



**International MOMS Club®
Fact Sheet**

Your MOMS Club Chapter – Is It a *Support* Group Or A *Service* Group?

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What are we?

MOMS Club stands for *MOMS Offering Moms Support*. Throughout the Bylaws and manual, chapters are referred to as “local support groups.” In Article 2, Section 1 of the Bylaws, it is stated that the purpose of the chapters (local support groups) is:

- a) To provide a support group for mothers who choose to stay home to raise their children;*
- b) To provide a forum for topics pertinent to children, child-raising, homemaking, personal improvement, and the family;*
- c) To engage in activities to enrich the lives of children in the community;*
- d) To undertake at least one charitable, humanitarian or social welfare project related to children each year.*

What is a support group?

When people hear “support group”, a number of groups come to mind: Alcoholics Anonymous and other addiction support groups, support groups for people with various illnesses or diseases, support groups for military wives, caregivers, those who’ve suffered trauma, parents of children with special needs... the list goes on and on.

Some common definitions of a support group are:

- *A group of people who share a similar problem or concern. The people in the group help one another by sharing experiences, knowledge, and information. ~Center for Disease Control*

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- *a group of people with common experiences and concerns who provide emotional and moral support for one another ~Miriam-Webster.com*
- *a group of people who meet regularly to support or sustain each other by discussing problems affecting them in common. ~Dictionary.com*

Does your local MOMS Club chapter encompass these qualities of a support group? Are there a variety of opportunities to come together and share in the experience we all have in common- being an at-home mom? Do the members of your chapter participate in the goal of sustaining each other and offering moral and emotional support?

Granted, most MOMS Club chapters do not have the heavy subject matters or conditions that are associated with support groups that address addictions or illnesses. However, there's a quote that's been made famous by Oprah Winfrey, but has been said by many people in the media and the world around us- "Being a mom is the hardest job in the world." And at-home moms have unique needs that need to be met; who else to better meet those needs than other at-home moms?

Unfortunately, many chapters have lost their sense of being a support group and have adopted the philosophy that they are a "service organization".



What is a service organization?

Service organizations are wonderful groups; the ones that commonly come to mind are PTA, Lion's Club, and Shriners, and many local communities have their own service organizations.

- *A service club or service organization, in the American sense only, is a voluntary non-profit organization where members meet regularly to perform charitable works either by direct hands-on efforts or by raising money for other organizations. A service club is defined first by its service mission. Secondary membership benefits, such as social occasions, networking, and personal growth opportunities encourage involvement. ~wikipedia.com*

While a service organization benefits their communities and is typically quite fulfilling for its members, it is not *defined* by the needs of its members, as a support group is. The social interaction of its members comes *secondary* to its goal of charitable works and contributions.

Service organizations are commendable groups providing invaluable services to their communities. However, MOMS Club in its goals, principles, and definition is not a service organization.

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Our chapters are required to do at least one service project per year benefitting mothers and children in their communities, and this is seen as a part of supporting each other in our roles as at-home moms. We perform acts of service as a way of giving back to the communities that we call home, that our children call home. Giving and volunteering is a part of feeling fulfilled and satisfied not only as a mom, but as a part of society.

When a chapter begins to shift its focus from providing support to at-home mothers in its community, and puts a stronger emphasis on service projects, the whole purpose and goal of the chapter diminishes! We replace the very real needs of a chapter's members- their at-home mothers- with the need to work on service projects.

A well-rounded chapter will do their mandatory service project for the year, and sometimes do numerous projects to make up an amazing service program. However, that well-rounded chapter will also be maintaining its primary focus of supporting moms by having regular meetings, events, and activities where members can gather and share in their common experience as moms. These gatherings are excellent ways for moms to get advice and guidance, vent about their problems, establish intimate relationships that nourish and benefit their motherhood, and be educated on topics relating to their lives as at-home moms.

It is disheartening to see many chapters take on a service organization mentality and neglect the members it is supposed to be supporting. When there's a list of service projects but no dynamic members meeting, no activities where moms can regularly come together to form friendships, no stimulating activities that appeal to the interests of an at-home mom (such as book clubs, exercise groups, discussion groups, craft groups, etc.), then it is just a group of moms who don't really know each other very well, but who get together a few times a year to help their community in some way. When the service project is done, they disperse and go their separate ways. The only way they'll see each other again or have any potential of receiving support is if they renew year after year and make some headway with each other a few times a year. Most of the time, the members drop out and are never seen again. They move on to other phases of their life as moms where service projects are equally abundant (PTA, for example).

The above example is not what MOMS Club intended its chapters to be. If you feel your chapter has lost its identity as a support group and you want to get it back on track, please contact your coordinator for tips and guidance.

Supporting at-home mothers

While any mom can join MOMS Club, our chapters specifically address the needs of "mothers who choose to stay at home to raise their children" (*Article 2, Section 1, MOMS Club Bylaws*). It can be very tempting to recruit all moms in your community, specifically by touting how your chapter does service projects that moms can participate in.



Many at-home mothers do some kind of work for pay. Some who work 40 hours a week maintain a schedule that makes them available during the day, or work long stretches over a

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few days, leaving most of their weekdays available. If a mother is at home with her children during your daytime meetings and activities, even if she works a number of hours during the week, then she will still likely be an active participant in your chapter.

However, while any mom can join a chapter, members should be *complete* members of your chapter, available during the weekdays to participate in all your chapter has to offer. A mom shouldn't join for one particular activity (such as MOMS Night Out), one particular playgroup, *or to only help out with service projects*. There are other organizations that can meet the needs of mothers looking to serve or looking for a night away from the home. The MOMS Club is a support group whose primary purpose is to serve the needs of at-home mothers.

Recruiting and opening your chapter up to moms who are not available to participate completely in your chapter does a disservice to them, and it also opens your chapter up to members requesting changes to your calendar and activities (for example, requesting evening and weekend activities), which do not fit the goals and principles of MOMS Club.

Regional Luncheons and Trainings

One way to make sure your chapter doesn't lose its focus or abandon its goals of being a support group for at-home moms is to attend your region's training workshops and Regional Luncheons. Chapter funds can be used to send members to these events, and a special "training" budget can be set aside in your treasury for such expenses. The training budget funds can be used for the registration fees, transportation, and modest accommodations needed to attend these events. You can fundraise for these training events upon approval of your membership via a vote at your members meeting.



"Why should we fundraise for training events when that money can be used for a good cause and go to charity?"

Why are your members not considered a good cause? Why is ensuring your chapter continues in the goals and principles of MOMS Club not deemed a worthy expense? Again, **MOMS Club is a support group**, not a service organization. If sending your members to these events can help your chapter be the best support group it can be to your members, then it is definitely a "good cause."



Sistering and Service Projects

Many chapters do an excellent job of offering their members a well-rounded program, along with an active service program, and grow quite large as a result. This is fantastic! The more moms we can support, the better.

However, when more moms join a chapter, sometimes the number can get so big that the members get lost in the crowd. Participation drops, and the needs of the at-home moms are

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no longer adequately met.

This is when we encourage sistering. Support groups accomplish more if there is an intimate dynamic, where the members know each other well and feel comfortable with each other. Moderately sized chapters are better able to meet the needs of its members. When the members know each other and are familiar with each other, that moral and emotional support is abundant.

But some chapters are wary of sistering for a number of reasons. One of them tends to be that the chapters are afraid if they sister, then not as many members will help with the service projects. Larger chapters tend to develop quite a large and extensive service program, and the idea of maintaining that after a sistering can seem daunting.

And this is again where we must reiterate that MOMS Club is a support group, not a service organization. The needs of the moms should be the primary concern! A sistered chapter should not feel the pressure to maintain a large, overwhelming service program. It should keep its focus on supporting its members, and do service projects that fit the size and personality of the group.

If you have any questions
about if your chapter is
a *support* group or a *service* group,
contact your Regional Coordinator!

