



Chapter Split - Guidance When An Existing Chapter Decides to Split

Background:

Article XII – Chapters, USA Dance By-Laws state, “A chapter may be formed within a specific geographic service area as a constituent body of USA Dance.” Further in Article XII, A, 15, it states, “Chapters in highly populated areas shall, subject to guidance by applicable national officials, develop branch chapters and facilitate their growth into independent certified chapters.”

On rare occasion (only about 4 in the past 15 years) there may be a situation where an existing chapter considers splitting and becoming two groups. This might be because it is in a dense urban population and members feel they have sufficient support to have a group on opposite sides of the city to expand the reach of the chapter. It might be because some of the members are focused on social dance programs and have no interest in competition when others are intensely involved in DanceSport and wanting to host workshops or competitive events thus creating a conflict on how and where existing chapter volunteer and financial resources should be spent. A chapter might have been hosting dances in multiple locations some distance apart and after a time find the dual outreach a burden or they determine support and interest has grown to a point where the population will now easily support two groups. In effect, they developed a branch chapter even though that was not the initial intent.

This document is intended to provide guidance for chapters who decide a split is desirable.

Key areas to consider

1) Notify National USA Dance of the potential for a split to confirm approval.

- Provide the basis for considering a split.
- Confirm steps taken to date.
- Discuss options with your District representative.
- Request a number be assigned by the Central Office to the new chapter being formed.

2) Create a Communications Plan

- There should be preliminary discussion regarding the proposed split at the chapter level and then with National.
- A plan should be developed early on that emphasizes the sequence of approvals and announcements anticipated.
- The incumbent board should vote on approval of the split and each board member should be in the loop and notified **before** any public announcements are made.
- If there is no consensus reached by the board, further discussion of the issues that triggered consideration of a split should be held. Request assistance from your District representative.
- The creation of an announcement of the proposed split should be co-authored by the incumbent board and the group leading the formation of the new chapter.
- The timing for making the announcement must be agreed to by each group.
- As agreed, an announcement should be made to membership of the proposed split presenting the reasons for the split and the proposed plan of action in a positive light.

- No other action should be taken to move toward establishment of the new chapter until all the above has been done.
- Members should be notified that they are free to affiliate with either chapter.

3) Membership - The group that will split off is required to meet the same requirements as any new chapter.

- They must have a minimum of 25 adult members.
- Existing chapter members have the option to affiliate with the new group but there should also be outreach to bring in new members not previously affiliated with the parent chapter.
- The new group must elect a board once they have met the membership minimum. The newly elected board would meet and elect their officers and submit a request to be certified as a new chapter along with an operating plan for the coming 12 month period.
- A new bank account would be established at this time with the assistance of the Corporate Secretary.

4) Money

- Any distribution of dollars or assets from the incumbent chapter to the new chapter must be overseen by an independent third party such as the District representative or a national officer of USA Dance.

5) Board Members

- Incumbent board members who intend to move to the new chapter should resign from the incumbent board so new members can be appointed. Once a new chapter is being formed, those board members will be dedicating their time to development of the new chapter leaving work to be done by the incumbent board members.
- The incumbent board can then appoint new board members to carry on the work of the parent chapter for the balance of the term.

The above guidelines are intended to smooth the transition from one chapter to two. It is imperative this take place in a positive way retaining the good will generated by USA Dance in the community and assuring that all members are informed.

Do contact your District representative to discuss the proposed plan before the chapter takes any action to move forward on such a split and obtain approval of the move from the national organization.