

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO START A DURGA TREE CHAPTER?



Utilize this “starter kit” as you begin to plan and create your personal chapter of Durga Tree International. This could be a group representing your state, city, school, or even social group. There is no limit as to who can be involved or what you can accomplish! Be sure to check out the Chapter Guidelines document as well.

1. BUILDING YOUR TEAM-

Deciding to start a chapter in your area is a great first step, but the next question is how to get others to step up with you? Take a moment and think about who you already have in your life that you could invite to join the team. Maybe you have a few friends who like to plan events, or know some neighbors who want to get involved in something for the greater good. Are you a student with connections within a school? A member of a faith based group, like a church or a synagogue? Do you belong to a recreational sports league? It only takes a few people to say “yes”, to commit to the process of launching your chapter.

In fact, it might just begin as one or two other people who share your interest and commitment. Plan together who else you each might be able to bring to an informal social informational session, what social media avenues you may be able to use to spread the word. Consider posting flyers around your school or church (or coffee shops, gyms, doctors’ offices, supermarkets, etc.). Facebook and Twitter are useful tools if you are looking to reach an even wider audience.

Please keep in mind that any information you plan to distribute (e.g., flyers or online advertisements) should represent Durga Tree and the anti-trafficking work we do in an accurate and transparent manner. Before creating any communications about your chapter or events you may be planning, please be in contact with our office to ensure it follows our mission and style guidelines.

Also, remember to be safe when advertising your chapter. Consider creating a designated email address so prospective and current members can correspond with you. It’s not wise to give or post your personal address or contact number publically when attempting to gather people you may not know.



2. MEETING FOR THE FIRST TIME-

Now that you have a group of people interested in learning more, you are ready to host your first chapter meeting. This may be an informational opportunity for most of the attendees, where they can ask questions about our organization and your chapter goals. From there, you can move toward initial planning and brainstorming for how your chapter will move ahead.

The first thing to consider is the location and layout of the meeting. The space should be open and large enough to seat everyone comfortably, without too many outside distractions. The larger the space and/or group, the more concerns there are about everyone hearing what is being said. Think about who will be attending- if you don't personally know most of those who have rsvp'd, a more public place may be appropriate, somewhere comfortable and friendly. Planning for refreshments to share is a good idea if it is not a place where food is already being served. Your chapter will work most efficiently when people are relaxed and at ease.

Your first meeting may be purely informational, an opportunity for people to learn more about Durga Tree and what being part of the chapter looks like before making a commitment. Whatever format you decide on for your first meeting, it is best to have internet access. Encourage participants to bring tablets or laptops (or print out enough copies of the provide FAQs sheet). This page was created to provide initial education on the topic of modern slavery and the efforts Durga Tree International makes to eradicate it. This can help get the ball rolling for your chapter by giving them the confidence and tools necessary to discuss the issue and become active abolitionists in your community.

Following this meeting, it would be best to create a schedule for the future. Whether you meet once a month or bimonthly, having a consistent meeting time and location will help encourage group members to make chapter meetings a part of their regular schedule. Be sure to share it with our office so we can post it on your informational website as well.



3. ORGANIZING YOUR CHAPTER-

At this point, you might be wondering how many people you need to recruit for your team. Don't worry, you don't need too many. The average Durga Tree Chapter has around eight members. It's not unusual to have a core group of 6-12 and a larger group who might not participate in regular meeting but will volunteer for events and initiatives. There is no maximum suggestion of how many people can join. However, if your group gets to be larger than 15-20 people, you will want to be proactive about keeping everyone engaged. Maybe even consider splitting the group based on location and then have two groups that work collaboratively. This could include meeting separately but coming together for events and initiatives. The more people that join the movement, the stronger we all are!

It can get stressful to have just one person who started the chapter be the only designated leader—that's a lot of pressure! A great way to reduce stress and burnout as new members join your group is to talk through what each person's role is, based on their skills, interests, and connections.

While you are recruiting for chapter, keep in mind that there will be some specific roles that will be helpful to fill. You are free to organize any way you like but the following roles can be really beneficial. Don't worry—you don't need to have every single one of these roles filled before getting started.

The following roles will aid your chapter and membership to stay organized as it continues to evolve and grow:

- TEAM LEADER/S

Your chapter needs to have a president. Maybe you, as the chapter creator, will take this role or perhaps you have some else who is willing to assume this responsibility. The president doesn't need to be the most informed or experienced person in the group—just someone who is organized enough to will set meeting dates, propose annual goals, and generally keep the group moving towards those goals. This person should be the primary contact for people interested in joining the chapter and with Durga Tree's home office. The chapter leader should also be a good delegator and possibly even a coach for the other members of your core team. It helps if this person is not too easily deterred or discouraged. Volunteers will come and go. Your group size will fluctuate. You will have success and failure. Look for someone with a steady hand.

If you want to plan further, with roles such as having a secretary and treasurer, that might not be a bad idea. It is a good organizational tool to have someone taking notes, or minutes, during the meeting to ensure that everything is



documents, decisions are recorded, etc. Each chapter is also responsible for keeping an informal record of finances and funds raised, so sharing these leadership roles is a smart choice. To start, these can be volunteered positions, and it is the chapter's choice whether to have elections each new year or just a general consensus appointment.

- EVENTS PLANNER

Whether you're hosting a monthly meeting, an awareness event, or a fundraiser, someone needs to manage the event planning. Look for someone in your chapter head up event organizing. This role entails looking into possible event locations, making sure speakers are aware of the schedule, finding businesses willing to donate food, etc. This can be just one person, but if your group is more than a dozen or so, consider creating a small team for each large scale event.

- COMMUNICATIONS FACILITATOR

How your chapter communicates with each other and with the community around you, and being consistent in your communication methods, are important to the success of your team. Hosting events and organizing meetings also requires good communication. Having a communications facilitator in charge of your contact list, social media accounts, and generally getting the word out about meetings will help your group recruit new members as well as stay organized.

Remember that Durga Tree International is here to help you; do not hesitate to reach out to us if you need to talk through how your chapter is developing. You can reach us at: info@durgatreeinternational.org



4. BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF ABOLITIONISTS

Once you have gathered for your first meeting and set up a plan for your chapter, start thinking about opportunities to build awareness within your community. Utilize the connections and skills your members already have, and strategize on who else can be introduced to your group to strengthen this focus. An important goal of any Durga Tree chapter is to build up community support and awareness, showing others how they can take steps to end the cycle of slavery.

It's important to keep momentum in your chapter, which includes setting goals and deciding on an annual schedule. For example, you could focus on small education & awareness DIY events throughout the year, host a larger social fundraiser in the fall, participate in our Lacing Up for Freedom walkathon in the spring, and take the summer to rest and regroup. Setting an extended schedule will save you the pressure of thinking up of new ideas all the time, and will give people a chance to come and look forward to a planning event each year. Start every year with clear goals and be sure to set aside time to evaluate your progress annually.

Focus around goals that correspond with the areas listed below for your first 6-12 months. As you continue to meet together, you will find that some activities are ones you will do once and move on from, while others are activities you all feel passionate about working on regularly.

- *Learn* – All groups start with the FAQs handout, but you can continue learning through books, documentaries, and resources from a variety of trustworthy sources. Consider asking each chapter member to keep an eye out for news events and articles connected to human trafficking, especially connected to your geographical area.
- *Raise Awareness* – Spread the word about human trafficking in your community by raising awareness. This could be a film screening or a table set up at a local coffee shop to spark conversations about modern day slavery.
- *DIY Fundraisers* – One way you can help end trafficking is to financially support Durga Tree's work and programs through do-it-yourself fundraising events. Whether is it a cocktail party, a community tag sale, or even a karaoke night, these types of events not only supports our efforts financially, but also provides an opportunity for you to invite the larger community to think about the issue, raising awareness as well.
- *Community Collaboration* – We at Durga Tree International are quick to recognize that we are not in this fight alone. Find out if there are any other nonprofit organizations and activists working in your area and see if there are ways that your chapter can collaborate with them. This includes any group working to educate and empower victims of abuse and exploitation.



5. OPEN COMMUNICATION

As stated before, communication with each other, your community, and with us is very important on many levels. Chapters, once officially created, will each have a page on the Durga Tree International website with a basic mission, logo, and group image. There will also be a list of chapter members with a photo brief paragraph intro for each.

In order to provide more information and updates, we will also help you create a Facebook Page for your chapter. This can be an efficient, convenient way for your Volunteer Team to stay connected and exchange information, post about events, and share awareness information. A link to this will be on your website page. Check out the [Oregon Chapter Facebook page](#) for inspiration! They use email for all internal communications and a public Facebook page for interacting with the community around them.

There will need to be a choice made regarding who will be the admins for the Facebook page – while someone from our Durga Tree home office will also always remain in this position, it is best to have at least one or two people from the chapter in charge of posting.

You will also need to have collect membership information, including emails, addresses, and telephone numbers, to provide to our home office. At least one person's contact information will need to be public on the website page, for people to directly reach out to as needed and for those who are not active on Facebook.

FURTHER RESOURCES FOR CHAPTERS

Please contact us for any specific needs your chapter may have, from the style guidelines for flyers and logo usage to setting up ticketing sites to collect donations via credit card. We are here to help and ensure your success as it only helps our own sustainability. Welcome to the Durga Tree family!

