

# Meetings

*(A resource for community advice offices and community-based paralegals brought to you by NADCAO, from the Paralegal Manual published by the Education and Training Unit and the Black Sash.)*

There are some things you can do to make meetings go well:

- Make sure everyone necessary will be able to attend the meeting.
- Appoint a chairperson if there is no chairperson.
- The chairperson should plan the agenda in advance so that you know what you are going to discuss and how long it will take.
- Make sure proper minutes are kept.

## **Chairing meetings**

Chairing a meeting means facilitating the aims of the meeting.

### **- At the start of the meeting**

The chairperson starts by reading the agenda and asking whether there are any additions to the agenda. Ideally, the agenda should have been circulated by the secretary to all people attending the meeting at least a week before the meeting takes place. This seldom happens, so it is polite to ask the committee at the start of the meeting whether they have anything to add to the agenda.

Important things and things that can be discussed quickly should be discussed first.

An agenda looks like this

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the last meeting
3. Matters arising from the previous meeting
4. Important matters for discussion
5. Upcoming meeting with the donors
6. Employing a new worker
7. Fund-raiser
8. Any other matters, or general

### **- During the meeting**

Everyone must get a chance to talk. The chairperson must not do all the talking, and must not allow people to interrupt each other or to talk at the same time. The chairperson must make sure that everyone sticks to the topic.

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The chairperson must work out how much time to spend on each discussion, and stop people from wasting time.

#### **- At the end of the meeting**

The chairperson must summarise what happened at the meeting. This means going over the important points that were discussed and decisions that were made. Everyone must know what they promised to do and by when it must be done.

#### **- Preparing for the next meeting**

The chairperson asks members when, where and what time the next meeting will be held.

#### ***Taking minutes***

It is the secretary's job to take minutes at the meeting. If the secretary is not present, then the chairperson should ask someone else at the meeting to take minutes. Minutes are an important way of keeping a record of what decisions were taken at a meeting.

After the meeting, the minutes must be typed or written up neatly. A copy should be given or sent to all the committee members.

At the beginning of the next meeting, the secretary reads out the minutes of the previous meeting. The main purpose of this is to note 'matters arising': those matters that the previous meeting decided must be finalised or discussed in this next meeting, and tasks that people had to do.