

**AN ORIENTATION GUIDE**

**for**

**THE NEW GENERAL SERVICE  
REPRESENTATIVE (GSR)**

General Service District 90 Solano County North  
Revised – August 2008



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## Welcome New GSRs!

Welcome to General Service! You have just become the link between your Group and the General Service Office in New York. As a GSR you now represent the voice of your *AA* Group's Conscience to the District, the Area, and the Area Assembly and ultimately to the General Service Conference held in New York each April.

Through your District Committee Member Chair (DCMC), \_\_\_\_\_ and your District Committee Member (DCM), \_\_\_\_\_, and your California Northern Coastal Area (CNCA) Delegate, \_\_\_\_\_, you will become the two-way link between your Group and the world of *AA* as a whole. You are also the reporter to your Group about the discussions and changes within the fellowship. Sound important? IT IS!

The General Service Representative (GSR) is perhaps the most important job in the entire service structure. You and your fellow GSRs all over the world have become the key to the Unity of *AA*. Your job will not only protect the right of the individual member to be heard and acknowledged, no matter how much of a minority opinion that represents, but it will ensure that any changes within *AA* as a whole come as a response to the needs of ALL *AA*, and not just the few. Therefore, your VOICE and your PARTICIPATION are vital so that your Informed Group's Voice is heard.

You have also become involved in a new dimension of 12th Step Work. You can help to ensure that your Group understands the meaning of "Conference Approved" *AA* literature and see that it is available to your Group. You help to ensure that your Group is listed with the General Service Office in New York by registering in your local District. Also, you help your Group to understand the importance of contributions to *AA* as a whole, i.e. CNCA, GSO or any other local *AA* Service entities deemed important to your Group.

MOST OF ALL, you are now vitally involved in making sure that the doors of your meetings remain open, that the Twelve Traditions are being practiced and understood, that your Group be well informed, and that your meeting is a safe haven for the suffering alcoholic.

We sincerely hope that this service will come to mean as much to you as it has to countless others.

**THE UNITY AND TRADITIONS OF AA DEPEND  
UPON YOUR COMMITMENT**

## What Is General Service?

Our co-founder, Bill W., writes:

*"Our Twelfth Step carrying the message is the basic service that AA Fellowship gives: this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, AA is more than a set of principles; it is a society of alcoholics in action. We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die.*

*Hence, an AA service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer--ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to AA.'s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all of these is our Third Legacy of Service.*

*Services include meeting places, hospital cooperation, and InterGroup offices; they mean pamphlets, books, and good publicity of almost every description. They call for committees, delegates, trustees and conferences...*

*These services, whether performed by individuals, Groups, areas or AA. as a whole... namely the General Services Office, AA World Services, Inc., The AA Grapevine, Inc., and our board of trustees, known legally as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous... "*

Bill W. 1951 (AA Service Manual pp S1 & S2)

Further in our Service Manual it states:

*"Today, the term general services is applied to all kinds of activities within the Conference Structure, carried on by area committees, delegates, trustees and the General Service Office staff and the Grapevine. Usually the services affect the fellowship as a whole."*

Service Manual pp S15

*"...BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED: That the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous should become, as of this date, July 3, 1955, the guardian of the Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, the perpetuators of the world services of our Society, the voice of the Group conscience of our entire Fellowship, and the sole successors of its co-founders, Doctor Bob and Bill."*

Appendix B., "A Resolution" Bill W. 1955 (AA. Service Manual pp S95-S96)

Bill continues:

*"We may not need a General Service Conference to insure our own recovery. We do need it to insure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from this room. We need it to insure the recovery of a child being born tonight, destined to alcoholism. We need it to provide, in keeping with our Twelfth Step, permanent haven for all alcoholics who, in the ages ahead, can find in AA that rebirth which brought us back to life.*

*"We need it because we, more than all others, are conscious of the devastating effect of the human urge for power and prestige which we must insure can never invade AA. We need it to insure AA against government, while insulating it against anarchy; we need it to protect AA against disintegration while preventing over integration. We need it so that Alcoholics Anonymous alone is the ultimate repository of its Twelve Steps its Twelve Traditions, and of all of its services.*

*"We need it to insure that changes within AA. come only as a response to the needs and the wants of all AA., and not of any few. We need it to insure that the doors of the halls of AA. never have locks on them, so that all people for all time who have an alcoholic problem may enter these halls unasked and feel welcome. We need it to insure that Alcoholics Anonymous never asks of anyone who needs us what his or her race is, what his or her creed is, what his or her social position."*

Bernard Smith, Class A Trustee 1954 (AA. Service Manual pp S19)

## **GSR's Roles & Responsibilities**

The following is a **suggested** outline of some of the roles/responsibilities you now face as a new GSR. More thorough guidelines and hints can be found on subsequent pages related to this outline.

### **Relationship of the GSR to his/her Group**

The GSR is the primary link between his/her Group, the district, the area, and AA as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

### **Relationship of the GSR to the District & CNCA**

Attend monthly District Meeting, Sub-district Meeting, Sharing Sessions and Unity Days. Attend Area meeting as non-voting participant, and attend Area Assemblies as voting representatives of your Group.

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<sup>1</sup> See AA Service Manual, Chapter Two "The Group and its G.S.R."

## The Home Group

Please note: **It is strongly suggested that the Group you represent BE your Home Group.**

As a GSR your relationship to your Home Group is probably the most important and hopefully the most fluid and open one. Your effectiveness **DEPENDS** upon your regular attendance at all meetings of your Home Group. This gets you acquainted with the members of the Group (the people who consider it their Home Group) and their ideas. Also, it gives you some credibility when you make suggestions or offer your reports.

The GSR is often referred to as: "The Guardian of the Traditions."

The GSR should be an active part of the Group, giving regular reports on service activities and brief reports on important issues discussed at District and Area Meetings. This helps keep time taken away from the recovery part of the meeting "to a minimum."

Just as a personal inventory helps us to maintain a healthy sobriety by revealing our strengths and weaknesses, so does a regular "Group Inventory" which can flag areas that may need some focused Group attention. A good starting format for this may be found in the pamphlet "The AA. Group" or "The Traditions Checklist". Encourage your Group to periodically conduct its own Inventory.

**Remember.** the members of your Home Group are the only people you need concern yourself with regarding getting an Informed Group Conscience. **These are the people you serve.** The Group Sharing Session<sup>2</sup> and Informed Group Conscience outlines<sup>3</sup> will guide you. Part of your first job may be to define yourself and your Group..."Just what is a Home Group anyway?"; and ..."Why is it so important?"

Our District experience suggests a **Home Group is:**

- Where we accept responsibility to be available to the newcomers.
- The one Group we attend regularly.
- The Group where we attend business meetings.
- The Group where we express our opinions, and form our Group conscience for AA
- The Group we are personally committed to serving with our time and 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition contributions.
- The place we vote on issues affecting other Groups or AA as whole

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<sup>2</sup> See "Steps to Achieving an Informed Group Conscience", Page 7 and "Sharing Sessions & Steering Committees", Page 9

<sup>3</sup> See "Steps to Achieving an Informed Group Conscience", Page 7

## Informed Group Conscience

Tradition Two, "For our Group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our Group conscience."

The late Dean K., Past Delegate from California Northern Interior Area, said there are two ways to arrive at a Group Conscience: "The competitive way permits the person with the loudest voice to push his ideas across, take a vote and come up with a 'majority' decision. This is not an informed Group Conscience. In the cooperative way, Group members come together in mutual trust to arrive at a Group decision, not one individual's personal triumph."<sup>4</sup>

### **What Is An Informed Group Conscience and How Is It Achieved?**

"The Group conscience is the collective conscience of the Group membership and thus represents substantial unanimity on an issue before definitive action is taken." This... "implies that pertinent information has been studied and all views have been heard before the Group votes."<sup>5</sup>

This reminds us that Concept One states "the final responsibility for AA. World Services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole fellowship." No one person or Group should make our decisions for us, no matter how persuasive they may be. As stated in Tradition Two (short form) "...Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern."

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<sup>4</sup> "Box 459" – Vol. 35, No. 1; February/March 1989

<sup>5</sup> "The AA Group" pamphlet, pp 26-27

## Steps To Achieving an Informed Group Conscience

1. The GSR (or other chosen chairperson of the Group) informs him/herself about the topic to be discussed. (Conference Agenda Topics, Area Motions, etc.)--**GATHER KNOWLEDGE**
2. The GSR presents the information on the topic to the Home Group, giving enough background material so all participants are informed on both sides of the topic. The GSR should be as unbiased as possible on the topic.
3. Ask each member to share in turn, being sure to allow all to share once before anyone shares a second time. Remember, this is not a general discussion meeting, but a method of arriving at unanimity on a specific subject.
4. Remember to carefully listen to any minority opinions.
5. Continue the process until substantial Group unanimity is achieved. (This is usually considered 2/3 of the participants.) More than one sharing session may be needed--**GO SLOWLY...REMEMBER, THERE IS NO HURRY IN AA.**
6. Remember, you are striving for a Group Conscience, not a "popular vote". Be patient and practice AA principles as the process continues
7. Once a Group Conscience is achieved, present a summary of their conscience to the Group as a whole including minority opinion.
8. Pass the Group Conscience and any minority opinion on to the appropriate person(s), be it the Delegate, Area Committee, District or Sub District.

“Not always understood, Group Conscience as expressed in Tradition Two is a powerful spiritual concept that makes it possible for people of diverse backgrounds and temperament to rise above personal ambition and unite in a common purpose; to stay sober and extend the hand of AA to the alcoholic who still suffers.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “Box 459” – Vol. 35, No. 1 February/March (refer also to Concepts 1 & 2)

## Sources

- *The AA. Group – Pamphlet:* pp 26-27
- *Box 459:* Volume 35, No.1 February/March 1989
- *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions:* Narrative on Tradition 2 with Bill's account of employment at Towns' Hospital
- *The AA. Service Manual:* page S15... "Conference Structure"
- *The AA. service Manual:* pages S38 "Sharing Sessions"
- *The Twelve Concepts of World Service:* Concepts 1 & 2 (Concept 1 is rooted in Tradition 2)
- *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions:* pp 189, Tradition 2 & 4 in the long form
- *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age:* pp 99-101
- *The Language of the Heart:* Various writings relative to the concept of Group Conscience

## Sharing Sessions & Steering Committees

### The Group Steering Committee meeting

Many Groups have Steering Committee or monthly Business Meetings, which conduct routine business and report back to the Group as a whole. "...question's related to Group practices, selecting ...candidates for office, and other Group issues are often tackled by the steering committee... which goes to the Group for its members' Group-conscience decision."<sup>7</sup>

Traditionally, Steering Committee/Business Meetings are reserved for issues pertaining to matters within the Group. These issues generally do not affect AA as a whole and can be solved within the confines of the individual Group. When such issues arise, the GSR can often become a mediator and may be asked about the matter regarding the Traditions and their effect on the Group and its place within the fellowship of AA.

The significance of steering committee decisions is that they generally arise from short discussions followed by limited vote. Not all Group members (i.e., those who attend the meeting) are commonly asked to participate in the discussion or allowed to vote. This is accepting the trusted servant's decision in matters affecting the Group. The results are then reported to the Group, often with no opportunity for debate at the Group level.

### Steering Committee versus Sharing Session

The Steering Committee concept differs from a Sharing Session in the limited participation by Group members in both the discussion and reporting of the issues, and the fact that in most Steering Committee questions, the matter is discussed and a decision is made in a relatively short period of time. The Sharing Session, through the Informed Group Conscience, seeks out the input of all Group members and allows for the hearing of the Minority Opinion followed by possible change in the outcome by the Group. The Informed Group Conscience usually is achieved over a long period of time, with much discussion by all participants.<sup>8</sup>

**The pamphlet "The AA Group... Where It All Begins" is a resource all GSRs should be familiar with. Please read it for further information.**

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<sup>7</sup> The AA. Group- "where it all begins" pp 24

<sup>8</sup> Ibid and prior section "The Informed Group Conscience" Sources: Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age- pp 121

## Reporting To an Assembly

When giving reports, it is best to be brief and to the point without omitting the essence of the Group conscience. Reporting can be best accomplished if you follow three simple requirements in your report:

1. A concisely prepared statement.
2. Clear presentation of both majority and minority views.
3. Concentration and Attention

When the Group has arrived at an informed Group conscience, **WRITE IT OUT!** Then practice reading it aloud to get used to hearing it. Try to limit the report to three minutes or less. This might be difficult. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Use your service sponsor, DCM, DCMC or other District Officers as resources. Limit your report to the topic, leaving out how you got the Group Conscience.

Listen to the prior speakers before you take your turn at the microphone. This helps you reduce anxiety and allows you to practice the final requirement of editing your statements. If a GSR before you has covered an item in your report then remove it from your report. This does not mean that you may edit yourself out of a report on a topic. If you feel being responsible to your Group means sharing it at the microphone, do it!

Step up, identify yourself, using first and last name, and your Group and make your report. You may want to say "Group X shares the same opinion for the same reasons about item Y with this additional reason..." or some other variation, and continue in three minutes or less.

Always remember, you can give your written report to your DCM, DCMC or another District Officer and request it be passed on. You can also pass your full report via mail, telephone, or email remembering that the ultimate goal is to have the Informed Group Conscience of your Group "heard" by the appropriate person(s).

## Supporting the GSR

Being of service to your Group in Alcoholics Anonymous should **never become a matter of money**. Anyone wishing to serve should not have to concern him or herself with whether they can afford it. There is a lot of time commitment asked of GSRs. Therefore, as Group members, we must be willing to pay for what we want.

You will be asked to attend a lot of service functions as your Group's representative. Your Group should be advised of the travel/lodging costs surrounding the meetings/assemblies. Although it is possible to carpool and share lodging accommodations to cut down on expenditures, each Group should take a personal commitment toward support of their GSRs.

Seventh Tradition support begins with the Group and GSR expenses are a part of that responsibility.

## Service Meetings

During your term as a GSR, you will be attending various types of service meetings. These service meetings will be a lot like your first AA meeting--confusing. However, you will find that by your continued attendance at these meetings and the reading and study of the Service Manual and other literature, this confusion will gradually clear up. You will find that service can become very rewarding.

You may want to get a Service Sponsor. If you don't have one, ask your DCM or DCMC about the service questions that arise. You can soon get to know these people, and they can be of great help to you. You will learn how to participate in the process of reaching an **informed** group conscience. You will also learn how to speak and vote using your "right of decision" for your Group as their "trusted servant", based upon the information you learn through this process. Seeking and achieving an informed group conscience is vital in order to help keep AA strong so that strength can be passed along to future members. Attending service meetings is as important to the life of AA as attending Group meetings are to a life in recovery.

### Subdistrict Meetings

Each subdistrict has a DCM who will hold a monthly meeting with the GSRs, where you can learn about General Service and discuss Group concerns. In this way Groups are able to communicate with each other. At these meetings you will become informed of assemblies so that you will be prepared to take part. In addition, these meetings will help you learn about the General Service structure.

### District Meetings

North Solano District 90 Meetings are held once a month, on the first Wednesday. The purpose of these meetings is for the DCMs and GSRs to gather to discuss matters of importance to the District, the Area, and AA as a whole.

At the District Meeting, chaired by the DCMC, we will discuss motions made by Groups and other business that could affect AA and the District, Group concerns and other District activities (for example, Unity Days, GSR Sharing Sessions, and Subdistrict Meetings). The subdistricts will report on their activity and there will be committee reports from the following District Committees:

- Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community (PI/CPC)
- Literature/Grapevine (L/GV)
- Bridging the Gap (BTG)
- Any special committees formed for various activities for the District

You will also hear reports from the liaisons for the following Service Committees:

- North Solano Intergroup
- Hospital and Institutions (H&I)
- Northern California Council of Alcoholics Anonymous (NCCAA)
- Solano Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (SolypAA)

### **Area Service Committee Meetings**

California Northern Coastal Area (CNCA), is one of the largest Delegate Areas in population in AA. There are 92 areas in the United States and Canada. Each delegate represents a single area.

The Area holds monthly business meetings and is primarily attended by Area Officers, DCMCs, DCMs and past delegates and officers. GSRs are encouraged to attend. Attendance at the monthly meetings is a good way for the GSRs to learn more about General Service. The meetings are held at the Petaluma Community Center on the fourth (4th) Saturday of each month, except in December, when it is held on the 3rd Saturday (so as not to conflict with the holidays).

At the Area Meeting, our DCMC and DCMs are voting members and take North Solano's Group conscience to the Area Committee, Area Officers and our Delegate.

### **Area Assembly Meetings**

The Area Assembly is a meeting of the districts within CNCA. As a GSR you are a voting member of the Area Assembly. It is your responsibility to carry the Informed Group Conscience of your Group to the Assembly. There are four (4) Assemblies held each year; the Pre-Conference Assembly, the Post-Conference Assembly, the Summer Assembly and the Fall Assembly (in even years, the Fall Assembly is the Election Assembly).

**NOTE:** Attendance at your GSR Sharing Session, District, or Area meetings is where the Conference Agenda Items are discussed, thus, these meetings are very important.

### **Unity Day**

Unity Days are informative and fun events which expose members of North Solano to General Service. Unity Days are held two to four times a year. They promote unity and understanding of various AA topics pertaining to General Service.<sup>9</sup>

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

Pacific Region Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly is a Pacific Region-wide assembly held yearly in March to discuss AA issues and matters. The Pacific Region includes \_\_\_ Delegate Areas from California (5 Delegate Areas) Washington (2 Delegate Areas) and one each from Alaska, Arizona, Hawaii, Idaho, Hawaii and Oregon.

PRAASA is a way for the first-time newly elected Delegates to meet with those who have been in service for a year to help them prepare for the General Service Conference. This assembly permits GSRs, District and Area Officers to pool their information and share their views on the issues to be discussed at the General Service Conference (in New York).

At each PRAASA, Delegate Areas submit bids to host this event. The Delegates of the Pacific Region select the site by vote each year at the General Service Conference in New York.

### **Regional Forum**

Regional Forums are sponsored by the General Service Office in cooperation with the Delegates of each region. They are held every other year, each time in a different Area. In the Pacific Region, they

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<sup>9</sup> See District 90 Unity Day Guidelines

are held in the even years. They are attended by the Regional Trustees, several members of the General Service Board of Trustees, GSO Staff and members of AA World Services and the Grapevine Boards and Staff.

The main purpose of the Regional Forum is to bring the General Service Office to you. The Forum acquaints the GSRs and other service interested members in the region with the activities, accomplishments and plans of the service personnel associated with the General Service Conference. In addition, the Forum is equally important in keeping GSO informed of the grass roots sentiment and opinions in the region.

### **General Service Conference**

As your Group's GSR, you are the guardian of the Group Conscience. The thoughts and opinions expressed in Group Consciences are pooled at the District Meetings and the GSR Sharing Session meetings you will be attending; AND pooled again at the Area Assemblies.

The AA Group Conscience finally comes into focus for one long week each spring at the General Service Conference held in New York. Our Delegate carries our CNCA Group conscience, along with the right of decision, to the Conference. The Conference is the AA way of keeping our fellowship strong and healthy by looking for weaknesses to be corrected and new challenges to be met.

### **Concept XII**

"General Warranties of the Conference: In all its proceedings, the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the AA Tradition, taking great care that the Conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle; that none of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others: that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> "The Twelve Concepts for World Service" by Bill W. Concept X11 (long form)

**RECOVERY: The Twelve Steps**

**UNITY: The Twelve Traditions**

**SERVICE: The Twelve Concepts**

## **Glossary of Terms**

### **AAWS - Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.**

The non-profit corporation that employs the General Service Office personnel, directs the General Service Office services, and is responsible for book and pamphlet publishing. Here are the General Manager (who is also the chairperson of General Services), the AA staff members, the department managers, and their employees.

### **Archives**

A committee of CNCA. The committee that gathers and preserves material and historical data about AA, emphasizing Northern California. Maintains and provides archive displays at the Archive Office at 193 Mayhew Way, Walnut Creek, California. Local archives are maintained at 750 Mendocino Avenue, Suite #10 in Santa Rosa, California.

### **Area**

See CNCA-California Northern Coastal Area. A geographical division within the State. In California there are 5 Delegate Areas, California Northern Coastal Area, California Northern Interior Area, Southern California Area, Mid-Southern California Area, and San Diego Imperial Area.

### **Area Committee**

The steering committee for California Northern Coastal Area. Comprised of the Area officers; Delegate, Alternate Delegate, Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Registrar, Literature/Grapevine Chairperson, and Assembly Coordinator. The Area Committee also includes the District Committee Member Chairs (DCMCs; and District Committee Members (DCMs.) from each of the 22 Districts which comprise CNCA (See Delegate, DCMC, DCM definitions.)

### **Assembly**

A periodic meeting of GSRs, DCMs, DCMCs, Area Officers, and the Delegate to discuss AA affairs of the area. The Assembly is a basic unit of the General Service structure and conducts or helps coordinate AA business for the area. The Area Assembly is the primary conduit for information to and from the AA General Service Conference. CNCA holds four (4) assemblies per year: Pre-Conference, Post-Conference, Summer and Fall.

### **Box 4-5-9**

The news and notes from the General Service Office of AA, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115, copyrighted by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Box 4-5-9 is published bi-monthly.

### **BTG - Bridging the Gap**

A committee of CNCA. The purpose of BTG is to help bridge the gap between the facility and AA, for the newcomer being released from a jail, prisons or treatment programs, etc. BTG provides a temporary contact for these newcomers. The contact member introduces the newcomer to AA and helps the alcoholic make the transition from the facility to AA.

## **CNCA - California Northern Coastal Area 06**

One of the five geographical divisions in the State of California. The area delegate is our representative at the General Service Conference each year. The CNCA Area consists of 22 districts, mainly by county: Humboldt-Del Norte, Mendocino, Lake, Sonoma, Napa, Marin, Solano North, Solano South, Contra Costa, Alameda South, Alameda North, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara South, Santa Clara North, Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, Spanish South South, Spanish North, Spanish South, and Spanish Central.

### **Conference**

The AA General Service Conference is the guardian of World Services and of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of AA. The Conference is a service body only; a whole, in the perpetuation and guidance of its World Services, and is the vehicle by which the AA Groups can express their views upon all matters of AA policy and AA tradition. Each area in the United States and Canada is represented by a delegate. 92 delegates are part of the Conference; the balance is made up of trustees, corporation boards of AAWS and Grapevine, and General Service office staff. The delegates represent more than two-thirds of the voting members.

### **Conference-Approved Literature**

AA literature has been the lifeblood of the movement. Editing, publishing, and distributing Conference-approved literature remain among the most vital of GSO services. A new service is the development of audiovisual materials.

### **DCM - District Committee Member**

An experienced GSR elected by other GSRs to represent the Groups in their sub-district in the area meetings and to coordinate the services in the District. Elected by GSRs of the sub-district and serves a two-year term concurrent with the District and Area Panels.

### **DCMC - District Committee Member Chairperson**

In CNCA each county is a separate district. Elected by GSRs of the district. Serves a full two-year term. Elected in December of the even years and serves starting the next odd year. For example: 2004 election: 2005-2006 service term.

### **Delegate**

The man or woman elected at the CNCA election assembly every other year (2008 election: 2009-2010 service term) to represent the Area at the annual meeting of the Conference in New York and to bring back to the Area the results of the General Service Conference.

### **District**

CNCA is divided up into 22 districts. These districts are usually divided by county lines. See CNCA for county listing and Maps of Interest.

### **Group**

An AA Group consists of two or more alcoholics who gather together for sobriety in meetings on a regular basis. These meetings are the basic source of recovery for the alcoholic who wants to stop drinking.

A Group ought to be fully self-supporting, have no outside affiliations, and no opinions on outside issues. Because AA's public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion, the Group members maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV and films.

### **Grapevine - The international journal of Alcoholics Anonymous**

Written, edited, illustrated and read by AA members and others interested in the AA program of recovery from alcoholism. "The Grapevine" is a lifeline linking one suffering alcoholic to another. Widely known as our "meeting in print", the AA Grapevine communicates the contributors and reflects a broad geographic spectrum of current AA experience with recovery, unity and service. Founded in 1944, the Grapevine does not receive Group contributions, but is supported entirely through magazine subscription sales and additional income derived from the sale of related items.

### **GSO - General Service Office**

General Service Office in New York.

### **GSR - General Service Representative**

An AA member selected by a Group to voice the Group's conscience at Sub-district, District and Area Assembly level. The GSR also participates in the election of district officers and area officers at the various election meetings or assemblies.<sup>11</sup>

### **GVR - Grapevine Representative**

The Group's GVR's job is to make sure that members are aware of the Fellowship's international journal and the enhancements to sobriety it offers. Also the Group's contact with the Grapevine Office.

### **H&I - Hospitals & Institutions**

"The only purpose of the Hospital and Institution Committee of Northern California Council of Alcoholics Anonymous is to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to the alcoholic who is confined. The activities of the committee are based on, and governed by, the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous."

While we cooperate with the H&I Committee, they are not a part of General Service.

### **NCCAA - Northern California Council of Alcoholics Anonymous**

Organized in the 1940's to provide the linkage between Groups in Northern California. Helped organize the Northern California Hospital and Institutions Committee. In March 1951, our first Delegate to the General Service Conference was elected at the NCCAA conference in San Francisco. Bill W. attended this meeting along with representatives from 52 of the 92 Groups in the western half of Northern California (then called Panel One-now called CNCA).

While we cooperate with NCCAA, they are not a part of General Service.

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<sup>11</sup> See long forms of Tradition Three and Warranty Six in Concept Twelve. Also refer to sections on the AA Group and the Home Group.

## **Pacific Region**

There are six regions in the United States and two in Canada. The Pacific Region is made up of the following states: California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Utah, Arizona, Nevada, Hawaii, and Alaska.

## **Panel - Conference Panels**

In any year, about half of all Area Assemblies are electing qualified Delegates to the annual General Service Conference, depending on whether they are an even or odd numbered Panel. The Conference started in 1951 (an odd year). CNCA elected its delegate to serve starting in 1951. The Conference two-year cycle applies to committee officers, DCMCs and DCMs. For example, CNCA elects its Delegate and Officers at the election assembly in November 2008. The start of their term began on January 1, 2009 and will end on December 31, 2010.

## **PI/CPC - Public Information/ Cooperation with the Professional Community**

1. A local service committee funded by and responsible to local AA Groups through the District Committee. The mandate of both is to provide information about AA to the general public and to cooperate with professionals who deal with alcoholics and alcoholism by informing them about what AA is and is not.
2. An Area Committee made up of PI/CPC Chairs from each District and headed by the current Area Alternate Delegate.
3. General Service Committees and General Service Office staff for each function.

## **PRAASA - Pacific Region Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly**

A regional service meeting held every March and hosted by one of the thirteen (13) areas in the Pacific Region.

## **Regional Forum**

A General Service meeting open to all AA members and hosted by the General Service Office. Held every other year in one Area of the Region. Pacific Region Forums are held in even years.

## **Right Of Decision - Concept III**

"As a traditional means of creating and maintaining a clearly defined working relation between the Groups, the Conference, the AA General Service Board and its several service corporations, staffs committees and executives and of thus insuring their effective leadership, it is here suggested that we endow each of these elements of World Service with a traditional "Right of Decision".

This means that at every level of service to decide on which problems the individual will dispose of themselves and upon which matters they will report, consult, or ask specific directions. Do not use this right as an excuse for failure to make proper reports of actions taken, or for exceeding a clearly defined authority, or for failing to consult the proper people before making an important decision.

## **Service Sponsor**

An individual who has served AA in various service capacities and has knowledge of the service responsibility of the positions you have been elected to. An individual who can act as a guide for your questions and concerns.

### **Sub-district**

A method of splitting districts into a serviceable size. Sub-districts are made up of a certain number of GSRs and are served by a DCM. They meet and discuss issues in depth at GSR Sharing Sessions.

### **The General Service Board**

The General Service Board (the trustees) is the chief service arm of the Conference, and is essentially custodial in its character...

Excepting for decisions upon matters of policy, finance, or AA Tradition liable to seriously affect AA as a whole, the General Service Board has entire freedom of action in the routine conduct of the policy and business affairs of the AA service corporations...

--Excerpt from the Conference Charter<sup>12</sup>

### **Third Legacy**

A special type of electoral procedure for the election of delegates and other representatives of General Service. This election procedure is unique to AA (Note: This procedure is often used to elect officers of Groups). After the list of names of those eligible and available for office is listed on the blackboard, the election procedure proceeds. Basically, the procedure calls for the winner to receive two-thirds (2/3) of the total vote. If no one receives a two-thirds majority, the election eventually "goes to the hat".<sup>13</sup>

### **Trustee**

The usual term for a member of AA's General Service Board. Some Trustees are AA's, some are non-alcoholic. The Certificate of Incorporation of the General Service Board divides member trustees into two categories: the non-alcoholic trustees are referred to as Class A Member Trustees and are seven (7) in number. The "ex-alcoholic" trustees are referred to as Class B Member Trustees and are fourteen (14) in number.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> AA Service Manual: pp S60

<sup>13</sup> See next section for details of this procedure and the Service Manual pages S20-S21, S36 and Voting Process S54.

<sup>14</sup> See Appendix E Bylaws, AA Service Manual pp S106-S116.

## Third Legacy Procedure<sup>15</sup>

This procedure is considered unique to AA

After a list of names of those eligible and available for office is listed on the blackboard, the election procedure proceeds. This procedure calls for the winner to receive two-thirds of the total vote. If no one receives a two-thirds majority, the election eventually goes to the hat.

Written ballots are passed out for each vote. Tellers count the votes and they are announced and put on the blackboard.

**Ballot 1:** Candidate receiving two-thirds (2/3) wins; if no 2/3: all go to ballot 2.

**Ballot 2:** Candidate receiving 2/3 wins; if no 2/3 then:

1. Any candidate with less than 1/5111 of the total vote will be withdrawn automatically, except that the top 2 candidates (and 2nd place ties) must remain.
2. .Go to ballot 3.

**Ballot 3:** Candidate receiving 2-3 wins; if no 2/3 then:

1. Any candidate with less than 1/3 of total vote will be withdrawn automatically, except that the top 2 candidates (and 2nd place ties) must remain.
2. Go to ballot 4.

**Ballot 4:** Candidate receiving 2/3 wins; if no 2/3 then:

1. The chair calls for a motion, second, and majority of those voting on conducting a fifth and final ballot. If defeated: Go to the hat. In case of ties for second place, the top candidate and tied second place candidates remain. If not, the candidate with the smallest total is dropped.
2. If passed, go to ballot 5.

**Ballot 5:** Candidate receiving 2/3 wins, if none receives 2/3 then:

**GO TO THE HAT** - Lots are then drawn by teller and the first one "out of the hat" becomes the winner.

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<sup>15</sup> AA Service Manual pp S20-S21

## **An Informed "Pass It On"**

Rotation and continuity are essential in general service. Rotation is necessary so that we don't succumb to the temptation of taking ourselves too seriously as we become entrenched in any one service position. An informed "pass it on" is the method we use in AA to achieve some continuity in the midst of our constant rotation.

## Helpful Hints

- Don't take yourself too seriously—but do take your job seriously
- Get a service sponsor and become informed
- Attend all General Service meetings (about 3-4 per month + 4 assemblies)
- Read the AA pamphlet "The General Service Representative"
- Read the AA pamphlet "The AA Group"
- Attend Area Meetings (CNCA) and try out a DCM Sharing Session
- Remember...nothing happens in Your Time...It's God's Time
- Just when you've figured out how to do it. ..you'll rotate out
- Be patient with yourself and others...we're ALL learning
- Remember this is a Spiritual Program, not a political debate
- LISTEN
- Be enthusiastic...IT IS CONTAGIOUS
- Don't give up before you see the "Miracle of General Service".
- Say what you mean, mean what you say, don't say it mean
- LISTEN ... before you SPEAK
- We are about the Business of AA, not the politics
- Remember--You are a Trusted Servant .....You serve your Group..... You must vote their conscience...Not your own
- . Don't be afraid to ask questions

## Suggested Readings

### ➤ **BOOKS**

- AA COMES OF AGE
- ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
- DR. BOB & THE GOOD OLDTIMERS
- LANGUAGE OF THE HEART
- PASS IT ON
- THE AA SERVICE MANUAL
- TWELVE CONCEPTS FOR WORLD SERVICE TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS

### ➤ **PAMPHLETS:**

- The AA Group...Where It All Begins
- The General Service Representative

### ➤ **AN ADDENDUM OF AA LITERATURE FOLLOWS:**

- The Traditions Checklist
- The Concepts Checklist

### ➤ **VIDEOS**<sup>16</sup>

- Your AA General Service Office, the Grapevine, and the General Service Structure
- Markings on the Journey

### ➤ **SUBSCRIPTIONS**

- The AA Grapevine

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<sup>16</sup> Tools Available, AA Service Manual: pp 22