend credibility to the event and the Club if they participate in as many events as possible.

Advisors truly advise (or counsel) the Club leadership while allowing that leadership to make their own decisions.

- The only time an Advisor would truly impact a decision is if the Club was about to break an installation, Department of Defense, state or federal rule/law.
- The main role as an Advisor is to actively listen, and to only offer advice WHEN ASKED.

Advisors counsel the Board of Directors of the Spouses' Club. To do this position effectively, we recommend following the guidelines listed below:

- Attend all board meetings.
- Attend all committee meetings as stated in the By-Laws. Most decisions should be made at the committee level, so in order to be effective, it is best to be present when the decisions are being discussed.
- Be well versed in the Constitution and By-Laws so that you can offer advice that follows their governing documents.
- Have an understanding of military and installation policies/calendars and share them as needed. This is one of the main reasons for serving in this position.
- Listen twice as much as speaking.
- Attempt to praise in public and redirect in private.
- Let the elected leadership LEAD the organization.
- Stay connected to the Executive Board and attempt to communicate your thoughts in smaller groups. Don't play favorites, either share with just the President, or the entire Executive Board.



Understanding the Advisor Role within a Spouses' Club

1

When asked to be the Advisor, your first response should be to ask to see the Constitution and By-laws.

- Double check those documents to make sure the person asking for your commitment is the person those documents state should be extending the invitation.
- Avoid uncomfortable situations by following the written rules and pointing them out if they are questioned.

2

More than likely, if you were asked to be an Advisor, it is due to the position your spouse holds on the installation.

- Spouses of senior ranking service members are asked to serve in this position due to the expectation that they have significant experience and seniority / maturity because of the number of years associated with their service member.
- Additionally, because of the service member's position, traditionally, they attend meetings and events outside the Club that may give them information, insight, or access that may be helpful to a Club.
- Be aware that Advisors do not wear their service member's rank or have their authority.
- Be extremely cautious to never give any indication that this is a possibility.
- Do not use this role to tell people what to do.

3

Consider these ways to be effective as an Advisor:

- If there are decisions being made, attempt to be a part of those decisions in small groups prior to them being presented to the entire board. This avoids having to redirect a decision in front of the entire board.
- When committees are setting meeting dates, request to be consulted on best dates and times so that you can be a part of the committee.
- Start off "redirecting" statements with:

"Have you ever thought about...?"

"Has anyone ever seen this done...?"

"You may want to double check your By-Laws to make sure that is allowed..."

"The installation may have a policy about that, please check with your private organization coordinator prior to getting too far in the planning process..."

"Maybe we should step back and look at the big picture for a minute?"

"Does this idea/process/document fulfill your mission statement or your purpose?"

"Have you checked with the Honorary President/Vice President to see if this fits into their calendar?"

Try not to say, "at my old Club we did it this way" and rather, gently pose a suggestion "I have seen this method be successful..."





4 If a board meeting gets out of hand and the Parliamentarian cannot manage the situation, the Advisor may need to step in as a mature person in the group and remind people to respect each other and follow Robert's Rules of Order.

5 While Advisors should not be overly involved in discussions/decisions, you still have to be approachable so the board will come to you for help.

- Find this balance outside the board room by checking up on people individually when they have a hard decision to make or set up monthly check-ins with the President.
- If the committee is going to lunch after the meeting, attempt to join in whenever possible.
- If the Advisor is too distant from the group, they will never ask for your help because they are too intimidated or don't know you well enough to be comfortable asking for help.

6 When an idea is not possible, sometimes listening to the thought process instead of just saying "that is not allowed."

- If you can understand where your Club is heading, then it may open the door to redirecting the conversation and helping the group find a way to get to a "yes."
- This requires active listening and understanding what the intention is in order to redirect to what might be possible to still reach the goal on a different path.

7 Sometimes the Advisor needs to be the "bad guy" and squash a popular decision because it is not legal.

- There may come a time when you must help people understand that just because it has always been done that way does not mean it is right/legal. This is a very delicate problem.
- Tread lightly and talk to the president first/alone so that they understand the situation.
- Be sure to inform the Honorees if you think it is necessary.
- Then attempt to help the President share the policies with others.
- It is best to already have a new way to tackle the situation prior to getting support to change from the old ways.

8 The Advisor does not have a vote in any board meeting or committee meeting. You only have a vote at membership meetings if you have paid your dues as a member. *Some by-laws allow advisors votes in committees, but we recommend they maintain an Advisor role throughout all positions within the Club.

9 If you are asked to host something in your home (i.e., a volunteer reception), be sure to check with the Honorees to ensure they would not prefer to host in their home. More than likely, they will be happy to have someone else take responsibility, however, sometimes hosting it at the senior person's home adds to the "importance" of the event. You may also need to check with your installation JAG office to make sure there is no legal restriction to hosting an event of a certain type or for a certain organization in military quarters.

10 Be sure to find out if there is an expectation that the Honorees and the Advisor give a thank you gift to all board members at the conclusion of the year. Usually there is a budget for the President to give a thank you gift to the entire board, although sometimes there is an additional expectation that the Advisors/Honorees give a small personal token as well – paid for by themselves. When known in advance, it is much easier to plan for a lower cost item.

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