



Reversing the Trend

A scripted workshop with PowerPoint to educate local chapter delegates on the status of membership in your state, province or district and give them tools they can implement in their chapters to help reverse the trend of sisters choosing inactive status.

Script

Introduction

Title Slide

This workshop is designed to give you a picture of what our sisterhood's membership looks like -- more especially a picture of membership in Ohio, and provide you with the tools and resources you need to strengthen membership in your respective chapters. Each chapter's participation is crucial if we are to effect positive change.

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Before we begin, it's important to understand our focus on membership must be equally divided between:

- Growing our sisterhood
- Nurturing our active members
- Encouraging our unaffiliated sisters to find new P.E.O. homes, and
- Helping our inactive sisters reinstate.

For the purposes of this workshop, we will be focusing specifically on nurturing our active members and encouraging our unaffiliated sisters to find new P.E.O. homes in the hopes of reversing the trend of sisters who are choosing inactive status.

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Why is this important? It's important because we care about our sisters as individuals. Beyond that, we're focusing on inactive prevention: counseling members; offering support and encouragement; stressing their importance that even when unable to participate, they contribute to our Sisterhood just by paying their dues; and finally, if a sister insists on going inactive, hold an exit interview. This is so crucial because membership trends in the Sisterhood indicate this is the major reason we are losing members. If we are passionate about passing the legacy of P.E.O. on to future generations – and I know all of you are – then it's important we understand this trend and do the best we can to change it.

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This is a graph of P.E.O. membership since 1995. As you can see, the trend for the last seven years has been a steady decline. Although initiations are at a three-year high and reinstatements have been steadily increasing for the past three years, the number of sisters choosing inactive status **increased by 11 percent** in 2012.

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We'll talk about **why** in a moment, but first, let's take a closer look at membership here in Ohio. As of March 1, 2013:

The total number of active members decreased by 25 from the year before; from 5,303 members to 5,278 members.

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Ohio chapters did actively work on membership this past year by initiating 206 new members, an increase of 42 members from the year before.

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Eighteen members were reinstated which was a slight decrease by three from 2012.

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According to the table, Ohio had the following increases in membership: there were 206 initiations; 56 members transferred into Ohio chapters; and 18 inactive members reinstated their membership; for a total increase of 280 members. With the increases in membership, Ohio had 5,583 active members!

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However—this slide shows the total number of members choosing inactive status. Even though the amount decreased by 14 from 2012, Ohio still had 139 members go inactive.

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According to the table, Ohio had the following decreases in membership this past year: 91 members entered Chapter Eternal and 75 members transferred out of Ohio chapters. There isn't much we can do about the Chapter Eternal and Transfer Out figures, BUT, even with the loss of those sisters there was still a positive growth of 114. It was not until 139 members chose inactive status (a number we can control), did our membership show a negative 25 in the year's membership. Therefore, the total number of active members in Ohio State Chapter as of March 1, 2013, is 5,278; a loss of 25 members from the year before. **Notice what decreasing** the number of *inactive* members would do to the number of *active* members in Ohio.

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Now let's take a look at some of the reasons sisters choose inactive status. The information I'm about to share with you was taken from responses to a letter the Chief Executive Officer sent to newly inactive sisters in 2012. Some of the reasons may surprise you. The good news is we can effectively reduce these numbers simply by being aware of these situations in our chapter -- and taking the appropriate actions to address them.

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Poor health. This was the biggest reason responding sisters say they chose inactive status.

- ✓ Some of the letters were written by spouses or children of members who had dementia and could no longer care for themselves.
- ✓ Many were written by older members who didn't believe they were contributing value to the Sisterhood.

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While we understand the difficult decisions spouses and family members must make in these situations, no member should ever feel she no longer has value in the eyes of her P.E.O. sisters.

Suggestions for chapter members:

- Provide love and support to sisters and their families who are elderly or have health problems. Refer to the “How to Care for Nonparticipating Sisters” PowerPoint on your handout for suggestions.
- Find ways to show all members they bring value to our sisterhood.
- Ask each member of your chapter to fill out a P.E.O. Wish, where members can designate how they wish their P.E.O. dues handled in the event of poor health. Update the information frequently and ask members to share a copy with their family members.

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Dues

- ✓ Some sisters said they didn't receive a dues notification. Some of these sisters said they did not intend to be inactive and immediately reinstated.
- ✓ Some said they forgot the deadline or were out of town during that period of time.
- ✓ Others said their dues were too expensive because of unexpected/recent financial issues.

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Keeping in mind every sister perceives finances in their own manner, here are a few suggestions for reducing the number of sisters who choose inactive status because of situations occurring with their P.E.O. dues.

Suggestions for chapter members:

- Send dues notifications in a timely fashion. There is a Notice of Dues in the Treasurer's panel of the Local Chapter Forms section on the P.E.O. website.
- Print a dues reminder in the chapter yearbook where snowbirds will see it before they leave for their winter home.
- Send friendly reminders to members who haven't paid their dues as the deadline approaches.
- Find creative, fun ways to collect dues. Some chapters include a dues payment option during Christmas auctions.
- Be sensitive to members who may not be able to pay their dues. Consider adopting a standing rule to help sisters with dues. Suggested wording is provided on your handout.

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Chapter activities

Our P.E.O. chapters are intended to foster friendships while attending to P.E.O. business, so:

- ✓ Be welcoming to all members, including those who are ethnically or culturally diverse.
- ✓ Be aware of the perceived existence of cliques among chapter members.
- ✓ Make sure discussions during meetings are congenial and positive – temper opinions.
- ✓ Stay connected to nonparticipating members all year, and not just for payment of dues.

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Suggestions for chapter members:

- If your chapter is reluctant to initiate new members, explore why. Our sisterhood is meant to be shared with women who state a belief in God and share our mission of providing educational assistance to woman worldwide. Remember, Part III, Article II, Section 2 of the P.E.O. Constitution states “A chapter shall not limit the number of members.”
- If your chapter perceives it is too big to welcome new members, consider sponsoring a new chapter in your community. Resources for starting this process are listed on your handout.
- Create an environment of acceptance and belonging among all chapter members.
- Make an effort to support sisters who cannot actively participate. Resources for staying connected to nonparticipating sisters are listed on your handout.

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Unaffiliates

One of the best aspects of P.E.O. membership is the ability to transfer to a new chapter when we move. Unfortunately:

- ✓ Some members were not contacted by chapters in their new communities.
- ✓ Some nonresident members said they had to travel too far to attend chapter meetings.
- ✓ Others said they moved to an area where there were no chapters.

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Suggestions for chapter members:

- Care for your nonresident members as if they were still actively participating in your chapter.
- Consider organizing a new chapter if you have members who must travel long distances to attend chapter meetings and your chapter has become too large to meet comfortably in each other's homes. Check with the Ohio State Chapter Organizer. There may be other unaffiliates living in the area who would benefit from a new chapter organization, too.
- Use the membership resources listed on your handout to help you track unaffiliated members who have visited your chapter as well as nonresident members of your chapter who have moved to new communities.

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Meetings issues

- ✓ Some members said they didn't feel the work of P.E.O. was fulfilling.
- ✓ Others said their chapter meetings were too long.

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Suggestions for chapter members

- It's important that every woman we invite to join our sisterhood know as much about it as possible before she accepts our invitation. Good preacceptance counseling is the key. The better we counsel prospective members, the less likely they will choose inactive status later because they feel P.E.O. is not for them.
- Evaluate what you might do to make meetings more efficient. Some examples are listed on your handout.

- Become more involved with P.E.O. philanthropies. Sponsor candidates when possible, invite project recipients to speak to members, and ask chairmen to give informational programs on their philanthropies.

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We'd like to close this workshop by issuing the following membership initiatives:

- ✓ Present a Chapter Membership/Health program. These programs may be found on the International website, such as Chapter Survey, Franc's List, S.W.O.T. Analysis, and Mentoring New Members – 3 year plan.
- ✓ Send Notice of Member Moving form for each of your nonresident sisters. These forms are to be sent to the appropriate State Organizer, Reciprocity and Local Chapter President.
- ✓ Send personal note and Guide for an Inactive Member to each of your inactives. The brochure may be ordered from the Supply Department or you may print directly from the International website.
- ✓ Set Attendance Challenge for one business or social meeting. The guidelines for the challenge can be found on the International website.
- ✓ Nurture and grow strong new members with the 3 year mentoring program.

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As you look around this evening, you will notice the many bedazzled delegates whose chapters participated in the membership initiatives this past year. All of our successes for the upcoming year will once again be celebrated and recognized at the 2014 Convention of Ohio State Chapter.

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Thank you for attending this membership workshop to learn how you can help us reverse the trend of sisters choosing inactive status. We appreciate your participation and hope your chapter will partner with us as we grow and strengthen membership in Ohio.