

# MEMBERSHIP

## TYPES AND APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

### I. GENERAL

There are four types of club memberships in the American Volkssport Association (AVA).

A. Regular Member Club.

A club formed by an organization or group of persons who subscribe to the purpose of the corporation and want to conduct or sponsor AVA- sanctioned volkssport events.

B. State Organization.

An organization formed by the Member Clubs in a specific state.

C. Volkssports Associate.

Any individual who supports the AVA and/or one of its clubs.

D. Honorary Member.

A membership conferred by the BOD on an individual, club or organization whose actions have greatly helped or promoted the aims and purpose of the AVA.

### II. POLICY

A. Application for Membership.

1. Any organization or group of persons wanting to form a Regular Member Club must submit an AVA Form 201, Application for Club Membership, with the charter fee and the appropriate prorated portion of the annual dues, the organization or group will send the application through the State Organization (if applicable) and the appropriate Regional Director to the AVA National Office.

a) The proposed Member Club must, as a minimum:

- (1) Have an elected President, Vice President and Secretary/Treasurer;
- (2) Have an approved Constitution and/or Bylaws that align with the purpose of the AVA;
- (3) Have an established bank account in the club's name;
- (4) Submit, if eligible, an application for inclusion in the AVA's 501(c)(3) Group Tax-Exemption; and
- (5) Have an Employer Identification Number (EIN) issued by

the Internal Revenue Service.

(6) If (4) and (5) do not apply, the proposed Member Club will submit paperwork showing proof of coverage under some other non-profit organization.

b) The proposed Member Club must be incorporated under the laws of the state in which it is located.

2. A State Organization may be formed when there are at least six Regular Member Clubs in a single state and two-thirds of those clubs agree. They will use the same application procedure and have the same additional requirements, as Regular Member Clubs. State Associations and all Associate Member Clubs shall pay annual dues. A detailed State Organization Policy is provided in Appendix D.

3. Any Regular Member Club, State Organization, or member of the BOD may recommend any individual, club, or organization for Honorary Membership. They must make this recommendation in writing and send it to the AVA National Office.

B. Processing of Applications.

1. State Organizations will process applications for Regular Member Clubs within their state. The State Organization will review the application for completeness and that the club meets membership requirements. It will forward the application to the appropriate Regional Director and will include a favorable recommendation for the formation of the club as being in the best interest of the AVA or recommend against its approval. The Regional Director will either approve the application or will return the application with an explanation for disapproval, to the State Organization for transmittal back to the originator. If the application is approved, it is forwarded to the National Office.

2. A Regional Director will process all applications for Regular Member Clubs and State Organizations within his or her region. The Regional Director will review the applications in the same manner as a State Organization. If the Regional Director approves the application, he or she will forward it to the AVA National Office. If the Regional Director disapproves the application, he or she will return it, through the State Organization if appropriate, to the originator with an explanation of the disapproval.

3. The AVA National Office will process each application for membership and assign an appropriate membership number. The CEO will grant interim approval of all applications for Regular Member Clubs, and State Organizations. The BOD will grant final approval of these applications and all applications for Honorary members at their next regular meeting.

4. There is a \$50 Charter Processing Fee for each new club application that must be submitted with the application.

## **STATE ORGANIZATIONS**

### **I. MISSION OF THE STATE ORGANIZATION**

State Organizations promote the creation and growth of strong and active clubs and the growth of participation in volkssport events within the state, in coordination with the regional and the national organization.

### **II. GOVERNING DOCUMENT**

The AVA Bylaws state that State Organizations are responsible for:

- A. Coordinating and carrying forward the AVA program of activities within the state;
- B. Maintaining a liaison among AVA members chartered within the state to the appropriate Regional Director, the Board of Directors, and the AVA National Office;
- C. Reviewing applications from prospective members and recommending action on chartering the prospective member to the appropriate Regional Director;
- D. Approving volkssport event dates for AVA members within the state;
- E. Reviewing After-Action Reports and Monthly Delinquency Reports and following up to ensure that all reports have been submitted and debts have been paid to the AVA;
- F. Implementing disciplinary action against AVA members in the state for violation of AVA or IVV Rules;
- G. Promoting development of new members by visiting, corresponding with, and making presentations to interested groups;
- H. Developing and implementing programs, with the assistance of the AVA, for the mutual benefit of the AVA, IVV, and members within the state.

### **III. INTERACTION BETWEEN REGIONAL DIRECTOR AND STATE ORGANIZATION**

Performance Expectations will be discussed and drawn up by consensus between the Regional Director and the State Organization yearly and upon change of the Regional Director or the state officers. This will clarify roles and expectations and allow the chance for exploring skills and training needs.

### **IV. DUTIES OF STATE ORGANIZATIONS**

- A. Creation and Growth of Strong and Active Clubs.

This includes creating new clubs and keeping existing clubs strong and active. Methods State Organizations can use to create and strengthen active clubs include:

## 1. Publicity.

Publicity equals growth. It is the key element to fulfilling the State Organization's mission of creating and strengthening clubs. A State Vice President for Publicity and Public Relations should be identified in the State Organization's structure. This may be a Publicity Chair position rather than a Vice President. This individual must ensure event publicity and marketing is occurring and provide support where needed for all events in the state. The following tools must be considered:

- a) Event information.
  - (1) Approve all official event brochures, checking for adherence to AVA brochure standards. Clubs must submit brochures sixty days before the event. The State Organization will respond to a club within ten days with approval or suggested improvements.
  - (2) Coach clubs to produce attractive information with appropriate content.
  - (3) Ensure an adequate number of the brochures are produced and distributed to publicize the event to non-volkssporters in the local area of the event.
- b) Joint Publications. Encourage and support clubs to work together to produce attractive publications listing events for volkssporters and others who attend events.
- c) Presentations and Exhibits. Arrange for speakers and displays on volkssporting for interested groups, health fairs, etc.
- d) Point-of-Contact. Provide an address/phone number/email address where people can request information. Place a listing in the Yellow Pages as able and appropriate. Explore fax and internet options.
- e) Press Releases. Coach clubs to ensure press releases announcing events are being produced and sent to media.

## 2. Education.

- a) Be a resource to explain AVA Policies. As a performance standard, the State Organization must maintain a current copy of the AVA Bylaws, all AVA Policies, the last year's issues of AVA *CHECKPOINT* and minutes of Board of Directors meetings.
- b) Follow up with the clubs on any deficiencies such as late reporting, inadequate brochure or publicity, lack of event safety, etc. Use this as an opportunity to coach the club. Contact should be made no more than ten days after State Organization is notified of the deficiency.

- c) Host seminars.
- d) Advise clubs in organizational matters such as incorporation; nonprofit status; parliamentary procedure; how to conduct meetings and how to participate as a member of the AVA.
- e) Promote participation in regional and national programs such as National Volkssport Month, AVA convention, regional convention, photo contest, etc.

### 3. New Club Development.

- a) Contact all persons in state who have asked for *Start-A-Club* packets.
- b) Visit organizers of new clubs and attend their first meeting to be an on-site resource and to answer questions.
- c) Develop a team that will help with the formation of new clubs. Team members need not be state officers. They should be interested people from around the state.
- d) Make the AVA video available to new clubs and potential new clubs.
- e) Provide assistance and local examples for writing bylaws, incorporating, etc. Help the new club in completing forms for tax-exempt status under AVA's 501(c)(3) Group Exemption.
- f) Find experienced volkssporters to help the club plan and host their first event and make it successful.
- g) Maintain a list of equipment (measuring wheel, tables, signs, etc.) the State Organization and clubs are willing to loan.

### 4. Keeping Existing Clubs Strong.

- a) Process Event Sanction Requests (ESR) and other reports that go through the State Organization. As a time standard, items should be sent to the Regional Director or the National Office no more than ten days from date after they are received for approval.
- b) Regulate the timing, frequency, and location of events. The State Organization may set these policies. They should be developed by vote of the Member Clubs in their state for their mutual benefit. The clubs may decide to not regulate the events. The system should encourage an even distribution of events by date.
- c) Follow up on all deficiency reports from the National Office such as delinquent payments and reports. The time standard is to contact the club involved no more than ten days after receiving

the deficiency report.

- d) Respond to all questions about policies and procedures and, if necessary, contact the appropriate source (Regional Director, National Officer, National Office) for answers. The time standard is to respond back to the club or inquirer within ten days after receiving the questions. This includes interim replies while the complete response is being developed.
- e) Investigate reported problems, violations of AVA Policies, and conflicts between clubs. The time standard is to begin investigation within ten days of being contacted. It is important in these cases to use tact and search for win-win solutions. An effort must be made to develop personnel who are good at negotiation and conflict resolution.
- f) Set an example by incorporating the State Organization and ensuring the State Organization is under the AVA's group tax-exempt 501(c)(3) status, if eligible. The State Organization will submit all required 501(c)(3) reports to the AVA.
- g) Ensure all eligible clubs apply for tax-exempt status under the AVA 501(c)(3) Group Exemption and encourage all clubs to become incorporated in their state. Examples of bylaws and incorporation papers should be made available to the clubs. The State Organization should be incorporated as a not-for-profit association in their state.
- h) Ensure clubs understand that except for pre-existing agreements between states, any club hosting an event outside of its home state will be subject to guidelines, policies, and fees for clubs within the state where the event is being held and not the guidelines, policies, and fees of their home state. The State Organization in the state where the event will be held will explain clearly their requirements at the time of sanctioning or when notified of sanctioning by the Regional Director.
- i) Develop forums where members from various clubs can come together to share information, socialize, and develop good working relationships. This may be accomplished at state meetings, state getaway weekends, joint events, seminars, etc,
- j) Explore developing a state loan fund to help clubs in distress.

B. Promote AVA and Regional Programs  
and Events.

Methods State Organizations can use to promote AVA and Regional programs and events include:

1. Publications.

The State Organization should help develop, support, and promote AVA and regional publications. Examples in this category include:

- a) *THE AMERICAN WANDERER* available through the Volkssports Associate program.
- b) *AVA CHECKPOINT* available to all clubs, and also on the web.
- c) State and regional event publications.
- d) Regional Director's newsletter or State Association newsletter.
- e) Minutes of state meetings.
- f) *STARTING POINT*, the AVA's Year-Round Event Book. State Organizations should consider buying this book in quantity and reselling them within the state.

## 2. National Programs.

State Organizations must understand these programs and promote club participation in them. The state may want to develop a local committee to coordinate them. These programs include, but are not limited to:

- a) AVA New Walker Program. The State Organization should consider buying *NewWalker Packets* in quantity and reselling them within the state.
- b) IVV Record Books. The State Organization should consider buying an assortment of these books in quantity and reselling them within the state.
- c) AVA Recognition Awards
- d) National Volkssport Month
- e) National Physical Fitness and Sports Month
- f) AVA Youth Programs
- g) AVA Special Programs/Club Challenges

## C. Support to the State Organization.

### 1. Structure.

The structure of the State Organization should make it representative of all the clubs in the state. It also should be responsive to all the clubs. In most State Associations, each club has one vote and all constitute the Board of Directors. Elected officers may have a vote. There may be regional coordinators within the state who also have a vote. Avoid

structures where there are so many voting officers that they can out vote the clubs.

D. Funding.

The State Organization will not levy fees in excess of those charged by the AVA.

1. Budgeting and Accountability.

- a) The State Organization will prepare an income and expense budget to be approved by the clubs of the state.
- b) The Organization will make at least semi-annual income and expense reports to the clubs of the state.

E. State Organization Rules

State Organizations will not enact rules, policies, and procedures that are either more restrictive or more permissive than stated AVA rules, policies, and procedures.

1. Amplification on Rules Restriction.

If an AVA rule, policy or procedure says a club or individual cannot do something, the State Organization cannot say they can do it (e.g. the state could not have a state rule saying an individual did not need to carry a Start Card). If an AVA rule, policy or procedure says a club or individual can do something, the State Organization cannot forbid the club or individual to do it (e.g., the AVA says clubs may charge non-credit walkers, so the State Organization can't say the clubs may not charge free walkers).

2. State Organizations may establish rules on:

- a) State fees
- b) Scheduling and location of events
- c) Additional safety planning for specific events (more checkpoints, water points, crossing guards, etc.) as needed to ensure safety and prevent liability.
- d) Common procedures and guidelines for the operation of events to promote consistency within the state.

3. State Organization rules will not have the force of AVA rules, policies, and procedures.

These rules should establish local practice only. AVA rules, policies and procedures will always take precedence.

F. Formation and Dissolution of State Organizations.

The formation and dissolution of State Organizations are governed by the AVA



Bylaws. State Organizations will include in their Constitution and Bylaws an approved procedure for dissolution of the State Organization.

## **MEMBERSHIP DUES**

### **I. GENERAL**

The BOD establishes dues (typically upon recommendation of the Membership Committee) for the various classes of membership.

### **II. POLICY**

A. Regular Member Clubs and State Organizations will pay annual dues on or before July 1 of each year. The AVA National Office will mail an annual dues notice to each Member Club and State Organization by May 1. A club or state organization that has not paid its annual dues by September 1 will be assessed a late fee. A club or state organization that has not paid its annual dues plus the late fee by October 1 will be considered "not in good standing". At its next regular meeting, the BOD will declare the club or state organization inactive as of December 31 of the year in which the club or state organization failed to pay their dues. The BOD will make arrangements to process the Year-Round/Seasonal Events from the affected club.

B. Dues for new clubs are waived the first year.

C. Dues for Volkssports Associate members, except life members, are collected on an annual basis based on the anniversary month of the membership.

## **STATUS AND STANDING**

### **I. GENERAL**

The status and standing of a Regular Member Club, and State Organization determine their rights and privileges.

### **II. POLICY**

A. Regular Member Clubs and State Organizations are considered *active* when the club's or organization's membership application has been accepted and all its activities are conducted according to the provisions of the AVA Bylaws and Policies.

1. Active Member Clubs and State Organizations are considered *in good standing* when all debts, liabilities and obligations to the AVA have been satisfied. They may exercise all the privileges of their respective membership.
2. Active Member Clubs and State Organizations are considered *not in good standing* when an outstanding debt, liability, and/or obligation has not been satisfied within sixty days of the date due. A Member Club or State Organization *not in good standing* forfeits all rights and privileges to include the right to conduct or sponsor events. It may not vote in any

state, regional or membership meeting of the AVA. Once a Member Club or State Organization has satisfied that outstanding debt, liability and/or obligation it will be considered *in good standing*. Regional Directors will be given ten days to resolve club deficiencies, or identify extenuating circumstances, before a club is placed in *not in goodstanding* status.

- B. The Board of Directors will declare Regular Member Clubs inactive when the club is *in good standing* and requests inactive status; fails to pay its annual dues post marked by October 1; fails to satisfy an outstanding debt, obligation or liability to the AVA; or is expelled under Article III, Paragraph 3.6(c) of the AVA Bylaws. To request inactive status, a club must submit the request in writing through the State Organization, if applicable, and the Regional Director to the AVA National Office. An inactive club must return all official materials supplied to the club by the AVA and/or IVV. Failure to return these materials may result in legal action.
- C. The Board of Directors may declare State Organizations *inactive* when the number of clubs within the state is five or less; the organization does not satisfy debts, liabilities or obligations to the AVA; or the AVA expels the organization under Article III, Paragraph 3.6(c) of the AVA Bylaws. An inactive State Organization may not conduct sanctioned events or vote in any state, regional or membership meeting of the AVA. An inactive State Organization must return all official materials supplied to the organization by the AVA and/or IVV. Failure to return these materials may result in legal action.
- D. The AVA National Office will notify, in writing, the Member Club or State Organization that it has been placed on inactive status and the requirements for reactivation.
- E. Clubs and State Organizations considered for inactive status shall present for approval by the Board of Directors an action plan to resolve and remedy within twelve months the conditions causing the Club or State Organization to be considered for inactive status. A Club and State Organization on inactive status may remain under the AVA's group exemption during the period of its inactive status and shall continue to file an annual financial report. Clubs and State Organizations that fail to resolve and remedy the conditions causing the entity to be placed on inactive status within the allowed twelve months shall be considered by the Board of Directors for Dissolution/Deactivation under the provisions of paragraph 3.06(c) of Article 3 of the AVA Bylaws adopted March 15, 2021, or similar provisions of the AVA Bylaws then in effect. Inactive Clubs and State Organizations that have resolved and remedied the conditions that caused the imposition of inactive status may be reactivated.
- F. Active Member Clubs and State Organizations may request dissolution and deactivation. The entity wishing to dissolve and deactivate must notify their RD and DRD, shall complete all items outlined in the "Club Dissolution and Deactivation Requirements Checklist" AVA form, which may be found in the AVA Forms library at <https://cb.ava.org/forms.php> and transfer to the Board of Director's Orphan Walks Committee all items identified by the Checklist for such transfer. The checklist includes specific notification requirements as well as

transferring remaining funds, records, other assets and event directions/brochures/maps, the return of all assets belonging to the AVA.

- G. Member Clubs and State Organizations that have been dissolved and deactivated may not be reactivated. The Tax ID Number of the dissolved and deactivated entity shall be considered null and void, and may not be used by any future entity of the AVA that may have a name similar to the dissolved and deactivated entity.

## **REACTIVATION OF MEMBERSHIP**

### **I. GENERAL**

Any organization or group of people may request reactivation of an inactive Regular Member Club, or State Organization.

### **II. POLICY**

An inactive Regular Member Club or State Organization may be reactivated provided it meets all membership requirements established in Types and Application for Membership. Applications for reactivation will follow the procedures outlined in that section; a reactivation fee and the appropriate prorated annual dues must accompany the application. If the inactive club is *in good standing* and the State Organization, Regional Director or Board of Directors does not approve the application, the disapproving authority will notify the club in writing and return the reactivation fee and prorated dues.

## **IRS TAX EXEMPTION DESIGNATION**

### **I. GENERAL**

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has granted tax-exempt status to the AVA under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC). As part of this tax-exempt status, the IRS also granted AVA authority to include its subordinate organizations under that tax-exempt status as part of a group exemption. The AVA may add subordinate organizations under this group exemption only in March of each year.

### **II. POLICY**

A. All Member Clubs and State Organizations of the AVA, except those already tax exempt under IRC Section 501(c)(3), under some other portion of Section 501, or under the direct control of another tax-exempt organization, will apply for recognition under the AVA Group Exemption as a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3), IRC. To be eligible, the Member Club or State Organization must:

1. Be in good standing with Articles of Incorporation or organization and a Constitution and/or Bylaws that conform to the AVA Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws and to Section 501(c)(3), IRC.
2. Qualify as a nonprofit organization under Section 501(c)(3), IRC; not be a private foundation; not be a for-profit organization; not have financial ties to a for-

profit organization; not already be 501(c)(3) or other 501(c) organization; or not be a subordinate of a different central organization recognized under any other portion of Section 501, IRC.

3. Operate on a fiscal accounting year of January 1 to December 31 or July 1 to June 30, maintain all funds in a bank account in the name of the organization, and submit all reports required and identified below.

4. Obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the IRS.

B. Member Club or State Organization granted recognition under the AVA Group Exemption will be disqualified if it no longer meets the requirements for the exempt status, becomes inactive according to AVA Policies, or fails to file the required annual reports. Unless the disqualified club has obtained its own tax-exempt status under Section 501(c) or has become subordinate to another tax-exempt organization, the club will be subject to taxation under the current Internal Revenue Code. Any Member Club or State Organization obtaining tax-exempt status subordinate to another tax-exempt organization – other than AVA – will submit an information copy of that tax-exempt document to AVA which will be filed with that Member Club's or State Organization's records.

C. A Member Club or State Organization requesting 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status under the AVA Group Exemption will apply to the AVA National Office with their membership application. The Member Club or State Organization must submit this application only once. The application must include a completed AVA Form 102C3, Application for IRS 501(c)(3) Status Under AVA Group Exemption and all supporting documentation listed on the application form. The AVA will submit all completed applications on file at the AVA National Office to the IRS in March of each year. The AVA will notify Member Clubs and State Organizations when the IRS approves their requests.

D. Member Clubs and State Organizations approved for 501(c)(3) status under the AVA Group Exemption must submit to the AVA National Office the reports listed below (Failure to submit the required information will jeopardize the club's 501(c)(3) standing and the club's ability to sanction events):

1. Club Officer Information Update.

Every club must submit the officer/club information report within thirty days of the change of an officer or any officer/club information and at least once annually between January 1 and November 15. Information required and procedures for submitting this report are shown in the official section of the AVA web site. If the report is not received by November 15, a late fee of \$10.00 will be assessed. Failure to make an annual report before December 31 will place the club in "not good standing".

2. Annual Financial Report for 501(c)(3) Organizations.

Every club under the AVA 501(c)(3) umbrella must submit an annual financial report between July 1 and November 15. Information required and procedure for submitting this report is shown in the official section of the AVA web site. If the

report is not received by November 15, a late fee of \$10.00 will be assessed. Failure to make an annual report before December 31 will place the club in "not good standing".

3. IRS Form 990, Return of Organizations Exempt from Income Tax.

A Member Club or State Organization must file this form with the IRS

- a) at the end of the first year it is under the AVA Group Exemption;
- b) if it normally has gross receipts of \$50,000 or more; and
- c) in any year in which the IRS sends it an IRS Form 990 for completion.

### **III. NON-IRS GROUP ORGANIZATIONS**

Clubs or sponsoring organizations that are exempt from participating in the AVA Group Designation must:

- A. Furnish to AVA copies of correspondence from IRS approving the exempt designation.
- B. File such reports with the IRS on an annual or other report time as required by IRS.
- C. Maintain the IRS requirements for not for profit or tax-exempt designations.
- D. Submit an AVA Club Officer Information Update as required by Section 1.02 D1 above.
- E. Obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the IRS.