Let's Get Started
A GUIDE TO STARTING AND SUSTAINING A PAL CHAPTER

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICE ATHLETIC/ACTIVITIES LEAGUES, INC.
LETTER FROM OUR CEO

On behalf of the National Association of Police Athletic/Activities Leagues, Inc. I want to thank you for your interest in starting a PAL Chapter in your community. National PAL continues to move from the "World's Best Kept Secret," to "The World's Foremost Leader in Engaging Kids, Cops, and Community".

The National Police Athletics/Activities Leagues, Inc. exists to prevent juvenile crime and violence by providing civic, athletic, recreational and educational opportunities and resources to PAL Chapters.

As a member of National PAL, you will have access to resources and opportunities to grow your programming and enhance the quality of individual programming. Such resources include funding opportunities through various grants, general liability protection programs, programming opportunities through affiliate organizations, and goods and services provided by corporate partners and supporting organizations. In addition, National PAL your Chapter with an opportunity to bring your young athletes together to compete in a championship environment in several sports. We also provide a platform for your young leaders to meet in DC for our National Youth Leadership Summit.

We are confident that with your commitment to building a strong and successful PAL Chapter that will we continue to bridge the divide between law enforcement officers and youth through structured out-of-school-time initiatives and effectively increase social-emotional skills development, positive classroom behavior, school attendance, and high school graduation rates, helping youth to excel in their future.

This Getting Started book will guide you through the necessary steps to starting and maintaining your successful PAL Chapter. In order to become officially part of National PAL, please be sure to fill out a membership application located on our website. Once approved, you’ll have access to the Members Only section of our website which includes resources on funding opportunities, recruiting and retaining volunteers, a public relations toolkit and more.

Thank you in advance for your service to this one-of-a-kind organization. I look forward to working with you in engaging kids, cops, and community.

Jeff Hood
Jeff Hood, National PAL CEO
WHAT IS NATIONAL PAL?

Our mission, vision and history.

In 1944, six Chapters on the eastern seaboard joined together to form an association to share ideas and resources and compete in several sports. Today, there are over 300 of those Chapters in partnership with law enforcement agencies servicing various cities throughout the United States, including the U.S. Virgin Islands; serving youth ages 5 to 18.

The National Association of Police Athletic/Activities Leagues, Inc. (National PAL) exists to prevent juvenile crime and violence by providing enriching civic, athletic, recreational and educational opportunities and resources to PAL Chapters. As a membership organization, National PAL provides local Chapters with support resources and opportunities to grow their own programs and enhance the quality of individual programming.

Such resources include funding opportunities through various grants, general liability protection programs, programming opportunities through affiliate organizations, as well as goods and services provided by corporate partners and supporting organizations.

In addition, National PAL provides Chapter members opportunities to bring their young athletes together to compete in a championship environment in several sports.

Our organization is based on the conviction that young people - if they are reached early enough - can develop strong positive attitudes towards police officers in their journey through life toward the goal of maturity and good citizenship. The PAL program brings youth under the supervision and positive influence of a law enforcement agency and expands public awareness about the role of law enforcement and the reinforcement of the responsible values and attitudes instilled in young people by their parents.

Studies have shown that if a young person respects a police officer on the ball field, gym or classroom, the youth will likely come to respect the laws that police officers enforce. In turn, the benefits for law enforcement engagement is a greater and first-hand understanding of the complexities that overwhelm youth in impoverished, high crime, neighborhoods that are struggling with high rates of unemployment, drug use, and gang activity. This mutual respect and understanding are beneficial to the youth, the police officer, and the community in general.

“The National Association of Police Athletic/Activities Leagues, Inc. (National PAL) and its chapters work nationwide promoting the prevention of juvenile crime and violence by building relationships among kids, cops and community through positive engagement.”

– Mission Statement of the National Association of Police Athletic/Activities Leagues, Inc.
TOP 10 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Below are some of the top questions potential PAL Chapters ask when starting their PAL.

1. How do I get started with opening a PAL Program?
   The first step is to read this Getting Started Guide as it will walk you through the process of starting a PAL. Be sure to complete the community assessment, your Articles of Incorporation and your Chapter By-laws. Once you become a member of PAL you will have access to other resources that will aid you in maintaining a successful chapter.

2. I work for a small law enforcement agency with a limited budget. Would it still be feasible for us to start a PAL Chapter?
   Yes, the unique thing about PAL is that you can start a program as small or as big as you want. First, you must assess all of your resources both outside as well as inside the law enforcement agency. Then determine the size of the program and activities you should offer.

3. Where do we get the money and how much do we need to start the program?
   Funding the program can sometimes be the biggest challenge. This is the time to tap into all of your local resources. Contact your local banks, corporations, restaurants, etc., and ask them to provide a donation to your program. You may want to ask an accountant to do the books for the program or an attorney to do the 501(c) 3 incorporation papers. Most of the time you can get someone to do this work pro-bono. Reaching out to your community and utilizing all the available resources is key to minimizing your expenses. Your expenses are also determined by how many youth are enrolled in the program, the activities and programs you will offer, cost of insurance, uniforms (if necessary), as well as any other expenses associated with that sport or activity.

4. How do I get community and volunteer support of the program?
   A key to getting community support for your program is to involve your local media such as your local television station, radio stations, and local newspaper. Let them know what you are doing, the positive effects the program will have on the community, and why it is important. Invite them to events and ask them to do a feature article or television clip on your program. The point is to advertise the program which will help you get volunteers to help you run the program.
5. How do I determine the approximate number of youth that may PAL will serve?
First, you must determine what area in your community you want to reach. Once you do that, go to the local schools and ask them to help you to promote the program to the youth and parents. You can also advertise the program throughout your community through other civic group organizations. A good practice is to start a waiting list of children who wish to enroll in a PAL program. This will help you estimate how many children your program will serve. The quality of programs is key. If it’s excellent, you’ll notice the youth will find you!

6. What age group of youth should we target?
PAL primarily serves kids ages 5 to 18. While starting with any age group is fine, we recommend that you start with the younger youth first. Often times youth that are entering their teens are more difficult to reach because they have already established patterns of behavior, while those of elementary school age are still developing their routines.

7. Do we need our own PAL building to conduct the sports and activities that we will offer?
No, in fact, most new PAL Chapters do not have a building of their own. That is something that usually comes later. Most PAL’s start off by using a local school, civic group building, or church auditorium. Many police/sheriff departments partner up with their local recreation center or school and work hand in hand to make it happen.

8. What activities and programs should I offer when we start our Chapter?
The program should include activities that will appeal to the youth of your community and reflect the resources you have available. A PAL program should encompass these few areas:
- Character Development
- Homework Assistance and Academic Enrichment
- Arts and Cultural Enrichment
- Recreational Activities

9. What type of insurance will we need for our PAL?
Liability insurance is a requirement. One of the benefits of membership is that our members have access to $1,000,000 liability insurance coverage at an affordable rate. This policy extends coverage to all the PAL youth, coaches, volunteers, police officers, and anyone directly associated with the program. Other options are Accidental/Medical Insurance and Directors and Officer Insurance.

10. Must my PAL Chapter include law enforcement engagement.
Yes. Your Chapter should be in partnership with your local law enforcement agency. This is what makes us unique. We are the world’s foremost organization for engaging kids, cops and community. Cops and kids working and playing together is what PAL is all about.
PAL MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

There is value in National PAL membership. Being part of a national organization is more advantageous than going at it alone. Our annual membership rate is $600 per calendar year but the benefits are worth so much more. National PAL members have opportunities that include:

- Membership in an organization with a rich history that has provided service for over 75 years.
- Access to a wealth of programming opportunities, organizational structure assistance, peer knowledge assistance, and more.
- Opportunity to attend our Annual National PAL Training & Conference at the preferred membership rate.
- Ability to apply for Mentor Grant Funding, via our NPAL Mentor Grant Program.
- Ability to apply for funding to support your local baseball programming thanks to the MLB, our national partner.
- Opportunity to have your chapter and the wonderful work that is being done recognized on a National stage.
- Access to posting and applying for PAL Chapter positions via our Members Only job board.
- Opportunity to have your Chapter’s youth, alumni, volunteers and law enforcement officers recognized nationally as National PAL Inspirational Awardees each month and annual at our National Conference.
- Opportunity to participate within the Annual National PAL Fundraising Initiative to aid in raising proceeds for your PAL.
- Receive a National PAL quarterly newsletter which includes important news, updates and resources delivered only to our PAL Chapter affiliates.
- Opportunity for your youth to attend our robust and well attended annual NPAL Youth Summit.
COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Examine the reasons for starting your PAL. Review juvenile crime statistics or contact other agencies (such as the local police department, schools, juvenile justice commissions, and neighboring police agencies) to assist you in securing accurate data. Does one or more of the following conditions exist in your community?

- **Poor school attendance? (YES / NO)**
  The routine of waking up, getting ready for school, attending school, completing assignments in school (and after school), and returning home each day establishes a routine that is a basis for good choices in the future. Children who are not going to school daily are losing out on establishing good habits.

- **Poor educational standards? (YES / NO)**
  Overcrowded and underfunded schools have the challenge of implementing discipline and order in their schools.

- **Behavioral Problems? (YES / NO)**
  Lashing out at others for the issues they experience at home or school is very common. Children subjected to poor conditions and treatment are more likely to act out their fears and frustrations on others.
- **Poverty factors? (YES / NO)**
  Juvenile delinquency is more common in poorer neighborhoods. While all neighborhoods are not exempt from delinquent activities, it is believed they happen more in areas where children feel they must commit crimes to prosper.

- **Low Parental Involvement? (YES / NO)**
  Parental involvement in school work and school-based activities has been found to be a very large deterrent for juvenile delinquent activities. When an adult is active in the lives of a child, that child is more prone to perform well in school and social surroundings.

- **An increase in incidents involving youth during non-school hours? (YES / NO)**
  Children who are not enrolled in after-school programming, particularly latch key kids, are prone to using their free time negatively (i.e. crime, drugs, etc).

- **Violence/ gangs in their neighborhood? (YES / NO)**
  The saying goes, hurt people hurt people. If the neighborhood in which a child lives is violent, the children will have a tendency to be more prone to delinquency.

- **Lack of suitable recreational facilities and educational activities for youth? (YES / NO)**
  Are there very few programs available to children in your area? Or if programs are available are they financially out of reach or at capacity?

- **Drugs and substance abuse? (YES / NO)**
  Substance abuse in a home or by the child is a very common cause for delinquency. Children who are exposed to substance abuse often do not have the necessities they need to thrive and are forced to find these necessities in other ways (such as turning to crime). Others, who become dependent on a substance may also need to commit crimes to sustain their habit.
PAL Chapters all across the nation have implemented a wide range of programs in different areas. Take a look at the ideas below to see what sorts of activities would be of most interest in your community!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATHLETICS</th>
<th>CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT &amp; EDUCATION</th>
<th>OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>THE ARTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archery</td>
<td>Afterschool Enrichment</td>
<td>Aviation</td>
<td>Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball/Softball</td>
<td>Career Development</td>
<td>Canoeing/Kayaking</td>
<td>Audio/Visual Editing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>College Prep</td>
<td>Camping</td>
<td>Cooking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMX Racing</td>
<td>Community Service</td>
<td>Cardio Classes</td>
<td>Dancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowling</td>
<td>Family Counseling</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Debate Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boxing</td>
<td>Homework Help</td>
<td>Hiking</td>
<td>Drama / Theater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheer leading</td>
<td>Junior Police Explorer</td>
<td>Horseback Riding</td>
<td>Film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equestrian Sports</td>
<td>Leadership Development</td>
<td>Mountain Biking</td>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness &amp; Nutrition Courses</td>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>Rock-climbing</td>
<td>Graphic Arts Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>Public Speaking</td>
<td>Roller / Deck Hockey</td>
<td>Journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kickball</td>
<td>Robotics</td>
<td>Scuba</td>
<td>Music Lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacrosse</td>
<td>STEM Activities</td>
<td>Skiing/Snowboarding</td>
<td>Painting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Defense Course (Karate, Wrestling, etc.)</td>
<td>Teen Nights</td>
<td>Chunkey (Hoop and Stick Game)</td>
<td>Photography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>Youth Leadership Clubs</td>
<td>Lacrosse</td>
<td>Pottery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stickball</td>
<td>Theater &amp; Drama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track &amp; Field</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yoga</td>
<td>Woodworking</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Zumba</td>
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</tbody>
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Here’s how to build a PAL Board that will help your Chapter thrive.

1. Find the expertise you are missing.
Some of the skills your PAL Chapter will need include financial management, marketing, public relations, contract negotiation and more. Find people who are experts in these fields.

2. Keep your board size manageable.
Small, focused boards are generally preferable to larger ones. Start with five board members, and then perhaps expand to seven over time. Regardless of the number, make sure that you have an odd number of board members to avoid voting deadlocks, as well as several directors who are clearly independent.

3. Choose people who can participate fully.
The people on your board must be able to dedicate significant time to your PAL--not just for scheduled meetings, but also on an ad-hoc basis when time-sensitive challenges arise. Do not select people who serve on so many boards that they will not be available when you need them.

4. Divide your board into focused committees.
Boards work on a broad range of issues, including compensation, audit, overall business strategy, key personnel decisions, lawsuits, and other problems that arise. You can increase your board’s effectiveness by forming focused committees in critical areas. It is recommended to form compensation and audit committees, and then establish governance, acquisition, and other committees as your PAL grows. Make sure you choose the right people to head your most critical committees - a board member with accounting and/or financial expertise should run the audit committee, and an independent director to run the compensation committee.

5. Establish an adequate structure.
Every board needs a playbook to bring clarity to the roles and responsibilities of the board itself. Board rules and governance policies should be articulated in writing and voted upon. The board should meet at a minimum of four times a year with a quorum present, or more often for critical issues.

6. Draft Board of Directors Agreement.
On top of your bylaws, a Board of Directors Agreement should be drafted. The agreement should outline the specific responsibilities of the board member to both the board and the chapter. It should detail the minimums expected of the directors and the consequences of the directors’ failure to adhere to those minimums.
1. **Articulate Your Nonprofit’s "Why"?**
   It is no longer enough for nonprofits to do “good work.” Donors, policy makers, board members, and others are increasingly demanding that nonprofits explain what value they provide a community and what change they exist to create.

2. **Recruit a groundbreaking Board of Directors.**
   A groundbreaking board provides strategic direction, brings money in the door, connects the organization to key decision makers and ultimately leads the organization to success. Without their leadership, investment and excitement it will be impossible to build community support and create change. This guidebook will walk you through those steps.

3. **Create a strategic and realistic organizational plan.**
   The old adage goes: if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Creating a realistic organizational plan provides a sense of direction and outlines measurable goals. Strategic planning is a tool that is useful for guiding day-to-day decisions and also for evaluating progress and changing approaches when moving forward. In order to make the most of strategic planning, give careful thought to the strategic objectives, then back up these goals with realistic, thoroughly researched, quantifiable benchmarks for evaluating results.

4. **Have a solid fundraising plan, with and without grant money.**
   Nonprofits too often look at fundraising only as a means of making money to accomplish their agendas and pay their staff. Do you need money to do these things? Yes. Is grant writing the only way to raise funds? No. Fundraising is not just a means of raising money, but also a way to promote the message and goals of your PAL. For example, many attendees of fundraising events, especially fun runs and walks, are multi-level supporters. Paying to participate and then also reaching out to friends for pledges is an ask of their money and time. This also publicizes and generates interest in the event. The people doing these things are volunteering their time giving you a personal endorsement to grow your event and essential your PAL brand and Chapter.

5. **Create a realistic marketing plan.**
   Careful planning will enable you to prioritize your spending and to avoid investing time or money in initiatives that don’t connect to your marketing and communications goals and ultimately your mission and vision. The marketing plan outlines ways you will reach your target audience including volunteers, donors, sponsors, parents and of course PAL Kids. This is also the time to identify your PAL’s strengths and weaknesses (internal factors) as well as your opportunities and threats (external factors).

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**National PAL provides resources to our member chapters including guidebooks and templates. Membership has its benefits!**