

## **Introduction**

This guide offers tips on how chapters can reach out to state dental associations to increase student representation and involvement.

## **Opportunities for Student Involvement**

### **Participation in State Dental Association's House of Delegates**

During ASDA's Annual Session, two students from each chapter serve as delegates in the House of Delegates meetings to set policy and elect officers for the association. Delegates typically serve as the ASDA chapter president and vice president or president-elect. Similarly, state dental association that allow voting by student delegates will usually have the ASDA chapter president serve as the student delegate. The ASDA chapter vice president or president-elect can serve as the alternate delegate.

### **Submitting Resolutions**

Students are encouraged to submit resolutions – most often changes to policy or recommendations for initiative – to their state dental association if the opportunity is available.

Before submitting a resolution for consideration, make sure the policy or initiative is not already in place. Then, develop a recommendation or solution to present to stakeholders. Always follow the guidelines set by the state dental association for submitting resolutions to their voting members. Contact the association's staff with questions.

ASDA members should adhere to ASDA's Current Statements of Position or Policy found at [www.ASDAnet.org/statementsonpolicy.aspx](http://www.ASDAnet.org/statementsonpolicy.aspx).

### **Participation in State Lobby Days and Legislative Training Days**

State lobby days typically feature meetings with state legislature to discuss issues affecting dentistry.

It is likely that several student members will one day practice in the state in which they attend dental school. This early participation will help orient students to their state association, as well as their specific state's legislative issues. Students can communicate their future plans to practice in the state in which they lobby proving to the state association their commitment to the community.

In some states, scheduling meeting time with the state legislature can be challenging. A state association may suggest that lobbying their state is not feasible based on their past experience. Formatting this meeting as a legislative training day versus a lobby day could be more effective.

### **ASDA Representation on Councils, Committees, Task Forces or State PACs**

For ASDA chapters looking to increase local representation, a great place to start is by requesting to serve on a council, committee, task force or state political action committee (PAC).

Chapters will need to convince their state dental association of the benefit of integrating students into their volunteer structure. Here are some talking points:

- The state association will gain access to the student's perspective.
- Students who are involved in the state society are more likely to remain involved in organized dentistry after graduation.
- The committee will better understand what students are looking to receive out of their membership during school and after they graduate.
- Students can keep committee members informed on the dental school's schedule for timing a proposed event and information on what will help increase student attendance.
- An ASDA representative can help educate a council on ASDA member's stance on issues.
- The student leader can also provide updates and information on changes regarding curriculum at their respective schools.

Actively involved student members are more likely to help the state association recruit their classmates because of maximizing the value of the relationship. In all cases, ASDA representatives can serve as a liaison between the state association and the dental school administration, and more importantly, the student body.

### **Student Member Sitting on the Board of Trustees**

Having an ASDA member sit on a board allows interaction with the most influential members of the state's dental association. The student member sitting on the board is usually one of the more experienced ASDA leaders from a chapter, sometimes holding a national ASDA position. These individuals have a wealth of knowledge on issues facing organized dentistry.

### **Activities**

Outside of political advocacy and student leadership positions, engagement opportunities for dental students include mentoring, job boards, educational sessions, networking and social events. Many state associations invite student members to events for new dentists. This is a great opportunity for networking, learning about career opportunities in the area and building a social support system.

### **Local Component**

Students at dental schools that are not located near state dental association events can benefit from getting involved with local components. Many state dental associations use local components to develop their leadership roles. There may be leadership roles available to students at the local level, which could be a stepping-stone to student leadership in state dental associations. In addition, students will be able to connect with current or future state leaders, making it easier to have an impact at the state level. The respective state organization can provide a contact at the local component or, search for a local dental organization at [ADA.org/localorganizations.aspx](http://ADA.org/localorganizations.aspx).

## **Funded Activities for ASDA Members**

Opportunities vary state-to-state. Funding can take the form of membership dues or travel expenses for attendance to meetings.

## **Making the Connection with the State Dental Association or Local Component**

Current contact information for the ADA's constituent (state) dental organizations can be found on [ADA's website](#).

A good contact to start with is the association's director of membership. This is the person who would typically interact with interested parties calling from outside the association. This position will tend to have knowledge of the current opportunities.

Here are a few tips to keep in mind when reaching out to the state dental association:

- 1. Find a common interest between the ASDA chapter and the state or local component.**  
Do the research. Find examples of other chapters that have faced the same issue and how they proceeded with a solution. Have support as to why others should become involved. And, be ready to give back. A relationship is about give and take. The focus should be on how to build on combined strengths.
- 2. Reach out via phone or e-mail and be prepared with a list of topics to address.**  
Don't start by forwarding a list of demands. Instead, give an overall objective to start the conversation. To enhance the efficacy of a suggestion, make sure to have prepared supporting information. Think doable, not earth-shattering. Once collaboration has been agreed upon, think in terms of an end result. What area needs to be improved or created and how does the chapter go about improving or creating it with this group's help?
- 3. Once the relationship is in ebb and flow, dedicate resources to the agreed upon plan.** Be honest about member's availability and be reasonable with the amount of work they can contribute to any one project. Take on projects one at a time and move forward slowly. An environment of overwhelm can threaten the relationship. Allow for the next group to pick up the reigns and be motivated to continue the legacy.

Remember that relationship building is a skill that takes time and effort to perfect. It should also be approached with focus and preparation. There will be formal and casual opportunities for interaction and both situations can lead to overall growth in the relationship.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix A: Template for Letter of Introduction to State Dental Association
- Appendix B: Talking Points for Meeting with State Dental Association Representative
- Appendix C: State Dental Association Liaison Position

## Appendix A: Template for Letter/Email of Introduction to State Dental Association

Your ASDA chapter Logo

Chapter E-Mail:  
Website:

[State Dental Association name]

Dear [State Dental Association President] and [State Dental Association Executive Director],

My name is [your name] and I am the [your leadership position] at the [school name] ASDA chapter. On behalf of our members, we would like to become more involved with the [Your State Dental Association].

The [American Student Dental Association](#) (ASDA) represents more than 23,000 members and provides education, representation and advocacy. Each U.S. dental school has a local chapter of ASDA. ASDA has a national leadership of 45+ dental students and full-time staff to manage our Chicago-based association.

There are [#] dental students at [school name] ASDA chapter. Our members are incredibly engaged and eager to become active in organized dentistry, in particular the [insert state dental association].

We hope to build a better relationship between our ASDA chapter and the [insert state dental association]. Building a strong relationship takes time. We are dedicated to this goal.

We see involvement with [insert your state dental association] as a way to further our leadership development and support of organized dentistry. We are certain that greater involvement while in dental school will lead to greater membership, leadership and involvement in organized dentistry once we begin to practice.

We hope that you will take our request into great consideration. Please contact me with any questions you may have.

Kind regards,

[Insert signature]

[Insert your printed name]

[Insert your leadership position]

[insert your email]

[insert your phone number]

## Appendix B: Talking Points for Meeting with State Dental Association Representative

- **Don't assume the leaders of your state dental association know what ASDA is, locally or nationally. ASDA wasn't as "big" when these leaders were in dental school.**
  - ASDA has over 22,000 members
  - ASDA is a large national organization headquartered in Chicago with staff and an Executive Director
  - ASDA has its own policies, bylaws and functioning house of delegates (refer to [www.ASDAnet.org](http://www.ASDAnet.org) for details)
- **Don't be afraid to "brag" about the local ASDA chapter.**
  - Explain how the local ASDA chapter works (leadership structure, events, etc.)
  - Share details about the chapter's accomplishments, events, national leaders
  - ASDA leaders are well educated on the big issues. For example, licensure reform.
- **Don't expect to get results right away – relationships take time to build.**
  - Many of the state dental association leaders had to "wait their turn" for leadership positions and are sometimes unwilling to open the door for newcomers
  - Emphasize that student involvement in state dental associations is critical to increasing their membership in the future.
- **Be respectful.**
  - Be respectful of other opinions and ideas. People may not agree with ASDA's policy on various issues like licensure or midlevel providers. While it is important for them to know the student perspective, always be respectful and polite.
- **Once a role is secured on a council/committee/board:**
  - ASDA leaders should be trained prior to this type of leadership position by their chapter executive committee
  - Ask if the chapter leader can share their thoughts in a committee/board meeting
  - The chapter representative is representing national ASDA and the local chapter when in attendance at these meetings.
  - Be sure to only comment on approved ASDA policies and opinions. If a comment is made on something that ASDA doesn't have a policy on (locally or nationally) state that "This is my individual opinion" first. Check out ASDA policy here: <http://www.asdanet.org/statementsonpolicy.aspx>.

## **Appendix C: State Dental Association Liaison Position**

**Step 1:** Send a letter or email from the ASDA chapter's executive committee introducing ASDA to the state dental association. See appendix A for a template.

Every state dental association is different. The chapter's executive committee will need to gauge the interest of the state association.

- In the introductory letter communicate the desire of the ASDA chapter to attend association meetings and to work collaboratively. Request to be kept up-to-date on current events within the association and ways for dental students to be involved (working on councils/work groups/holding voting positions). Introduce the leadership of the ASDA chapter in this letter.
- This letter may not be needed if a relationship between the organizations exists.

**Step 2:** If there is interest from the state dental association, create a specific chapter position (a State Dental Association Student Liaison) to facilitate the connection. Define the specific responsibilities of the position, such as:

- Attendance at association meetings,
- Attendance at dental lobby day at the state level,
- Acting as a liaison between ASDA members and state dental association members to connect students with leaders within the association,
- Coordinating events between the organizations,
- Submitting resolutions to the state dental association (i.e. to obtain voting privileges within the association)
- Training ASDA members with the state dental association (i.e. coordinating a legislative training day for ASDA members),
- Educating ASDA members about pertinent state dental association issues, and
- Developing resources that members' transition into organized dentistry as dentists.

**Step 3:** Refer to your chapter's constitution and bylaws while creating this position and update as needed. For example, describing the position and if it will be elected or appointed.

**Step 4:** Notify your ASDA chapter members about the creation of the position. Describe the responsibilities of the position and why they should apply for it.

**Step 5:** Request the student representative send a monthly e-mail to the ASDA chapter membership reporting on the latest news from the state dental association, the issues they are working on and ways to get involved. It is very important that the student representative be committed to relaying communications with the chapter. Doing so may encourage other students to become involved with the state dental association.