

Seymour Pollack, MD, and the Creation of AAPL Regional Chapters

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The period when Seymour Pollack, MD, was president of AAPL, 1973 to 1975, was the time in which the first regional chapter of The American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, the New York State (now the Tri-State) chapter was formed. The processes that were developed were influenced by Dr. Pollack and have come to be the model for all subsequent chapters within the organization. This essay will review the history of the formation of that first AAPL chapter and Dr. Pollack's contribution to its development.

The idea for the creation of the first AAPL chapter was born at the October 1974 annual meeting. It was a simple suggestion, that the educational needs of forensic psychiatrists could not be met with one or two annual scientific meetings, held far from the geographic practice sites of those physicians, and that it would be worthwhile to develop local educational programs to address the needs of practitioners who could not attend the national meetings. The suggestion was made that prominent forensic psychiatrists in the New York metropolitan area take the lead in organizing and implementing a series of programs to meet the needs in their region.

Two problems immediately loomed. First, should such an effort be made under the aegis of AAPL and, if so, how should it be done? Second, a previous effort of this sort, the New York Isaac Ray Society, had failed in the recent past to sustain itself, what could be learned from that organizational failure to ensure that the new venture would succeed?

The first step involved Dr. Pollack, who was notified of the goal. At this time, Dr. Pollack had many responsibilities within AAPL and at the University of Southern California. He received mail on a wide range of subjects and often did not respond immediately or respond at all to matters that he felt did not require his active intervention. Thus, paradoxically, one of Dr. Pollack's nonresponses (to the notification of the plan to create a local chapter of AAPL in the New York State area) was interpretable as tacit approval to continue the project. Silence implied consent. With this most understated of presidential authorizations, the work on creating the local chapter could proceed.

A series of telephone conversations and informal meetings of prominent New York forensic psychiatrists led to the suggestion of how to organize. A general mailing was sent to all known AAPL members in the New York

State region, inviting them to an organizational meeting to plan for the potential chapter. As might be expected, the turnout was quite small, consisting of a nuclear group of highly motivated physicians, who became the core of the chapter-to-be. A second mailing to all New York State members of AAPL was actually a ballot. The AAPL members were asked to vote on whether or not they supported the creation of a local chapter; they were also asked (if they approved the chapter's creation) to vote on a slate of candidates to become the first elected officers of the chapter. The majority of those responding voted in favor of a New York State chapter and voted in favor of the proposed candidates. The organization had been implemented.

Dr. Pollack had been notified periodically of the various stages. He had maintained "radio silence" on all letters. However, upon learning of the local authorization to create a chapter, he indicated that national AAPL had no provision in its bylaws for the creation of chapters, so that the new local organization could not properly call itself a "chapter" of AAPL, rather we could refer to it as a "membership group." It was agreed that the more modest title would be used and that the national organization would monitor the growth and development of the local group, deferring until the future a discussion of official bylaw changes and formal chapter designation.

It is important to note that had Dr. Pollack brought the matter of the national AAPL bylaws to the fore earlier, there is a likelihood that the whole project would have been abandoned. However, by waiting until the local organization already existed, he permitted the grassroots communication network to be created, after which it was possible to press for formal recognition.

In subsequent discussions with Dr. Pollack about the role he had in the formation of the New York State chapter, he explained that he had drifted into the habit of assuming that anything really important would be discussed with him on the telephone, that written letters did not get priority attention and almost never got written replies. Like some in the New York area, he expected that the local organization was unlikely to be able to sustain itself, would die of inertia, and would not require specific authorization or specific denial. The success of the effort was a surprise to him and to many other leaders in national AAPL, who were concerned that local groups might siphon off support for the national enterprise. It was precisely this pessimism that permitted the local organization to create itself.

Dr. Pollack eventually recognized that local chapters would be useful for the overall goals of national AAPL. He indicated that he was pleased to have been mistaken (!) about the viability of the New York State organization. However, his underestimation of the likelihood of the success of a local effort was fundamental to the persistence of the original organizers.

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Part of Dr. Pollack's legacy to AAPL is the now established process of chapter formation. The proposers of the would be chapter must notify national AAPL of their intentions. The new organization must restrict itself to the title of membership group of AAPL. A series of periodic reports on the status of the organization must be submitted. After the local organization has proven its viability, it may petition to be granted chapter status within AAPL. Were it not for Seymour Pollack, the first chapter might never have been created and the processes by which subsequent chapters could come into being would never have been structured.

One of Dr. Pollack's many good qualities was his tendency not to kill a good idea in the bud. In the case of local membership groups and chapters, that conservatism has borne good fruit. Although it is rare for a laudatory essay to point out seeming errors, in misestimating chapters, Dr. Pollack made a "mistake" in which he was finally able to take pride.

For those members of AAPL who are interested in forming their own regional membership group and who are interested in the process of applying for chapter status, the current national AAPL Guidelines for Chapters and Their Organization and Model Bylaws for AAPL Chapters are appended to this essay.

Guidelines for Chapters and Their Organization

Introduction

The American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law encourages the formation of local chapters of AAPL and has approved these guidelines to assist in their formation. Reflected in these guidelines are the following principles:

- 1) All AAPL members living in the designated geographic area must be included.
- 2) Until the group of AAPL members who have joined together are awarded a charter for chapter status by the Executive Committee of AAPL, it is considered a MEMBERSHIP GROUP AND NOT A CHAPTER.
- 3) Only members of AAPL may be members of a chapter or a membership group.
- 4) The creation of a chapter should reflect the wishes of the local AAPL members.
- 5) Chapters will maintain activity and participation at a level deemed acceptable by the Committee on Chapters.

Guidelines for Organization

Interested members of AAPL in a designated geographic area (no gerrymandering of districts) would meet to assess the need, practicality, and appropriateness of a local membership group of AAPL for their area.

If this group agrees that a local membership group of AAPL members is desirable, a general mailing will then be sent to all AAPL members residing or practicing in the selected geographic area. This mailing should be in the form of a vote in which all members may indicate whether they are in favor of, or in opposition to, the formation of a local membership group. In order to be considered binding, at least 50 percent of those votes returned must be in favor of a local membership group. The Chair of the Committee on Chapters must

receive all correspondence and mailing regarding organization of the proposed Membership Group.

First General Membership Meeting

A general membership meeting shall be called by the proponents, with all members of AAPL in that geographic area notified that this meeting will include the nomination of temporary officers who shall serve until the results of the mail ballot are confirmed.

Mail Ballot

The names of those candidates nominated for office shall be placed on a ballot with the space for write-in candidates for each office. This ballot shall be mailed to each member of AAPL within the geographic area, together with two envelopes—a small, unmarked envelope, and a larger preaddressed envelope with a space for the signature of the member. Ballots shall be returned to the temporary Chairman or his designee by a reasonable deadline date. The temporary Chairman shall appoint a teller's committee of at least three to count the ballots. Announcement of the results shall be sent to all members in the geographic area within thirty days of the designated deadline. The first officers of the membership group shall assume office upon notification of the membership until bylaws are established and new elections held.

The newly elected officers shall immediately notify the Chair of the Committee on Chapters of AAPL that a new Membership Group has been formed. This Membership Group may thereupon apply for official recognition. Henceforth, the Membership Group shall furnish copies of all future correspondence and votes to the Chair.

Notification of Executive Committee

The Chair of the Committee on Chapters will notify the Executive Committee of this application for eventual Chapters Charter. This information will also be presented to the Executive Committee of AAPL at the next Executive Committee meeting by the Chair of the Committee on Chapters. It is understood that this Membership Group may not refer to itself as a chapter of AAPL, but is limited to calling itself a Membership Group.

The criteria for official recognition as a Chapter of AAPL should include:

a) The local Membership Group must exist as a functioning entity for a minimum of one year after recognition as a Membership Group.

b) The Membership Group's organizational and operational structure must meet either the basic set of bylaws established by the Committee on Chapters and the National AAPL or a structure which is approved by the Committee on Chapters.

c) During the time of Membership Group Status with application filed for official Chapter recognition, there must be at least two educational and two business meetings each year. The business and educational meetings may be held together, and invitations must be extended to all AAPL members in the geographic area.

d) At least 20 percent of the AAPL members in the geographic area must participate in at least one meeting during the year.

e) Meetings may be either business, educational, or both combined; meetings that have been cosponsored with other groups by the Membership Group will count toward the required yearly meetings.

f) All AAPL members in the geographic area must automatically be regarded as members of the local Membership Group and cannot be excluded from meetings regardless of whether they participate actively or pay dues to support the organization at the local level. They must be sent notices of all meetings and, of course, must pay specific fees associated with special or scientific presentations of meetings.

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g) All AAPL members in the geographic area must be forwarded minutes regarding each local meeting regardless of having attended the meeting.

h) Financial support for the activities of the local group may be sought on a voluntary basis from all AAPL members in the geographic area (with the clear statement that such a voluntary contribution does not affect membership status within the local group). Admission fees may be charged for participation in specific activities of the local group.

i) Non-members of AAPL, including other mental health professionals and attorneys, may be permitted to attend the activities of the local membership group, but may not be regarded as members of the local group. Fees charged to non-members may be used to help support the activities of the local group. Non-members of AAPL may not vote or hold elective office in the local group.

j) Financial contributions may be accepted from charitable organizations, from private individuals, from governmental organizations, or from private corporations, provided there are "no strings attached" (i.e., no implication of product endorsement, no advertisements, and the like).

It is the responsibility of the officers of the local Membership Group to document to the Committee on Chapters what they have accomplished since their formation. To that end, the Membership Group should present attendance sheets for documentation as well as minutes for each local meeting held during the year. This information must be received in time for presentation to the AAPL Executive Committee as determined by the Chair of the Committee on Chapters.

Achievement of Chapter Status

After a local Membership Group has been in existence for one year from the date of the Executive Committee meeting at which they were recognized as a local Membership Group, the Membership Group may be recommended for a Chapter charter by the Chair of the Committee on Chapters. Upon nomination and approval by the Executive Committee, a charter shall be issued.

Maintenance of Chapter Status

Each Chapter president or secretary is responsible for submitting an annual report. The annual report shall list the meetings held during that year and the number of members in attendance. This report shall be sent to the Chair of the Committee on Chapters as soon after December 31st as practical but before any deadline established by the Chair.

Removal of Chapter Status

Any chapter whose annual activities are considered to be inadequate shall be called upon to explain the reasons for such inactivity to the Committee on Chapters. The Committee on Chapters shall investigate these causes and make a report at the next Executive Committee meeting. A Chapter shall be considered inactive if it holds less than two meetings per year and/or has participation of less than 20 percent of the eligible AAPL members in its activities.

A recommendation for withdrawal of the Charter of a Chapter must be proposed by more than 20 percent of the AAPL membership in that chapter, by majority of the Executive Committee of that chapter, or by a majority of the Executive Committee of AAPL upon recommendation of the Committee on Chapters. At least 30 days notice should be given to the entire membership of that Chapter in question of the recommendation for withdrawal (including all AAPL members who live in that district but may not have been active) and to all other AAPL members who have expressed an interest in the deliberations. The minutes of the proceedings for the Committee on Chapters and the Committee's recommendations will be presented to the Executive Committee for action at its next meeting.

Any complaints about the conduct of affairs of any local Membership Group or chapter shall be made in writing to the Chair of the Committee on Chapters and investigated by the Committee. As much investigation as deemed necessary should be made by the Committee on Chapters to make a fair determination; information obtained during investigation should be made available to the Executive Committee.

AAPL Caveat

AAPL may in no way be considered as a guarantor of contracts, financially responsible, or as approving of any specific programs, etc., unless, however, specific approval is given.

Official Bylaws for AAPL Chapters

Article I—Name

The name of this organization is _____, an affiliate chapter of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, and is chartered in accordance with AAPL Constitution and Bylaws. Its boundaries are _____.

Article II—Purposes

This Chapter of the Academy is organized exclusively for educational, scientific, and charitable purposes; including, more specifically, in the public interest:

- (a) The exchange of ideas and experience in those areas where psychiatry and the law overlap.
- (b) The development of standards of practice in the relationship of psychiatry and the law.
- (c) Encouraging development of training programs for psychiatrists desirous of skill and knowledge in this area.
- (d) Stimulating and encouraging research in the field.
- (e) Improving relationships between psychiatrists and other professionals working in the field.
- (f) Providing information to the public regarding problems in the area of psychiatry and the law and the potential contributions from psychiatry.
- (g) Publishing journals, newsletters, books or pamphlets, holding property, receiving grants and awards, monitoring research activities conducted under its auspices, and organizing courses of instruction in the area of psychiatry and the law.
- (h) Making distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law).

Article III—Membership

Section 1. Eligibility. All members in good standing of AAPL residing or practicing within the boundaries of this Chapter shall be members of the Chapter, and such members shall have all the rights of membership.

Section 2. Dues. No Chapter dues are required from AAPL members; however, voluntary contributions may be solicited to assist in defraying the expenses of the Chapter.

Article IV—Officers

Section 1. The officers of this chapter shall be a President, a Vice-President, and a Secretary and a Treasurer. Their duties shall be those usually associated with each title.

Section 2. The Vice-President, the Secretary, and the Treasurer shall be elected by ballot

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each year at the annual meeting in (month) or as otherwise designated by the Executive Committee, except that if there is only one candidate for an office, the vote may be by voice.

Section 3. All officers may be re-elected for as many terms as the membership approves.

Section 4. The term of office shall be for one year or until their successors are elected.

Section 5. A Nominating Committee of three members shall be elected at the meeting preceding the voting meeting. They shall present at least one candidate for each office who has consented to serve if elected. The nominees' names should be listed in the mailed election meeting announcement. Nominations may be made from the floor.

Section 6. The Vice-President shall automatically succeed to office at the close of the election meeting, or the new president if no vice-president exists, at which time all those elected shall assume office.

Section 7. Vacancies. If the office of President becomes vacant, the Vice-President shall succeed to that office for the remainder of the term and for the term to which she/he was elected. A vacancy in the office of Vice-President shall be filled for the remainder of the term by the Executive Committee, but at the next election, candidates for both president and vice-president shall be presented. Vacancies in the offices of secretary and treasurer shall be filled by the remaining members of the Executive Committee.

Article V—Meetings

Section 1. This chapter shall meet (quarterly) (bi-monthly) (monthly) on _____ (e.g., the fourth Saturday) at a time and place designated by the Executive Committee.

Section 2. The meeting in (month) shall be designated as the annual meeting.

Section 3. Special meetings may be called by the Executive Committee or on written request to the Secretary by ten members.

Section 4. A quorum shall be _____ members.

Article VI—Executive Committee

Section 1. The Executive Committee shall be composed of the officers and the immediate past president.

Section 2. The Executive Committee shall meet at the call of the President or any two of its members. A quorum shall be three members.

Section 3. The Executive Committee Shall conduct necessary business between regular meetings, subject to ratification at the next membership meeting.

Article VII—Committees

Section 1. There shall be the following standing committees: Membership and Program. There may be other standing committees established by the Executive Committee or by the membership.

Section 2. Special committees may be created by the Executive Committee or the membership when needed.

Section 3. Committees shall be appointed by the President with the approval of the Executive Committee, or may be appointed through motion of the membership.

Section 4. The term of office of standing committee chairmen and members shall be the same as that of the officers. Special committees serve until the task is completed.

Section 5. The responsibilities of each standing committee will be set forth in Rules of Procedure.

Article VIII—Parliamentary Authority

The rules contained in the current edition of Robert's RULES OF ORDER, NEWLY REVISED shall govern the Chapter in all cases to which they are applicable and in which

they are not inconsistent with these bylaws and any special rules of order the Chapter may adopt.

Article IX—Amendment of Bylaws

Section 1. Amendments may be proposed by any member, by a committee appointed to review the bylaws, or by the Executive Committee, at any meeting, provided notice is given at the preceding meeting or in writing to all members at least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting at which such amendments will be considered.

Section 2. Amendments may be adopted by a two-thirds vote of members present and voting at a meeting, provided proper notice has been given.

Section 3. Amendments shall become effective after submission to the Committee on Chapters, and receipt of its approval.

Date Adopted _____ Signed _____

President

Date Approved _____

Secretary

Chairman, Committee on Chapters