Appendix C - Guest Speakers

Where to Find Guest Speakers

• Contact BIAC. We can provide names of individuals who can speak on specific topics you have in mind or suggest where to go for more information. BIAC has a large network of supporters and contacts that would make good guest speakers who are knowledgeable on a wide range of topics. *Please don't hesitate to reach out for suggestions and ideas*.

• Tap into connections within your own support group. Members may know of an interesting speaker to recommend.

• Local social services and government agencies and hospitals may have lists of speakers.

• Local colleges and universities may have speakers who can present on topics related to your group's interest. (For example, contact the psychology department for speakers to address stress.)

• Contact government agencies such as Social Security Administration or the Bureau of Rehabilitative Services.

• Lawyers specializing in discrimination law, financial planning, insurance, and/or disability law are another source of speakers.

• Contact professional associations (psychologists, social workers, nurses, doctors, speech pathologists, physical and occupational therapists) for local speakers on subjects such as medications or choosing a good therapist/doctor.

• Alternative health providers can provide information on herbal medicine, massage, meditation, yoga, or guided imagery. Be careful not to allow practitioner demonstrations due to safety reasons.

• Local pharmacists are a good source of information on drug interactions and taking medicines wisely.

• Invite representatives from another brain injury support group to talk about their group's best meetings, discussions, speakers, and other successful activities.

• Consider using a pre-recorded or "canned" speaker (tape of a radio interview show, PowerPoint presentation, conference presentation, portion of a TV program, etc.) that is relevant to the discussion.

• If you do invite a guest speaker, please be sure to notify tBIAC in your monthly Support Group Report

Types of Guest Speakers
Some examples of "experts" that you might ask to speak at your meetings include:

- **BIAC Staff**
- Neurologists
- Recreational Therapists
- Neuropsychologists
- Music Therapists
- Psychologists
- Physiatrists
- Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist
- Nurses
- Physical Therapists
- Attorneys
- Occupational Therapists
- Family Counselors
- Speech Therapists
- Social Security Representatives
- Licensed Clinical Social Workers
- Authors

Guest Speaker Topic Ideas
• How do I get Social Security? What entitlement programs do I qualify for? Can I still work and receive SSDI? (representative from social security office)

• What vocational services, recreational programs, and/or housing options are available in the community? (state department of rehabilitative services)

• What does the state and/or national brain injury alliance do for me? (BIAC staff)

• What about driving? (state department of motor vehicles, representative of rehabilitation program that teaches driving courses)

• Legal issues such as trusts, wills, and power of attorney (attorney)

• Substance abuse issues (substance abuse counselor)

• Understanding pharmacological issues (neuropsychiatrist)

Preparing For and Hosting Guest Speakers

If a support group decides to have a guest speaker, members will need to prepare and follow some simple, common courtesy procedures. Listed below are some useful suggestions:

- Appoint one person in charge of recruiting speakers. Ideally, this person should be someone who personally knows potential speakers. (As with other group responsibilities, this task can rotate among different members of the group.)

- Contact the potential speaker as far in advance of the meeting as possible. This will not only allow the speaker to prepare his/her presentation but will also give the support group time to promote the program.

- Potential speakers not familiar with the group should be contacted first by email, then via telephone. The initial email should include information about the group as well as an invitation to speak and should be followed with a telephone call for further discussion and confirmation. If the group chooses to contact the speaker by telephone first and the speaker agrees to participate, a follow-up email should be sent providing all the details described below.

- The follow-up/confirmation email should include the time, date, and location of the meetings, along with specific directions once inside the building. In the email, provide a brief overview of the group, the expected size and makeup of the audience, what information the group expects to receive, the amount of time allocated for the presentation, and any specific issues that may arise during the support group meeting. For example, the reason for inviting a speaker on social security may be because group members have had problems getting approved for social security. You should also attempt to give the speaker some idea about the level of audience expertise. This will help the speaker determine how technical the presentation should be.

- In addition to providing the speaker with the meeting time, let him/her know the full agenda of the support group meeting and the time at which the presentation is scheduled. The support group may encourage the speaker to attend the entire meeting to become acquainted with the support group.

- For introduction purposes, be sure to obtain the full name and title of the speaker. One of the best ways to do this is to ask for a short biographical sketch well before the presentation.

- There are many excellent speakers who are willing to provide their time free of charge. BIAC doesn’t pay and then say that speakers cannot promote their own business

- If there is more than one speaker at the support group meeting, make certain that all speakers are aware that more than one person will be speaking. Provide each speaker with relevant information about the other speakers so that they may take the time to become familiar with each other. If they will be talking about related issues, suggest that they contact one another to coordinate their presentations.

- Establish whether the speaker will need any audio-visual equipment and if so, whether he or she will provide it or if the support group can. If the group needs to obtain the equipment, the facility hosting the meeting may be of help.

- While all the details should be ironed out several weeks before the meeting, the designated group member should get in touch with the speaker again a few days before the event. This is not only a courtesy, but also a subtle way to ensure that the speaker has not forgotten about his/her commitment.

Helping the Speaker at the Meeting

- A designated group member should greet the speaker as soon as he/she arrives and make sure that the speaker is comfortable. In this initial chat, ask important questions (i.e., will the speaker take questions during the presentations, or should all questions be held until the end?) and include this information in the speaker's introduction.

- Ask the speaker if they'd like a time check.

- If audio-visual equipment is used, a group member should check to make sure it is working prior to the meeting. If the speaker has handouts, a group member can help distribute them.

- In order to allow sufficient time for the full presentation and a question-and-answer period afterwards, introduce the speaker at the scheduled time, present his/her biography, and inform the audience how the presentation will proceed. Remind everyone to turn their cell phones off.

- The facilitator or someone else designated for the task should "police" the meeting. If the speaker has asked that questions be held until the end and someone interrupts with a question, the facilitator should say, "Please hold all questions until the end." An individual with memory problems may not remember his or her question if he/she must wait. Asking support group members to write down their questions as they think of them will help alleviate this problem.

- Occasionally a presentation will run longer than planned. If it does not have a negative impact on the meeting, the facilitator should let the presentation continue. If the extended time does create a problem, the facilitator can cue the speaker that

he/she is out of time. This is usually done with a visual cue if agreed upon in advance or by walking toward the speaker and using simple hand motions to let the speaker know what it is time to conclude the presentation. The facilitator might also catch the speaker's attention and point to the clock. If that does not work, the facilitator may need to interrupt. That should be done as courteously as possible by saying something like, "I'm really sorry to interrupt you Ms. Smith, since this is such an interesting topic, but I'm afraid we're out of time."

- On behalf of the group, thank the speaker at the conclusion of his/her presentation. If a token gift is given, it should be done at this time. This is nice but giving a gift is not essential and most speakers do not expect it. If appropriate, invite the speaker for any social activity that follows. This is not only a nice gesture, but it also gives the audience a chance to meet the speaker.

- One of the host group members should help the speaker pack up materials at the close of the meeting.

- Sending a thank-you note is a great way to express the group's gratitude to the speaker as well as encourage the speaker to return and refer professional colleagues to the support group to make future presentations.