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An Organization Manual for County Home Demonstration Councils



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AN ORGANIZATION MANUAL FOR COUNTY HOME DEMONSTRATION COUNCILS

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THE PRINCIPAL objectives of county home demonstration councils are to develop leadership, to forward and extend home demonstration work among both women and girls through county-wide cooperation with all rural home makers, and to serve as a medium through which the agent may receive information from community clubs and give additional help to rural home makers.

County home demonstration councils were first organized in 1924. For some time instructions were sent out in mimeographed circulars. The first printed manual was issued in 1933. The manuals are records of practices and procedures which have been tried out and found sufficiently satisfactory to justify their being regarded as fundamentally sound policies.

County Home Demonstration Council Is An Advisory Committee

The council has the status of an advisory committee functioning within the limitations imposed by the policies of the state home demonstration staff with all its activities subject to the approval of the county home demonstration agent, the representative of the staff in the county. It is not an independent club. It has no constitution or by-laws. It can not take official action on anything except matters pertaining to home demonstration work and cannot join, as an organization, other groups not directly related to cooperative extension work.

The county home demonstration council and the county girls' 4-H council are the county-wide organizations through which the agent carries on all organized group activities related to home demonstration work. Whenever separate groups dealing with specific activities become necessary these should not be organized as independent councils or associations but as committees of the council. The home demonstration agent can not give continuous official service to home demonstration organizations not related to the council.

The council is the cooperating agency through which the home demonstration agent in her official capacity cooperates with other local groups. This should be done whenever possible through existing council committees. New organizations or committees should not be created unless the work to be performed cannot be efficiently done through already functioning groups or through individual effort.

Relation of the Home Demonstration Agent to the County Home Demonstration Council

The county home demonstration council is a demonstration in organization. This defines the most important relationship and responsibility of the agent to the organization. Each council meeting is a training school for the organization demonstrators, the officers and members, and should contribute something definite to the demonstration as a whole.

As in any demonstration the agent is the instructor of the council training it to proper procedure, effective functioning through its committees and to an understanding of its responsibility in providing a harmonious working machine through which, under the guidance of the agent, the benefits of home demonstration work may be extended to all farm families in the county.

The agent should also train the council members in how to present each step of the demonstration to the community home demonstration club to which each member belongs so that the clubs also may be demonstrations in good organization procedures and efficient functioning.

In her instruction methods the agent should always strive to stimulate the initiative and the sense of individual and collective responsibility of the council members.

The home demonstration agent is not a member of the county home demonstration council consequently she can never preside over its meetings, introduce or put motions, vote or handle the money of the council but she has all the privileges of the floor in a council meeting.

The council represents the home demonstration clubs of the county and is responsible for all activities related to home demonstration work in the county except those requiring the professional services of the agent. In all its duties the council should have the advice and cooperation of the agent and must have her approval.

The agent cannot give continuous professional service to any organized group in the county not represented in the council. Where state wide cooperation has been established by the Extension Service with outside groups the extent of the service given by the agent is of course determined by the district agent.

Organization

County home demonstration councils are organized by the county home demonstration agent with the advice and under the direction of the district home demonstration agent.

Since the council is a delegate body consisting of representatives from community home demonstration clubs, club organization precedes that of permanent council organization though the agent on entering a county which has not been organized for home demonstration work may call together a temporary group representative of the home makers in the various communities to advise them in the organization of clubs in their respective communities. This group is not a county home demonstration council and serves only until such a time as there may be enough club representatives to organize a permanent council.

Every group working together for a common purpose should adopt rules to which all members pledge themselves to conform so that the group may work together harmoniously and efficiently. These rules should always be written in the affirmative and positively stated.

The number and character of the rules vary with the size and purposes of the group. It is necessary, however, for the council to adopt standing rules providing regulations in regard to:

1. Membership
2. Officers
3. Term of office of officers and club representatives
4. Annual meetings and elections of officers
5. Money received and paid out
6. Standing committees, business and special
7. Meetings
8. Voting body
9. Quorum

Because the council must conform to the policies of the home demonstration staff, there are certain requirements that must be included in the rules adopted.

These are as follows:

1. Council membership shall consist of club representatives, chairmen of standing committees and council officers. Club representatives shall be the club presidents and at least one elected delegate from each club. They shall serve not less than one year or more than two. Club presidents are required to be representatives because they are responsible for proper club procedure and for carrying out recommendations of the council. No elected delegates can take their places.

2. As the council has the status of a committee the presiding officer must be called a chairman and there must be a secretary-treasurer. These last two officers may be separated if the council desires.

3. All officers must be elected annually and are not eligible to the same office for more than two consecutive years.

The purpose of restricting the term of officers is to give opportunity to other members of the council to have executive experience. To observe the letter and not the spirit of this requirement is to defeat its purpose.

Officers may be elected to higher offices than those they have held. Retiring officers may serve as chairmen of special committees. Their experience in leadership and knowledge of the work in the county should enable them to be very helpful.

4. The regular meeting in October or November should be designated as the annual meeting. At this meeting annual reports of officers, committees and clubs should be given and officers elected from the authorized voting body. These are officers-elect until the following January when they take over the responsibilities of their offices. The same is true of delegates elected by the clubs. Delegates elected are not voting members of the council until January 1 following their election.

5. The following rule in regard to the council's funds must be adopted as given:

"The treasurer shall receive, hold and disburse all the funds belonging to the county home demonstration council of _____ county. She shall make a full report at each annual meeting and at any other time upon the request of the chairman.

The outgoing treasurer shall, after the annual meeting and before the beginning of the next council year, turn over to the treasurer-elect all money, books and papers of the county council in her custody.

Money paid out by the treasurer must be authorized by a majority vote of the council, except in an emergency the treasurer is authorized to pay out not more than _____ dollars on a written order for same signed by the chairman to be reported at the next meeting of the council. All disbursements must be made by checks signed by both the council chairman and treasurer.”

6. Standing committees are of two kinds, business committees and special committees.

Business committees such as year book, finance and exhibits committees should consist of three council members. These committees, not their personnel, should be listed in the standing rule on committees. This rule should also provide that business committees be appointed by the chairman of the council at the first meeting of the new council year.

The rule on standing committees should include this sentence: “Additional standing committees may be appointed at any time and in any way that the council may determine advisable.” This applies to both business and special committees.

Organization of special standing committees will be found under the heading “Duties of Officers and Standing Committees.”

7. This rule should require monthly meetings specifying the day, the hour and the place the meetings are to be held and should include this sentence: “The meeting shall close not later than _____ o’clock.”

8. In this rule the voting body should be defined as:
- a. The membership as provided for in rule 1
 - b. The officers of the council
 - c. The chairmen of special standing committees

9. A quorum should always be less than one half the total voting strength. The rule should state the number to constitute a quorum. It should also state how many clubs must be represented in the number present to constitute a quorum. For instance, if a council has a total voting body of twenty, the quorum should not exceed eight, and in this number five clubs should be represented.

10. Where a council desires a parliamentarian the standing rule concerning term of office of officers and club representatives or the one relating to the annual meeting should

stipulate the method of selecting the parliamentarian. Parliamentarians are not officers. Their duties are not executive. They should be appointed in January by the council chairman or be elected at the same time the officers are elected.

The above paragraphs are a guide to the council in drafting its standing rules. From the information and suggestions given each council must formulate its own rules except as to the handling of money in paragraph 5. The rule given there must be used as written.

While council organization should be kept simple and the rules should deal only with fundamental things, a council is at liberty to make other rules than those discussed here. Before formulating rules submitted for adoption, the Manual should be read carefully especially the instructions under the head of "Organization" and "General Information."

DUTIES OF OFFICERS AND STANDING COMMITTEES

Officers

The chairman: The chairman of the council is its presiding officer. She calls the meeting to order, sees that the adopted order of business is followed and that every member who desires has the opportunity of discussing without interruption the business being considered. She sees that proper parliamentary procedure is used, that motions are made in the right order, discussed and disposed of. She sees that business is transacted in an orderly manner without undue noise or confusion. She sees that speakers keep any rules agreed on as to time limits and that meetings are opened and closed on time.

The chairman should know as far as possible what business is to be considered and plan a program that will enable it to be transacted. As the agent has the responsibility of training the council she and the chairman should have a conference before each meeting.

The chairman should not talk herself while in the chair unless she has very important information that it is necessary for the body to have before a question can be intelligently discussed and acted upon. She should then leave the chair and ask the vice chairman to preside while she is talking.

The chairman should have the impartiality of a judge in regard to any subject under consideration. The vice chairman assumes the duties of the chairman in the absence of the latter and in case of permanent absence or of disability automatically becomes chairman.

The secretary-treasurer: The secretary-treasurer has two sets of duties. Performing the duties of secretary she keeps the records of the meetings of the council and compiles reports given at the meeting summarizing them for the home demonstration agent annually or at any other time the agent may call for them. She answers communications of all kinds addressed to the council, sends the contributions to the scholarship fund to the district vice-president of the Texas Home Demonstration Association, sends the name and address of the chairman of the council when selected to the president and treasurer of the Texas Home Demonstration Association and the names of chairmen of special standing committees of the council to the corresponding state chairmen.

As treasurer, the secretary-treasurer must follow in detail the standing rule regarding the council fund. The county home demonstration agent should never be asked to receive, hold or disburse money belonging to the council.

Business Standing Committees

Finance: This committee plans the council budget and devises ways and means for raising the money to meet it as approved by the council.

Exhibits: Through this committee the council participates in fairs, and plans the educational exhibits that the council decides to sponsor.

Yearbook or Programs: This committee, in cooperation with the agent, plans the yearbook, compiles it, is responsible for its publication, and distribution; and in cooperation with the finance committee plans some method of financing it.

Discussion of matters pertaining to the committees should be part of the business program of the January and February council meetings, so that plans for the year may be made and approved as soon as possible.

Special Standing Committees

Special standing committees are created to take care of the growing activities of the individual councils.

Their duties arise out of the nature of the work they are created to perform hence those duties cannot be defined in detail and their organization cannot follow fixed rules laid down in a manual.

The most common standing committees are education, expansion, markets, sponsors and reporters.

The personnel of these committees should be selected from the entire membership of the home demonstration clubs according to their fitness for the work regardless of whether they are members of the council or not at the time of selection. They serve until new selections are made.

They may be appointed by the council chairman or the committee may be made up of the chairmen of the corresponding committees for the home demonstration clubs. Whatever the committee and however organized only the chairman can represent the committee in the council.

The chairman may be appointed by the chairman of the council or elected by the council or the latter may give the committee the privilege as in the present committee on markets, recreation and 4-H sponsors of electing its own chairman who automatically becomes a voting member of the council. The council should create these committees as needed and the motion to that effect should include the method of selecting a chairman.

The organization and plan of work of the committees must have the approval of the county home demonstration agent.

The secretary should in her official record book, apart from the minutes, list these committees with the date of the council's authorization and their plan of organization and work for the year.

Organization of these committees that have been approved and are in general use at present is given in a separate set of instructions, Special Standing Committee Organization in County Home Demonstration Councils, MS-278 (mimeographed).

COUNTY GIRLS' 4-H COUNCIL

The county girls' 4-H council, like the county home demonstration council, has the status of an advisory committee functioning within the limitations imposed by the policies of the state home demonstration staff. It is subject to the same rules and regulations as far as they apply and serves the girls 4-H clubs of the county with the same relationships as the county home demonstration council serves the home demonstration clubs.

Since the women's work and the girls' work constitutes senior and junior activities in home demonstration work the county home demonstration council cooperates with the county home demonstration agent in the development of girls' 4-H Club work. In order that the county home demonstration council may cooperate more effectively to this end it is suggested that the girls' council have the representative status of a special standing committee in the county home demonstration council. In this case the chairman of the County Girls' 4-H Council would become automatically a member of the county home demonstration council as official representative of the County Girls' 4-H Council.

Report of Council Meetings

The monthly report of the agent is the principal source of information for the organization specialist as to the functioning of the council.

Regular meetings held with good average attendance of officers and a major proportion of clubs represented are a fairly good assurance that the council is actively alive.

For this reason the first paragraph of every council report should state whether the meeting was regular or called; time and place held; officer, not the name of the person, presiding; total number of members present; number of clubs represented; total number of clubs in the council membership.

The report should state it if a temporary secretary was appointed. This gives a check on the regularity of attendance of that officer. No organization can flourish if its secretary-treasurer is lacking in promptness and regularity or if it tolerates an intermittent chairman.

Committees are the eyes and ears of an organization someone has said. Their reports should be included in the council report either in full or summarized. It is not sufficient to say a committee reported. The important thing is what it reported, whether it is a plan of work, a recommendation or something done. Also say how the council disposed of the report.

It is unnecessary to give the names of committee members or officers. State the name of the committee and whether the chairman or someone else made the report. Refer to officers by titles and not by name.

Since the council is a demonstration in organization, the home demonstration clubs which are cooperators should make reports to the council. They should include programs, finances, committee work, community activities and cooperation with others which are part of the business of their organization and should be summarized in the agent's report.

Miscellaneous Information

From time to time home demonstration agents and councils have asked for definitions and instructions in regard to specific questions of policy or organization principles. Some of these are sufficiently general in their application to be included in this Manual, and are presented below.

A farm home-maker is a person living in the open country or in a town or village of less than 2,500 population and having a home environment that will permit productive activities required for demonstrators and cooperators in home demonstration work.

The officers and voting members of the council must be demonstrators or cooperators. If a club elects its president or council delegate from club members who are not demonstrators or cooperators these cannot represent the club in the council. They may attend the meetings of the council but cannot vote or make a motion.

Council meetings are executive sessions. No publicity as to action taken by the council should be given out except by the duly appointed council reporter.

The above does not apply to the occasional open meeting before or after the business sessions that a council may have during the year.

Monthly reports from the local clubs should be in writing and filed with the home demonstration agent. All or part of the report from each club should be presented orally to the council and interesting features discussed.

Annual reports of officers should furnish all necessary information on the council for the agent's annual report.

All meetings should be conducted in accordance with Extension Service C-54 "Suggested Method of Procedure for Organizations" and the parliamentary law text adopted by the Texas Home Demonstration Association.

When the agent uses a home demonstration club as a medium for helping the people entitled to her service it should be remembered:

a. That home demonstration clubs are independent organizations controlled by a constitution and by-laws of their own making. The agent may serve them in an advisory capacity in regard to methods of procedure but is not responsible for their policies.

b. That the club programs belong to the club but the instruction for training demonstrators and cooperators, even though given in connection with a club program by the agent or by a demonstrator, belong to all farm families. The agent and the club should see to it that information as to time and place of such illustrated lectures is given out in the community through the press.

c. That, where the home demonstration club has in its membership people who are not farm home-makers as already defined these are reported by the Extension Committee as "families helped." Such members may not be designated or counted as demonstrators or cooperators, though they may do all the work required of demonstrators or cooperators and attend club meetings and illustrated lectures. Such members are not eligible to enter contests or receive prizes offered for home demonstration work. Such competition would be obviously unfair to farm home-makers.