

Meeting Service Position: The Sponsorship Chairperson

Like everything else in the Compulsive Eaters Anonymous (CEA)-HOW program, learning how to be a CEA-HOW food, inventory, step, and maintenance sponsor is not something we do alone. We learn by talking to other sponsors and benefiting from their experience, strength, and hope. This shared interaction is why it's important that every CEA-HOW meeting have and fill a much-needed service position: the sponsorship chairperson.

This is a six-month position that is filled along with the other service positions at the time of rotation. It is suggested that the sponsorship chairperson be an experienced CEA-HOW sponsor and fulfill these responsibilities:

- Hold informal once-a-month discussion groups after the regular meeting that address all aspects of sponsoring according to the CEA-HOW guidelines.
- Introduce newcomers to available sponsors after the meeting.

The discussion group is generally described as being an open forum and opportunity to ask questions about sponsoring, being sponsored, the food plan, etc. The discussion group can be held at the same time every month (i.e., after the last meeting of the month) or whenever is best for your meeting.

Discussion groups can last from 30–45 minutes and everyone is welcome to attend, sponsor or not. These are not formal affairs—they allow crosstalk and don't require handouts or even preparation; they are simply opportunities for sponsors and sponsees to ask and answer questions that pertain to CEA-HOW sponsorship.

Here's how it works...

- During the meeting announcements, the secretary announces the date of the upcoming discussion group. It's a good idea for the secretary to include the sponsorship chairperson in the announcement. For example, the secretary can say, "[Name] is our sponsorship chairperson. Do you have any announcements?"
- The chairperson can then give general information about the discussion group and encourage all members (sponsor or not) to attend. He or she should also ask if anybody has specific topics or questions they would like addressed at the next discussion group. This gives the chairperson the opportunity to prepare in advance.

- The chairperson then asks all available sponsors and people looking for sponsors to meet him or her at the back of the room. After the meeting, the sponsorship chairperson stands at the back of room and introduces newcomers to available sponsors. If no sponsors are available, the chairperson can give newcomers his or her phone number, phone lists, and literature so newcomers can have people to contact and information about the CEA-HOW program.
- Once a month the sponsorship chairperson holds the discussion group after the regular meeting. He or she can start the discussion by asking whether anyone has a question about sponsoring, reminding members not to break the anonymity of those they mention. At times, entire discussion groups may be devoted entirely to answering questions.
- The chairperson should refer to the CEA-HOW literature *first* for answers to participants' questions before sharing his or her own experience.
- After the chairperson has checked the literature for the answers to questions, then he or she can personally address the question and ask the group if anyone has related experience they would like to share.
- Once questions are answered, if there is time, the chairperson can read from CEA-HOW literature, such as the first several pages of the *Sponsor Guideline* or *Forever Abstinent*.
- If nobody has questions, the chairperson can devote the discussion group to reading CEA-HOW literature. This gives everybody a chance to review basic CEA-HOW guidelines and sets a good example for newer members.

As you can see, the sponsorship chairperson plays a vital role in taking the guesswork out of sponsoring. He or she can facilitate both new sponsor-sponsee relationships and rich discussions in which members have the opportunity to ask and answer questions, review or become familiar with CEA-HOW literature, and learn how to best help sponsees, one day at a time.