

# CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION: HOW TO MAKE DSA ACCESSIBLE TO PARENTS



By Natalie Midiri

As democratic socialists, we recognize that we must fight multiple systems of oppression beyond just capitalism to put real democratic control into the hands of working people, and that this fight begins by making participation in our locals accessible to all classes of people—including parents. We don't always think of parents as an oppressed class, but the United States is the only industrialized western country that provides almost no support to the people who are doing the work of nurturing the next generation. Your local or any organization can be allies to parents. Although some of these guidelines are specific to children, many of us also care for adult dependents and these guidelines may be adapted as necessary to support your activist community.

**Ask parents what support they need to be active in DSA.** The answers may surprise you.

**Share the responsibility.** We all have a stake in the next generation! In practice, this means that members without children must allocate time for caregiving or managing the logistics of making sure children are cared for during meetings, so that parents can think about politics, strategy, and organizing, too.

**Consider how the systems of oppression that we fight as socialists, like racism, classism, male supremacy, ableism, and heterosexism can influence who has caregiving responsibilities in your group.** If members of your group who do not normally care for children express concerns about their ability to do so, pair them with an experienced person.

**Re-evaluate the time and locations of your regular meetings.** Consider holding some of your meetings in a place with built-in activities, such as a public playground or library. Plan a potluck or brown bag in someone's home.

**Plan your local's calendar at least a month in advance and share it online** so that parents have time to choose to attend events with children or arrange childcare when necessary.

**Create and maintain a system for keeping members who can't attend every meeting up to date on your local's work.** For example, record detailed notes from planning meetings; send out overviews after DSA-sponsored or attended events; use to-do lists to log progress on your organizing projects, and make sure they are all shared on a cloud platform, such as Google Drive, so that parents can access them at their convenience.



**Create a “busy-box” for children who regularly attend DSA meetings.** Browse a thrift store for blocks, picture books and toys for children ages one to three; playdough, race cars, and animal figures for children ages four to six; Legos, puzzles, and coloring books for children seven to nine; modeling clay, paper planes or origami guides, and playing cards for children ages 10 to 12. On weeknights, older children may have homework to do, so be prepared to provide a quiet place and some help.

**Offer childcare during your meetings and rotate who will be responsible for childcare.** Plan activities and appoint caregivers in advance and make sure parents are aware of who will be watching their children. Guidelines for childcare vary, so please check with your meeting space to make sure you meet the legal requirements for caring for multiple children.

**Fundraise to supplement the cost of childcare** so that parents can devote their full attention to developing themselves as socialists at important events, especially conferences and workshops that will help them grow as organizers.

**Try to make the time children spend in DSA spaces collaborative and fun.** Children may not be ready to debate the labor theory of value with you, but they have something to say about issues that affect them and their parents and can be eager to make signs or banners! Children who have good memories of their first meetings are more likely to be active DSA members when they grow up.