

WISCONSIN TEENS FOR LIFE

GETTING STARTED



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YOUR FIRST STEPS

You've decided to start a Teens for Life group in your area! You're probably wondering what comes next. This section will tell you what you need to know.

In fact, we'll walk you right through it.

- **Contact Wisconsin Teens for Life**

We can help you out by putting you in touch with your local Wisconsin Right to Life chapter (adults can be very helpful if you let them). We will also get you some information that will help you get started, and send you some cool stuff about Wisconsin Teens for Life membership. Find your county's region coordinator at:

<https://wisconsinrighttolife.org/chapters/>

- **Find a few other pro-life teens who want to help you start a group**

This sort of thing is just much easier, not to mention more fun, when there are at least a couple of you working on it. We call this little unit your "core group". No matter how many other pro-life teens you find, your core group will often end up taking on the most responsibility.

Suggestion: Spend a day/weekend with your "core group" brainstorming about what kind of group you will be and what you plan to do for your first few events.

- **Decide what type of group you would like to start**

Your best bet is to start with your school or church youth group. As you grow larger, you may consider uniting with other schools in your area and becoming a city or county wide group.



- **Find an adult advisor**

We strongly recommend that you find an adult advisor to help your group. While some groups survive without such an advisor, it has been our experience that an adult advisor brings a great deal of stability to a group. Teens grow up and graduate – it’s just a fact. Also, there are some things that you just need an adult’s help to do. Opening a checking account for your group, running certain fundraisers, and a bunch of other things are much easier to do when the people you are dealing with know that an adult is involved. Your adult advisor can be very hands-on and involved in the day-to-day operations of your group, or s/he can be more of a support system. Either way, be sure to pick someone who understands teenagers and is fun to work with!

- **Get training**

While not required, taking part in training is strongly recommended before starting your group. It will help you build confidence in your pro-life advocacy and leadership skills. Wisconsin Right to Life offers a variety of training opportunities including Teen Impact Camp, Teen Impact Boxes, and one-on-one training with your regional coordinator. Talk to your regional coordinator to learn more about the training offered!

- **Plan your first meeting**

This meeting should be an organizational one, where you explain what Teens for Life is all about, elect officers, and make plans for the upcoming year. It is important to invite anyone and everyone you can think of who might be interested in joining Teens for Life. To make things easier, we’ve made a “first meeting checklist” for you to follow!



MEETING CHECKLIST

Decide when and where to meet, keeping in mind things like meeting on a day when the most people will be able to attend. (Don't plan your meeting at the same time as the school football game, or on the night that the biggest church in your area has their youth group meeting!)

Reserve a building in which to meet. It can be a church, but for the sake of getting the widest variety of people, you may want to avoid meeting in a church at the very beginning. Some denominations feel uncomfortable meeting in churches of other denominations. Try a local library, village hall or community center.

Contact local youth groups at pro-life churches. Find out which churches in your area are pro-life and personally contact the youth pastor at each church to explain what Teens for Life is all about. Invite the youth of their church to join you. Ask if they would be willing to make an announcement at their youth group meetings, and in church on Sunday. You can offer to send someone from your core group to their next meeting and invite interested teens to join.

Contact any Christian schools in your area to let them know about the meeting. Speak with the principal or a teacher about Teens for Life and ask them to spread the word. Put up posters around the school and invite interested students to join you. (Always get permission before posting!) This can be done at public schools as well, but it is often much more difficult to find sympathetic teachers and principals. When advertising in public schools you run the risk of attracting people who disagree with your message. This is okay as long as you're prepared for them if they show up at the meeting.



Another way to spread the word about your group is to contact your local WRTL chapter. Give them the details about your meeting. Often, they will know of some pro-life teens who might be interested. If the group has a newsletter, they will probably let you write an article, including the time and date of your first meeting. This is a great way to reach other teens who share your pro-life views.

Helpful Hint: The best way to advertise is still good old fashioned WOM or word-of-mouth. Your excitement will draw in more people than a cleverly laid out poster... and people will often feel more comfortable attending a meeting where they will recognize a familiar face. Trust us, it works!

Create social media accounts! Make an account on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms that teens in your community use frequently. Work on gaining followers and keeping the account active. This is also a great way to advertise meeting times and future events!

Helpful Hint: Put one person in charge of managing your group's social media accounts to keep the content consistent. Also post photos from your club's meetings and other events; people love to see what your group is up to!

Plan out your meeting agenda. Decide what you will talk about, whether or not to hold elections at the first meeting, and how to grab your audience's attention and make them want to keep coming back. And of course, decide what kind of refreshments you want to serve. These days, anything you do that involves teenagers is much more popular if it also involves food! (As a teenager, you know this is true. Admit it!)

Now that you have done all the advance work, it's time to have your first meeting! Remember, your group will only be as excited and as dedicated as those of you in your core group are. If you make Teens for Life sound like the coolest, most exciting thing since microwaveable macaroni and cheese, everyone else is likely to get pretty excited, too. **Your attitude will go a long way toward determining how successful your group is, and how much you accomplish.** So be happy, spread the excitement, and make a difference!

