



Fall 2016 – Online Supplement

---

## **New Members Talk: Orientation Experience**

*By Nicole Simmons, Membership & Leadership Development Manager*

Did you know orientations are a best practice for [welcoming](#) and laying the foundation for an optimal member experience? Fortunately, a number of materials are on our [website to help with orienting new members](#).

Because orientations are a critical step to inspiring new members to become active, long-term members, we conducted a survey of new members from all over SIA to listen to what they had to say about their orientation experience—or lack thereof.

Nearly 100 members with less than a year of membership under their belt took the time to respond and share what worked, what didn't work, and where improvements could be made.

### **Those Who Received an Orientation**

The majority of members who attended an orientation or participated in a program for new members had a positive onboarding experience with nearly all expressing orientation was a good use of their time. They felt the experience was enjoyable and made them feel connected to Soroptimist. Nearly all of the new members said they know at least one person in the club they can turn to with questions or concerns.

New members reported the ideal session length is one to two hours supplemented with ongoing informal sessions. An understanding of their club, time commitment, and committee/program involvement all ranked high within the content of the orientations.

The most useful parts of the orientation mainly involved the friendship and fellowship, and learning more about how they can get involved. Several knowledge areas showed room for improvement such as

explaining the [financial obligations](#)\*, [resources available online](#)\*, and an understanding of the region, [SIA](#), and [SI](#).

Three quarters of the new members have/had a mentor or advisor they connect with in person, by email, and on the phone. The majority are satisfied with the experience.

### **Those Who Did Not Received an Orientation**

More than half of the total members surveyed did not attend an orientation or program for new members and about the same amount thought it would have been useful. The main reason was because one was not offered to them. However, one-third of the responders who did not have an orientation said they were already familiar with Soroptimist, indicating they felt an orientation was not necessary.

More than one-third of the new members who did not have an orientation have/had a mentor or advisor they connect with in person, by email, and on the phone. Approximately two-thirds are satisfied with the experience.

### **Where do we go from here?**

Kudos to those clubs that are taking the time to create a positive onboarding experience by providing an overview of Soroptimist's important work in the community and beyond! By presenting important information, you are instilling confidence in new members and providing reassurance they made the right choice when they decided to join our organization.

More than half of the survey takers said they did not have an orientation. Of those, over 60 percent said they were never offered one and they all thought an orientation would have been helpful.

If you are in a club that does not provide orientation, please consider doing so! Why? Because you want to hear the members in your club say things like these survey takers:

"I am continually amazed and inspired by my Soroptimist sisters. It makes me proud to be a member of this organization!"

"My mentor is superb. Within three days of starting my membership I was enlisted to participate on the Program Committee and to work on two SIA signature programs: *Live Your Dream* and *Dream It, Be It*."

"I feel so welcome by my local Soroptimist club and love being a part of it. Members have been so welcoming and are quick to answer any questions that I have."

Remember, orientations matter because they:

- Give new members a better picture of your club.
- Shows members how they fit in.
- Provide an opportunity to meet key players in your club.
- Introduce them to other newbies who they can bond with.
- Make them aware of opportunities for their involvement.
- Reiterate what a great idea it was to join your club!

Also, an orientation doesn't need to be complicated. Keep in mind what new members said in our survey: keep orientations short and simple; use a buddy or mentor to provide ongoing support by phone, email or in-person (keep "sessions" informal); and highlight how they can get involved right away.

Additionally, use the [New Members](#) area on our website to help supplement your club's orientation. Send new members there so they can peruse at their own leisure or you can pull information to help craft your program. With a greeting from our SIA president, links to our programs, and member benefits (just to name a few)—these resources lay the groundwork to make a great first impression.

Remember, orientations give new members a better picture of your club, explain how they fit in, and show the value of their membership. Onboarding helps motivate and keep new members engaged right from the start. Never underestimate the power of educating and welcoming new members—it's one of the first and most essential steps to retaining members. Roll out the welcome mat today!

*\*Please note: these links refer to the financial obligations and the online resources at the SIA level. Each club should provide personalized information regarding the financial obligations and materials at the club and region levels.*