

2022

Vegan Pledge Mentor Toolkit



PEACE **ADVOCACY** NETWORK

Welcome

Dear Volunteer Vegan Pledge Mentor,

Welcome to the Peace Advocacy Network (PAN) team! Thank you for volunteering to help others go vegan with us!

PAN was formed in 2010 and has been organizing Vegan Pledge Programs ever since. We have held more than 50 successful Vegan Pledge Programs around the country and virtually. You are joining an elite team of volunteers without whom PAN would not be able to do what we do!

These materials are the guidelines for mentoring PAN vegan pledges. You have agreed to follow the PAN principles of kindness, the abolition of animal cruelty, and the promotion of a happy, healthy vegan lifestyle. Thank you for joining our team of mentors and for helping us spread compassion and promote a peaceful existence.



*Dara Lovitz
President, Peace Advocacy Network*

As a Mentor, you play a very important role in the PAN Vegan Pledge Program. For many people, going vegan may be confusing, if not downright overwhelming. Pledges may feel alone and not know whom to turn to for help, and as a result, they may find their efforts unfulfilled and eventually fall back to their old patterns. Experience has shown that those who have been mentored as part of a community have stayed vegan and are happier for it. PAN takes great pride in supporting others to go vegan with us.

As a PAN Mentor, I promise to:

- Be friendly with my pledge(s); help them out, answer questions, support their efforts, give them tips, provide direction, lend an ear, and offer advice;
- Treat my pledges with respect;
- Reassure my pledges if they “slip” by understanding mistakes without encouraging “cheats;”
- Check in with my pledges at least once a week outside of the scheduled meetings.

By signing below, I promise I have read this toolkit in its entirety and will refer back to it whenever I have a question. Should you be unable to read this toolkit for any reason please let us know and we will work with you directly.

Signature

Date

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The PAN Approach

PAN is different from other programs in many ways, but an important one is that we seek to show others how easy being vegan can be without making them feel guilty for not already being vegan. Sustaining a vegan lifestyle can be easy. Our goal is to encourage others, and thus all messaging, discussions, presentations, and dialogue MUST focus on how easily the diet and lifestyle fit into each person's life. Conversations should impart the benefits of a vegan diet to our health, the environment, and animals without making the transition seem overwhelming or unattainable.

PAN promotes complete veganism. Accordingly, the use of animals in any way, regardless of perceived or advertised treatment, is unacceptable, and mentors should never suggest (or concede) to a participant that "humane" animal farming is an acceptable alternative to veganism. On the same note, if your pledge is unsuccessful at any time, remember to treat that individual with kindness and provide advice for avoiding the same mistake in the future.

How Does It Work?

Over 30 days, Vegan Pledge participants commit to maintain a vegan diet with significant support from the program. Five meetings, held weekly, include seminars on useful topics, cooking classes, panels, and question-and-answer sessions. Participants are assigned to a small mentoring group with an experienced vegan(s) (that's you!) to serve as a mentor. Additionally, participants receive resources, coupons, and helpful literature, and pledges of in-person meetings receive a care package of vegan goodies.

As a vegan, you probably remember what it was like when you transitioned and what worked well for you. As a mentor, you will help others skip some of the difficult aspects of transitioning by offering advice on recipes, restaurants, products, and events. Any vegan can be a mentor if they have a little time to share!

Pledge Assignments

As a Vegan Pledge mentor, you will be appointed your pledge(s) by the Vegan Pledge Organizer either on or before the start of the program. If you have not received your pledge assignment(s) before the first meeting, don't worry. Many organizers choose to wait until the first meeting to see who attends before grouping participants. You will have your pledge(s) assigned by the end of the first meeting.

When possible, mentors and pledges will be grouped into small teams with at least two mentors and at least two pledges. Sometimes you will be paired one-to-one with your pledge instead. It is up to the discretion of the Organizer to make this decision. Please let them know if you are uncomfortable in a one-to-one relationship.

You will introduce yourself to your pledge(s) at the first meeting and exchange contact information. You will be the point of contact for your pledge(s) during the duration of their 30 Day Pledge and are responsible for touching base with them outside of meetings, responding promptly to their questions, and directing them to resources.

Please notify PAN as soon as possible if you are unable to reach your pledge or if anything comes up in your life (e.g., illness, family issues, work obligations, unexpected travel, etc.) that prevents you from meeting the needs of your pledge so that we can arrange alternate mentoring support for your pledge.

Self-Guided Program Mentoring

PAN also offers a Self-Guided Remote Program for pledges unable to participate in a live program. Pledges work through the same content provided live—except pre-recorded—at their own pace during their 30 days. As a mentor for the Self-Guided Program, you are the primary support for pledges. As a mentor in this program, you are expected to set up and participate in at least one face-to-face meeting with your pledge. PAN provides free Zoom training for mentors to help facilitate face-to-face meetings. Mentors are assigned only one pledge at a time, rather than mentoring in groups.

Pro Tip: You can mentor for the Self-Guided Program, the Live Program, or both at the same time!

Guidelines

We encourage you to be friendly with your pledge(s), to help them out, answer questions, support their efforts, encourage them if they “slip,” give tips from what you’ve experienced, provide direction, lend an ear, offer advice, and refer to other resources as needed.

Please check in with your pledges at least once during each week via e-mail or another agreed-upon method, and respond promptly to any questions

your pledges may have. You are their personal liaison for the program. We check in with pledges regularly to assure they are getting what they need from their mentors and will let you know if there are any discrepancies.

In providing nutritional advice to your pledge, it is great if you can make suggestions for specific nutrients (i.e., great sources of calcium, protein, iron, etc.) if asked, and it is fine to suggest resources for nutrition information. However, please do not make prescriptive suggestions for health issues unless you are licensed to do so. If necessary, PAN can refer participants to a registered dietitian.

We all have very different vegan diets and choose to go vegan for different reasons. While we certainly want our pledges to be healthy, we also want them to be comfortable and successful in their vegan endeavor. We do not food shame any vegan foods and acknowledge that meat analogs and vegan treats can help ease a pledge's journey. Moreover, a pledge may be going vegan for reasons other than health and we support them in that. It is great to help the pledges make good choices, but we need to balance that with an awareness of their needs and how they are adjusting. However, if your pledge asks specific questions, answer them honestly.

PAN believes in a full abolitionist approach to veganism. Your pledge might make mistakes that should be treated kindly and with complete forgiveness but you should never be suggesting that they subscribe to a partially vegan diet or flexitarianism. The PAN Vegan Pledge Program is a 30-day commitment to a fully vegan diet.

You must be physically present at the first meeting. You are invited to attend subsequent meetings and any planned social events as well, but it is most important that you attend the first meeting.

This booklet serves as your mentoring guidelines, please refer to it if you have any concerns, or email the Organizer if the concerns are not met here.

Engaging with Your Pledge

You are your pledge's primary contact between meetings. Check in with them as regularly as you both feel comfortable and be sure to provide them with the kind of support you would have desired. Not sure what to talk to them about? Here are a few conversation starters:

What are you making for dinner tonight?

Check out this delicious recipe I am thinking about trying!

What food are you missing right now? Need help finding a replacement?

Do you have any social events coming up you are concerned about?
How are your family/friends reacting to the change? Need to chat about it?

If you have the time, invite your pledge to do something outside of the program like a Zoom chat, virtual film screening, or coffee date. Your pledge might not have many vegan friends so they will appreciate your help finding fun community events.

What if I Need Help?

We don't expect you to have all of the answers. Please feel free to consult with the organizer of your program or other mentors if you have any difficulties at any time. While you are here to support your pledge, we are here to support you.

Pro Tip: Feel free to direct your pledge(s) to our website, which is filled with great resources!

Resources

PAN offers many resources for our participants that you are welcome to direct your pledge(s) to, or use for yourself should you need them. The following can all be found under the [Resource Section](#) of our website as downloadable PDFs:

- [English Vegan Starter Guide](#)
- [Spanish Vegan Starter Guide](#)
- [Vegan Living and Recipe Guide](#)
- [Guide to Fast Food and Chain Restaurants](#)
- [Guide to Food Ingredients](#)
- [Vegan Shopping List](#)
- [Why Vegan Food Choices](#)
- ["Humane" Meat](#)
- [Environmental Food Choices](#)
- [Human Slavery](#)

An [online Supplemental page](#) is also offered to each participant. You are welcome to use this page as well as direct your pledge(s) to it for more information. The site includes recorded videos on the environment, ethics, and nutrition; mini-games to help identify cruelty-free products; recorded panel discussions; and quizzes.

Pro Tip: Ask your Vegan Pledge Program Organizer if you don't have an answer to a pledge's question.

Do's and Dont's

DO be friendly with your pledge(s)! Feel free to chat with them as often as you both feel comfortable and spend time with them outside of the program.

DON'T pressure them to do things exactly the way you do. Everyone approaches their transition differently and it's important that you work to help your pledge(s) find the fit that's best for them.

DO be understanding if your pledge(s) makes a mistake or slips up.

DON'T ever encourage your pledge(s) to consume any animal products at all.

DO attend as many meetings as you can/would like. Your attendance is comforting to your pledge(s) and provides you an opportunity to check in to see how they are doing. Be sure to keep the organizer posted of your intended attendance as they often need a headcount to ensure adequate food and space are provided.

DON'T miss the first meeting. It's okay if you can't make any of the following meetings but it's important that you are at the first meeting to introduce yourself to your pledge(s).

DO check in with your pledge(s) at least once a week via email or text message (or another agreed-upon method) to make sure they are continuing with the program.

DON'T give up on your pledge(s) if they miss a meeting or don't respond to one of your messages.

DO suggest recipes, restaurants, and personal favorite resources!

DON'T give medical advice unless you are licensed to do so.

DO stay in touch with your pledge(s) after the program if they desire it.

DON'T insist on staying in touch with your pledge(s) after the program is completed if it's not something they desire.

DO reach out to the Vegan Pledge Organizer if you need help. They have lots of resources that can help you answer questions from your pledge(s).

DON'T feel you are the final source of information for your pledge(s). If you don't have an answer to a question, be honest about it and help them find the answer.

DO engage on the Slack channel with the entire Vegan Pledge group.

DON'T hesitate to ask your own questions or ask for suggestions on the Slack channel.

FAQs from Pledges

PAN pledges frequently ask great questions. The following are examples of questions you might get.

What do I do with tofu? Do you have a good recipe for mac and cheese (or pizza, or pasta, or other food)?

Pledges often ask what to do with certain ingredients or how to veganize their favorite meals. If you have recipes or tips, share them. If not, consult with a fellow vegan pledge mentor, program organizer, or refer your pledge to a vegan food website or vegan recipe blog.

What do I do about my leather jacket/shoes/purse/etc?

Going vegan isn't always an overnight process. It's important to remind pledges that their transition is about intent. If they already own non-vegan articles of clothing and can't afford to replace them, that's okay! Point them in the direction of cruelty-free companies that they can purchase from when they are able to do so. Many people would prefer to donate all their non-vegan items and start fresh, and that's okay too. Each pledge has different circumstances and working with them to make sure that they no longer support cruelty is the most important goal of our program.

Is XX vegan?

A large part of mentoring is not only sharing your own experiences but answering practical questions. When a pledge is uncertain whether an item is vegan, help them to not only determine whether it is but learn how to do so in the future. Help them learn which ingredients to look out for or what labels to seek out.

What about humane meat/cage-free eggs/etc?

PAN promotes complete veganism. The use of animals in any way, regardless of perceived or advertised treatment, is unacceptable, and you should never suggest (or concede) to a participant that "humane" animal farming is an acceptable alternative to veganism. Most of the products labeled humane are barely different than their unlabeled counterparts. Even in the best of circumstances, the animals' needs will always take a back seat to the industry's need to make a profit.

Why did you go vegan?

Sharing your personal journey is what makes our mentoring program so strong. Be honest and as open as you feel comfortable with telling your pledge(s) your own story.

My spouse/children/roommate/parents/etc aren't vegan, do you have any advice?

Most of us have lived with someone who wasn't vegan at least at some point. Be honest about what that experience was like and how you handled it. Many people choose not to cook meat once they go vegan and persuade their housemates with delicious vegan offerings. If you have no personal experience with this, feel free to direct your pledge(s) to the Organizer.

Where/when is the next meeting?

Although meetings are typically held in the same location throughout each program, sometimes there is a different meeting location or people simply forget. Make sure you always know where and when the next meeting(s) will take place.

Will you be at the next meeting?

Mentors are not required to attend all meetings. However, pledges often like it when you are there. Let them know which meetings and social events you will be able to attend. Don't hesitate to set up your own social time with your pledge(s). Some mentors will have pledges over for dinner, visit a farm animal sanctuary together, or watch a vegan documentary together.

How often can I text/email you?

This is up to you. Some pledges only desire to check in once a week while others need more guidance and want to text you regularly with questions. Discuss expectations early and let your pledge(s) know what you are comfortable with so that they know how and when they can reach you.

Can we stay in touch?

This is up to you. Often great friendships are made during the program.

Nondiscrimination/Anti-Harassment Policy

Peace Advocacy Network is committed to a community culture in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each participant (employee, pledge, and volunteer) has the right to connect in a courteous and friendly atmosphere that promotes equality and prohibits discriminatory practices, including harassment. PAN has developed a policy to ensure that all participants can engage in an environment free from unlawful harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. [Read our full Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy here.](#)

This toolkit was created by Peace Advocacy Network for the purpose of supporting Vegan Pledge Mentors in volunteering for PAN's Vegan Pledge programs. This document remains at all times the property of Peace Advocacy Network solely and may not be published, distributed, disseminated, or shared in any way by any non-PAN employee or non-PAN board member.

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