



Depression and Bipolar
Support Alliance

Understanding Chapter Quality

DBSA Chapters

As independent affiliates of the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance in their communities, DBSA chapters offer peer-run support groups, present educational opportunities, provide community outreach services and advocate on behalf of people with mood disorders. Chapter participants will find comfort and direction in a supportive setting, and can make a difference in the lives of others.

DBSA Chapter Functions

DBSA Chapters exist *to improve the lives of people living with mood disorders* on a local level. These chapters engage in four major functions to achieve this mission:

- Advocacy
 - The chapter actively advocates for legislation, policy and legal actions that improve the lives of people living with mood disorders.

- Community Outreach
 - The chapter receives and actively reaches out to community members in need of chapter services. The chapter publicizes community and chapter illness-related opportunities, and maintains communication lines for interested parties.

- Education
 - The chapter provides scientifically sound, illness-based educational programs and resources to community patients, and does not promote a specific medication, business, treatment or provider.

- Support
 - The chapter offers consistent, comfortable, welcoming peer-led support services to their community that help people successfully manage their disease.

DBSA Chapter Outcomes

Through the four chapter functions, the exemplification of our chapter principles, and the dedication to our mission, policies and guidelines, we, as DBSA chapters, work toward the following outcomes:

- Help people successfully manage their disease.
- Provide emotional support and the wisdom of experience to patients, families and friends.
- Build self-esteem and empower participants to actively improve their life, and the lives of others affected by depression or bipolar disorder.
- Eliminate discrimination and stigma related to depression and bipolar disorder.
- Reach all individuals in the community affected by depression or bipolar disorder with opportunities for support and empowerment
- Educate chapter participants and the public -- through programs and resources -- about mood disorders.
- Help participants rediscover strength and humor they may have thought they had lost

DBSA Chapter Principles

- **Focus on self-help**
Each person has the ability to help themselves. Together we all know more than one of us alone. Everyone has value and something to add to the group process. Each of us is the authority on what we need.
- **Peer-leadership**
We are all equals. Our chapters are governed by our participants, and our support groups are led by patients or friends/family of patients.
- **Confidentiality**
No one may publicly reveal information about the people attending chapter activities, or what is said during a support group meeting. Exceptions to this policy are made only when the safety of an individual is in danger.
- **Safety and Acceptance**
Chapter activities and support groups are welcoming to all, and foster a nurturing atmosphere.
- **Consistency**
Chapter services are offered at consistent times and places for the comfort of participants.
- **Accessibility**
Support groups are free of charge, and all activities are accessible to anyone who can benefit from them.

Chapter Quality Standards

DBSA Chapters vary greatly in their level of performance, resources, size and activity. Each chapter has the potential for incredible achievement, and each chapter should do all that it can to support the mission of DBSA. The highest achieving chapters are always expanding their services in support of the mission of DBSA, and continue to grow and prosper in new and creative ways. However, DBSA chapters are also successful when they are performing the very basic expectations of chapter existence. There are 4 baseline standards in order to exist as a chapter. Beyond that, DBSA has certain standards and recommendations for chapters to work toward as they aspire *to improve the lives of people living with mood disorders*.

Basic Expectations: The 4 baseline standards to be a chapter

1. Run at least one peer-led, public, regularly-scheduled, free support group for people affected directly or indirectly by depression or bipolar disorder.
2. Enlist one professional advisor who is a certified or licensed health care professional.
3. Complete all necessary paperwork provided by DBSA for official affiliation and incorporation, and submit the \$40.00 affiliation fee.
4. Act in support of, and accord with the mission and policies of DBSA.

Chapter quality is defined by each individual chapter. Chapters can simply offer support groups, or they can greatly exceed the recommendations made in this document depending on the needs of the patients in their community. A quality chapter is one that is filling those unique local community needs, and modeling the mission, policies and standards of DBSA.

In order to ensure that patients in need find consistent services in their respective locations, DBSA has basic expectations, standards and recommendations listed in this document. These expectations, standards and recommendations are set forth to protect stakeholders of DBSA, welcome new participants, and challenge chapter leaders to higher levels of quality. DBSA will do all within its ability to support local chapters in their continual growth and improvement.

Standards by Chapter Function

Advocacy

Defined: The chapter actively advocates for legislation, policy and legal actions that improve the lives of people living with mood disorders.

There are three standards and three recommendations for advocacy in DBSA chapters. Each chapter adheres to the three standards to maintain overall consistency and message in DBSA advocacy work. The three recommendations for advocacy in DBSA chapters challenge chapters to the highest level of advocacy quality.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter acts in accord with DBSA's national public policy positions.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter familiarizes all participants with DBSA national public policy positions (found at www.DBSAAlliance.org and through DBSA staff), and continually educates itself on these issues.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter encourages individuals to participate in local, state and national elections.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter hosts discussions and meetings, and provides information to chapter participants regarding issues of mental health public policy and other advocacy issues.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter operates in accord with federal law with regard to lobbying and does not participate in or attempt to influence political campaigns.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter actively engages in opportunities for individual democratic political practice and advocacy, and encourages all participants to do the same.

Community Outreach

Defined: The chapter receives and actively reaches out to community members in need of chapter services. The chapter publicizes community and chapter illness-related opportunities, and maintains communication lines for interested parties.

There are four standards and five recommendations for community outreach in DBSA chapters. Each chapter adheres to the four standards to maintain basic DBSA presence and services to their community. The five recommendations for community outreach in DBSA chapters challenge chapters to the highest level of community service quality.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter has a publicly available telephone number for inquiries.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter has a phone line dedicated to the group.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter has an e-mail address and/or web site.

<u>Standard:</u>	A chapter representative responds to all phone messages within 48 hours or less.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter has a process in place to share the responsibility of responding to inquiries and maintaining all communication with chapter participants and public inquiries.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter publicizes the date, location, and value of its support group meetings and other activities to the local community.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter publicizes the date, location and value of its support group meetings to the general community, and to medical practitioners, mental health agencies and businesses.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter informs participants about community resources.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter provides a written directory with information about community mental health resources to all participants.

Education

Defined: The chapter provides scientifically sound, illness-based educational programs and resources to community patients, and does not promote a specific medication, business, treatment or provider.

There are five standards and five recommendations for education in DBSA chapters. Each chapter adheres to the five standards to ensure that all participants have adequate access to the educational resources available to the chapter. The five recommendations for education in DBSA chapters challenge chapters to the highest level of chapter education quality.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter offers educational programs.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter offers at least two educational programs per year.

<u>Standard:</u>	Educational materials are made available to chapter members and participants.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter operates a lending library.

<u>Standard:</u>	Chapter educational programs are based on currently accepted scientific knowledge.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter has a process in place to actively seek the newest scientifically accepted knowledge related to mood disorders, and provides education to chapter participants based on this new information.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter does not use or distribute materials promoting a particular medication, business, treatment, or provider.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter has a policy in place to manage chapter activities that ensures no particular medication, business, treatment or provider is officially promoted.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter broadly disseminates materials received for distribution from DBSA to chapter members.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter informs all chapter participants of all educational materials available from DBSA for their consumption.

Support

Defined: The chapter offers consistent, comfortable, welcoming peer-led support services to their community that help people successfully manage their disease.

There are 17 standards and 17 recommendations for support provided by DBSA chapters. Each chapter adheres to the 17 standards to maintain consistent support services offered by each DBSA chapter. The 17 recommendations for support in DBSA chapters challenge chapters to the highest level of chapter support quality.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter offers one or more support groups.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter offers two or more support groups.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter offers at least one support group for patients.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter offers specialty support groups: for example, a family/friends group, or a group for people with a dual diagnosis.

<u>Standard:</u>	Support groups include no more than 8-12 participants.
<u>Recommended:</u>	New support groups are formed by chapters when attendance exceeds the standard amount of participants

<u>Standard:</u>	Support groups are open to all participants, with specialty support groups clearly identified.
<u>Recommended:</u>	Support group information, location and atmosphere are welcoming and open to newcomers.

<u>Standard:</u>	Each support group meets at an established location and meeting time.
<u>Recommended:</u>	Support group meetings are located at handicap accessible locations, accessible to a diverse population of participants, and are offered at times that meet the needs of the majority of participants.

<u>Standard:</u>	Each support group meets regularly.
<u>Recommended:</u>	Each support group meets at least twice per month.

<u>Standard:</u>	Support group meetings follow a structured format in accord with DBSA guidelines and philosophy.
<u>Recommended:</u>	All chapter participants are aware of the values, philosophy and guidelines of DBSA, and regularly remind one another of those expectations.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter has adopted group discussion guidelines that are made available to all participants.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter reminds all support group participants at the beginning of every meeting of the adopted group discussion guidelines.

<u>Standard:</u>	Newcomers are welcomed and oriented to the support group.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter has developed a newcomer orientation program to aid in continued participation and retention.

<u>Standard:</u>	Support group facilitators are oriented to DBSA support group guidelines and philosophy.
<u>Recommended:</u>	Support group facilitators regularly orient new participants to serve as future support group facilitators.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter has more than one support group facilitator.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter orients and rotates facilitators on an ongoing basis.

<u>Standard:</u>	Support groups are peer-led (patients facilitate patient groups; family members facilitate family groups, etc.)
<u>Recommended:</u>	All chapter decisions are peer-led, and chapter governances are led by an inclusive representation of chapter activity participants.

<u>Standard:</u>	Information disclosed at support group meetings is kept confidential, and exceptions to this policy are made only when the safety of an individual is in danger.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter has adopted a written confidentiality policy, and all chapter participants understand the policy.

<u>Standard:</u>	Support group meetings are free of charge, and payment of fees or dues is not required to participate in a support group meeting.
<u>Recommended:</u>	Chapters respect diverse individual financial situations; they fund support groups and other chapter needs through donations or fundraisers, and always keep support group meetings free of charge.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter and its support groups do not endorse any specific therapy, treatment, healthcare provider, or product.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter has a policy in place to manage chapter activities that ensures no particular medication, business, treatment or provider is officially promoted.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter has adopted guidelines on support group participation and procedures for suspension or removal of an individual from the group.
<u>Recommended:</u>	Chapter guidelines for support group participation and procedures for suspension of an individual from chapter activities are agreed upon by the chapter's membership. Those guidelines and procedures are clearly communicated to all participants.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter has adopted guidelines for suicide prevention and emergency crisis intervention.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter works in conjunction with its professional advisor to develop guidelines for suicide prevention and emergency crisis information. The chapter educates all participants on these guidelines.

Chapter Administration Standards

Professional Advisor

Defined: A DBSA Chapter Professional Advisor is a licensed health care professional who provides mental health services, and who offers assistance of a technical, professional, and therapeutic nature to a DBSA chapter. The professional advisor supports the chapter in its efforts to provide self-help to persons with mood disorders.

There are three standards and three recommendations for the relationship between a DBSA chapter and its Professional Advisor. The three standards are provided to guide the basic expectations of the Professional Advisor relationship. The three recommendations are meant to challenge chapter leaders and advisors to the highest quality working relationship that benefits all involved.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter has a professional advisor who is a licensed or certified health care professional.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter should annually review the need for more than one advisor to meet the group's overall needs.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter professional advisor speaks to/ meets with chapter members at least once per year.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter leadership/participants and the professional advisor maintain regular, continual contact.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter professional advisor does not facilitate support groups.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter professional advisor advises chapter leaders on medical concerns, and works within the DBSA philosophy and guidelines.

Chapter Support Group Meeting Place

Defined: DBSA chapters host peer-led, self-help support groups. It is vital that these support groups are hosted in a welcoming, comfortable location that is easily accessible for all support group participants.

There are two standards and two recommendations that guide chapter leaders toward choosing and maintaining appropriate space for hosting support group meetings.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter hosts support group meetings in a convenient and comfortable location.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter hosts support group meetings in locations that are accessible to all, and comfortable for all current and potential participants.

<u>Standard:</u>	Support group meetings do not take place in private homes.
<u>Recommended:</u>	Support group meetings take place in community, religious, medical or other public facilities that are appropriate, that maintain group privacy and accommodate all chapter needs.

Chapter Identity

Defined: DBSA chapters identify themselves to the public as independent affiliates of the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance. The identity standards of a chapter are important for both clarity and liability purposes. DBSA and its local affiliates must follow specific identity guidelines to keep messages to the public clear and legal.

There are two standards and two recommendations that assist chapter leaders in developing a solid chapter identity, and maintaining the quality of the reputation that is associated with that chapter identity.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter uses the DBSA name and logo in accord with DBSA Corporate Identity Standards.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter includes both local and national office contact information in all publications and public media to facilitate serving the largest possible population.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter does not permit the use of DBSA’s logos, trademarks, service marks, trade names, or copyrighted materials by others without DBSA’s prior written consent.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter protects its own materials through trademarks, copyrights or other appropriate legal documentation.

Chapter Governance

Defined: DBSA chapters are governed by volunteer leaders. Each chapter has a unique manner of self-governance, but there are some minimum standards, and some further recommendations in place to ensure that participants are treated fairly at every DBSA chapter.

There are seven standards and eight recommendations that assist chapter leaders in developing a quality chapter governance structure and process.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter maintains a Board of Directors or other governing body made up of at least three members.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter has a democratically elected Board of Directors, and leadership structure that encourages shared leadership, involvement, and accountability.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter is incorporated as a not-for-profit organization and holds 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, either independently or via the DBSA national office.
<u>Recommended:</u>	Immediately upon chapter start-up, the chapter files all necessary paperwork, and renews all DBSA and other paperwork on-time when needed.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter maintains regular contact with its support groups.
<u>Recommended:</u>	Chapter governance includes representation from all support groups, and is conducted in an inclusive, shared-leadership, democratic manner.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter maintains contact with DBSA’s national office and provides requested information in a timely, accurate, and complete manner.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter designates at least one chapter leader as the main contact for DBSA’s national office.
<u>Recommended:</u>	That chapter leader contacts the DBSA office regularly to report on chapter highlights, needs, etc.

<u>Standard:</u>	If the chapter maintains a membership or mailing list, it does not rent, sell, or disclose any of this information, other than in the form of a printed membership directory for internal use, to any party other than DBSA without the prior written permission of the persons listed.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter maintains a regularly updated membership list, and provides this to all participants (with a disclaimer of confidentiality).

<u>Standard:</u>	Chapter leadership, including the board of directors, rotates on a regular basis.
<u>Recommended:</u>	New chapter leaders are chosen at least every two years. Outgoing chapter leaders host training sessions for incoming leaders to ensure consistent chapter service, and continually growing chapters.

<u>Standard:</u>	One chapter member may not hold two officer positions.
<u>Recommended:</u>	Chapters actively recruit new leaders to participate in the chapter’s governance.

Chapter Financial Management

Defined: DBSA chapters are responsible for their own financial management. Funds generated and expended by chapters should be managed with integrity and responsibility.

There are two standards and two recommendations that assist chapter leaders in managing their finances.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter has adopted procedures and policies that assure proper fiscal responsibility.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter maintains public records of all chapter financial activities.

<u>Standard:</u>	The chapter provides a financial report to the membership at least annually.
<u>Recommended:</u>	The chapter maintains a designated bank account.