

New Jersey PTA COVID-19 Meeting Guidance

As the COVID-19 situation remains fluid and is changing on a day-to-day basis, New Jersey PTA has been reassessing our guidance as it relates to PTA General Membership/Association Meeting.

This guidance will expire on December 31, 2020.

General Guidelines for PTA Meetings and Events During the Coronavirus Outbreak

Board of Directors Meetings

Our bylaws allow for Board of Directors meetings to be held via telephone or video conferencing as long as all of the members are able to hear each other.

General Membership Meetings and Events

While our bylaws do not directly prohibit meetings via video conference, they do not specifically allow for them either. However, in collaboration with National PTA, in common law, the cy pres doctrine says that a legal requirement or a bylaw requirement cannot be enforced when the organization is not able to do it.

Also if there is a health emergency (which COVID-19 is), it supersedes any rule or regulation that would require in-person meetings if they pose a risk to a person's health. Even Governor Murphy relaxed the open meeting requirements to help keep citizens of New Jersey safe.

New Jersey PTA rules do not allow proxy votes but teleconferencing and videoconferencing still allows for voting by the members themselves.

Teleconferencing Guidelines

Getting Started

- Find a platform/app for hosting the meeting. There are several available. (See the **Teleconferencing and Videoconferencing Tools** section below for some suggestions.)
- Set up your account.
- Practice having a meeting with your executive board before you have one with your general association.

Before the Meeting

- Give notice of the meeting.
- Establish the ground rules for the teleconferencing meeting.
- Prepare the agenda, financial reports, minutes from the last association meeting.
- Email the reports, agenda and ground rules for the meeting to those who indicate they will be on the call.
- Make sure your membership list is up to date and your secretary has a copy (most likely can be found on MemberHub).

During the Meeting

- Conduct the meeting as you normally would. Make note of time you open the meeting as well as adjourn the meeting.
- Set ground rules for the call.
- Verify everyone on the call can hear and be heard.
- Remind people to "Mute" themselves to get rid of outside noises.
- Quorum should be established by roll call and identification of individual members.
- Have your Secretary do a roll call of the Board of Directors that is on the call.

- Have your Secretary do a roll call of other members that are on the call. Verify they are actually paid PTA members.

Remember: The normal rules of holding a meeting apply to your teleconferencing meeting. People should be treated and treat others with respect and courtesy.

FAQ's For Meetings

Is it mandatory that we hold an Association Meeting?

Yes, At this point in the year, you must: approve your budget, elect your nominating committee, have elections (if you did not in the spring or summer) and approve your Financial Review for 2019 – 2020. Please contact njpta@njpta.org if you need additional guidance.

I have no idea how to find a way to do teleconferencing? Where do I start to look?

*Go to the internet and type in “teleconferencing” or “conference calls,” or refer to the **Teleconferencing and Videoconferencing Tools** section below.*

How much notice of this meeting do I need to give?

General Association meetings need a minimum of 5 days’ notice before hosting the actual meeting. No meeting can be held with less than 5 days’ notice.

How do we give notice of the meeting?

1. Use the PTA’s social media platforms as well as the website to announce details of the meeting
2. See if your principal can place notice of the meeting on the school website and social media platforms
3. Email your membership list directly announcing the meeting and agenda
4. Board members should also share information about the meeting on their personal pages. This may notify people who are not following the PTA.

Is it OK to post the documents for the meeting on our website and social media?

Yes, as long as you make sure they are non-editable documents. Also make sure that there is nothing controversial or confidential in the documents. Example: you can list that there are bounced checks from your last fundraiser but do not list the names of the people who bounced the checks.

Is it OK to present our financials at this teleconferencing meeting?

Yes, you can present a full treasurer’s report including ratification of payments made and releasing funds. You can release funds to pay summer bills.

What should we do if we do not have a current membership list?

If there is no current membership list, then you would have to grant voting rights to all those on the call, once you verify they are actually members of your school population.

How do we handle translation of this teleconferencing meeting?

See if the application or tool you are using has a translation option. Test it out before the meeting. If it does not offer that option, talk to someone who can do translation from the school community. The translator(s) would need to be on the actual call, translating in real time. Prior to the event make sure that person knows the order of what is happening during the meeting and work out how the translation process will work during the call. It is very important to make all our parents feel included.

FAQ's for Elections

Does the slate of officers need to be posted?

Yes, your proposed slate of officers should be posted 30 days in advance.

We never elected a nominating committee and do not have a slate of officers, what should we do?

It is still important to hold an election. You should hold a meeting to elect a Nominating Committee and plan for your election meeting ASAP.

How do people run from the floor?

As per your bylaws – all individuals wishing to run from the floor must give 20 days' notice before the election meeting. The chair could then announce the names of those who are running from the floor to let people know in advance, who is running for the various positions.

How do we handle a ballot vote when people wish to remain anonymous regarding who they are voting for?

There are several alternatives to handling a ballot vote. Some of the conferencing services will allow you to vote and only the organizer see who has voted. You can utilize Survey Monkey, the free version, if you set the account up ahead of time and have the names of the candidates.

[Click here](#) to view instructions for making a Google form, which could be helpful when holding a ballot vote.

FAQs for Financial Transactions, Audits and Taxes

Is it OK to present our financials at a teleconferencing meeting?

Yes, you can present a full treasurer's report including ratification of payments made and releasing funds. You can also present the budget for the next school year and/or release funds to pay summer bills.

Are checks the only way we can pay our bills?

If the person or company you need to pay can accept an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) or a payment from your bank's bill payment system, you can process the payment via that method. Remember, you should never pay a bill without an invoice or a receipt, and electronic signatures are acceptable on this and other payment authorization forms when necessary.

What do we do with donated items now that we can no longer have the event they were donated for (like our silent auction)? Do we need to vote to cancel the event even though we can't hold it due to school closures and COVID-19 restrictions?

If the donations were solicited specifically for this event that you are now not able to have and not as "general" donation to the PTA, the PTA needs to contact the donors (all of them) and ask them what they would like you to do with the donated items. This is easiest via email, because then you will have written instructions from the donor, which is really what you need. If the donor wants the items returned, you have to give them back. If they give you permission to keep them/use them as needed, then you can vote as an association how to "repurpose" those donations at a future time.

You do not need a vote of the association to cancel a fundraiser/event that you are no longer able or allowed by law to hold. You would only need a vote on how to distribute/use any donations that were not returned to donors. **FYI:** only donations that you keep have to be reported on tax filings. Returned donations do not need to be reported.

Can our PTA donate to other community non-profits who are taking lead roles in supporting the many under-served families in our district? Can we offer some sort of direct support to members (individuals and families) of need in our school communities?

The IRS is very clear that a 501(c)3 public charity (which all PTAs are) may donate funds to another 501(c)3 public charity with a similar mission. That means that a PTA can donate money only to nonprofits who have similar purposes. For example, you could not donate to the Red Cross, but you could donate to a non-profit children's library, provided it had 501(c)3 status.

Likewise, the IRS is very clear that a public charity may not gift funds to individuals or families unless that is what the charity was organized to do. PTAs are not organized for that purpose, so we **may not give money (including gift cards)** to individuals or families in our school communities, regardless of need.

So the PTA may donate to other community organizations if they meet the criteria above (and assuming the association voted to do so), but the PTA could not gift funds to an individual or family.

However, there are several other things that PTAs can do to help and we encourage units to consider the following:

- The PTA may advertise any and all benefits/fundraisers being held for individuals or families in need or local charities who are assisting those in need, regardless of who is organizing them. That includes letting everyone in your community know GoFundMe campaigns, etc.
- The PTA may also help with a fundraiser by advertising it and encouraging volunteers, but it cannot be an official PTA activity and all money collected must go to the organization holding the fundraiser Checks cannot be made out to PTA and no deposits may be made to the PTA account on behalf of another organization or family in need.
- The PTA may sponsor a food/diaper/necessities drive or solicit donations of those items to be given to a local food bank, etc. “Necessities” could include personal protective equipment (PPE) for local hospitals and medical facilities if that’s a need in your area.

Teleconferencing and Video Conferencing Tools

If local leaders choose to hold meetings via teleconference or video conference based on our recent guidance, there are various free tools to consider that allow you to hold online conference calls or video meetings with multiple attendees (subject to limitations).

Some options include:

1. [GoToMeeting](#) and [GoToWebinar](#)
2. [Zoom](#) *
3. [Slack](#)
4. [GROUPME](#)
5. [Facebook Messenger](#)
6. [Google Hangouts](#)

To compare conference call systems, please go to <https://www.quicksprout.com/best-conference-call-services/>.

* Please note that Zoom’s free plan normally limits conference calls to 40 minutes, but this rule has been **temporarily lifted for K-12 schools affected by Coronavirus**. [Click here](#) to learn how to access this offer, and how to verify your school using its official email address.

Mention of these companies does not imply endorsement by New Jersey PTA.

[Click here](#) to view instructions for making a Google form, which could be helpful when holding a ballot vote.