

# **Arizona Area GSR School Workbook**

General Service Representative: May be the Most Important Job in AA.

By choosing it's most qualified person as GSR, a Group helps it's own future, and the future of AA as a whole.

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# SECTION I

## INTRODUCTION

On March 10, 2007, the Arizona Area passed Motion 2006-17 which authorized the Area to develop a GSR School and a DCM School to supplement the Service Workshops already in place. The basis for this GSR School Workbook is the result of the research of GSR Schools offered by other Areas, particularly the Oregon Area. This GSR School Workbook is intended to be used with any one of a number of Arizona Area PowerPoint presentations available on the subject as well as the following GSO Pamphlets:

1. GSR: General Service Representative
2. The AA Group: Where it all Begins
3. Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix
4. Your A.A. General Service Office

## WELCOME TO ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS GENERAL SERVICE

As an elected General Service Representative (GSR) you now represent the voice of your Group's Conscience to the A.A. General Service Conference (GSC) held in New York each April. Through your elected District Committee Member (DCM) and the Arizona Area Delegate, you will become the two-way link between your Group and the world of A.A. as a whole. As such, you and your fellow GSR's all over the world will have become the key to the unity of A.A.

You are your Group's link with Arizona Area General Service, the GSO, and the GSC. As such you have an active part in building a strong service structure. You will learn more about General Service, which is based on The Three Legacies.

## THE THREE LEGACIES

1. RECOVERY, as outlined in the Twelve Steps
2. UNITY, as outlined in the Twelve Traditions
3. SERVICE, as outlined in the A.A. Service Manual combined with Twelve Concepts For World Service, by Bill W.

Please take care to protect the rights of individual A.A.'s to have their voice acknowledged and heard no matter how much in the minority they may be.

By your active presence in General Service you will be helping to ensure that A.A. will still be here for future generations of suffering alcoholics.

**You are now engaged in one of the finest forms of Twelfth Step Work.**

## ABOUT THIS MANUAL

Here, we will cover some aspects of the General Service structure and your new position as GSR.

1. The geographic division of the U.S. and Canada into service regions.
2. The broad structure of General Service.
3. Service Structure of the Arizona Area.
4. Area Officers and their qualifications.
5. Things you can do as a General Service Representative.
6. Some ideas on how to carry out the duties of a General Service Representative more effectively.

## INVOLVEMENT IN GENERAL SERVICE

Regarding the relationship of the GSR to General Service, the AA Service Manual states: "general services grew to fill a need beyond the reach of the individual, group and intergroup. Today, the term general services is applied to all kinds of activities within the Conference structure, carried on by the Area committees, Delegates, Trustees, and GSO staff. Usually the services affect the Fellowship as a whole. Almost always, they are part of AA's distinctive unity, which allows the movement to function so well."

# SECTION II

## A.A. WORLDWIDE

Alcoholics Anonymous is a worldwide organization. There are General Service Offices in many countries, each of which is autonomous. Our General Service Office for the United States and Canada is located in New York City. No attempt is made to have this office be the work capital of A.A. Rather, the New York office is available to share experience, strength and hope with offices in other countries, mainly because it has been in existence a much longer period of time.

Every two years a World Service Conference is held with one Trustee At Large each from the United States and Canada attending as our delegates. This conference serves as the way that Alcoholics Anonymous establishes and maintains its worldwide communication links. The meeting location rotates between New York and another country which has submitted a bid to hold the meeting; much as a district or two or more districts combine to submit bids to host Arizona Area Assemblies.

## THE REGIONS

The map in the AA Service Manual, Chapter IX, shows the U.S. and Canada divided into eight regions:

1. Two in Canada:

- a. Eastern Canada
- b. Western Canada including Yukon Territory
2. Six in the United States:
  - a. Northeast
  - b. Southeast
  - c. East Central
  - d. West Central
  - e. Southwest
  - f. Pacific Region: Which consists of Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington.

Thus, our Arizona Area is part of the Pacific Region.

## REGIONAL TRUSTEE

Each Region has its own trustee, called a Regional Trustee, who serves a four year term on the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous. Each Region nominates a slate of qualified candidates, one from each Area, from which a Regional Trustee is elected during the General Service Conference. The terms of these trustees are staggered so that two Regional Trustees are elected each year. This provides both continuity and a smooth flow of rotation. There are twenty-one non-paid trustees on the General Service Board, all of whom perform tremendous amounts of service for Alcoholics Anonymous. These trustees are elected or approved by the General Service Conference. Seven are non-alcoholic, called Class A Trustees, and 14 are alcoholic, called Class B Trustees. Eight of these fourteen Class B Trustees are the Regional Trustees.

## THE AREAS

Most General Service Areas follow the broad geographical division of a State or Province. Due to the size and/or population of some States, they are divided into two or more Areas. California is divided into six. Our Pacific Region has nine States with fifteen Areas.

But, Areas do not have to follow strict State lines. Our Arizona Area includes small locations in California, New Mexico, Nevada, and Mexico. This allows non-Arizona Groups to closest to Arizona population centers to be represented by the Arizona Area regardless of State lines. Our Arizona Area is known as Area 03.

## THE DELEGATE

Each General Service Area elects a Delegate to represent them at the annual General Service Conference in New York where the broad issues of A.A. as a whole are addressed. There are a total of 93 Delegates, one for each Area, throughout the U.S. and Canada. The Delegates are elected for a two year term with about one-half elected each year to provide both continuity and rotation as with the Trustees. The AA Service

Manual has an election schedule for Delegates. Remember that the General Service Conference only deals in issues affecting AA in the U.S. and Canada.

## THE GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

The culmination of much of this activity, (Group, District, Area, and Regional meetings), occurs in April of each year when the Delegate we elect to represent our Area attends the week long General Service Conference in New York. The 134 voting members of the Conference are comprised of:

1. The 93 Area Delegates,
2. The 21 Trustees of the General Service Board,
3. The staffs of the General Service Office and Grapevine,
4. The Directors of A.A. World Services, Inc., and
5. The Directors of The A.A. Grapevine, Inc.

Note that the 93 Area Delegates constitute more than two thirds of the voting members at the Conference. The policy of A.A. is decided at this meeting. The Delegates take to the Conference consensus of the Groups in the Area as expressed at the Area Assemblies by the GSR's responses to the issues and policies discussed. This should clarify some of the names, nature, and relationships among the structural entities of the General Service structure.

## SECTION III

### AREA ASSEMBLIES

Each Area acts as a unit at Area Assemblies held periodically throughout the year.

In Arizona, quarterly Assemblies are held. The first is prior to the General Service Conference to provide our Group conscience to the Delegate. During the second Assembly the Delegate provides the results. The third Assembly occurs in August to complete the Arizona Area business. The fourth is in November for budgeting, elections, and Area business.

At Assemblies we conduct such business as may affect the entire Area, including:

1. Informing the Delegate of the sense or conscience of the Area.
2. Receiving from the Delegate the sense or conscience of and report from the Conference.
3. Discussions of the issues to be introduced and/or voted upon during the Area business session.
4. Conducting workshops and roundtables on all aspects of General Service work.
5. Receiving reports from all our Area Officers, Service Committee Chairpersons and DCM's regarding their activities and concerns.

6. Presenting training or orientation sessions for new GSRs.
7. Discussion or sharing sessions for GSRs and DCMs.
8. Area budget matters.

Most, but not all, of these activities are offered at every Assembly.

Area Assemblies have preset agendas and are usually too large for specific Group problems to be efficiently addressed except at the GSR sharing sessions. However, there are always plenty of GSRs and other servants around with whom to talk.

## ATTENDING AREA ASSEMBLIES

By attending Area Assemblies we become familiar with things happening in the larger world of A.A. through the reports given by our Delegate, Area Officers, and the Alternates, Area Service Committee Chairs, and the DCM's reports.

It is quite likely that you will hear some ideas that can be used to better your own District or Group. With more than a hundred GSRs, DCMs, Area Officers, Area Service Committee members, the Delegate and Past Delegates present, you will always be able to find someone to discuss your concerns with.

Minutes of Area meeting are published in the Area Newsletter.

Serving on different committees at all levels of A.A. one can learn a great deal about the working of our fellowship.

## AREA BUSINESS; WHO VOTES

In the Arizona Area, while all members are encouraged to attend and become familiar with the issues discussed at the Area Assemblies, only the GSRs, IGLs, DMCs, DCMCs and Area Service Committee Chairs, the Treasurer, and Secretary, Registrar, Area Chair, Alternate Area Chair, Delegate, and Alternated Delegate, are voting members. As has been mentioned, the main activities at the Assemblies center around the Delegate, the Conference, and Area business. Service committee workshops and roundtables, GSR and DCM sharing sessions are also offered. As mentioned earlier, the Arizona Area holds four Assemblies each year.

Proxy votes are not allowed at our Area Assemblies. Your Group must have a representative present to vote.

## ARIZONA AREA VOTING PROCEDURES

A motion will reach the floor of the Assembly in one of two ways:

1. By Topic Submittal through the Agenda Committee and then through a positive Panel vote.
2. An individual member motion from the floor during New Business.

A positive Panel vote is presented by the Panel Chair as a Recommendation which is considered a seconded motion. If an individual submits a motion, a second is required.

A motion is made:

1. If it does not receive a second, it dies. After a second, debate is opened.
2. If a registered voter calls for the question, a second will be required, or debate resumes.
  - a. A question must be called in turn at the mike.
  - b. If the question is seconded a 2/3 majority will end the debate, or debate resumes.
  - c. If the question is not called, debate will go on until there is no one at the mike.
3. Once debate ends, a sense of the group will be taken by simple majority, to vote or table.

A motion is voted on:

1. If it involves expenditure of Area funds, the finance committee will be asked to report.
2. It requires a 2/3 majority to pass.
3. The losing side will be asked if they wish to speak to their position.
4. The winning side will be asked if there is a motion to reconsider, and requires a second. A simple majority is required to reconsider.

A motion is reconsidered:

1. Full debate, pro and con is resumed (please limit discussion to only new considerations).
2. The question may again be called, seconded, and requires a 2/3 majority to end debate.
3. A sense of the group may be taken by simple majority, to vote or table.
4. If voted on, the motion must have a 2/3 majority to pass.

Debate has ended on the motion.

Debate on a tabled motion will be resumed under old business at the next Assembly, and the voting process will be the same as above.

## MAKEUP OF THE ARIZONA AREA COMMITTEE AND ELECTION SCHEDULES

The voting membership of the Arizona Area Committee is comprised of the GSRs, IGLs, DCMs, DCMCs, the Delegate and Alternate Delegate, the Area Chair and Alternate Chair, the Secretary and Treasurer, and all the Area Coordinators. All Area Officers are elected during the General Assembly in November of odd years. They take office on January 1 of the even year. The Area Officers, with their duties briefly described, are comprised as follows:

**Area Delegate:** Selected by our Area to represent AA as a whole at the General Service Conference each April. Also mainly concerned with maintaining the two-way communication between our Area and the General Service Office. The Delegate obtains pre-conference information from the Area concerning agenda items for the General

Service Conference and reports to the Area the results of that Conference at the Post-Conference Assembly in May.

**Alternate Delegate:** Stands ready to assume the duties of the Delegate. Assists the Delegate in handling Traditions problems and anonymity breaks. The Alternate Delegate also is an advisor to the host committees for Assemblies and the State Convention.

**Area Chair:** Has overall responsibility for the operations of the Area, including: facilitating the business meetings; appointing service committee members; setting the agenda for business meetings; updating Area Guidelines; attending certain regional functions; helping service committees as needed; attending District meetings when possible; appointing ad hoc committees to address specific issues as needed.

**Alternate Chair:** Stands ready to assume the duties of the Area Chair. Provides orientations at Assemblies and coordinates the Area Service Workshop program.

**Secretary:** Prepares minutes of all Area Assemblies and Administrative Committee meetings. Distributes copies of those minutes, as directed, to the Newsletter Editor.

**Treasurer:** Records and reports all Group contributions and other sources of revenue to the Area as well as disbursements of funds. Participates heavily in preparation of the annual budget for the Area.

**Registrar:** Maintains current and accurate Group, Meeting, and Area Committee information. Also, provides Area Registration at Assemblies.

## AREA SERVICE COORDINATORS

Area Service Coordinators are usually referred to as Coordinators. Members are elected at the November Assembly in odd years. They take office on January 1 of even years. The Coordinators are voting members of the Arizona Area Committee.

Arizona Area Service Committees include:

1. Archives
2. Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC)
3. Correctional Facilities
4. Finance
5. Grapevine
6. Literature
7. Meeting List Editor
8. Newsletter
9. Public Information (PI)
10. Remote Communities
11. Spanish
12. Treatment

The Website Committee is not a standing committee, but a committee that is an extension of the Public Information Coordinator position. It has no vote. The Area Webservant works with the PI Committee on website issues.

All District Committee Members (DCMs) and District Committee Member Chairs (DCMCs) are noting members at the Area Assemblies. If a DCM or DCMC is not present at the Assembly, the Alternate DCM carries the vote.

## THE GSRs VOICE AND VOTE AT THE AREA ASSEMBLIES

At the assemblies the GSR's are both voting members and collectively form a majority of all the voting members. As such, they should make every effort to attend every Assembly. All Area matters that either have an effect on the Area's finances, the conduct of Area business, or a direct impact on all the Groups are presented and ratified, rejected or revised by the Assembly.

We become informed about what is going on by attending Area Assemblies and discussing issues with others who are in a good position to have experience and information to share on most issues.

In this way the Assemblies meet their purpose of strengthening A.A. as a whole by carrying our message in the best way possible for our Area. Again, participation by the GSR is the key link in this vital area of necessary two-way communication between the members of their Group and the larger structure of A.A.

## ARIZONA AREA HANDBOOK

The Arizona Area handbook is available on the Area Website, [www.area03.org](http://www.area03.org). It contains a wealth of current and historical information on how our Area conducts business, references the suggested qualifications to hold Area office, as well as references to other A.A. literature which contain more complete descriptions of Area officers qualifications and duties. We strongly suggest that each GSR obtain a copy of the Area Handbook, as well as a copy of The A.A. Service Manual Combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service, by Bill W.

# SECTION IV

## THE DISTRICTS

The Area is further divided into County Districts, with a DCMC for each County District. County Districts are broken down into Sub-Districts with a DCM for each Sub-District.

A Sub-District is usually a small geographic part of the Area. In Arizona, we have two Hispanic Sub-Districts, one in the Maricopa County area and one in the Tucson area.

The two Hispanic Sub-Districts include all Hispanic Groups in their location, no matter where each particular Group is located.

## DISTRICT MEETINGS

A District is usually composed of from six to twenty A.A. Groups. Each Group's GSR represents their Group at the District meetings, usually held once a month. Although the format for the conduct of the business is determined autonomously by each District, a typical meeting includes:

1. Reports to the GSRs from the District Committee Member (DCM).
2. Reports from the Groups via the GSR.
3. Discussion of Group problems.
4. Discussion of the business of the previous or upcoming Assembly.
5. Discussions of special events such as workshops that the District may be organizing for the general fellowship.
6. Perhaps a presentation on some aspect of service.

## THE DISTRICT COMMITTEE MEMBER

Each Sub-District elects a District Committee Member (DCM) who conducts District meetings, represents the conscience of the District as a voting member at the Area Assemblies, and is a member of the Area Committee.

The primary purpose of the DCM is to facilitate Sub-District meetings, and stimulate as many Groups as possible to be an active part of A.A. as a whole, through representation and participation. Also, they assist the efforts of the GSRs. Many Districts assign additional duties to the DCM and his or her alternate. Please see The A.A. Service Manual, Chapter III, for a more complete description of DCMs and their duties.

DCMs are elected, by the GSRs in a District, for a two year term.

## OTHER ENTITIES SERVING A.A.

No Group can really exist in total isolation in their communities and usually has some sort of contact with the larger surrounding community of A.A. that contributes to the overall maintenance of the Group. This contact, or cooperation, may be with the local Intergroup or Central Office (if only as a source of literature) or other service entities such as the District, the District's and Area's service committees, as well as Area Assemblies. For this, a GSR is needed to carry the Group's conscience to the larger structure and likewise to take issues back to the Group such as those pending before the upcoming Arizona Area Assembly and the General Service Conference held each year in April in New York.

# SECTION V

## THE GROUP

The fundamental unit in Alcoholics Anonymous is the Group; and, the Groups are the top of the chart. We will work our way down from there. (See The A.A. Service Manual Chapter II for charts of the Group and the general service structures, and the Arizona Area Handbook for a chart of the service structure of the Arizona Area.) Note that A.A. is loosely organized almost directly in reverse of the normal corporate or department chart we are used to seeing. Hopefully, internal matters within any Group are resolved at the business meeting of the Group by:

1. Involving as many members of the Group as possible.
2. Expressing the widest range of points of view on the subject.
3. Allowing enough time for the member to take all information into consideration before any final decision is made on an issue.
4. Thus resulting in an informed Group conscience.

## YOUR HOME GROUP

The relationship of the GSRs with their Group is probably the most important and, hopefully, a most fluid and open one. The best way to start to become effective is to attend the meetings of your Home Group on a regular basis. This gets you acquainted with the members of the Group and their ideas and also gives you some credibility when you make suggestions and reports. Only by attending Group meetings regularly can we stay informed of our Group's affairs. People in General Service – particularly the GSRs are generally known as the Guardians of our Traditions.

If your Group has a Steering Committee, the GSR should be an active part of it; giving regular reports to the Group on service activities and brief reports on important issues discussed at the District and Area meetings.

Just as a personal inventory helps us to maintain a healthy sobriety by revealing our strengths and weaknesses, so an annual Group Inventory can flag areas that may need some focused Group attention. A good starting format for this inventory may be found in the pamphlet *The A.A. Group*.

The General Service Office has a publication, Box 4-5-9, which is produced bimonthly and contains many articles of general interest to the entire fellowship. Since the GSR is listed at GSO as the mail contact for their Group, they automatically receive a copy which should be read and then shared with your Group. For the nominal cost of \$6.00 per year, a Group may receive a bulk subscription of ten copies of each issue. Often just a simple exposure to the availability of this newfound hidden resource is enough to get a Group interested in subscribing. Box 4-5-9 is a valuable resource for discussion and could also be tied into the GRS's report.

Other areas in which the GSR can be of service to the Group include the Group's finances. It is suggested that a Group retain a Prudent Reserve of money to cover any potential extraordinary cost that may be incurred, as well as one to three months regular

expenses. This reserve is retained after the Group's expenses have been paid. These expenses may, and probably should, include supporting the GSR in his/her duties directly related to the position. Such expenses might be for traveling to District meetings and Area Assemblies.

## DUTIES OF THE GSR

Now, let's focus on the duties of a GSR in a bit more detail. The GSR has the job of:

1. Linking their Group with A.A. as a whole.
2. Representing the voice of the Group's conscience.
3. Reporting it to the DCM and the Delegate, who pass this on to the Conference and the rest of A.A.
4. Bringing the problems and remedies that affect A.A. unity, health, and growth back to their Group.

In this sense, the Conference can feel that it is acting for A.A. as a whole only to the extent that the GSR keeps the Group informed and can gather and communicate the Group's conscience.

In general there are three areas in which the GSRs have their major responsibilities, each of which involves a two-way relationship with:

1. The Group
2. The District
3. The General Service Area

Please read The A.A. Service Manual, Chapter II, and the Pamphlet GSR: Perhaps the Most Important Job in A.A. for further information on your job and duties.

## REPORTS TO THOSE YOU SERVE

When giving reports at your Group, or District, it is probably best to be brief. Things you might present to the District are:

1. Any new Group officers or other service position holders.
2. Who your Alternate GSR is.
3. What the average attendance is at Group meetings.
4. How your Group divides its funds for contributions.
5. Any problems, (alcoholism coupled with a mental illness, non-alcoholic addicts, lack of interest in service, etc.)
6. Announce any upcoming events and any Group activities.

Things that you might report to you Group include:

1. News of any events or workshops you learned about at the District meeting.
2. New District officers and other service people.
3. Try to report on things that you think the Group can relate to or is interested or involved in.

4. If there is an issue coming up that will require your vote, try to explain it as simply, fully, and fairly as possible so that they can arrive at an informed Group conscience.
5. With a bit of practice, you can probably work in a piece of information that will provoke a question and get the discussion started.

You may not personally agree with your Group's conscience but if you have done your job correctly and discussed it enough, you will have no problem in abiding by it; and can rightly feel good about it, too.

Probably the most important thing that you can do as a GSR is to become an informed one. This serves both us personally and A.A. as a whole. The more you know, the more you can share from personal experience and the more credible your voice will become.

### ATTANEDING DISTRICT MEETINGS

There are really very few completely new and original problems that develop in Groups, so our continuity of experience is extremely valuable to the new GSR. The GSRs may share with their fellow GSRs and the DCM at the District meetings how they dealt with such matters and with what success. Their experience may be helpful to another Group.

Also, at the District meetings, agenda items that require action at the next Area Assembly can be discussed. This is a kind of middle ground where such discussion makes us better informed and able to take back to our Group any business where a Group conscience is needed. We can then take this conscience back to the Assembly and make our voice heard.

### ROTATION

In most Groups, the GSR is elected to a two year term. DMCs and Area officers likewise serve two years. Since rotation is an essential part of service, it is important to have an Alternate GSR to learn something about the job before they assume the responsibility that goes with it. Having someone in the wings who is prepared will give you the freedom to go into, and experience other levels of service without feeling that your job is unfinished because there is no one to take your place.

If you've been elected a GSR without any training, don't despair. Ask the former GSR, or your DCM, for copies of past District meeting and Area Assembly minutes, read the previous reports, if any, from your Group to the District, and learn what is being discussed at the Area level. It is an adage in A.A. that by the time you have fully learned how to do your current job – it is time to rotate out of it. Remember, we strive for progress, not perfection.

And, if we hold any job beyond its' usual term, we are denying someone else the opportunity to learn and grow as we have. It will seem frustrating at times because you may think that nobody in the Group is listening or cares about what you have to say.

Then, sometime you will find yourself amazed by being asked a question relating something you thought was dead and buried months ago. Or your Group asks you to deal with a question in terms of how it relates to the A.A. Traditions. Those times are part of what makes it all rewarding in the end. So keep coming back and ask questions until you feel you have, or know how to get, an answer.

## A WORD ABOUT COMMITMENT

Commitment in terms of recovery, means recovering some of those basic principles which all of us were taught as children, but which we lost somewhere in the pursuit of self.

As members of the General Service Structure, those principles that we must now demonstrate as a Trusted Servant include willingness, self-sacrifice, honesty, consideration of others, thoughtfulness, love, tolerance and, most of all, basic etiquette.

1. Do we show up when we say we will?
2. Are we on time?
3. Do we mark our A.A. commitments on the calendar and then work around them, or do we attend only if it doesn't interfere with our own pleasure?
4. When we are unable to make an event in which the Group should be represented, do we arrange for our alternate to be there?
5. Do we keep our alternates well-informed and involved?
6. Do we attend as many service activities as possible in order to become better informed, or do we do the least possible required?
7. Do we tend to our responsibilities cheerfully or portray them as a drag?
8. Are we able to offer criticism lovingly and based on the application of our three legacies, or do we let personalities get in the way?

All of these things are important to being committed to service in A.A., but the bottom line is: are we giving in proportion to what has been given to us? Gratitude is an action word. It is something we show, not just something we talk about. If we give only a tenth of what has been given to us, we should all be shining examples of service and commitment in A. A.

## THE INFORMED GROUP CONSCIENCE

The following is taken from Workshop One from the thirty-fourth General Service Conference: **The Second Tradition:** For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority... A loving god as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants... they do not govern.

**Concept XII, Warranty Four:** "That all important decisions should be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity." "Here on the one hand we erect a safeguard against any hasty or overbearing authority of a simple majority; and, on the other hand, it takes notice of the rights and the frequent wisdom of minorities, however small. This principle further guarantees that all matters of

importance, time permitting, will be extensively debated, and that such debates will continue until a really heavy majority can support every critical decision....”

### **What is the Group Conscience?**

### **How does the Group Conscience differ from a Group opinion or a majority vote?**

The Group conscience strives for unanimity through enlightenment, spirituality, and the practice of our principles in all of our affairs. To be fully informed requires a willingness to listen to minority opinions through full discussion. On sensitive issues, the Group works slowly, discouraging formal motions until the Group has a clear sense of its views. Placing principles before personalities, the Group is wary of dominate opinions. The Group conscience is the aggregate of experience a Group develops after applying the Traditions and Concepts to a question.

The difference between a Group conscience and a majority vote or Group opinion is that one or more of the elements described above are missing.

### **How does “A Loving God” express Himself through the Group Conscience?**

Groups find their way past ignorance, prejudice and self-will on an individual basis by practicing the Twelve Steps which enable us to practice humility, patience, tolerance, kindness and love – emphasizing principles before personalities. Through the Steps, we learn to overcome self-will and open the way to Group conscience. When tempers flare, an informed chairperson postpones discussion until those tempers cool, allowing time for prayer and meditation. (One workshop mentioned the Serenity Prayer.)

A knowledge of A.A. history and a willingness to listen to experience were also cited as important factors. We can listen for a quiet minority voice which may be the true expression of a loving God by allowing time for all to share and, especially, the minority to be heard. The importance of the minority view was stressed in most workshop sessions.

### **How is discussion prior to a Group conscience handled in your Area?**

In most Areas, members are informed, in advance, that a Group conscience will be sought; and all agreed that advance notice should be given – with two weeks suggested, if possible, to acquire necessary information. Most agreed that members are encouraged to participate in discussion; but several suggested more encouragement is needed, and this could be the GSR’s responsibility. It was mentioned that a know-it-all in the Groups can be annoying, but that the Group gains strength by tolerating him or her.

There was general agreement that, in most instances, not enough time is allowed for discussion in order to hear both sides of an issue.

Most workshops indicated that a lack of unanimity does not mean a lack of Group conscience. Lack of unanimity is also a Group conscience to do nothing. Sometimes the Group conscience is that we do not agree. If a Group cannot find the voice of conscience, a Group inventory may be needed. If a Group conscience cannot be developed, the Group eventually dies.

### **In what ways can we stimulate a better understanding and application of the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts?**

By personally applying and relating the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts to our own sobriety, we can stimulate an interest by example. As trusted servants, we can include experience with the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts in sharing our stories. Sponsorship and a Home Group need emphasis. A sponsor has the responsibility to encourage reading the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and other Conference approved literature.

Workshops and Panel discussions on the Steps, Traditions and Concepts stimulate discussion. And, it was suggested that these be held at Regional Forums as well as Area and District meetings.

Groups especially need stimulation in this effort. And, it is helpful to cite examples to the Traditions and Concepts pertinent to Group experiences. It was also suggested that Groups read the Steps at the beginning of their meetings to explain How It Works and, also read the Traditions to share Why it Works. The Concepts may be used a reference: find the one that fits the question.

### **How can we help the Groups understand that the Conference has the responsibility of action as the collective Group conscience for the entire fellowship?**

One workshop suggested that what takes place at the Conference does not become a Group conscience until the Delegates take the experience back to the Groups.

Full reports relating what was accomplished to Area needs are helpful. The membership feels part of the Conference through the Delegate's sharing of the activities.

Charts are helpful – especially the Structure Of The Fellowship chart in Chapter I of the A.A. Service Manual showing the relation between the A.A. Groups and the Conference. Information regarding matters coming before the Conference gives each Group a sense of participation in the Conference.

Regional service conferences such as the Regional Forum and PRAASA are helpful. Many Areas now have service structure schools for the GSRs making it possible for them to provide their Groups with an understanding of the Conference.

**FURTHERING YOUR GROWTH AND EDUCATION**

You will find it advantageous to attend all training sessions, workshops and seminars to get new ideas, and knowledge or clarification of principles. These include:

1. Other District and Area Workshops
2. Local unity days type events
3. Regional Service Assemblies

The Pacific Region A.A. Service Assembly (PRAASA) is held annually during the first weekend of March.

Regional Forums are held every two years in even numbered years.

WHAT ARE THESE REGIONAL ASSEMBLIES?

### **Pacific Regional Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly (PRAASA)**

The purpose of PRAASA is to develop greater unity among the members, Groups, and Areas of the Pacific Region, to encourage the exchange of ideas and to provide an opportunity for members to discuss pertinent aspects of A.A. Recovery, Unity, and Service should always be the primary purpose for each Assembly. The thought of how we can better serve Alcoholics Anonymous should never be compromised. PRAASA is held annually the first weekend of March. It consists of two days of presentations concerning our three legacies and matters on the agenda of the upcoming General Service Assembly. Time for questions is always provided.

There are roundtable discussions concerning every facet of service. At these you will meet people from nine states all sharing a common bond of interest; whether that interest be in Public Information, finance or GSRs. All share their experience, strength and hope with others with similar interests.

PRAASA is a gathering of, in recent years, about one thousand people all striving to learn how to better carry the message of A.A. This Assembly is hosted by a different Area each year.

### **Regional Forum**

Regional Forums originated in 1975 through a good idea on the part of the late Chair of the Board Emeritus, Dr. Jack Norris. They are weekend sharing sessions designed to enhance and widen communications among service and potential service people, and representatives of the General Service Board, Staff, and Grapevine Staff. At the invitation of a Region, four Forums are held each year. Since our U.S./Canada structure is made up of eight Regions, a Regional Forum is held every other year in a particular Region, and on a rotating basis.

There is no registration fee for a Regional Forum. The General Service Board covers the expenses of hotel meeting rooms, transportation and rooms for it's Board and Staff

personnel. Many Areas/Districts/Groups cover or defray the transportation and hotel room expenses of the service people representing them at a Forum. A Regional Forum is not a formal, decision-making body, thus no formal actions come about as a result of Forums. Rather, Forums provide a unique opportunity to share valuable experience, ask questions, and spark new ideas.

## SPONSORSHIP IN SERVICE

Sponsorship in A.A. is basically the same, whether in helping another individual's recovery or in service to a Group. It can be defined as one alcoholic who has made some progress in recovery and/or performance or service, sharing this experience with another alcoholic who is just starting the journey. Both types of service spring from the spiritual aspects of the Program.

Individuals may feel that they have more to offer in one area than in another. It is the Service Sponsor's responsibility to present the various aspects of service: setting up a meeting, working on a committee, or participating in a conference, among others. In this matter, it is important for the Service Sponsor to help individuals understand the distinction between serving the needs of the Fellowship and meeting the personal needs of another Group member.

The Service Sponsor begins by encouraging the member to become active in their Home Group: coffee, literature, cleanup, attending business meetings or Intergroup meetings. The Service Sponsor should keep in mind that all members will not have the desire or qualifications to move beyond certain levels and, thus, the Service Sponsor might help find tasks appropriate to the individual's skills and interests. Whatever level of service one performs, all are intended to reach the same end: sharing the overall responsibilities of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Eventually, the Service Sponsor encourages the individual member interested in this form of service to attend District meetings and to read about the history and structure of alcoholics Anonymous. At this point, the individual beginning this work should begin to understand the responsibilities of service work, as well as feel the satisfaction of yet another form of Twelfth Step work. Such individuals should be encouraged to take an active part in District activities and consider being elected to alternate positions in the District so as to learn about the responsibilities of various jobs in the service structure.

During this process it is important for the individual to continue to learn about the three Legacies: Unity, Recover, and Service, and to understand that the principle of rotation not only allows them to move on in service, but also gives newer members the privilege of serving. Rotation also allows them to understand that no one should hold on to a position of trust long enough to feel a proprietary interest and thereby discourage newcomers from service.

Now, through knowledge and experience, the newer member is aware that service is our most important product after sobriety. With this knowledge, the individual is able to share their vision with others and ensure the future of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The above section on service sponsorship has been quoted directly from the A.A. pamphlet Questions and Answers on Sponsorship, with permission.

## SECTION VI

### PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Now, if you start doing all the things indicated above, you'll be active and find yourself attending many meetings. Some of these may seem boring to you. This is not unusual. The main reason for this is that you are a Newcomer in a whole different sense of the word. Try to remember how strange and confusing some of those first A.A. meetings that you attended seemed. Keeping this in mind may make it easier.

You may not know any of the people there, or fully understand what is being discussed; possibly just as it was at your first A.A. meeting. But similarly, everyone there was once also a newcomer and know what it feels like. Talk to people. Ask questions. Find out how to get information.

You'll find that people involved in service are a friendly bunch and love to take time to share and explain this most valuable part of recovery with new people.

Service work takes every bit as much energy as learning and working the Steps. It is probably more difficult to explain and share with the general member until we have told enough people not currently in service what it is really all about; which is (participating in an informed Group conscience, the only recognized authority in A.A.) so that this dimension becomes a normal part of recovery for all of us.

This organizational method; Region, Area, District and Group may seem complicated and overly structured at first but it is really in accord with our Tradition of "least possible organization." It has been tested over time as providing the most balanced way to arrive at the only recognized authority in A.A., which is expressed as an Informed Group Conscience which must be communicated to others when it deals with issues affecting A.A. as a whole. Perhaps this will be clearer if we start at the top of the A.A. structure.

### SUMMARY OF THE SERVICE STRUCTURE

Therefore, the structure from the Top Down is:

The Group: is part of  
The District: is part of

The Area: is part of  
The Region: all part of  
The General Service Conference.

## TOOLS FOR THE GSR (SOME VITAL AIDS)

Some of the reading material seems tough at first; but study it, discuss it, and see how it relates to other parts of the program. It will surprise you someday soon when it comes alive and becomes part of you and your message. All of our A.A. literature is important but those pieces most directly related to service include:

1. *The A.A. Service Manual Combined With The Twelve Concepts for World Service (booklet)*
2. *The A.A. Group (pamphlet)*
3. *A.A. Comes of Age (book)*
4. *A.A. Tradition – How it Developed (pamphlet)*
5. *Supporting the A.A. Support System (pamphlet)*
6. *Circles of Love and Service (pamphlet)*
7. *Inside A.A. (pamphlet)*
8. *The GSR May Be The Most Important Job In A.A. (pamphlet)*
9. *The Twelve Concepts for World Service Illustrated (pamphlet)*
10. *The “White Sheet” What A.A. Does and Does Not Do (one page flyer)*
11. *A.A. Literature Catalog*
12. *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (book)*
13. *The Arizona Area Handbook: This Handbook is available at [www.Area03.org](http://www.Area03.org) and explains how our Area conducts business , charts our service structure, contains maps of our Districts, and tells how a District or a combination of two or three Districts may host an Assembly.*
14. *Final Conference Report: A detailed report from the General Service Conference held in New York City in April of each year.*

*Using these you will get both a good overview of the service picture and enough detail to deal in specifics.*

## IN CONCLUSION

Concept IX tells us: *“Good service leaders .. are at all Levels indispensable – for our future functioning and safety.”*

Leadership starts with informed Group members and GSRs many of whom go on to become DMCs, Area Service Committee Chairs, Area Officers, Delegates and Trustees.

In order to fulfill the responsibility that our Group has given us we must become as knowledgeable as possible. If we keep an open mind and a willingness to learn we soon find that we are the ones that benefit.

## **In so helping to carry the message more usefully are we not doing what the 12<sup>th</sup> Step asks of us?**

### GLOSSARY OF COMMON A.A. TERMS

**Alternate:** A General Service worker who, according to local autonomy and needs, is elected at the Group, District, or Area levels to participate with, assist in and, in appropriate circumstances, assume the duties of a principal officer holder, i.e., Alternate GSR, Alternate Delegate.

**Archives:** A collection of A.A. memorabilia. The Archivist functions might include collection, indexing, storing and exhibiting original and reproduced local, national and international A.A. material such as newspaper and magazine articles, tape recordings of important A.A. functions, oral histories of older members, Group, and District histories, minutes of Area Assemblies and District meetings.

**Area:** A geographical division within a State or Province. Normally there is one Area for each State or Province. Where there is high population, a State or Province may be divided in two or more Areas.

**Area Assembly:** An Area Assembly is a periodic meeting of the GSRs DCMs, Area service committee chairs and Area officers. All A.A. members are encouraged to attend, but only specific members of the Assembly are entitled to vote. From among the members of the Assembly, they elect their Delegate and Alternate and the Area officers and their alternates. The Assembly is a basic unit of the General Service Structure and conducts or helps coordinate most of the business for the Area.

**Autonomous:** Our Fourth Tradition states: "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole." This means that we have been given the courage to declare each A.A. group an individual entity, strictly reliant on its own conscience as a guide to action. In charting this enormous expanse of freedom, we found it necessary to post only two storm signals: A group ought not do anything which would greatly injure A.A. as a whole, nor ought it affiliate itself with anything or anybody else.

*The above was quoted from page 147 of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, published by A.A. World Service, Inc., with permission.*

**Box 4-5-9:** A bimonthly publication of the General Service Office, the title of which is also the New York mailing address of GSO. (Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10136) The masthead of this informative mini-magazine consists of the words "*News and Notes From the General Service Office of A.A.*" It includes such items of interest as: a calendar of important local, national and international events; questions and problems of GSO about A.A.; committee reports from Public Information, Cooperation With The Professional Community, Cooperation With Treatment Facilities, Correctional Facilities Committee, Hospitals, Finance, and others; vignettes and anecdotes from A.A. people;

history and events; as well as much other information of interest to the dedicated and/or curious member. Many fruitful ideas for a GSR's reports to the Group can be derived from the pages of Box 4-5-9.

**Conference:** Delegates, the Board of Trustees and the GSO Staff. This meeting keeps the individual A.A. member and GSO in close, supportive contact with each other through the general service chain. This chain is made up of several links: The Trustee's Committees working closely with the comparable Delegates' Committees (such as P.I., CPC, Treatment Facilities, and Finance) the Delegate from and back to the Area; and the individual A.A. member through the GSR. In the Conference, each Area has one representative Delegate who confers with the ninety three other Delegates, twenty-one trustees, GSO Staff members and representatives from the two corporations – A.A. World Services, Inc. and the A.A. Grapevine, Inc. See "What is the Conference Plan?" in the A.A. Service Manual.

**Delegate:** The man or woman elected, for a two year term, at the Area General Assembly to represent the Area at the annual meeting of the General Service Conference in New York. The Delegate carries the Group conscience of our Area to the Conference and brings back to us the results of the Conference meeting.

**District:** A geographic sub-division within a general service Area created in order to come closer to the individual A.A. Group.

**District Committee Member (DCM):** An experienced GSR who has been elected by the other GSRs within a District. The DCM is primarily responsible for coordinating and assisting the efforts of the GSRs in the District. Many Districts assign further duties to their DCM.

**General Service Representative (GSR):** An A.A. member who is elected by a Group to represent that Group's opinion in discussions at the District and Area levels. The GSR also keeps the Group as fully informed as possible of important decisions, discussions and events occurring within A.A. at the District, Area, Regional, National and International levels. They are further responsible for seeing that the best possible A.A. representatives are chosen to serve the whole fellowship by voting for the DCM of their District, Area officers, the Delegate to the Conference and their alternates.

**Region:** A grouping of several States or Provinces from which a Regional Trustee is elected to the Board of Trustees. There are eight Regions in the Conference – six in the United States and two in Canada.

**Third Legacy:** Recovery and unity are our first two legacies handed down to us from the Founders of A.A. Our Third Legacy is Service: The sum total of all A.A. services, from the twelfth step call to A.A.'s coast-to-coast and world-wide activities.

**Third Legacy Procedure:** A voting procedure, unique to A.A. designed to help reduce some of the negative aspects of elections – such as personality clashes, ego battles

and dissatisfied minorities. See “What is Third Legacy Procedure?” in the A.A. Service Manual.

Trustee: The usual term, or name, for a member of A.A.’s General Service Board of Trustees. Currently the Board is made up of twenty-one Trustees including the eight Regional Trustees; all of whom are alcoholic. Seven of the other Trustees are “Class A” (non-alcoholic) and fourteen are “Class B” (alcoholic).

Twelve Concepts: As the Twelve Traditions are to the preservation and unity of Alcoholics Anonymous; so are the Twelve Concepts to General Service. They are a set of principles and practices intended to preserve service to A.A. and the still suffering alcoholic. They also protect the structure by which such service is made possible. (See The Twelve Concepts for World Service in the back portion of The A.A. Service Manual.

Warranties: The Twelfth Concept of World Service consists of The Six Warranties which are also Article 12 of the Conference Charter. These Warranties are considered, by some, to be the A.A. Bill Of Rights.

**Responsibility Statement: I am responsible...when anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help. I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that I am responsible.**