

APTA VOLUNTEER GROUP SYSTEM Frequently Asked Questions

The Board of Directors (Board):

- *gratefully acknowledges the work done to-date by all APTA volunteers and volunteer groups;*
- *looks forward to the continued active participation of volunteers in accomplishing APTA's strategic plan and operational priorities; and,*
- *thanks members for their patience during this time of transition to the new volunteer group system.*

Updates regarding the progress of the transition will be provided that will include specifics regarding how members can get involved in the new volunteer group system. In the meantime, if you have a question about APTA's new volunteer group system and don't see an answer below, please feel free to contact us at executiveoffice@apta.org. We welcome hearing from you!

What is APTA's new volunteer group system?

The new volunteer group system is an enhanced version of APTA's former appointed group system (which comprised advisory panels, committees, task forces, and consulting groups).

The new volunteer group system comprises Board-appointed committees, Board-appointed task forces, and staff-selected workgroups, and benefits APTA and its members by:

- Being less complicated in structure;
- Clearly delineating roles, responsibilities, and expectations for all involved; and,
- Supporting enhanced opportunities for a broad range of diverse members to become actively engaged in satisfying volunteer service.

Why update the appointed group system?

The Board updated the appointed group system, which it uses to accomplish its work, in response to feedback it received from members over the past several years and the Task Force on Governance Review regarding the need to update and revise the appointed group system in order to:

- make the system less complicated and more transparent,
- increase the value of volunteer groups to the Board, all of APTA, and individual participants,
- enhance how information flows among the Board, volunteer groups, and staff, and
- ensure that a broader representation of members can participate in volunteer groups.

It is important to note that the new volunteer group system is intended to be dynamic and will be evaluated each year to ensure that it continues to be effective, purposeful, accountable, transparent in process, collaborative, efficient, and inclusive.

When did the update occur?

The Board at its February and March 2011 meetings adopted the new [volunteer group/opportunities design specifications](#), new [volunteer group structure](#) and new [Board-appointed group process](#).

The Board took this action after careful deliberation that started in 2009 with consideration of the qualities needed to enhance the appointed group system. The Board's action was informed by several streams of data, including: (1) research findings gleaned from the ongoing [Governance Review](#), especially in regard to the APTA volunteer experience; (2) current best practices from the association management literature; and (3) benchmarking information gleaned from 4 associations similar in size and type to APTA, as well as from the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE).

The Board understands that the new volunteer group system will be most effective when all stages of the creation and work flow of volunteer groups are contributing to the association's mission and goals **and** to our volunteers' experiences within the groups. The Board is also aware that implementing these improvements will require a period of transition, learning, and evolution.

How did the Board communicate this update?

After its March meeting, the Board directed staff to implement the new volunteer group system with the understanding that 2011 will be a year of transition and the new volunteer group system will not be fully implemented until 2012.

APTA staff, in consultation with the Board, began executing a communication plan designed to reach all key stakeholders on Monday, March 9. During the weeks of March 7, 14, and 28 messages were sent directly to key stakeholders, including members currently serving on volunteer groups, members currently in the appointed group pool, component leaders, and staff liaisons.

Members will be kept up-to-date as the transition process continues.

Why won't the new volunteer group system be fully implemented until 2012?

A period of transition is required to ensure continuity of work and a smooth changeover to the new annual appointment cycle, and to allow adequate time to build and test the new online volunteer pool.

How will the Board ensure continuity of work in the transition to the new volunteer group system?

First, the Board has directed that careful steps be taken to ensure that all of the portfolios of work of groups in the old appointed group system are accounted for during the transition.

Second, the new [volunteer group structure](#) offers 3 channels—Board-appointed committees, Board-appointed task forces, and staff-selected workgroups—to engage members in accomplishing important work on behalf of the association. The Board is confident that these channels will support a continued effective partnership between the Board, membership, and staff to accomplish all of the work that is needed to achieve APTA's strategic plan and operational priorities.

What are the new volunteer group/opportunities design specifications, and how are they used?

The new [volunteer group/opportunities design specifications](#) are 7 key qualities that:

- optimize the ability of volunteer groups to support the work of the association, and
- enhance the process through which the association engages members in support of its work.

While it may not be possible to achieve all 7 key qualities (purposeful, accountable, efficient, collaborative, transparent in process, effective, and inclusive) in all situations, the new volunteer group system is designed around these qualities and will continue to be driven by these qualities, which will lead to an overall improvement in the volunteer experience for members.

What is the new volunteer group structure?

The new [volunteer group structure](#) classifies and clarifies the purpose and role of APTA volunteer groups into 3 types:

- *Board-appointed committees* (achieve strategies, priorities, and core functions),
- *Board-appointed task forces* (address emerging issues and initiatives), and
- *Staff-selected workgroups* (advise staff in association management).

All 3 types of groups will be engaged in valuable work on behalf of the association. The Board of Directors will appoint members from the volunteer pool to committees and task forces, and APTA staff will select members from the volunteer pool for workgroups.

What is the new Board-appointed group process?

The new Board-appointed group process supports and enhances the Board's role in leading and directing the work of the association. The [Board-appointed group process](#) graphic illustrates the new annual process of: *annual program of work and charge, recruitment, selection, appointment, orientation, work, reporting, and evaluation and feedback.*

What are the Board-appointed groups for 2011-2012?

Click here to view the list of [2011-2012 Board-appointed Groups](#).

What appointment process will be used in 2011 for Board-appointed committees and task forces?

During this time of transition prior to the implementation of the new volunteer pool, the Board will use a careful [appointment process](#) and will make any appointments that may be necessary from the association's existing pool of prospective appointees.

In 2012, the new [Board-appointed group process](#) will be fully implemented and the Board will appoint members to committees and task forces using APTA's new electronic volunteer pool.

Why will Board members be appointed as chairs of Board-appointed groups?

The president will identify a Board member to serve as chair of each Board-appointed committee and task force, replacing the current process of appointing a Board liaison to each Board-appointed group. This change is in line with best practices in association management that emphasize one of responsibilities of Board-appointed group chairs is to link the work of the group back to the full Board. This change serves to clarify the role and responsibility of Board members relative to Board-appointed groups. It will also streamline the work of Board members, which should make Board service more attractive to potential candidates.

How will staff-selected workgroups be managed?

Staff-selected workgroups offer members the opportunity to engage in important work on behalf of the association by providing APTA staff input or perspective on operational issues. APTA staff will manage these workgroups and use APTA's volunteer pool to select members to assist them. These member workgroups will form as needed and will vary in duration and intensity.

How can I put my name into the volunteer pool?

APTA's new online volunteer pool is in development at this time. All members will be alerted when the volunteer pool is operational and ready to accept entries. Once it is in place, the volunteer pool will be open year round to all members.

What if I want to volunteer now?

There are numerous ways to get involved in APTA. You can volunteer with your chapter and/or section(s) by contacting them directly. You can volunteer with APTA national by responding to specific calls for volunteers as they come out during the year or by contacting executiveoffice@apta.org.

Who can I contact if I have questions or concerns?

Questions and concerns about the volunteer group system and the status of specific groups may be directed to executiveoffice@apta.org.