SAFE STATES

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (SIG)
PROGRAM MANUAL

Organization and Purpose

SIGs are forums for Safe States members who share similar interests or specialties. SIGs are created and maintained by members, allowing members to pursue narrower, substantive subjects while Safe States focuses on the broader issues of the larger membership base.

The purpose of SIGs shall include, but are not limited to:
> engaging and recruiting new Safe States members;
> providing an organized forum where Safe States members with a special interest or specialty can share their professional activities and studies through meetings, publications, training and other organized activities;
> advising the Safe States Executive Committee on matters pertaining to the group's special interest or area;
> organizing technical programs for such interests and areas;
> collecting and disseminating information concerning its special interest; and
> representing Safe States through national activities, either as a Group or through one of its members, at the request of the Safe States Executive Committee.

SIGs are different from other Safe States committees, which are created by the Safe States bylaws and Executive Committee and focus on the organization and membership as a whole. SIGs are semi-autonomous networks of members, organized by the members themselves to pursue special interests. SIGs and committees are encouraged to work together in developing programs and projects that meet the needs of Safe States members with the goal of reducing overlap and maximizing the services Safe States provides to its members.

Creating SIGs

In order to create a new SIG, interested members must submit an application to the Safe States Alliance Executive Committee. The application must contain:
> signatures from at least five members (who must represent more than one state);
> contact information for the chair and vice-chair of the proposed SIG;
> a short description of the SIG including: name, acronym (if applicable), purpose, and scope of interest; and
> an activity plan for the year.

Applications will be assessed on the basis of its relevance to the interests of Safe States and needs, uniqueness of the special interest area to be addressed, and the potential ability of the proposed SIG to recruit and maintain an active membership.

Dissolving SIGs

A SIG may be recommended for dissolution at any time by a SIG member or the Safe States Executive Committee. Reasons for dissolution may include: a lack of activity for one or more years; fading interest in the special interest; lack of membership; duplication of efforts by another SIG; etc.

Once a recommendation for dissolution has been made, the recommendation will be submitted to the Safe States Executive Committee for consideration. If the Safe States Executive Committee agrees, the SIG involved will be notified and given a termination date.

SIG Membership Eligibility

All Safe States members are eligible to become members of SIGs, as long as membership dues are current. Any Safe States member who does not renew membership will be removed from the membership of all SIGs.

SIG Governance

The Safe States Executive Committee retains ultimate authority over the actions of each SIG.

Each SIG will appoint a chair and vice-chair to provide leadership to the group for each calendar year and will serve as the main contacts for the Executive Committee. The chair will be responsible for:
> Coordinating and leading SIG calls and meetings (ensuring the SIG meets at least quarterly);
> Ensuring the timely submission of SIG process documents on a regular basis, including meeting/teleconference agendas, minutes, member lists, SIG products, etc., on the Safe States SIG internal website;
> Working with appropriate staff and the Executive Committee (as needed) to coordinate review and approval as needed for projects and activities;
> Submitting an annual activity report (including a proposed activity plan for the coming year) to the Executive Committee.

The vice-chair will work with the chair in carrying out the SIGs activities and will serve on behalf of the Chair if the Chair is unable to carry out these duties. SIGs may not have co-chairs. SIGs will use Robert's Rules of Order to guide official business.

SIG Activities

SIGs are encouraged to think creatively about planning and conducting programs and activities that will engage members in their specific area of interest. This may include:
> Building an online library of member-submitted materials (such as reports, evaluation tools, organization charts, strategic plans, educational materials, marketing materials, etc);
> Submitting abstracts for sessions during the annual meeting of Safe States;
> Submitting information for Safe States' electronic newsletter, QuickNews;
> Planning and conducting web-based training sessions;

> Developing reports on best-practices, current research, standards/guidelines, etc;
> Planning and holding SIG meetings;
> Working in partnership with other national organizations or groups working on related SIG issues for the purposes of program or policy development with appropriate coordination and approval from the Executive Committee of Safe States;
> Developing tools for members to engage in policy efforts including position statements, issue briefs, resolutions, etc with appropriate coordination with the Policy Committee of Safe States and approval from the Executive Committee of Safe States.

SIG Reporting Requirements
SIGs are responsible for submitting the following documentation and reports to the SIG Committee and online meeting management system:
> SIG Products: SIGs are required to submit drafts for Safe States Executive Committee approval, and subsequent final copies of all products developed by the SIG;
> Process Documentation: All SIGs will maintain an online meeting space provided by Safe States, and include copies of current SIG Purpose, Goals and Objectives; all meeting agendas and minutes; current member lists and contact information; SIG documents and reports, etc.;
> Annual Activity Report: SIGs will receive an online report template to create an *Annual Activity Report* that will be submitted to the SIG Committee each year. This template will include sections to report on: a summary of activities for the past year; a current list of all SIG members; an *Annual Activity Plan* for the coming year; etc;

SIG Public Affairs Policies
Safe States' Executive Director and President serve as the spokespersons for the organization. **All public comment should be made through the Executive Director and President, or their designee.** From time to time, Safe States will seek input from the membership on particular issues. If a SIG exists for that particular issue or topic, Safe States will ask the SIG to formulate comments that will be considered by the Executive Committee, Executive Director and/or President to use when speaking on behalf of the organization.

SIG Funding Policies
SIGs may not make financial commitments on behalf of the organization. If a SIG wishes to seek funding for a particular project or activity, the SIG must develop a plan noting the purposes for which the funding will be sought and what funding source will be approached for the Safe States Executive Director to approve. Any funds raised on behalf of Safe States will be the property of Safe States and subject to the standard accounting procedures of the organization. The Safe States Executive Director will ensure that SIG activities do not conflict with other priorities of the organization and that fundraising activities can be coordinated if needed.

Use of Safe States Logo
SIGs are entitled and encouraged to identify themselves with Safe States through the use of the Safe States name and logo. However, in order to protect the organization, certain guidelines must be followed. SIGs may use the Safe States name and logo on SIG newsletters and other

communication tools among members; on programs for meetings, web-based trainings, etc that have been properly approved; on publicity for Safe States approved events and functions; and on technical publications that have been properly approved.

Proper approval requires an action by the Safe States Executive Committee and will be coordinated by Safe States' staff.

Safe States Staff Support
Safe States will provide staff support to the SIGs. SIGs may request the following of Safe States staff:
> Teleconference lines;
> Online collaboration platform;
> Assistance with marketing to or surveying members;
> Assistance with graphic design/formatting to ensure consistency in look for materials, reports and other documents; and/or
> Assistance in scheduling SIG meetings during the Safe States Annual Meeting.

In addition, Safe States staff will provide assistance to SIG Chairs and Vice-Chairs in working through the system, including facilitating a response to requests not listed.

Other staff support requests will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Executive Director.