

HOW-TO GUIDE

# STARTING A NEW CHAPTER



## INTRODUCTION TO ASDA

Welcome to the American Student Dental Association (ASDA)! We realize that it can be overwhelming to start a new ASDA chapter and to know where to begin. Therefore, we created this start-up guide to help you get started in building a strong ASDA chapter.

We wish you much success with your chapter this year! If you have any questions along the way, please contact Lilliane Smothers, Director of Membership at [Lilliane@ASDAnet.org](mailto:Lilliane@ASDAnet.org).

### ***ASDA Structure***

ASDA is the largest student-run organization for dental students. It is the only national association entirely devoted to dental student concerns and the student viewpoint on professional issues in dentistry. ASDA currently has over 22,000 members and a chapter at each dental school in the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

*ASDA's mission statement is "The American Student Dental Association (ASDA) is a national student-run organization that protects and advances the rights, interests and welfare of dental students. It introduces students to lifelong involvement in organized dentistry and provides services, information, education, representation and advocacy."*

There are two groups that set the future of the association – the Board of Trustees and House of Delegates. The Board of Trustees is governing body of ASDA and is responsible for the administration and management of the association. The House of Delegates is the supreme legislative body of the Association and is responsible for electing officers and determining policies, initiatives and directives. Members serve in both the Board of Trustees and House of Delegates.

The Board of Trustees includes eleven district trustees along with the association president, two vice presidents, speaker of the house, and the executive director. Each chapter is part of one of the eleven ASDA districts. Each district elects its district trustee. Each chapter has two representatives, known as delegates, who vote as part of the House of Delegates. Those delegates vote on ASDA policy and for the Board leadership. See the ASDA bylaws for a full overview of the positions that comprise the Board of Trustees and House of Delegates.

ASDA employs staff to manage the association and implement strategic plan objectives and adopted policies. The national ASDA central is located in the American Dental Association building located in downtown Chicago. ASDA operates on a budget supported by membership dues, product sales, advertising, and sponsorships.

When students join ASDA, they automatically become student members of the American Dental Association (ADA). ASDA and the ADA are two independent organizations that maintain a close working relationship. ASDA retains its own governing structure and leadership apart from the ADA. This allows the organization to direct resources to the issues of greatest importance to students, and enables the association to express opinions and take positions that may be different from those of the ADA.

ASDA collaborates with the ADA, the Academy of General Dentistry, state dental societies and ADEA. Five ASDA members sit on the ADA House of Delegates, while one ASDA member sits on each ADA Council. Additionally, ASDA is invited to speak at AGD and ADEA meetings to collaborate and share viewpoints.

### ***Role of the Chapter***

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The chapter is a very important component in ASDA's national organizational structure. Each chapter has an Executive Committee that manages the local chapter, represents ASDA in the program, and maintains and open dialogue between national ASDA and local ASDA.

Chapter membership consists of the active members of each dental school. The purpose of the chapter is to:

- Promote and serve the mission of ASDA
- Recruit, inform and involve local members in the activities of the association at all levels
- Provide local members with representation by sending two delegates to the association's House of Delegates
- May function as a form of local student government
- Supports the leadership development of its members for the local, district and national level

Each individual ASDA chapter affords the opportunity for the student body to become engaged in leadership roles through chapter activities such as: fundraisers, lunch and learns, state lobbying events, vendor fairs and chapter newsletters. Additionally, each chapter can be broken down into committees such as: pre dental, membership, health and wellness, activities, community service, communications, legislative and ethics.

### ***Resources***

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Check out the ASDA's Chapter Management Resources section of ASDA's website for key resources such as How-To Guides, Finance and Legal Issues, Communication templates and logos, Membership Recruitment, and Leadership Tools. The chapter leadership resources [website](#) includes the information listed above. New resources are added regularly.

The constitution template and chapter waiver templates can be found on the [chapter management resources website](#).

The chapter Executive Committee, Chapter Advisor, Dean and/or Dean of Student Affairs will receive ASDA's month enewsletter, New Leader. New Leader is your one-stop publication for dates, deadline, and ideas for your chapter.

### ***Key Contacts***

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The ASDA central office employs full-time staff who specialize in specific aspects of association management. The contact information for the central office is [online](#).

Your district will contain anywhere from four to seven schools. As a new chapter, you may feel as though you are the new kid on the block, but the national leaders and staff are willing to reach out a helping hand if you need it. [Contact](#) your trustee. View the list of Districts and associated chapters on the [District Map](#).

## GETTING STARTED

### *Taking the First Steps*

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National ASDA has been working with the program administration to establish an ASDA chapter prior to the start of the program. The first chapter members should take these steps to establish a successful ASDA chapter.

**1. *Talk with your dean and administrators***

The administration at your school most likely must approve all student organizations. Prepare to speak with your dean/administration by (1) having a core team lined up, (2) knowing who your faculty advisor will be and (3) being prepared to explain why your institution needs an ASDA chapter. Hopefully your administration already understands and appreciates the importance of organized dentistry. If they don't understand (and even if they do), a well-prepared explanation of why you want to start ASDA at your school will go a long way. Include specifics of what your chapter will provide, such as opportunities for outreach, educational events, wellness activities, etc.

**2. *Identify a supporting faculty member***

The ASDA central office must have a chapter advisor on file for every chapter. The selection of a faculty advisor is an important one. An ideal advisor should be an ADA member and be active in their state and local dental societies. The advisor should also understand the role of students in organized dentistry and serve as an advocate for students to the dean and administration. A wise choice for faculty advisor would be someone who has a great relationship with the administration. Finally, the faculty advisor registered with the central office will receive a number of resources that will better equip them to assist your chapter.

**3. *Communicate regularly with ASDA central office staff***

The ASDA central office staff will likely be your best resource in starting and managing your chapter. They have resources and expertise to get your chapter through the most difficult stages of getting started. The director of membership is the staff person that you will work most closely with and can be reached at [Lilliane@ASDAnet.org](mailto:Lilliane@ASDAnet.org).

**4. *Meet the minimum requirements***

To become a fully chartered ASDA chapters, the following requirements must be met by January 1 of the first academic year. These requirements include:

- a. Have at least five active predoctoral members
- b. Submit a signed Affiliate Agreement. National ASDA will supply the agreement.
- c. Elect or appoint a president and president-elect or vice-president to represent and manage the chapter.

Submit the signed Affiliate Agreement and names of the new chapter leaders to national ASDA.

**5. Draft the backbones of your chapter – the constitution and bylaws and budget.**

Work with national ASDA to draft your chapter’s constitution and bylaws and first budget. The constitution and bylaws must be completed and submitted to national ASDA by January 1 of the second academic year.

***Leadership Structure***

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Each chapter must have an Executive Committee. The Executive Committee manages and is responsible for chapter business. The positions of the Executive Committee include: President, Vice President or President-Elect, Secretary, and Treasurer.

As your chapter develops, creating committees, task forces or general volunteer positions will help the chapter increase overall engagement.

***Required Paperwork***

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The required paperwork includes the constitution & bylaws, declaration form and an affiliation agreement. The constitution & bylaws will provide the direction, leadership and cohesiveness for your chapter to achieve its goals. All chapters must have electronic and hard copies (signed by the two chapter delegates) of their constitution & bylaws on file at the central office. The central office can provide your chapter with a template and samples from other chapters of constitution & bylaws to help you get started. They will also send you the other forms that you must submit: a signed constitution declaration and affiliation agreement.

***Setting Up Your Finances***

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Once your chapter gets going, you will need funds for activities, materials and other expenses to run the chapter. It is important to have a conversation with your administration regarding how your finances will be managed. Some schools handle the finances for the chapter. Other chapters set up their own bank account.

## RECRUITING AND ENGAGING MEMBERS

### ***Membership Cycle***

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Membership in ASDA runs on a calendar year (January 1-December 31). This is important to keep in mind during your first year. Although students may join ASDA in the fall when they start school, membership does not officially start until January 1. However, members start to receive some of their benefits sooner, such as access to the website and their publications.

When you join ASDA, you automatically become a student member of the ADA and are eligible for their benefits as well. ADA membership runs on the same calendar year as ASDA membership. ADA benefits can be found at [www.ada.org/students](http://www.ada.org/students).

### ***Auto Enroll vs. Recruited Chapters***

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ASDA chapters are set up one of two ways to collect member dues: automatic enrollment and recruited. *Automatic enrollment* is when ASDA dues are automatically paid for by the school, a third-party (such as a state society) or included as part of the student's tuition. *Recruited* chapters require students to apply and pay their ASDA dues individually, either to a representative at their chapter or online.

The biggest difference between auto enroll and recruited chapters is in the number of members. Since auto enroll chapters pay membership dues for all students, they typically have 100% membership in ASDA. Recruited chapters only include membership of those students who choose to join so membership is typically lower.

Some schools are set up as auto enroll chapters from their inception, but many new chapters convert to auto enroll after a few years. It is important to have this discussion with your administration to see if auto enroll is a possibility. The ASDA staff can assist you in getting this set up if you have support from your school.

If your school is not an automatic enrollment school, it is important to have good recruiting methods. One of the primary roles of a chapter is to recruit and involve students in ASDA.

### ***Membership Drive***

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Chapters go about recruitment in many different ways, but most hold some type of membership drive in the fall when new students start school. For auto-enroll schools, the drive is used to introduce new students to ASDA. The membership drive can be as simple as setting up a table during orientation to share ASDA materials with new students. Many chapters schedule a lunch and learn presentation on ASDA during orientation week to provide more in-depth information.

Find resources on the [Chapter Management Resources](#) of the ASDA website for more information, templates and guides.

### ***Membership Benefits***

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ASDA provides members with both tangible and intangible benefits. Tangible benefits are discounts on products and services. Intangible benefits include having a voice in your profession and the opportunity to meet dentals students from across the country. These benefits serve to recruit members, ensure member satisfaction and help our members develop into professionals. View a [summary](#) of all the benefits ASDA has to offer.

### ***Finances***

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Always confirm with your administration on what the chapter is able to do. Raising funds can happen in several different ways – fundraising, event fees, vendor fairs, lunch and learns and more. Check out the [How-To Guides](#) for more information.

### ***Planning your First Events***

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Your first impression to your school as an ASDA chapter will most likely be perceived through your first event. Whether you are organizing a social, community service event or fundraiser, it is important to follow some basic planning guidelines.

1. Be professional in everything you do.
  - a. Make sure your administration approves everything before holding the event.
2. Make the event relevant.
  - a. You would like your first event to represent you as a chapter and organization.
3. Publicize!
  - a. Make sure to get the word out through multiple channels and promote the event as sponsored by ASDA. Don't underestimate emails, flyers, social media and most of all, word of mouth. Providing food is a great way to get your members to attend.
4. Invite your administrators and faculty.
  - a. It is always a good idea to reach out to your administration. Especially at a new school, faculty want to mingle with the students and this is a great way to gain administrative support.

## **PLANNING FOR SUCCESS**

### ***Potential Road Blocks***

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As you are starting to build your chapter, you may come up against issues common to many chapters.

#### **Unsupportive Administrator**

If you find that you have an unsupportive administration, don't worry. Try to set up a meeting where you can discuss why ASDA is important and why you feel it is critical to have the support of the administration. Plan as many events as you are allowed and make sure to never cross any lines. The reputation of the local chapter can be made stronger over time and through the implementation of successful events. Also, seek out the advice of other student leaders and your trustee. Chances are you are not the only person feeling the pushback and others may have the words of wisdom that you need to make progress. Use Best Practices: ASDA's Working with School Administration in the [Leadership Toolbox](#).

### **Disinterested Classmates**

One of the most difficult aspects to work through can be a disinterested or negative classmate. Many students do not understand the benefit of ASDA and organized dentistry. They may see it as just another club they have to join or as a waste of money with no payoff. The best way to approach a student of this nature is through education and by relating the benefits of ASDA directly to them.

Educate them on the accomplishments of ASDA over the past year. Discuss national issues and the advocacy that we are fighting for. Mention the great member benefits and the importance of standing up for our profession. Relate the changes in medicine to dentistry to demonstrate that we are still an independent profession (unlike medicine) and that we are fighting to stay that way for years to come. As hard as it may seem, stay upbeat and excited about the organization. Continue to plan events and even personally invite students that do not seem to be as excited or involved. Chances are that when they see the benefit and good work that ASDA does, they will be likely to jump on board.

### **Taking on the World**

Starting a chapter is no easy task. There is a lot of organization, delegation and leadership that goes into beginning a chapter. It is very easy to get lost in the shuffle and to find yourself doing everything. Remember not to take on the world. Start your first year with a couple of great events that will spark a buzz about ASDA. In between those great events, hold smaller events or do little things to remind the students that ASDA is still around and is working to benefit them. As your chapter becomes more established, add events, consider forming committees and reevaluate your role among the other organizations within the school. If you feel yourself getting overwhelmed at any time, take a step back and see who is willing to help. Chances are that if you are excited about ASDA, there are many people that feel the same way.

### **Learning to Delegate**

The first year of development will probably run like a big committee, with people having titles and job descriptions, but for the most part, everyone will be involved in every decision. As time goes on, committee chairs can do most of the day-to-day tasks and report to the executive committee. This may be the best utilization of everyone's time and energy and it is important to learn to trust the people working with you. Give clear expectations and set reasonable deadlines. People will surprise you with the quality of work they produce.

We are all dental students and the more time and advanced notice you can give another student leader, the better. Establishing a chapter should be a leadership development opportunity. Everyone involved will have these opportunities if delegation is done well and efficiently.

### **Finding Balance**

We all know that doing well in dental school is no easy task. While establishing an ASDA chapter will certainly add things to your already very busy schedule, be sure to prioritize what is important for you. Many national leaders pick one day during the week that is dedicated to completing all of their ASDA tasks. This way, they can spend the rest of the week doing everything else. Each person has their own views on what it means to be balanced. Determine



early on what you want your life balance to be and you will find yourself happier, healthier and much less stressed while accomplishing more than you could have ever imagined.

### ***The Value of Experiencing National Events***

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One of the toughest aspects to tackle when establishing a chapter is to find the funding to do everything that you want to do, such as attending national meetings. ASDA's national meetings offer an invaluable experience to learn about issues facing the dental profession and provide an opportunity to network with students from other dental schools across the country. All members are invited to attend meetings to learn more about ASDA in order to maximize the benefits of membership to themselves and their chapters. Details on our national meetings can be found [online](#).

To assist new chapters in attending Annual Session, ASDA waives the registration fee for first and second delegates for their first Annual Session. This fee covers the cost of the meeting registration, hotel, materials and meals provided at the meeting. Chapters only need to fund their travel to and from the event.

### ***Celebrate Your Success***

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It is no easy feat to start a chapter while you are just beginning dental school. Start with the basics, such as establishing a leadership team, setting goals, filling out paperwork and holding one event to expose students to ASDA. If you can accomplish those things in your first year, you are doing great and should celebrate your success.

Remember that there are many people who are here to help so don't be afraid to reach out. Good luck!