

People First of Louisiana

By-Laws

Article 1: Name, Territory, and Purpose

Section 1.1: The name of this organization is People First of Louisiana.

Section 1.2: People First of Louisiana shall conduct its activities throughout the state of Louisiana.

Section 1.3: People First of Louisiana supports people with disabilities to empower themselves in becoming effective decision makers, to gain more independence, and to enjoy life as equal citizens of the United States of America.

Article 2: Membership

Section 2.1: General membership shall be open to people who have a disability and who show interest in People First of Louisiana. Members may vote on certain issues as decided by the board.

Section 2.2: Categories and Dues of membership shall be:

Voting member

Self-advocate: \$10.00

Chapter: \$15.00

Non-Voting member

Individual Supporters: \$25.00

Business/Organization: \$100.00

*Honorary member: no fee

*Honorary membership will be decided on by a majority vote of the members of People First of Louisiana's Board of Directors present at the time of voting.

Section 2.3: The Board of Directors may determine and adopt rules and policies regarding the payment of dues.

Section 2.4: Non-Voting membership shall be open to the people who support the Mission and the goals of People First of Louisiana and request participation as a non-voting member.

Article 3: Chapter Membership

Section 3.1: Membership runs from July 1st through June 30th.

Section 3.2: Any self-advocacy group for people with disabilities can request recognition to become a member chapter of People First of Louisiana. The following guidelines must be completed and agreed upon by group requesting membership. Once all paperwork is completed, group requesting membership must be accepted by a majority vote of the members of People First of Louisiana's Board of Directors present at time of voting.

Section 3.3: To obtain affiliation, it is necessary to request in writing to the Board of Directors of People First of Louisiana. State how often group will meet and state its willingness to participate in the goals of People First of Louisiana. Sign an affiliation agreement that states the following guidelines:

- Group will have the name "People First" as a part of its group name. Group will remove People First from its name if at any time or for any reason the group is no longer recognized as a chapter member of People First of Louisiana.
- Agrees with People First By-Laws, mission statement, position statement, and vision.
- Group must have membership guidelines or willing to work with People First to set up guidelines for membership with dates that work with the membership dates of People First.
- Train chapter on duties of chapter officers.
- Hold elections for chapter officers unless chapter already has officers.
- Group agrees to pay dues by deadline set by Board of Directors of People First. If any chapter cannot pay dues due to hardship, it must be put in writing and presented to the board of directors before deadline. Decision to waive dues must have a majority vote of the Board of Directors present.
- Once People First accepts a group as a member chapter, People First of Louisiana will only recognize chapter members in good standing with the local chapter. Local chapter is to define, what good standing of its members are.
- Chapter will report list of members annually to the office of People First of Louisiana. State and local membership drive will be in the months of December and January of each year.
- Chapter member will share a monthly report with at least one of its Regional Representatives. Regional Representatives will report to board of directors, so that People First will stay informed of advocacy movement, challenges and goal of its membership. People First of Louisiana will be guided by the goals and needs of its membership.

- People First of Louisiana will report to its local chapters of its advocacy movement, goals and challenges as board meets.
- Chapter members will work with People First of Louisiana to host a Regional Election to elect Regional Representatives for the board of directors of People First of Louisiana.
- Chapter member will agree to support at least one executive officer of its local chapter to participate in state advocacy movement (examples include but are not limited to Disability Rights Rally, People First Annual Meetings, etc.)

Article 4: Resignation

Section 4.1: Any voting chapter/individual may resign at any time. The resignation should be put in writing and submitted to the president of the board and the secretary.

Section 4.2: Any non-voting supporter/business/organization may resign at any time. The resignation should be put in writing and submitted to the president of the board and the secretary.

Article 5: Member Removal or Suspension

Section 5.1: To remove or suspend a member, another member must bring the issue/cause to the attention of the Board of Directors and move for suspension or removal. The reason for the request must be in writing or recorded on tape. A written letter must be sent to the person that the complaint has been brought against. The letter must clearly explain the complaint and a timeline for him/her to respond in person, or by written statement or tape recorded statement to the Board of Directors. The person can be suspended or removed based on majority vote of the Board of Directors. A written notice will be mailed to the member stating the Board’s action.

Section 5.2: Issue/Cause:

- Nonpayment of dues.
- Conduct that reflects negatively on People First of Louisiana (picking fights, yelling, spitting, taking or damaging property, cursing, being drunk or using illegal drugs during meetings.)
- Physically hurting others.
- Not following the by-laws of People First of Louisiana on purpose on a regular basis.

- Continually being in trouble with the law.
- Sexual misconduct, verbal and/or physical abuse.

Article 6: Executive Committee: The Executive Committee of Board of Directors shall consist of the following offices:

- Executive Committee will consist of no more than five (5) and no less than four (4) of the following:
 - o President
 - o Vice President
 - o Secretary
 - o Treasurer
 - o Sergeant at Arms
- There will be no more than two (2) representatives per region.

Article 7: Qualifications, Duties, Elections, Term of Office/Term Limit and Vacancy of Executive Officers

Section 7.1: Qualifications: One or more Representatives on Board of Directors may run for any one (1) officer's position that has:

- One year minimum service on People First Board of Directors.
- Put in writing or tape recording requesting permission from board of directors.
- Must be evaluated by Board of Directors.
- Evaluation of candidate must be reviewed and discussed. Permission to run for office is approved by a majority vote of the members of People First of Louisiana's Board of Directors present at the time of voting. All candidates will receive a written letter stating yes or no, that candidate has/has not permission to run for office. Candidate(s) must receive a satisfactory evaluation or fail on facts of job performance not opinion of one or more board members. If the candidate did not pass with a satisfactory evaluation or has not received a majority vote of those present, reason must be written in letter.

All candidates will receive a written letter stating yes or no, that the candidate has or has not permission to run for office. Candidate(s) must receive a satisfactory evaluation or fail on facts of job performance not the opinion of one or

more board members. If the candidate did not pass with a satisfactory evaluation or has not received a majority vote of those present, the reason must be written in a letter.

All candidates have the right to appeal to Executive Officers on evaluation decision. If Board of Directors does not have documentation to present to candidate on evaluation decision, President must call for a special called meeting to review the decision. Final decision must receive a majority vote of those members of the Board of Directors present.

Section 7.2: Duties of Executive Officers are as follows:

- President:
 - o Serve as role model for the officers and members.
 - o Promotes our “mission statement” within our community and elsewhere.
 - o Spokesperson for People First of Louisiana with permission from the executive committee
 - o Attends the board meetings.
 - o Calls meetings to order on time and closes meetings on time.
 - o Oversees scheduling of regular executive committee meetings and conference calls.
 - o Gives a written or tape recorded executive report to board of directors. Report should tell board of activities that board members, officers or staff participated in.
 - o Guides and works together with officers to make certain that officers work as a team.
 - o Votes only after all other board members have voted.
 - o Oversee board and trainings scheduling and attends officers training.
 - o Makes sure other officers know and perform their duties.
 - o Sets agenda according to the interest and work of the board.
 - o Appoint committees to help with projects and programs.
 - o Arrange for replacement in your absence by contacting the vice president.
 - o Take the lead by encouraging representative in the growth of People First of Louisiana.
- Vice President:
 - o Serve as role model for the officers and members.
 - o Promotes our “mission statement” within our community and elsewhere.
 - o Spokesperson for people First of Louisiana with permission from the executive committee..
 - o Attends the board meetings.
 - o Attends the officer trainings.
 - o Will substitute in the place of President when president is absent.
 - o If president is unable to fulfill duties, will fulfill the term of the president until the election.

- Will inform the president before meeting if you are going to be absent from board meeting or other called meetings.
 - Selects committee chairs, assigns responsibilities to the committee chairs and keeps up to date with the committee chairs.
 - Take the lead by encouraging representatives in the growth of People First of Louisiana.
- Secretary:
- Serve as a role model for the officers and members.
 - Promotes our “mission statement” within our community and elsewhere.
 - Spokesperson for People First of Louisiana with permission from the executive committee.
 - Attends the board meetings.
 - Attends the officer trainings.
 - Will inform the President before meeting if you are going to be absent from board meeting or other called meetings.
 - Keeps a membership roll.
 - Writes and/or records roll call for all People First of Louisiana board meetings, conference calls, and committee meetings.
 - Writes or tape records meeting minutes and reads or plays recording of the meeting minutes.
 - Responsible for contacting and collecting minutes from committee meeting chairs.
 - Records all votes.
 - Will inform the president before meeting if you are going to be absent from board meetings or other called meetings.
 - Take the lead by encouraging representatives in the growth of People First of Louisiana.
- Treasurer:
- Serve as a role model for the officers and members.
 - Promotes our “mission statement” within our community and elsewhere.
 - Spokesperson for People First of Louisiana with permission from the executive committee.
 - Attends the board meetings.
 - Attends the officer trainings.
 - Will inform the President before meeting if you are going to be absent from board meeting or other called meetings.
 - Take the lead by encouraging representatives in the growth of People First of Louisiana.
 - Will give treasurer’s report at board meetings.

- Sergeant at Arms:
 - o Serve as a role model for the officers and members.
 - o Promotes our “mission statement” within our community and elsewhere.
 - o Spokesperson for People First of Louisiana with permission from the executive committee.
 - o Attends the board meetings.
 - o Attends the officer trainings.
 - o Will inform the President before meeting if you are going to be absent from board meeting or other called meetings.
 - o Call meetings to order, including executive meetings/conference calls.
 - o Keep order in meetings.
 - o Greet all guest and members for each meeting.
 - o Sets up room and equipment for each meeting.
 - o Takes the lead by encouraging representatives in the growth of People First of Louisiana.

Section 7.3: Elections for Executive Officers will be held during an annual meeting voted on by general membership.

Section 7.4: Executive Officers will serve a two (2) year term with a two (2) term limit. A representative that has served two terms can run again after not serving in that office for one term.

Section 7.5: If an executive officer is unable to fulfill their term, the office is filled by officers moving up in succession (president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, sergeant-at-arms). If officers do not want to move up, a special election will be held. The candidates will come from the Board of Directors and only the members of the Board of Directors will vote.

Article 8: Qualifications, Duties, Elections, Term of Office/Term Limit, and Vacancy of Board Members

Section 8.1: Representative qualifications

- Person with a disability.
- Minimum one year experience in self-advocacy.
- Must complete Board of Directors application.
- Office for People First of Louisiana must receive application by the deadline that is set by the Board of Directors.
- He/she must be in good standing of a local chapter for People First of Louisiana.
- Serve as a role model for other members.
- Promotes our mission statement within our community and elsewhere.
- Dependable
- Flexible
- Has a general awareness of disability issues and events.

- Knows when to ask for help and will do so.
- Can work as a team.
- Agrees to follow People First of Louisiana by-laws.
- Feels comfortable around people with all different types of disabilities.
- Think of people with disabilities as “People First.”

Section 8.2: Duties

- Spokesperson for People First of Louisiana with permission from the board.
- Encourages the growth of membership in People First of Louisiana.
- Available to attend board meetings.
- Attend local chapter meetings, all state board meetings, and participate on board committees.
- Bring a written or tape recorded report to board meetings, and regional chapter activities.
- Will give a written or tape recorded report to regional chapters after each board meeting, or special called meeting or any events that People First of Louisiana participated in.
- Able to get support to do the things they have difficulty with (reading, writing, speaking).
- Able to travel (with or without assistance) to board meetings.
- Agrees to follow People First of Louisiana by-laws.
- Support membership drives and fundraisers.

Section 8.3: Regional Elections

The members of the People First of Louisiana Board of Directors (state board) will be chosen by the regional representative election(s).

- People First of Louisiana staff will contact president of each chapter in region to work as a team to host their regional election.
- Notification of regional elections will be posted in meeting area of each chapter one (1) month before election.

Notification will include:

- ✓ Event
- ✓ Place
- ✓ Date
- ✓ Time

- Advertisement of regional representative position may be flyers, posters, newspaper or newsletter and will begin three (3) months before election.
- All candidates must meet qualifications stated in Section 8.1.
- People First of Louisiana staff will be responsible for monitoring and counting votes at the regional election.

Each region will have two representatives, a senior representative and a junior representative. The newly elected representative will have the position of junior representative. The terms of the senior representative and junior representative will expire at different times; thereby assuring each region will have an experienced representative at all times. Representative(s) are nominated and elected by chapter members. The candidate with a majority vote of the chapter members present will be elected. If there is more than one (1) chapter in a region, each chapter will nominate one (1) candidate. The candidate with a majority vote of the chapter members in the region that are voting in the regional election will be elected.

Acceptance of the by-law revision amendment 10/2009 requires that each region will make a one-time designation of representatives as follows:

One (1) representative will be designated as the senior representative. The senior representative's term will expire in 2011.

One (1) representative will be designated as the junior representative. The junior representative's term will expire in 2012.

Starting in 2012, all representatives will be chosen by election.

Section 8.4: Starting in 2012, all representatives will serve a four (4) year term with a two (2) term limit.

Section 8.5: Vacancies in the position of representatives will be filled by a vote of the board of directors of each chapter in the region present at the time of voting. Each chapter will nominate one (1) candidate for each vacancy. There will be no more than two (2) vacancies. The candidate with the most votes will be elected to complete the term. If two (2) representatives are to be elected, the two (2) candidates with the most votes will be elected to complete the term.

Article 9: Executive Committee/Board Member Removal or Suspension

Section 9.1: To remove or suspend an executive officer or board member, another member must bring the issue/cause to the attention of the Board of Directors and move for suspension or removal. The reason for the request must be in writing or recorded on tape. A written letter must be sent to the person that the complaint has been brought against. The letter must clearly explain the complaint and a timeline for him/her to respond in person, or by written statement or tape recorded statement to the Board of Directors. The person can be suspended or removed based on majority vote of the Board of Directors. A written notice will be mailed to the member stating the Board of Director's action.

Causes:

- Four un-excusable absences per term.
- Physically hurting others

- Not following the by-laws of People First of Louisiana on purpose on a regular basis.
- Conduct that reflects negatively on People First of Louisiana.
- Will not follow chain of command.
- Participation by telephone is acceptable.

Section 9.2: Excusable absences are emergencies, personal illness, death, illness in the family, or if employer refuses to permit to take off work. A board member calls People First staff at least five (5) days before date of board/committee meetings; If a member shows a pattern of usage of some or all of the excusable excuses board with a majority can still remove a board member.

Article 10: Meetings

Section 10.1: People First of Louisiana will decide date, time, and location of regular meetings.

Section 10.2: Annual Meeting/conference (election time) will be decided by People First of Louisiana.

Section 10.3: All executive officers must be present for a special call meeting to be held. In order to allow Board members the opportunity to make arrangements to attend the special call meeting, Board members must be contacted by phone 24 hours before the special call meeting.

Section 10.4: Quorum: a quorum of the Board of Directors is a majority (51% of the directors). Each director has one vote.

Article 11: Standing Committees (ongoing)

Section 11.1: President appoints members and Vice President appoints the chair of each committee.

Section 11.2: Standing committees will be: Finance, Public Relations, Legislative Issues and Policy.

Section 11.3: The Executive Committee will be able to take care of business between meeting times for the board as long as the entire committee is in agreement.

Article 12: Special Committees (limited time)

Section 12.1: Special committees will be established as needed.

Section 12.2: President appoints members and Vice-President appoints the chair of each committee.

Article 13: Budget Development, Approval, Monitoring, Auditing and Reporting

Section 13.1: Budget is developed between Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council, The Arc of Louisiana Executive Director and People First of Louisiana Executive Director. People First of Louisiana staff will identify future needs.

Section 13.2: Proposed budget will be submitted to the People First of Louisiana Board of Directors for approval.

Section 13.3: Procedures for monitoring of budget include:

- Expenditures are managed by the Arc of Louisiana's bookkeeper.
- The Arc of Louisiana has a contracted a Certified Public Accountant to review all financial expenditures monthly.
- The Executive Director for People First of Louisiana will be given a monthly budget report from the bookkeeping department to review.

Section 13.4: The Arc of Louisiana retains an auditor to audit all contracts managed by The Arc of Louisiana.

Section 13.5: People First of Louisiana Board of Directors will be given a written quarterly report at a regularly scheduled board meeting.

Article 14: Parliamentary Authority: Roberts Rules of Order will be used as parliamentary authority.

Article 15: Amendment of By-Laws

Section 15.1: State officers, board members or local chapters can present by-laws revisions to the board. The board will examine them and recommend them by accepting, rejecting, or revising. A copy of the proposed revisions and the board's suggestions will be sent to the chapters at least 30 days before date of voting.

Section 15.2: These by-laws were amended October 2009.