

**Recruiting New Group Leaders**

Active group leaders are one of Partner in Parenting’s most valuable resources for identifying and engaging new leaders. You know from personal experience how satisfying leading a group can be, and how very important PIP’s work is in our community. But do you know how great our need is for new leaders?

**How you can help**

As your group winds down, take time to invite members to think about leading a group of their own in the future. Some PIP volunteers have been PIP participants, and your encouragement now is one of our most valuable tools for maintaining a vibrant, supportive community in which:

* No new parent feels isolated, ill-equipped, overwhelmed, unsupported, or insecure.
* All parents develop the confidence to build strong, healthy families.
* All children grow up in a social environment that allows them to thrive.

**Why ask now?**

Leaders sometimes feel reluctant to ask group members to think about volunteering during what's often a vulnerable and overwhelming time. Yet, our experience shows that group members really appreciate hearing about how they might stay connected with PIP and even reciprocate by leading a group. Many new group leaders have 6-12 month-old children. As families emerge from the "newborn haze," parents often look for ways to reach out in their community and help others adjust to parenting.

**Ask for later**

Don't expect people to say "yes" right away. Your intention is to provide information for the future, to put the invitation out there in a welcoming and informative way. That's all.

**Phrasing the invitation**

***Share why you volunteer:*** "I've really enjoyed leading this group. One reason I chose to lead is that my own PIP group meant so much to me and I wanted to return that gift to other families."

***Reinforce that volunteers are critical to PIP:*** "Volunteers don’t just help around the edges of PIP, they *ARE* PIP! Volunteers lead almost all PIP groups, so PIP always asks us to take this opportunity to invite you to think about leading a group someday."

***Set realistic expectations:*** "The most important leader qualifications are enthusiasm, a desire to work with other families, and your experience as a parent. PIP will supplement that and support you with formal training and lots of resources.

***Timing:*** "Many parents volunteer when their babies are a little older, like 6 months or a year. You may wonder why we bring this up now, when your babies are still so young. Volunteers are so critical to PIP that we want to put out the invitation now in the hopes that one day the time is right for you.

***Brag about the benefits – highlights from current group leaders:***

* Opportunity to build and practice facilitation skills.
* Wonderful experience to put on my resume.
* Helped me build community when I was new to Austin.
* Love being able to experience PIP even though I don’t have a new newborn.
* Made me a better parent; reinforced the things I do well and generated lots of new ideas as I prepare for the group. Experience was really valuable and relatable to parenting kids of any age.

**What to expect in response**

* ***Hesitation*** -- provide gentle encouragement; Let them know that Carolyn can meet with them personally to answer any questions.
* ***Enthusiasm***-- ask what additional information might be helpful right now, if any. Inquire when they'd like to hear from Carolyn with more information.
* ***Questions*** *--* prospective volunteers usually want to know more. Certainly speak to your own experience, or see below for a list of common questions and answers.

**Answers to questions interested group members may ask:**

***How will I be supported?*** You'll receive a 90 minute training, detailed Group Leader Manual, and access to personal support from PIP staff and peers.

***Can I lead a different type of group than the one with which I participated?*** Yes. Your experience will translate well to all groups.

***How much preparation do I need to do?*** Most volunteers spend an hour(ish) a week preparing for the meeting and doing following up. It's easy to customize each topic to your individual leadership style.

***I'm interested but not ready right now***. Great, there’s a link to the Volunteer Manager on the Website when the time is right.

***How flexible is the time commitment?*** The Newborn PIPsqueaks sessions are 12-weeks long, and Baby PIPsqueaks sessions are 8 weeks. It is possible to take a week off to accommodate a vacation, or line-up a substitute to accommodate illness or a special situation.

***Can I co-lead?*** Absolutely, it's a great way to divide the prep and time commitment. Participants love co-leaders as they provide twice the insight and perspective.

***How do I find a co-leader?*** You may be sitting right next to one! Ask parents in your PIP group, a friend who has also been in PIP, or a parent you know who's new to Austin or new to PIP; it’s a perfect way to introduce new folks to their community. Consider your partner too - it's a fun project to work on as a team and one parent will always be home with your kids. Grandparents also make fabulous PIP leaders! Be creative; the most important trait is to invite somebody with whom you enjoy collaborating.

**What's next?**

* Call Carolyn or send her (carolyn@pipaustin.org) names of interested folks and when they might like to hear from PIP with more information.
* Please also share names of group members that you would recommend as leaders even if they haven't stepped forward. There’s a spot for these names on your Leader Evaluation form.

Carolyn will follow up in 6-12 months to let folks know they’ve been recommended and offer more information. People always appreciate this compliment even if they don’t volunteer.

**Other Volunteer Opportunities**

PIP is also always on the lookout for new Board and Committee members, guest speakers, and PIP Squad volunteers. There are many great ways to stay involved with PIP and give back! Information online at www.pipaustin.org.