

a step-by-step guide:  
**starting a parents group**



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## INTRODUCTION

Parents groups are the heart of Family Pride. They are formal and informal groups of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) parents, families and those considering parenthood who organize social, educational and advocacy-based activities for their families and their community. Some groups are quite large, and organize conferences, workshops, newsletters and websites. Some are smaller groups of families that meet monthly for potlucks and other child-friendly social opportunities. Most are volunteer-run, and serve to connect and strengthen our families.

People involved in parents groups may be formerly married, considering parenthood, pregnant, parenting and awaiting adoption or surrogate birth. We see families that are adoptive, foster, co-parented, step-parented, blended and extended. While many of our community's parents have access to local parents groups, many more do not. We encourage local volunteers to start up and maintain groups, and we can help.

Family Pride helps to start and revitalize LGBTQ parents groups in rural, urban and suburban areas. This step-by-step guide was designed to help new groups with defining goals and objectives. We encourage you to complete this using feedback from as many families as you can. Family Pride can provide you with newsletters and resources for local parents. We will help you troubleshoot and support your efforts. All services are provided to LGBTQ parents groups free of charge. Call (202) 331-5015 or e-mail [info@familypride.org](mailto:info@familypride.org) with any questions.



This guide was designed to help new groups create and define goals and objectives. This process is most effective if the input of as many families as possible has been included.

## YOUR COMMUNITY

1. Is there a need for a group?
2. Are there other activities or resources for LGBTQ families and parents? If there are, have you contacted those who are involved?
3. My community needs a group because:
4. Where will parents come from? How will you reach out to them? Is there a local community center? Gay bookstore or newspaper? What about schools where other children of LGBTQ parents may attend?

List where you may be able to find parents and families:

- a)
- b)
- c)

5. What supportive organizations exist to help you locate parents and families? List any local gay-friendly organizations or groups (such as PFLAG, MCC, etc).

- a)
- b)
- c)

## YOUR PARENTS GROUP

1. What will be the focus of your new group? Social? Advocacy? Education? Parents? Kids?
2. List three things you would like your parents group to do for families and the community.

- a)
- b)
- c)

3. A mission statement is an organization's purpose. A good mission statement provides strategic vision and direction for the group and should not have to be revised often. Brainstorm, and write your group's mission statement:

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4. What resources are needed? There can be expenses involved in starting and maintaining a parents group: running ads in local papers, designing and printing flyers, mailing invitations and finding a location. Think about what resources you will need to get the parents group off the ground. List what you might need.

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)
- f)
- g)

5. What resources are available? Look at the list you created and think of creative ways to get these things donated at no cost. Who do you know? You may have a very socially active local church that has a very positive LGBTQ outreach. That's a resource. You may have a "gay" newspaper run by a gay parent—that's a resource too!

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)
- f)
- g)

6. Who will your parents be? LGBTQ means lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer. Will you be open and inclusive of all these groups?

7. How will you be welcoming to transgender parents? (If it appears that there are no bisexual or transgender parents in your community, remember these families are often invisible). When you speak of the parenting and family community, you also need to consider those considering parenthood, those formerly married, straight spouses, non-biological parents, foster parents, step families and blended families.

8. Do you want a group exclusively for moms only, dads only, for parents of toddlers or for everyone? Think about who you want to include and why. I would like this parents group to include:

9. How often would you like your group to meet?

10. Where would your group like to meet?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

## THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF STARTING A GROUP

**1. Who will help put this group together?** Be clear on personal commitment and abilities! Most parents are very busy, and many LGBTQ parents tend to be involved in many social justice causes. Be realistic on what you can and cannot do. Some “coordinators” find it helpful to designate how many hours a month they can commit, others have found that being clear on specific job descriptions is useful. A good indicator of time required to start up a group is 40 to 50 hours spread out over one to two months. Think about what you can do and make a short list.

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

**2. Determine your outreach list.** On a separate sheet of paper, gather contact information (names, addresses, phone numbers and emails) for the following groups in your community. Add to this list! This will serve as your initial “outreach tool” to advertise and solicit volunteer help.

- a) Parents & families
- b) local LGBTQ groups
- c) LGBTQ-friendly churches/synagogues
- d) schools
- e) bookstores
- f) local gay papers
- g) local gay-friendly businesses
- h)
- i)
- j)

**3. Choose the name of your group.** Have fun and come up with something catchy that reflects the personality and mission of the group. Brainstorm with other parents. Choose the top three suggestions and when you begin to produce your initial flyers and promotional materials, try using all three. The “right” name is bound to jump out.

- a)
- b)
- c)

**4. Choose contact information for your group.** We strongly suggest using a post office box, e-mail address and second phone line or answering machine. You want to be cautious about publishing home contact information. List two ideas for safe contact information here:

- a)
- b)

