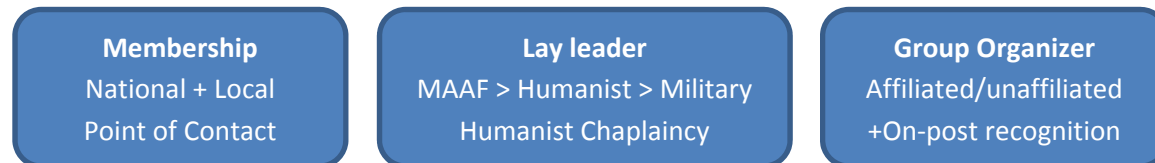


The MAAF Network Local Leadership



Version 20120417

All positions open to civilian and military, current, prior, or retired:



I. Introduction

The following document lays out several options for local leadership in support of atheists and humanists in the military. As you review the steps you'll see being active as an individual, organizing a group, and being a chaplain-recognized lay leader. You can join others throughout the world. This is a voluntary association, with some controls on the use of the MAAF acronym, name, and logo. **All positions are open to current, prior, and retired military as well as civilians.**

II. Terms

Affiliate Organizer: Formal affiliation requires a member be registered with MAAF. In this way, the local group can operate independently while also affiliating formally with MAAF in order to benefit from MAAF/MASH branding, financial support, advertising, and other resources. MAAF maintains an Affiliate Development document that lays out types and levels of support.

Group Organizer: Those who wish to form a group without formally affiliating can benefit from limited support so long as the group is military-focused and in support of the MAAF mission and values. Groups not completing the formal affiliation process are not authorized to use MAAF/MASH service marks.

Lay Leaders are formally recognized as representatives of humanism. This is the first step to gaining access to chaplain programs and facilities. Lay leaders may or may not be associated with a local group, but will interact through the chaplaincy to support local atheists and humanists. Lay leaders must complete a formal application with MAAF first, and may seek higher levels of certification through humanist groups and the military. Note that lay leaders represent nontheists in general (atheist/freethinker/agnostic/humanist/pastafarian) but are always referred to primarily as "humanist."

Humanist Chaplain: Just as other military chaplains for traditional religions, humanist chaplains hold special endorsement to provide for humanists in the military. Humanist chaplains are common in the Dutch military and in many civilian chaplaincies. Meeting this requirement is no small accomplishment, but submitting lay leader paperwork is the first step.

Point of Contact (POC) is an Individual identified on the MAAF website who is available to be contacted by interested members in the local area. This provides a foundation for others to meet informally for activities, but it does not require the effort of starting a local group or the formal application for a prospective lay leader.

Member with MAAF is a prerequisite for all positions (POC, organizer, and Lay Leader). MAAF also encourages membership with at least one other national organization and membership in a local atheist/humanist group.

III. Step-By-Step

- 1) **Join MAAF.** Connection with a national network is critical to ensure continuity and to help funnel resources and information from national to local and between local groups. Also review the MAAF FAQs for how to be more vocal and visible in your area.
- 2) **Contact MAAF** to discuss activities and to meet personnel in your area. By reviewing this document, you are learning about opportunities for local leadership. At this point, you may review regulations for your service (AFI 52-101, Navy TRP 1-05.1, or AR 165-1 which can be found at <http://www.militaryatheists.org/regslst.html>).
- 3) **Start with a local point of contact.** There may also be a local civilian or military group, or you may be interested in starting a local group, and MAAF can point you in the right direction. If not, you may choose to be a local point of contact to start. Hopefully this will lead to lay leader or local group activism. **Note that all POCs, lay leaders, and group organizers agree to be identified publicly. This may be a big step for some, but we are moving out of the days when we have to hide who we are. Be proud and know you have support.**
- 4) Decide whether you want to **(5) seek lay leader certification or (6) organize a local group.** The lay leader application provides you more insight into the humanist community and provides additional credibility for yourself as a leader. The lay leader works through the chaplaincy to support atheists and humanists. A local group leader uses post and command facilities. The two approaches should not both be necessary, but we should seek support where we can find it.
- 5) **Certify a lay leader.** Lay leaders work with chaplains for access to chaplain facilities and advertising. This is positive outreach to give the chaplaincy the opportunity to support atheists and humanists in the military. Individuals seeking lay leader certification also have the opportunity to formally represent fellow humanists and be a major factor in advancing equal rights for atheists and humanists. Note that no local group is required for a lay leader, just a confirmed community of atheists and humanists. **(See 5a-5f below)**
- 6) **Establish a local group.** Identify a date, time, and location for the initial meeting. There should also be an online presence to make it easy to find, and the group will also be on the MAAF Network. Note that there may be restrictions to meeting on post, so make sure to get approval for on-post meetings. **(See 5a-5f below)**
- 7) **Operate and improve.** Whether operating with a lay leader, affiliate, or both, running a local group is no easy task. Gaining official recognition to conduct operations and fundraising on post may require special paperwork that MAAF can help to advise on. Nearby civilian or military groups, and other national secular organizations can all add to the support MAAF provides. MAAF will help coordinate among group leaders to collect and publish best practices like frequency of meetings, discussion topics and events, contacting members, and growing the group. **(See Affiliate Development below)**

5 & 6 Initial Approach breakouts:

<u>Certify a lay leader</u>	<u>Establish a local group</u>
<p>5a) Seek MAAF lay leader certification. For your application, MAAF will have to attest to your suitability as a lay leader, which involves a questionnaire with your personal and ideological background and your understanding of the lay leader position. This is part of military requirements.</p> <p>5b) Contact the chaplain. Ask to be recognized as a "lay leader" (Army DFGL, Air Force SRP, Navy RMLL). Request official support from the chaplains and work with MAAF to answer any questions. You may also provide the chaplain with MAAF brochures printed from the MAAF website. Make it clear that this is not an isolated request.</p> <p>5c) Meet with the chaplain. The first meeting should be to confirm that humanists have positive values and a need for community, just like everyone else. You should ask for meeting space and advertisement for meetings. MAAF can provide you with any sponsorship information or letters the chaplain provides.</p> <p>5d) Receive formal lay leader certification. MAAF will provide an official sponsor letter, either directly or in conjunction with other organizations, depending on the requirements the chaplains put forth. This may take several months, but each step is necessary to maintain the legitimacy of our efforts.</p> <p>5e) File military recognition paperwork. This may not always be necessary, depending on the chaplain, but Army Reg 165-1, AF Instruction 52-101, and Navy TRP 1.05-1 provide lay leader requirements that include official sponsorship by an organization like MAAF. The formal recognition and review process may take months depending on chaplain cooperation and the applicant's diligence in the process.</p> <p>[Note that MAAF recognition can be provided even if military recognition comes slowly.]</p> <p>5f) Schedule meetings and advertise. See Section 7: Operate and Improve. Set up meetings. The chaplains should be able to jump-start the effort with advertising and free, accessible meeting space. Again, the chaplain is not recognizing any local groups but rather "humanists" in general.</p>	<p>6a) Choose a name and affiliation. Using MAAF or MASH and the installation name is a good choice and requires completion of the Affiliate Agreement. Other choices with atheist, humanist, secular and the installation/ship name may also be good. Organizations like American Atheists, American Humanist Association, and Secular Student Alliance have other group setup and affiliation requirements that can be helpful.</p> <p>6b) Select a date, time, and location for the first meeting. Normally a first meeting is a meet-and-greet for new members. It should be an easily-accessible place that people know that is relatively quiet to allow for a discussion. Allowing 2 weeks before the first event allows for enough time for people to plan.</p> <p>6c) Establish an online presence. Suggested sites are meetup.com and facebook.com (group). When establishing website URLs, trim unnecessary characters for simplicity. MAAF can help with fees for established Affiliates.</p> <p>6d) Advertise. Once an event is scheduled and website is set up, MAAF will notify all MAAF members in the local area. MAAF will help with initial advertising to get the group started. Discussions and activity on the Facebook page will also gather attention.</p> <p>6e) Hold your event(s). Have some distinctive marker especially if this is at a public place – like Humanist Magazine or a sign with the group name. This will allow people to easily identify the group. Be sure to have a sign-up sheet with phone numbers and email addresses so you can get in touch later. There may not be lots of people at the first event, but even a small group makes a big difference and can form the foundation for future meetings.</p> <p>6f) Plan for the future. From the first meeting, note who shows up, follow up to encourage attendance, and take notes on what people want to see from the group.</p>