

JUNIOR OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL

ADVISOR INFORMATION

Junior Optimist Clubs offers young individuals fellowship, community service, project management, and leadership opportunities. Young individuals can collaborate using teamwork, enhancing communication, and developing personal growth skills.

Junior Optimist International embodies youth clubs throughout the world. Each club has an adult advisor involved in the day-to-day operation. The advisor attends the club's meetings and projects and oversees certain aspects of the club. The advisor does not have to be an Optimist Member and, in many cases, is a faculty member of a school where a club exists.

Elementary clubs focus on learning about volunteerism and teamwork. The club advisor plays a significant role in coordinating simple community service projects and fundraisers. Officers are typically not elected.

Junior high or middle school clubs elect officers and plan their projects with much help from the club advisor. This age group focuses on learning leadership skills and serving the needs of others. This group also does more social events with other club members.

High school or equivalent clubs should be member-driven, with the club advisor available to point members in the right direction. This group hones their leadership skills, identifies needs in their local community, and plans projects and fundraisers to address those needs. This group works hard and plays hard in various social activities.

Why be a JOI Advisor?

- You can be connected to the youth in your community and help them succeed through service.
- You'll be a role model and trusted adult for youth, building valuable connections and relationships.
- As an advisor, you can help young adults with personal growth by teaching them unique skills such as finance or project management.
- Most importantly, you'll positively impact the youth and community members around you!

Qualities of a JOI Advisor

Active Listening

Fully engaging and listening when in a conversation.

Patient

When working with youth, understand their perspective and give them time to express themselves.

Passionate

Eager to positively impact the young with optimism, contributing to the growth and development of future generations.

Provides Support and Guidance

Being approachable, understanding the needs of the youth, helping organize goals, and providing constructive criticism.

Communicative

Able to establish trust and provide a non-judgmental space. Communication is vital to ensure members know about leadership opportunities, deadlines, and current information.

Sponsoring a Club

If your Optimist Club decides to sponsor a Junior Optimist Club, a chair from the sponsoring club should volunteer to be the liaison between the JOI Club and the Optimist Club. Selecting a dedicated Optimist who is comfortable working with youth is essential. The club should determine what age group to sponsor and then make a formal sponsorship recommendation to your Board.

Now you're ready to choose a site and recruit Members!

Remember, clubs can be built without a sponsoring adult Optimist Club. Opportunities for such clubs are sponsored by schools or established through partnerships with other youth associations, such as sports teams or performing arts groups.

School and Community Clubs

Most clubs are built in schools but do not have to be. Many community-based clubs partner with other organizations. An Optimist Club should sponsor a club if possible, but it is not a requirement.

School Clubs

Most clubs hold meetings in schools; the convenience and membership possibilities make schools attractive to most clubs. Arrange a meeting with school officials to inform them of the benefits of Junior Optimist Clubs. Emphasize that clubs will not interfere with school operations and that the club's administration will rest with the Optimist Club and advisor. Assure them that the school officials will maintain control over all school policy matters and regulations concerning school club functions.

Community Clubs

Optimist Clubs may sponsor Junior Optimist Clubs in relation to other community activities or organizations. If school facilities are not feasible, you can meet at community centers or parks.

Step One: Recruiting Members

Student prospects can come from principals, athletic advisors, faculty members, or your Optimist Club members. Leaders of youth groups (such as Girl Scout leaders or religious youth group leaders) may also supply names of active youths. Keep your recruitment efforts open to students already designated by the community as achievers. Expand your reach to allow each student the opportunity to learn about Optimism. Hang a poster in a prominent spot in the school or district (obtain permission before posting signs) and ask a willing faculty member to collect applications. Publicize your informational meeting through school newspapers, radio spots, posters, signs and newsletters. Host a sign-up table at the local library or supermarket and distribute Optimist materials! Be sure to advertise the meeting time and location. Let the potential members know that the first meeting is informational and no long-term commitment is necessary.

Step Two: The First Meeting

Choose a convenient location and time for the first informational meeting. Remember, most students do not have their own transportation. Also, keep in mind competing events such as sports practices, and avoid those times.

The purpose of the first meeting is to let students know about Optimism and to gauge their interest level. The meeting should be short (no longer than 30 minutes) and informal, with the students providing input and receiving information about Junior Optimist International.

Distribute applications to each student who attends the first meeting. Explain the purpose of Optimist Clubs and that the advisor will provide advice and guidance, but the youth members will choose and organize activities themselves.

Remember to address your comments to the students. Keep in mind the level of maturity of your audience. Describe the activities clubs have accomplished in the past and ask students for feedback. Once the students seem to grasp the

concept of Optimism, give them ample opportunity to ask questions. Encourage students to discuss the idea of a club between this first meeting and the next, more formal, organizational meeting. Before adjourning the meeting, take a quick vote to determine interest levels. If enough students (eight or more) express interest, plan an organizational meeting for approximately two weeks after the informational meeting. Remember to collect all membership applications before the organizational meeting. Keep up recruitment efforts in the interim weeks.

Step Three: Organizing the Club

Students should start taking control of the club at the next meeting. They will need your guidance initially, but once they have begun, most students enjoy overseeing the meetings and can run effective meetings with little supervision. At the organizational meeting, be sure students vote to adopt the bylaws with or without changes, nominate and elect officers, and establish dues and fees. Help them determine the regular club meeting place and time and discuss potential projects and basic goals for the club. Encourage the students to begin their first project immediately. Successful clubs invariably begin work on a project within a month of organizing.

Step Four: Making the Club Official (Chartering the Club)

Email the necessary paperwork and the charter fee to the Junior Optimist Clubs Department at junioroptimist@optimist.org. There is a one-time enrollment fee of \$50, plus a \$60 affiliation fee, and an \$8 per member fee for elementary students or a \$10 per member fee for junior high and high school students. Registration and member fees are prorated depending on the month the club charts.

Annual Dues

There is an annual \$60 club affiliation fee, plus an \$8 per member fee for elementary students or a \$10 per member fee for junior high and high school students.

Optimist Leaders

1. JOI club advisors, chairs, club, and district officers can access the online portal.
2. To access the portal, visit optimist.org and click the Optimist Leaders button.
3. Click the password recovery option if you do not have a password.
4. Once logged in to Optimist Leaders, type in the JOI Club number, and you can update the roster and officer information.

Advisors: The Guide on the Side

The club advisor acts as a guiding hand for the club. An effective advisor has the energy to help spark the imaginations of the youth members, the patience to help them follow through with projects, and the bureaucratic skills to help cut red tape for potential community service activities. In short, the advisor works closely with the club members and provides varying levels of guidance, depending on age and maturity.

Elementary clubs require more direction than high school clubs, but each has different challenges and rewards. For the first few meetings, students will look to you for guidance. Encourage the students to work through ideas independently and keep your role as non-intrusive as possible. You may need to help keep the meeting on track, explain any procedures the members do not understand, help publicize events, and find chaperones or adult project participants. Discuss with the members the best day and time to meet.

Club Activities

Planned activities are the heart and soul of every club. Since there are so many projects a club can do, it is often difficult for members to narrow the list down! A simple way to choose projects is to decide what your club can afford to do and how much work is required to organize the activity.

Many clubs like inventing their own projects or conducting the same projects yearly. However, if your club needs a little imagination boost, a list of projects and fundraisers is available on the Junior Optimist social media accounts and in the issues of *The Torch* magazine. You can find past issues of *The Torch* on www.junioroptimist.org.

Community Service

Community service is the basis of Junior Optimist clubs. Each club should plan and complete at least one project annually. The project can be anything from visiting a nursing home to cleaning up a beach or organizing a teacher appreciation day. The purpose of your club is to assess the community's needs and answer those needs through community service.

Fundraisers

Don't let fundraisers scare you! They can be a lot of fun. Plan a simple fundraiser for your first time, such as a car wash or a bake sale. Make it clear to everyone that there is a direct relationship between fundraising success and the effectiveness of their service projects.

Social Events

You may want to suggest a social event to let everyone get to know each other or celebrate club milestones. "Socials" can be a no-cost activity for the members. Try a potluck picnic or a trip to a local youth entertainment facility. Remember, the more fun members have, the more excited they will be about every project!

Increase Club Visibility and Name Recognition Locally

Club members work hard to make the world a better place ... so why doesn't anybody know who we are? Help spread the word to other youth, teachers, families, and the community!

What are we?

A community service youth membership organization with clubs and districts throughout the world.

Help your club get the word out about Junior Optimist – in your schools, places of worship, community centers, shopping malls, and libraries.

- Submit articles to your school paper and radio stations. Not only does this help teachers and students understand the mission, but it also provides a great recruiting tool for new members.
- Send press releases to local newspapers, television channels, and radio stations about each member, club accomplishment, and project.
- Make sure your club takes part in other community events. Volunteering at county fairs, festivals, and other events lets adults see members at work. It is also a great time for people to ask, "Now, what is Junior Optimist again?"
- Wearing club swag can help advertise. Encourage members to wear Junior Optimist T-shirts during projects, club meetings, and district conferences.
- Do you have a community spotlight segment on your local news broadcast or cable access channel? If so, invite the press to your next big event. Or better yet, volunteer to appear on their broadcast in person!

AWARDS

Visit junioroptimist.org for specific requirements.

Advisor of Excellence

Throughout the years, club advisors have dedicated countless hours to ensuring Junior Optimist Clubs run smoothly and effectively. The "Advisor of Excellence Award" honors their commitment.

Junior Optimist International Personal Growth & Involvement Program

The Junior Optimist Personal Growth and Involvement (PGI) Program, like the Optimist International (adult) PGI Program, is designed to encourage active participation in both meetings and activities to increase the opportunities for developing

personal and leadership skills while learning about Optimism as a philosophy of life; and to honor and recognize individual members for their growth, personal accomplishments, and contributions to their club. There are three levels of recognition (Bronze, Silver, and Gold) in the PGI Program, with a separate program for each of the three different types of clubs.

Club Project Awards

Every year, the Club Project Awards offer clubs the chance to enter their best projects for judging and international recognition in three categories. Remember to include lots of photos of your members in action!

Distinguished Junior Optimist International Governor

This award recognizes each Junior Optimist Governor whose district fulfills the specific requirements.

JOI Summit

The JOI Summit is an international event held each summer. Members from all over the world come together to get to know each other, share ideas, and discuss tough issues facing youth today. Leadership skills, public speaking, and team-building activities occur throughout the summit.

Members say the summit is fun and one of the best parts of joining JOI! Students will attend enlightening workshops, participate in a service project, hear first-rate motivational speakers, elect international officers, and have a voice in planning the future! Students will also check out area attractions with fellow members, strut their stuff in the talent show, and attend the annual banquet and dance.

Visit junioroptimist.org for additional information.

Club, District, and International Officers

Refer to the JOI Officer Information guide for a detailed description of all officers.

JOI Policy for Governance

Refer to the JOI Policy for Governance for the current JOI Policies.

Following Junior Optimist International on social media is a great way to get project ideas and the most up-to-date information!

Facebook: Junior Optimist International

Instagram: @junioroptimist

YouTube: Junior Optimist International

Twitter: @Junior_Optimist

Snapchat: junioroptimist

Website: www.junioroptimist.org