

Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc.  
Affiliate Chapter Relations Committee

Affiliate Chapter Handbook  
Third Edition  
Section 29

Successful Scribing:  
How to Take Effective Board/Committee Minutes

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Written/Compiled by the Affiliate Chapter Relations Committee, 2001-2007.

## Editor's Note

This section is one in a series of sections of the Affiliate Chapter Handbook intended to assist affiliate chapters in developing and maintaining a functional chapter of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. Each section has been prepared with the needs of the affiliate chapters in mind based on feedback provided to the Affiliate Chapter Relations Committee (ACRC) by the membership during the 2001 RID Convention, Orlando, Florida, and from the Affiliate Chapter Relations Committee survey of affiliate chapters.

### The ACRC Mission Statement:

It is the mission of the Affiliate Chapter Relations Committee to clarify and strengthen the organizational structure of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. by acting in an advisory capacity, representing the interest of the affiliate chapters and promoting best practices so that affiliation is valued by chapters and by individual members.

The design, organization and composition of the membership of affiliate chapters across the country vary. To accommodate the diversity of affiliate chapter needs, each section (or parts thereof) may not apply to every affiliate chapter. The challenge was to develop all-inclusive sections with the understanding that each individual affiliate chapter may or may not need the information in its entirety.

The Affiliate Chapter Handbook is intended to be a “living document” with updates, additions and/or deletions made accordingly and in a timely manner by the ACRC. Suggestions and inquiries to the Affiliate Chapter Handbook or the ACRC may be directed through the RID National Office, Membership Services Coordinator, or via e-mail at [membership@rid.org](mailto:membership@rid.org).

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### Cultural Diversity in Leadership Committee, 2003-2005

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## **Successful Scribing: How to Take Effective Board/Committee Minutes**

### **Introduction:**

The keeping of records for a Board of Directors or committee plays a crucial role as it provides key documentation of the organization/committee. The only major difference between keeping records for a committee and that of a board secretary is that the record keeper often does not process the correspondences for the committee as do most board secretaries.

Record keepers and secretaries will retain a membership roll of attendees at each meeting (whether it be teleconference, videoconference or face-to-face), keep the minutes of each meeting and provide a list with action items and timelines established during each meeting.

A competent record keeper is indispensable to a board or committee. Besides recording the events of each meeting, record keepers are responsible for filing the approved minutes, helping to prepare for meetings, and other duties as assigned by the President/Committee chair.

### **General Guidelines:**

Many members find themselves in the position of taking minutes without a clue of how to go about it. The following is a guide for making this task easier:

- Ensure that all of the essential elements are noted, such as type of meeting, name of the organization, date and time, venue, name of the chair or facilitator, main topics and the time of adjournment.
- For a more formal process, meetings include approval of previous minutes and all resolutions. Remember, committees do not create motions, only resolutions to the board of directors. These resolutions may be worded so that they become motions from the board as the board accepts them (for more information on this topic see: *How to Bring a Recommendation to the Board*).
- Prepare an outline ahead of time based on the agenda, and leave plenty of white space for notes. By having the topics already written down, you can go directly to a new topic without pause.
- Prepare a list of expected attendees and check off the names as people enter the room or join the teleconference or videoconference. You may pass around an attendance sheet for everyone to sign as the meeting starts. This may be important to do if you have many visitors to your meeting. Their presence needs to be noted in the minutes.

- To be sure about who said what, you may make a map of the seating arrangement, and ask for introductions of unfamiliar people.
- Do not make the mistake of recording every single comment. Concentrate on getting the gist of the discussion and taking enough notes to summarize it later. Think in terms of issues discussed, major points raised and decisions made. Rarely do you want to assign any statements to any particular person. You are not providing a dictation of the meeting.
- Use whatever recording method is most comfortable for you: a notepad, a laptop computer, a tape recorder, a video recorder, a steno pad, shorthand. If applicable, it might be a good idea to make a sound or video recording of important meetings as a backup to your notes. Understand these “process minutes” are for your use only. You will transcribe the official minutes for distribution from these process minutes. Process minutes are not to be distributed to the committee or to the board. They are used as a reference tool only.
- If you are an active participant in the meeting, be prepared! Study the issues to be discussed and have your questions ready ahead of time. If you have to concentrate on grasping the issues while you are making your notes, they may not make any sense to you later. This does not mean that your dual tasking skills are weak but your use of the same part of the brain to process similar functions in different fashions—simultaneously—may be overloaded. If this is the case, the use of sound / video recordings (if applicable) may be important.
- Transcribe your minutes while your memory is fresh. Do not wait too long to type up the minutes. Be sure to have the minutes approved by the president/chair and/or committee prior to forwarding to the board of directors.
- Concise and coherent minutes are the mark of a professional. The very process of recording minutes can give you a deeper understanding of the issues faced by your committee along with the ability to focus on what is important.

**Preparation:**

- Have ready the minutes of previous meetings and any other material you may need.
- Obtain a list of committee members and an agenda from the chair.
- Prepare a sign-in sheet to pass around. The sheet should request the following of visiting attendees: name, institutional affiliation, preferred mailing address, e-mail address, and designation of member or observer.
- If applicable, you may wish to use a tape recorder or video recorder to back up your notes.

## **What to Include:**

- Identify name of the group.
- Indicate place, time and date of the meeting.
- State kind of meeting (teleconference, videoconference or face-to-face).
- List names of board/committee members present (indicate what representation each may have).
- List names of board/committee members absent.
- List observers: indicate name, affiliation and contact information (from sign-in sheet if used).
- If applicable, include a statement that the minutes of the prior meeting were approved, revised or not read.
- List items discussed in order listed on the agenda. Briefly describe main points discussed and state actions taken. A transcript of the discussion is not necessary, but be sure to include actions, votes, resolutions, motions, etc.
- Keep the minutes to the point. Give complete information but do not ramble.
- A structured format will help keep the minutes succinct. For example, you may wish to use headings such as "Agenda Item" followed by subheadings "Discussion" and "Action Taken."
- Minutes should always be objective and impartial (avoid first person pronouns if at all possible). They should be factual and devoid of editorial opinions and comments.
- If a member of the board/committee is assigned a task or volunteers for an assignment, state clearly the person's name and the responsibility accepted.
- Record the time the meeting was adjourned and the place, time and date of the next meeting.
- Include recording secretary's signature and typed name (unless identification is given at beginning).

**Action Items:**

At the end of or on a separate sheet attached to the minutes, have "Action Items" listed along with the responsible board/committee member. Be sure to have any timelines that are designated for each action item.

**Distribution of Minutes:**

Transcribe the minutes as soon as possible after the meeting is held but no later than two weeks after the meeting(s). Distribute them to the board president/committee chair and board/committee for review. (Some presidents/committee chairs prefer to review prior to the board/committee and will distribute them to board/committee members and meeting visitors for review.) Once any corrections are made and they are approved, the committee record keeper will send the minutes to the Board of Directors. For board minutes, once any corrections are made, they are placed in the official minute book.