



## Volunteer Support Group Leader Description

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Thank you for considering a volunteer position as a support group leader for the Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS) Foundation. Listed below are the responsibilities of a support group leader. If you feel you are a good fit for this role and would like to partner with the Foundation, please fill out the volunteer application and send to Program Coordinator Clara Schlemeyer at: Restless Legs Syndrome Foundation, 3006 Bee Caves Road, Suite D206, Austin, TX 78746 or email it to [clara@rls.org](mailto:clara@rls.org).

### **Function of a Support Group:**

An RLS Foundation support group is an informal gathering of people who share a common medical condition, or have family or friends suffering from it. It is a treasury of practical experience. It is a place where you can be yourself and be with other people who will listen and understand. Its main purpose is to **offer mutual support and to share information.**

### **Role of a Support Group Leader:**

**To support the RLS Foundation's goals.** These goals are to increase awareness of RLS, improve treatments, and through research, find a cure for RLS. Support group leaders will do this by planning meetings and facilitating discussions that allow attendees to share their experiences with RLS. Support group leaders will work with the Foundation to provide current information about treatment and ways to communicate with healthcare providers to their attendees and other constituents.

The Foundation will provide support for your meeting through our volunteer manual containing guidelines to help plan for your group. In addition, the Foundation promotes meetings through our website, social media platforms and targeted e-newsletter announcements. The Foundation is here to support your group, however,

**it is up to the group leader to set up meeting logistics and to determine how frequent meetings and group activity will be.** A volunteer must be proactive, capable of problem solving, patient and compassionate.

**Requirements:**

1. Must apply and meet the requirements to be accepted into the program. This includes an application, references, interview with the Program Coordinator, signed agreements, and orientation training provided by RLSF staff.
2. Arrange and hold at least ONE support group meeting per year and submit Activity Report(s) after each meeting. **New support group leaders must hold a support group meeting within the first three months of accepting the position or they will be asked to reapply.**
3. Must have e-mail address and internet access through a cell phone, tablet, laptop or desktop computer. You must respond to inquiries in a timely fashion through all channels.
4. Must allow the use of your name, phone number and Foundation email address in *NightWalkers*, on social media, in e-blasts and on the Foundation's website.
5. Keep the Foundation informed of any updates in your contact information.
6. Keep the Foundation informed of potential problems, and successes in regards to support group meetings, topics, etc. We are here to help!
7. Refer to RLS Foundation publications and the website. The Foundation will provide you with Foundation handouts for your meetings.
8. Present clearly that **any information you provide is not medical or treatment advice.**
9. Review and follow guidelines provided in the RLS Volunteer Manual.
10. Participate in the annual RLS Awareness Day campaign (September 23), in addition to other Foundation events.

**Recommendations:**

1. Be willing to devote time, energy and talents to disperse reliable information at support group meetings and provide a forum that is supportive of individuals who have RLS.
2. Have a focus for your meeting. It could be a guest speaker, planned program, webinar screening or just a general sharing of experiences. It is important to remain flexible to keep the interest of those attending the meetings.
3. Send out meeting reminders to attendees and anyone who has expressed interest in attending a support group meeting. The Foundation will assist in the promotion of your meeting.
4. Find a healthcare provider in your area to be your group's medical advisor. This advisor can provide support for medical questions and may assist with presenter topics and speakers. Some volunteers use their own healthcare provider as a resource, or if they live near an RLS Quality Care Center, may be able to enlist one of the Foundation's QCPs as their medical advisor.