

**A  
GUIDE TO SERVICE  
IN  
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS**

*Newly Revised 1987*

World Service Conference  
Select Committee  
Revised Work-in-Progress  
UNAPPROVED LITERATURE  
for REVIEW and INPUT

# **A GUIDE TO SERVICE IN NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS**



World Service Conference  
Work-In-Progress  
Unapproved Literature  
For Review and Input

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions  
reprinted for adaptation by  
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**World Service Conference  
Work-In-Progress  
Unapproved Literature  
For Review and Input**



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To:           The Fellowship  
From:         The Select Committee  
Date:         April, 1987

The following pages reflect the progress of the Select Committee towards the development of a comprehensive manual on service in Narcotics Anonymous. This material is the first revision of the original work in progress. This publication reflects a continuing effort to provide the Fellowship opportunity to comment and submit ideas on the draft as it is being developed. The Committee believes strongly in this approach, involving the Fellowship in the process, and strongly encourages members, groups, and service committees to review and input on this latest draft.

Some of these chapters you will find quite familiar because only minor revisions were made to the original material published in 1985. Other chapters were substantially revised and there are three new chapters (One, Three, and Five) included for the very first time. There is more extensive work to be done on each chapter.

Each chapter was worked on separately as an individual piece of work rectifying only obvious conflicts with other chapters. Any inconsistencies which exist will need to be corrected before the Fellowship is offered an approval form of this document. The Committee believes that not only do service committee have their separate and primary responsibilities, but together they form a cohesive working structure supportive of the whole. The Select Committee will be concentrating on these particular efforts (tying up the loose ends) and reviewing the input from the Fellowship, in the coming year.

It is important to reiterate that this is a work in progress. It is not in final form. There are many parts of this work that are not included at this time such as forms, diagrams, etc., that are being discussed as part of the eventual approval form. The WSC Literature Committee has agreed to turn over the input they have been collecting for the Trusted Servant's Resource Guide, for possible use in this manual.

In July, 1987 the Select Committee will hold an open forum at the WSC workshop. Members of the Fellowship will be able to comment directly to the Committee on the enclosed material. Those members, groups, or service committees who are unable to attend will be able to submit their input in writing to the Committee c/o the WSO, until December 1, 1987. All of the input will be considered, equally and fairly, for possible inclusion in the draft. This draft will then be presented to WSC'88, which will then decide the appropriate course of action.



# **A GUIDE TO SERVICE IN NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS**

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## A GUIDE TO SERVICE IN N.A.

### FORWARD

A Guide to Service in Narcotics Anonymous is designed to assist members, groups, and committees in fulfilling the primary purpose of Narcotics Anonymous. As stated in our Fifth Tradition and implemented by our Twelfth Step, that primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers from the disease of addiction. The N.A. message is that recovery is possible from this disease that otherwise is progressive, incurable, and fatal. Our beautiful Fellowship continues to grow and sustain our recovery because we freely give of ourselves that which was so freely given to us through sharing and service. Therefore, it is important that we understand how service has evolved and what sharing and service really mean. All of us will come to our own understanding but this guide is intended to provide tried and true methods forged in the pain and joy of our experience.

The disease of addiction to drugs has claimed the lives of untold numbers of people around the world since time began. Addicts have been shunned and despised, and left to their own misery and despair only to be institutionalized, imprisoned, or die painful deaths. The prospects for an addict's recovery were dismal; they were seen as helpless without hope and rejected by society.

The early years of N.A. were hard times for our early members. Many relapsed and died; there were no longstanding interpretations of the Steps and Traditions for guidance and no "old-timers" to seek out for their experience. However, a few survived through working the Steps and applying the Traditions, mainly by sharing with each other during and between meetings.

Gradually, one meeting became two meetings became three meetings. At first, the same members attended all meetings in existence, and everyone helped each other and knew what everyone else was attempting to do to carry the message. Narcotics Anonymous evolved from the efforts of these addicts who saw hope for escape from the pain of active addiction and its consequences. The changed lives of hundreds of thousands of recovering addicts is a testament to the accuracy of their vision, born in the depths of their own desperation.

However, as the number of meetings grew, members lost touch with each other and unity as we know it today suffered. Since personal recovery depends on N.A. unity, methods of communication and cooperation among the groups were necessary. The therapeutic value of one addict helping another before, during, and



after a meeting, called sharing, was still the most important tool, but something had to be done to make that sharing possible on a larger scale and thus available to more addicts. The method that has evolved through the experience, strength, and hope of those early members and their successors is what we call service.

For more history on the evolving service arms in Narcotics Anonymous, see the chapters describing World Service Conference, World Service Office, and others.

In the chapters that follow, we will explain service in its two forms: personal service and general service. Personal service is the description we give to the sharing exemplified in the therapeutic value of one addict helping another. As the Fellowship grew, we mistakenly began to make too much distinction between sharing and service. In reality they are merely different expressions with the same goals in mind: (1) to stay clean just for today through the Steps and Traditions and (2) to carry the message that such recovery is possible to the still-suffering addict. Therefore, neither is more important nor more spiritual than the other. We have come to believe in both as gifts from a Higher Power. We pray that our experience as expressed in the pages that follow will guide you as you share and serve.

We know now from the painful experiences and joyous successes of our early members that we cannot share or serve unless we gain recovery through the spiritual principles of our program. "One thing more than anything else will defeat us in our recovery. This is an attitude of indifference or intolerance toward spiritual principles." All of these are vital, and principal among them for the purpose of this Guide is the direction in the Twelfth Step and Fifth Tradition to carry the message. This process starts with the individual member.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE N.A. MEMBER

Perhaps the very first commitment we are faced with is that of our own membership. The first responsibility we have as members is, clearly and simply, staying clean. Once we have established this priority by demonstrating a continuing desire to remain clean, our responsibility broadens ever so slightly. We begin to familiarize ourselves with the literature and the principles of recovery by listening carefully while other members share. We seem to intuitively sense our responsibility to be present at N.A. meetings for the chance to "be there" for another addict who may need the empathy that only another addict can give. Then comes the most important responsibility of our membership: preparing ourselves for carrying the message of Narcotics Anonymous. Each and every member of our Fellowship shares these responsibilities, even those with just a few clean days. Our membership is a very precious gift, something never to be taken for granted.

The individual N.A. member is the cornerstone of all N.A. service. Everything we do in service as individuals, groups, and committees must be motivated by the desire to carry the N.A. message to the addict who still suffers. We need to serve with a grateful heart, expressing our gratitude by keeping and honoring our commitments even when we personally do not believe we have it in us to do so. However, as will be discussed later in this Guide, we should take care not to overextend ourselves with multiple commitments. Failing to honor commitments can be just as powerful a reaffirmation of low self-esteem as honoring our commitments can be a vehicle of feeling worthwhile.

From the very beginning our ability to fulfill even the smallest commitment gives us a feeling of accomplishment, a sense of purpose, something that very few of us were able to capture while still using. This new sense of purpose gives us direction and helps us to persevere through even the most troublesome times. We come to understand there is a real value to our lives; we are clean and able to be of service to others as a result of the N.A. Program and our individual commitment to the principles thereof.

### SERVICE

Service in its simplest form is the sharing of experience, strength, and hope, the giving of oneself. This may be expressed by things we do or things we say.

Taking the time to talk one on one with other members or newcomers, when picking up after the meeting or setting up before, are just some of the first things we do to be of service to ourselves and others. These early expressions of service prepare us for later work on service committees and boards. For those of us who have been privileged to serve NA, we must stress, how important sharing through service has been and continues to be, in contributing to our personal recovery.

Service contributes to the growth of Narcotics Anonymous in a variety of ways. It is through our services that we communicate to society our experience as a Fellowship and to one another the benefits of our different experiences so we may improve our efforts. The Ninth Tradition, "NA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve," provides for the service structure while protecting the integrity of the group setting, so that powerful tool can concentrate its efforts towards the personal recovery of our members. The service structure brings our message within reach of suffering addicts who may otherwise never hear it. It also provides continuity to our efforts and, in most cases, enhances the personal recovery of those who choose to get involved.

### PERSONAL SERVICE

The distinction between personal and general is necessary in order to understand the nature of the responsibility involved with each. Personal service begins as soon as our desire to stay clean is demonstrated by our staying clean. Having spent time listening and sharing in meetings and becoming increasingly aware of the N.A. community, the opportunity presents itself for us to assist others, as well as ourselves, through some direct action. Sharing one on one making coffee, setting up chairs and tables, cleaning ashtrays, and cleaning up after the meeting are just some of the things that we can begin to do early in our recovery to contribute. This simple and basic form of personal service has provided many of our members the opportunity to enhance their personal recovery.

The form of personal service members choose is not nearly as important as making the decision to learn and practice spiritual principles by giving service. When we serve for no other reason than for the joy of giving, there is something inside of us that begins to stir. It is a bond of understanding, perhaps for the first time in our lives, that we belong, that we feel a part of something. Many times we have seen members who have been reluctant to get involved in any capacity finally

muster the courage to participate and then express the rewards they received in doing so. We find there is another aspect of these initial efforts that we experience as we perform our personal service. We become an example for others and inspire them to contribute also. We are giving away, without realizing, what has so freely been given to us.

We have learned from years of experience that there is a binding relationship between personal service and the development of a spiritual program of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous. This relationship is strengthened by sharing one's experience and hope with others. Chairing a meeting, speaking, and even sponsorship are a few of the ways our members have found to be important to the ongoing recovery process. Personal service is the foundation of the total service experience and has provided many of us with lasting and profound rewards.

Sponsorship is a very obvious and important form of personal service that requires mentioning. We believe that sponsorship is one aspect of "the therapeutic value of one addict helping another" that "is without parallel." Through sponsorship, we have a chance to share with those we sponsor the important role service has played in our individual recovery. We often suggest to those we sponsor to get involved in personal service with the same conviction that we place on abstinence, attendance at N.A. meetings, and attempts at contact with a Higher Power. All these are related for us. For more on this important form of personal service see N.A.'s other publications that discuss sponsorship.

Another responsibility that is often omitted when discussing personal service concerns the self-supporting part of our Seventh Tradition: "Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions." Most of us feel privileged to serve N.A. by contributing our fair share, or by otherwise donating to the Fellowship. While none of us can "buy our recovery" or excuse ourselves from other forms of service by making cash contributions, nevertheless our groups, boards, and committees, need funds in order to continue carrying the N.A. message. We, as individual members, must search our hearts and contribute what we can afford to provide our services. Most of us would have nothing at all, let alone money, if it were not for Narcotics Anonymous. By contributing financially, we perform another valuable service and help make all levels of service from group to area to region to world possible. After all, our experience has shown that whatever we are able to give will be returned again and again. In

this way, we participate in our recovery and express our gratitude by contributing to the success of N.A. worldwide.

As individual members, we all need to understand all of N.A.'s principles, including the Twelve Traditions. Sometimes, particularly in the early development of a local Fellowship, interest in learning about the traditions is low. Often they are seen as a source of controversy rather than the ties that bind us together and tools to resolve conflicts experienced by the groups and their members. Part of serving Narcotics Anonymous is learning the Traditions and their applications. When we hear a new member remark that the Traditions are not important, we know nothing is further from the truth. While teaching each other the spiritual principles underlying the Traditions, it is important that we lovingly explain them and not address those who may be less versed in the Traditions as "violators" or with negative or coarse overtones. None of us wish to hurt the Fellowship which saved our lives, but until we gain an understanding of the Traditions we may make some mistakes in our zeal to give back what was so freely given to us.

Working the steps provides the basis for our recovery and frees us from the bonds of our addiction to carry the message. While some of us have felt that we "stayed clean on service," our experience has shown that service is not a replacement for recovery meetings or otherwise neglecting the remaining steps. Those of us who have tried Step One and Twelve recovery have learned through pain that we can only give away what we have and that we have much less to give if we do not work all twelve of the steps of N.A. Recovery-oriented service seems to work better than service-oriented recovery.

### GENERAL SERVICE

In principle, general service is an extension of personal service. General services are those activities we do as members of a committee, board, or subcommittee, and is usually performed after being elected or appointed to a position within the N.A. service structure. General services exist primarily to carry the N.A. message where it is impossible or impractical to do so at the group level. The N.A. group has proven to be the most successful vehicle to carry our message to the addict that still suffers. It should remain free to concentrate its efforts in the business of recovery and allow the business of the Fellowship to be handled by the appropriate service committees. Our general services have proven to be the practical method to present the Narcotics Anonymous program to the

general public and unify Fellowship-wide service efforts. This unified approach has contributed greatly to our success, past and present.

When we first examine our general services, many of us questioned what seemed to be a contradiction with our Ninth Tradition that says, "N.A., as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve." The first part of the Tradition cautions us about two things: the N.A. groups should never be unduly belabored with beauracratc red tape and the creation of governing bodies, who may assume authority over one another. The second part of the Tradition provides the method we are to assume to be able to bring our message within reach of all who desire it. It goes further to explain that the creation of "service" boards or committees is possible only through the authority of the groups and that these boards and committees are made up of trusted servants guided by the spirit to serve N.A. When individuals serve repeatedly in the same general service position, (usually more than two consecutive terms), our Fellowship becomes too organized, and we are usually placing their personality before our principle of rotating leadership. It also reminds us to follow a system of rotating leadership giving those who are willing the opportunity to serve also. As we can see, these two distinctions don't conflict, but compliment each other and provide the frame-work for our worldwide service structure.

Examples of our general service include committees and boards for public information, policy, phonedines, hospital and institutions, activities, conventions, and literature. All of our service boards and committees have separate and distinct functions but are collectively parts of the whole N.A. service structure.

Going directly into general service with little experience in applying spiritual principles to our new lives frequently leads to frustration and difficulties. In areas of the world where N.A. is new, newcomers are frequently pressed into service early. While this is not ideal, it is often unavoidable. However, as the local Fellowship grows, members with longer clean time should share the responsibilities. We do not imply a chronological caste system or that quantity always implies quality. Our mistakes have simply proven time and again that we often jeopardize an individual's recovery by electing him or her to a position they are not experienced enough to deal with. We can all think of occasional exceptions, but the clean time guidelines as mentioned later speak for the experience of our members.

Trusted servants should begin to learn general service at the group level after experience with personal service. This gives them understanding of the

group and prepares them for area service. Members might serve in different capacities on the area level (GSR, Subcommittee Chair, etc.) one at a time over several years. This is good preparation for service at the regional level. During service for the region the member is exposed to world-level service with more direct contact. This chain of experience enhances the quality of service of our world-level trusted servants. At the end of this chapter we speak of experienced members having a perspective about N.A. acquired from the continuous practicing of N.A. principles in their lives. Part of that vision is acquired through service experience.

This brings us to another consideration of the individual N.A. member in service. When we serve in any capacity, we must remember our relationship to N.A. as a whole. Trusted servants can usually understand their relationship to the Fellowship immediately surrounding them, but it is sometimes more difficult to understand their relationship to N.A. as a whole. The N.A. Fellowship is not just our local group, area, or regional committee, it is a worldwide Fellowship, made up of hundreds of thousands of members, thousands of groups, and hundreds of service committees. When we as individual members participate in service committees we need to remind ourselves of how we fit into the whole and if our actions are a reflection of N.A. principles. We are many addicts who together will impact a great number of people. It is our individual responsibility to every other member to insure this impact is a positive one. When we are able to present the perspective of our common welfare in our service commitments instead of just our own, N.A. is truly served and our message is clear and precise. We should always take great care when we participate in general service committees to work together for our common good.

No matter what the type of service the work must be done in a spirit of mutual trust and respect. These principles are the cornerstone of our service efforts and are discussed more fully in Chapter Three. It is also important to remember to keep things simple and not take on more than we can handle.

There are many reasons that we stress the importance of the qualifications for service positions written into this guide, perhaps, the most important being our experience. In recommending the qualifications presented, we have been diligent in trying not to place limits on our participation. These qualifications are simply what has worked best. If and when we consider waiving these qualifications, we ought not let the successful exceptions we have seen give us excuses to continue to

allow the exceptions to become the standard. If we follow these guidelines with God's help, all will be well. Here are examples of what we mean.

### THE PITFALLS OF GENERAL SERVICE

This guide contains wording of a different nature than previous N.A. service manuals. Prior manuals made considerable use of the word suggested in reference to qualifications for service positions. Because the Fellowship was very young in clean time in most areas, it was not possible to have "requirements" that met the ideal. So most times the qualifications were ignored or impossible to meet. What happened, however, was that often ignoring the suggestions continued after the necessity for doing so had passed. It became a habit to elect relative newcomers to positions of secretary, Group Service Representative (GSR), treasurer and even area and regional service positions. Often we treated elections like a joke by giving it to a newcomer who was too new to know what he/she was getting into or electing someone who was absent or late. We did not take the time to search out our more experienced members.

Serving concurrently with these members, new in recovery, were the overloaded, overextended, and over-committed members. These willing people often got used to doing many different service duties at one time. They were taught to never to say no to an N.A. commitment and did so without regard to doing just their fair share. When they had a year or less clean, they were responsible at the group level. They were then elected to perform tasks at the area level while maintaining group responsibilities. Sometimes a regional position (or two or three) was added to the first two commitments. Being visible to the local fellowship through service, they were naturally asked to share often and to sponsor at least several people. They took on all of these responsibilities at the same time out of genuine concern and willingness.

Usually these commitments to N.A. service occur along with growth in the member's personal life. A job, relationships, and such become possible and happen. These personal things are usually new, frightening, and require nurturing while we learn to apply spiritual principles to them. Debts are taken on; the natural desire to socialize occurs. So we have a person relatively new to N.A. trying to handle a half dozen or more new situations, N.A. and personal. But these people have their hands too full and begin to cut corners. Often they miss recovery meetings so that they can maintain service commitments, work, and to be with their family. They



are hesitant to give up any responsibility, feeling that would signify failure. So they struggle along, doing many tasks but each of them increasingly inadequately.

Often they strain their work and family relationships to the point where they are threatened or even lost. Service commitments are also inevitably broken, and that hinders the Fellowship as a whole in our effort to carry the message. Often program money entrusted to servants gets mismanaged. All of these things can back us into a corner that we may not come out of clean. Newcomers, associating the trusted servant's resulting turmoil to his or her service involvement, often become disillusioned because they cannot understand the difference between commitment and overload. For these reasons, we stress the qualifications in this guide so that they are not ignored as suggestions were.

Along these lines, we believe each N.A. member should participate in personal service. Further, all members should continue to attend meetings regularly, especially the home group. However, as to general service commitments, only one position at one time should be the standard. For example, a GSR would not accept a chairmanship of an Area Service Committee (ASC) subcommittee while serving as a GSR. He would participate in an ASC subcommittee because that is one function of being a GSR, but not as chairperson.

An area officer should not accept a position at the group, area, or regional level unless his current term of office was due to expire. A Regional Service Representative (RSR) or regional officer would not serve at the world level as an elected chairman. Again, the exception exists where service at one level is part of a servant's responsibility at another level. But on the other hand, it is very important not to resign one commitment in order to take another. This provides a bad example and weakens the continuity of our service structure by failing to fulfill the commitment made to those members who have entrusted us to complete our obligations..

### A LIVING EXAMPLE

Among the most accurate statements about our trusted servants is that effective leaders in N.A. are those who "lead by example." Good leaders are members who have a solid foundation in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and practice them diligently in their own lives. When some problem arises in a service committee, they speak humbly and clearly about the issue in relation to the N.A. principles that seem most applicable, allow all others to do the same, and then

abide by the decisions of group conscience on the matter. Group conscience becomes a hollow principle if we only follow it when it agrees with our point of view. If the decision is accepted gracefully, our principles are such that if a wrong decision is made, that will become obvious soon enough, and a good leader is ready to be helpful without being smug when it is decided to reconsider.

A member who is living a life based in the program, and who is diligent in reading and listening about NA, develops a vision of the spiritual whole of the Fellowship. This vision is always limited by our humanness, but most of us can think of at least a few people in N.A. who always seems to see the broader picture. Such people seem to have an uncommon ability for sensing the outcome of a particular situation. Let us never forget who they are in each local N.A. community, and continue to seek their guidance as we grow. However, we should not put them on a pedestal or in a position of infallibility since this is unfair to them and the rest of the Fellowship.

We have found that the best way to gain the respect of our group and for our personal or general service is to practice the principles of N.A. in all our affairs. The Fellowship embraces the influence of such people, and willingly turns to them for guidance. Leaders in N.A. do not need to wrestle with the Fellowship for authority, rather they are freely given the privilege of enriching group decisions by virtue of the integrity of their recovery and their commitment to N.A. principles.

The pages that follow give an explanation of the current service structure as it has evolved since 1953. However, without the participation of the individual member, the rest of this guide is meaningless.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS GROUP

The earliest experiences of recovering addicts proved that staying off drugs through individual effort may have been possible, but was not probable. The most practical and quickly-found solution was the establishment of regular gatherings of addicts so that they could all benefit at one time through sharing with each other. However, getting a bunch of recovering addicts together at one time to do anything, especially in an orderly manner, has never been an easy task. The best answer seemed to be to borrow something from the experience of others.

The result was the formation of the group. The first groups lacked a little of the decorum and organization that we find in N.A. groups today, but through trial and tribulation, they gradually became stronger, and addicts found recovery. We share the benefits of this experience with you in an attempt to be helpful to N.A. members involved in service at the group level.

When starting an N.A. group, we have found that it is essential to maintain consistency and perseverance. Most groups are started because an addict needs a meeting. For example, an N.A. member may move to a city where there are no N.A. meetings yet. Sometimes members start meetings because they wish to attend a meeting on a particular night or in an area near to their homes. In each of these cases as well as in all other circumstances, when a meeting is started--even if it is only by one person--that person must be prepared to keep the doors open even if no one else shows up. This lesson was learned through repeated experiences and still holds true today. Many of our meetings have started this way, and thousands of addicts are alive and clean today because one person made and kept the commitment to have the N.A. door open when addicts reached out for help. Therefore, if a meeting is scheduled to begin at 8:00, it is very important that the group's trusted servants come early so that the meeting does take place at the scheduled time.

In some cases, when a meeting is first started, no one shows up except the member who started the meeting. In this situation, it may be helpful to do some basic public information work, but above all, keep the door open, make some coffee and study from the N.A. Basic Text. It is often helpful to put up notices or announcements in places where other addicts might see them. Newspapers and bulletin boards are common places these notices can be found. Do not be discouraged if your new meeting seems to have a rocky start. Put up more notices

and come back the next week. Do it over and over again until other addicts begin coming to the meeting--and they will come. There have been many examples cited by members of our Fellowship where meetings have been kept open for up to a year with only one or two regular members. Then, for no apparent reason, the rooms suddenly filled with people seeking recovery. Many of these groups now report quite a few years' experience with successfully carrying the message of recovery.

If two or more addicts join together to start a meeting, the task may be easier and more comforting than when one individual takes on the job alone. But it still requires the same dedication and consistency. With two or more addicts, decisions need to be made by the group rather than by an individual. This promotes an acceptance of unity and an application of the Traditions. Unity within the Fellowship is important and can be developed or maintained only through the association of one addict with another. This can be on an individual basis but it conveys a stronger understanding if it can be in the setting of a meeting.

In the paragraphs above the words "group" and "meeting" have been used interchangeably. The terms "meeting" and "group" have evolved to have synonymous meanings in some areas in the Fellowship, while in others the two words convey different meanings. Although some areas of the Fellowship have found it convenient to determine that a group can be two addicts meeting on a regular schedule, in other places the meeting of two addicts on a regular basis would be called a meeting, but not a group. In order to avoid confusion and to encourage a more common understanding, the term "group" generally refers to two or more individual members who meet regularly at a specified time and place to share their recovery. That regular event is known as an N.A. meeting.

Using this understanding, a difference can be drawn between a meeting and a group. A meeting is essentially the gathering together of two or more member addicts for the purpose of practicing the principles of N.A., and is the primary activity of an N.A. group. While it is expected that members of a group will all attend their meeting, they may also attend meetings of other groups. It is from this understanding that the concept of a home group has evolved.

## THE HOME GROUP AND ITS MEETING

Choosing and supporting a home group is an important part of recovery. A home group allows us to have an anchor each week where we can really get to know the people, and they can really get to know us. A home group should be a group that you are comfortable with and whose meeting you will attend regularly. Each N.A. member should make a decision to support a particular group on a weekly basis. We call this group our "home group" because it suggests a place where we fit in and belong. We have made a commitment to that group, and if we are absent for some reason, we will be missed. This is a real benefit to our recovery. It helps us in making a commitment to the N.A. Program and teaches us about responsibility and consistency. Someone once said "the only good reason to miss your home group's meeting is a death in the family--yours!" This statement may seem a bit extreme, but it highlights the importance of regular attendance at your home group meetings. To get a home group, a member simply gives their name to the secretary. Many groups maintain a small file box with an index card for each member. This provides information about the person's name and clean date. The information is used for commemorating clean time. Many groups prepare birthday cakes and/or present commemorative medallions as a means of celebrating recovery.

Having a home group is also important when voting on matters that affect the area, region and N.A. Fellowship as a whole. All recovering addicts who consider themselves members of the group and attend that group regularly, may vote on matters which affect that group and when that group votes on matters affecting the rest of the Fellowship. These may include approving new literature, suggesting or approving actions for Area, Region or World Service Committees, or a variety of other questions which come before the group. In the interest of equity, each member votes only in their home group.

Although Narcotics Anonymous is not built on the democratic principle found in the one man-one vote concept of voting, there is an application of that concept in the spiritual development of group conscience. A loving God will express Himself through group conscience and every member should have an equal opportunity to allow that to happen through their own participation. For one member to vote more often than once in the gathering of a group conscience is to believe that God needs help in speaking through that member by virtue of some special knowledge by that member. If we feel that an issue is so important that we

must vote more than once, we are not trusting in a God of our understanding. To act in this way places the member in opposition to the acceptance of a Higher Power described in the Second Step.

The difficulty over the distinction between "group" and "meeting" arose in part from situations where a small N.A. community or in a remote area or town wanted more than one meeting, but didn't want to have the headache of having two, three or more sets of officers and the necessary business meetings for each group. While on one hand there is no specific desire to force autonomous groups to conform and thereby believe that groups are no longer autonomous, the issue does have Fellowship-wide impact.

The lack of common practice has caused controversy and conflict when these practices are carried with addicts who subsequently move to an area where the practice is different. The controversy also involves the development of group conscience, fellowship conscience and participation at Area Service Committees.

In a typical situation an Area Service Committee found the conflict arose when it attempted to define its membership. Some parts of the area chose to believe Area Service Committee membership was based on the number of groups with Group Service Representatives, while other parts felt that each group, even if it sponsored several meetings could us one Group Service Representative, and should be allowed to have a vote for each meeting. The extension of this controversy can be seen when it comes to developing a fellowship-wide conscience. Unless there is a universally applied approach, some will exercise a disproportionate influence in the matter of Fellowship conscience.

The solution of this issue rests in application of common understanding that the words are not synonymous and that groups are the basic element of Fellowship structure and that each group sponsors one meeting.

It may be necessary for a short time for a group to sponsor more than one meeting, while a second group is developed. In this manner, the supporting group gets the meeting on it's feet, helps with the procedures of electing officers of the new group and then returns to the management of its own affairs. The new group then operates on its own. Several months should be a reasonable time for this divide and build system of starting new meetings and groups.

A home group also encourages the group to practice the principle of the Seventh Tradition. The Seventh Tradition observed at the group level keeps the group self supporting by providing funds to pay for the meeting hall, purchase coffee or other refreshments, maintain a supply of N.A. literature for public

information purposes and for any addict who desires it. Customarily, most literature, including meeting directories, various informational pamphlets (IP'S), and "The Little White Book" are free to newcomers. This is not a hard and fast rule; rather it is just another way in which the principles of Step Twelve and Tradition Five--"carrying the message"--is practiced.

The Seventh Tradition is not a directive to individuals in order to qualify for membership in the Fellowship. Quite often newcomers are asked not to contribute, because we are all aware that financial security was not one of our assets when we first walked through the doors of N.A. On the other hand, in order to maintain a regular meeting place, meet our obligations, and remain free from outside influences, the Seventh Tradition at the Home Group level is one of the foundations upon which we build an atmosphere of recovery.

Most groups find that using key tags or ships to celebrate clean time is a good incentive system for new members and old members alike. By using the Home Group concept and encouraging members to celebrate their anniversary dates in the Home Group, a strong bond is developed that strengthens the commitment to total abstinence.

An important consideration in this matter is that a member of a group not have an office or position in another group. This defeats the understanding and purpose of the Home Group concept described above.

### BUILDING A STRONG MEETING

N.A. is a personal and spiritual program of recovery, therefore a personal experience. Life stories, and/or N.A. principles or N.A. general information should be the main topics at our meetings. You may find the following suggestions, which were derived from our collective experience, helpful to your group. Meetings often take on a character reflective of the members who attend the meeting. Some meetings are boisterous, while others are quietly serious; some meetings are short, while others are long. Although there is no perfect time length for meetings, those which follow an established schedule and time limitation are usually the most successful. The meeting leader and secretary should try to keep the meeting on schedule. It should start on time and end on time.

Each group makes its own decisions concerning when and where the group will meet, as well as the format of the meeting and a wide range of other questions that will come up. This how the group exercises its autonomy as expressed by the

Fourth Tradition, " Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups, or N.A., as a whole." The meeting format chosen by the group will most likely reflect the particular needs of its members. These needs will be determined by the size of the group, the clean time of the members, as well as the level of support the group receives in it's area or region. A group just forming in an isolated area where no N.A. community has ever been established might opt for a "participation" format which allows for every addict to share his or her recovery with others in the meeting. Another very helpful format is the "Basic Text Study" in which the members read from conference approved N.A. literature and discuss how they apply the material in their lives. As the group evolves and it's members gain some clean time, the need to discuss and study the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions becomes more apparent.

The group may then either change or expand it's format to include a "step and/or tradition study," or it's members may decide to start a second meeting. In an area or region where many meetings are available, meeting formats are often varied. Among the most common are : "participation meetings," "step and/or tradition studies," "Basic Text studies," "speaker meetings," "half-speaker/half-participation meetings," "question & answer" or any combination of the above. Whatever format your group decides upon, it is helpful for the group secretary to type up a standard format so that all the group's members may become familiar with it. A standard format helps the group develop an identity and is also very helpful for the various members who are chosen from week to week to lead the meeting. With a typed format to follow, even the group's most quiet member may contribute something without feeling it necessary to have a vast experience from which to draw.

Experience has shown that the same basic organization for the group works in almost any place a group is started. We have also found that new groups which pattern themselves according to the commonly-utilized formats are the most successful. Perhaps one reason for this is that groups can learn from the experience of those who have come before them and avoid many of the mistakes made by their forerunners. It is also true that many addicts travel and attend meetings in distant areas. Because recovering addicts know that their very lives depend upon N.A., they may react quite forcefully if a great deal of difference is perceived in the N.A. meetings. Therefore, following the tried-and-true methods seems to work out best for all.



Coffee alone or coffee with refreshments are nice ways of welcoming newcomers to N.A. meetings. For many addicts, a hot cup of coffee is a reassuring sign that they are welcome, safe and comfortable in the N.A. meeting. This may become an important aspect of the meeting and should not be overlooked. However, we must be careful to see that it is handled appropriately. Do not let the coffee break become a coffee hour. Coffee and other refreshments, when made available and used properly, encourage people to socialize and get to know each other better. It also allows members who have been clean awhile to introduce themselves and offer support and phone numbers to the newcomers who have been identified during the meeting. We can all remember when we first came to N.A. how frightened we were, how alone we felt, and how we welcomed that initial smile or extended hand. When we utilize a coffee break to share our recovery with a newcomer, it becomes a small but vital function of a group's primary purpose. It is the living practice of the principle of attraction, and one of the doors which was opened to allow us to "keep coming back."

Another important point is that we use only Narcotics Anonymous literature in our meetings. This is another principle so simple that we sometimes overlook it. There is a wealth of written material available today from a variety of sources. There are prayer books, self-help books, books for addicts, books for alcoholics--the list is almost endless. However, when we are tempted to use non-N.A. literature in our meetings, we must bear in mind the Sixth Tradition which warns against implied or direct endorsements. To use outside literature is to endorse and lend the N.A. name to that publication or organization and it diverts us from our primary purpose--sharing the message of recovery with addicts. It stands to reason, therefore, that N.A. funds should never be used to purchase non N.A. literature. Buying, selling and using literature, other than our own, at any level of service, implies affiliation with others and violates the spirit of our Twelve Traditions.

N.A. meetings are conducted by addicts for addicts. This sounds so simple many might think it unnecessary to be stated. However, our Fellowship faces constant pressure to open the doors to membership for people with a great number of difficulties other than drug addiction. It is a compliment to our members and our groups when others with different problems want to join us. It is our recovery--the application of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions--which attracts them. We cannot be misled by this flattery though; our recovery is at stake. We cannot allow ourselves to be diverted from the single purpose of Narcotics Anonymous. It is this singleness of purpose, recognizing that we cannot

be all things to all people, which strengthens N.A. and gives us integrity. Those with other problems such as gambling, overeating, emotional problems and the like, can and do find help by adapting the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions to their specific problems.

An important aspect of the need to keep N.A. to the singleness of our purpose is so that addicts who come to their first meeting can relate, and can identify with the others at the meeting. This is a vital point among addicts. We need to find others like ourselves, others who have been through what we have and can understand our feelings and experiences. A meeting that becomes distracted from this does not provide that essence of welcome that an addict needs at the first meeting. A meeting that moves away from our primary purpose and attempts to meet the needs of those with other types of problems will begin to exclude the addict from the new membership list.

If we keep in perspective when sharing that this is a personal and spiritual program of recovery, problems within the group will be minimized. An N.A. meeting is not group therapy, nor is it a gossip session. Recovering addicts attend meetings not only to share their experiences, but often to gain strength and hope through listening to other members describe how they have handled seemingly hopeless situations through working the Twelve Steps. In an atmosphere of recovery, we often hear solutions applied to problems that we were unable to figure out by ourselves. A newcomer walking into a group doesn't need to hear how many problems we've been through today; they know enough of the problems already.

#### MEETING LOCATIONS

Although many meetings have started in private residences, years of experience have shown that it is best to move the meeting as soon as possible to a public meeting place. In some cities there are zoning ordinances that prohibit meetings in residential areas. Also, neighbors frequently object to the increasing number of parked cars and strangers coming around. Therefore, meetings in public places are generally more successful and have fewer problems. There are a great number of organizations and public agencies that have room where meetings can be held. It may require some effort on the part of the group to find a good meeting place, but they are available. Check with nonprofit organizations, fraternal groups, public and private schools and governmental agencies.

In keeping with our Seventh Tradition, it is important that we pay our way for places where we meet. In some places a percentage of the collection or a fixed monthly donation is acceptable. Other organizations, especially small churches, can be compensated by some service such as typing, painting, gardening, etc. In some cases, donating N.A. literature may be more beneficial than a monetary donation. In order to maintain a good relationship with your landlord, always leave the meeting place clean and orderly. This includes putting chairs away, emptying ashtrays and wiping up any spilled coffee. Try to leave the room in as good shape or better than you found it.

There are two different types of regular N.A. meetings: open and closed. Open meetings are just that--anyone is welcome. Very often, families and friends of addicts may be curious about the N.A. Program and wish to accompany a recovering addict to a meeting. Addicts may also wish to invite family members and friends to attend a meeting when they are celebrating increments of clean time. Closed meetings, however, are for addicts and those may think they have drug problem only. There are times when addicts choose to attend meetings where they know their anonymity will be closely safeguarded. They may wish to share particular experiences which would not be appropriate in an open meeting. It is always wise to indicate in the local meeting directory which meetings are open and which are closed. We do not ever like to turn someone away from a meeting. Therefore, these embarrassing situations can be avoided if non-members are informed at an early stage which meetings are open to the public. Regardless of the type of meeting, participation is limited to addicts only.

Care must be exercised when holding meetings in hospitals, medical facilities, public buildings and in facilities providing drug treatment or rehabilitation. There may be regulations established by the facility that infringe on the free exercise of the Twelve Traditions. For example, perhaps a meeting place is available in a room at a hospital but the hospital has a requirement about who may attend the meeting. They may state that no prior patient may attend the meeting unless they have been clean for a certain period of time, or that patients discharged for unsuccessful completion of their program cannot attend the meeting. A facility may mandate their patients to attend the N.A. meeting, or addicts may also be prevented from attending if they are under the influence of any drug. Requirements such as these would conflict with the Third Tradition of N.A. which states that "the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using." In such cases, or similar situations where the facility imposes rules or regulations, certain

admonitions apply. We do not want to cause problems for the facility nor do we want to violate any of the Twelve Traditions. Therefore, a meeting in a facility such as the example cited above would be classified as a "Hospitals and Institutions (H&I) meeting." These meetings are not regular Narcotics Anonymous meetings. They are coordinated through an area or regional hospitals and institutions subcommittee and are considered an activity of the committee.

The distinction between regular N.A. meetings and H&I meetings is an important one to make because most area service committees exclude H&I meetings from voting at area service committee meetings. Inasmuch as they are considered activities of a committee rather than regular meetings, they do not have the usual officers, including a group service representative. So caution should be exercised when starting a meeting in a facility that restricts our members from a complete exercise of our Twelve Traditions.

### TRUSTED SERVANTS OF THE GROUP

In order to encourage the atmosphere necessary to recovery, successful groups generally utilize the following trusted servants: Secretary, Treasurer, Group Service Representative (GSR), and Group Service Representative-Alternate. For conducting meetings many groups select a Chairperson and/or a Discussion Leader. Each of these trusted servants have separate responsibilities but they work together as a team.

Without doubt the primary purpose of Narcotics Anonymous is to carry the message that addicts can recover from the disease of addiction. There are, however, some important by-products of this purpose. Among them is the development of skills, attitudes and personal tools that help us return to a productive role in society. This process of group supported self improvement can result from being a trusted servant. When selecting the trusted servants for our groups, this self improvement objective can be kept in our thinking and may be one of the reasons a certain individual is elected or appointed to serve in a particular position. Care must be exercised, however, to maintain a balance in the leadership of each group so that there are always some with considerable clean time and service experience along with those new to service.

When new groups are formed or when there is a rapid growth in membership, some trusted servants will be selected with relatively little clean time or service experience. New officers should be elected every twelve months. In

order to accommodate a smooth transition, many groups install their officers two months after they are elected. This gives the new officers time to more fully learn their new responsibilities. Some groups stagger the election of officers, holding elections for the Secretary and Group Service Representative six months away from the regular election for the Treasurer and Alternate Groups Service Representative or some other combination. With these new leaders extra effort should be exercised to provide them with the best and most experienced help and guidance. The quality of our meetings and therefore our recovery can be affected by how the group is managed and the meetings conducted.

Of particular caution should be those trusted servants who will be responsible for the group's money. Both early and later in recovery, the temptation to use the group's money is always present. The procedures adopted by the group in the actual handling of money can aid or hinder the temptations involved. To use procedures that encourage temptation is harmful to the group and to the growth of the individuals assigned these responsibilities.

Growth in personal characteristics and responsibility can be important results of service and every group should encourage this opportunity for every member. An effort should be made to rotate the leadership and participation in an orderly manner so that confidence in the group and trusted servants is strengthened.

Although at first one or two members may do all the work when a meeting is first started, it is usually better in the long run to adopt the distribution of duties outlined later in this chapter. Even if the group is small, it is desirable to have as many separate trusted servants selected as there are separate jobs to be done. This helps to establish the framework for growth and helps to keep the work load spread out and the trusted servants from getting burned out. Every effort must be exercised by the group to equally divide and share the responsibilities necessary for the functioning of the group. This permits every member the necessary time and energy to devote to their own recovery--to study and apply the steps in their personal lives.

The group's responsibility to provide an atmosphere for recovery should include the existing members as well as the newcomer or the addict who just stopped using that day. No one person is responsible for keeping a group or meeting alive. The trusted servants working together, determine how best to meet the needs of the group. The importance of working together is paramount. We must never forget our failures at trying to stay clean alone. If the trusted servants

do not work together for the benefit of the group, members will eventually wander away and the group will die due to a lack of commitment and support.

The most successful groups provide opportunity for members of the group to learn as much as possible about each of the trusted servant positions within the group. This can be done effectively by an openness and encouragement of each existing trusted servant. This will prove to be an important aspect in the selection and training of replacements for trusted servants.

Every effort should be exercised to have each trusted servant complete their full term of office. While this is not always possible, the continual change of trusted servants undermines the strength of the group, threatens the confidence of the members, and affects the quality of recovery gained from the group.

All N.A. groups should inform the World Service Office and area service committee of the location, type and time of meeting, as well as the name and address of the group service representative and group secretary. In this way, inclusion in the World Directory and local meeting directory can be maintained.

### THE SECRETARY

The Secretary is the backbone of the group and carries a lot of responsibility for the success of the group. The Secretary is primarily responsible for the day-to-day activities of the group, such as when the meeting takes place, selecting a leader or chairperson, etc. Because of the importance of this service position the best collective judgment should be exercised when selecting the Secretary.

The Secretary is responsible for calling and chairing all regular and special business (steering committee) meetings. It is also the duty of the Secretary to answer all correspondence in conjunction with the Group Service Representative. The group's correspondence may include letters from other groups, conventions, WSO, the landlord, public and private social or service agencies, mental health groups, etc. All of these things are important and should not be taken lightly. Without a good Secretary and other trusted servants, a group has little chance of attracting new members or providing a positive atmosphere of recovery.

The Secretary makes the arrangements for celebrating N.A. birthdays. It is helpful to keep a sufficient number of commemorative keytags and medallions on hand. Some groups commemorate birthdays with special refreshments, such as a cake. Frequently making these arrangements is the duty of the Secretary.

The responsibilities of the Secretary make it important that in the selection of the Secretary extensive clean time and service in the group be used as criteria for nomination. Unless there is not another member of the group with more time and service experience able to do the job, a Secretary should be selected with not less than two years clean time and service experience.

### THE TREASURER

The Treasurer is responsible for the collection and distribution of the group funds. Among these responsibilities are:

Paying the rent. The group's rent is usually determined by the landlord but in some cases, such as a clubhouse or public facility, there may be other things that can be done in lieu of payment of rent. The group conscience will be involved in the decision related to paying rent, but the Treasurer is responsible when it does involve payment of money.

Purchase supplies for the group such as coffee and refreshments, literature, N.A. meeting directories, newsletters, the N.A. Way Magazine, commemorative key tags and medallions.

Pays the bills for the group and forwards to the Group Service Representative Seventh Tradition money that is to be donated to the area service committee.

Makes funds available to other officers or members for other purchases as may be authorized or needed such as envelopes and postage for correspondence, etc.

Makes and keeps financial records of the flow of funds both in and out of the group. Most Treasurers use a notebook or ledger so that the records can be passed to the next treasurer. The Treasurer's Handbook can be obtained from the World Service Office and provides guidance on the details of how to perform all of these responsibilities. Usually group financial records are made in duplicate and the second set of records kept by another trusted servant. This protects the Treasurer in the event the records are lost or if questions arise about the use or flow of funds.

A checking account has become almost essential for the management of group funds. A checking account makes transactions easier to perform and easier to document. The group Treasurer must always keep the group's money separate from personal funds.

Experience learned over and over throughout the Fellowship has shown that care must be exercised in the selection of a group Treasurer. Unless there is absolutely no other person available for this position, a member with less than two years clean time and service experience is not elected as a Treasurer. A Treasurer should have previously served as a Secretary and/or Group Service Representative-Alternate. Of course it is helpful if the Treasurer has good mathematical skills and handles his/her own personal finances properly.

#### GROUP SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE (GSR)

As soon as you have a small number of regular members, elect or choose a Group Service Representative. The most important facet of this position is to be the communicator for the group. This duty requires the representative to provide information to the group about what is happening in the rest of N.A. (at the area, regional and world levels) and to keep the area informed about activities, strength and problems of the group. There is a tremendous amount of information and experience to be shared through the proper exercise of responsibility of the representative. The representative is a vital link that binds the groups together in their common efforts to carry the message of recovery.

The Group Service Representative attends each meeting of the area service committee and usually serves as a member of one subcommittee. Through this association the Representative is able to share what is happening in his group and learn what is happening in others.

If the Representative cannot attend the area service committee meeting, it is essential that the alternate attend. If this is not accomplished then the group goes unrepresented at that meeting. This is not recommended because it harms the Fellowship from the lack of communication and associating with other groups.

The Representative also attends the area service committee meetings to express group conscience of his group. The representative receives from the Treasurer any funds that he is to take and give to the Treasurer of the area service committee. The Representative keeps the group informed each month of what happened at the area service committee meeting, the needs of the area, and any activities or subcommittees that have been started or need support.

The Representative usually discusses the progress and needs of their group with members and trusted servants of other groups at the area service committee meeting. When the Group Service Representative is elected, notification of their



address and name should be provided to the World Service Office in order to be added to the NEWSLINE mailing list.

Because of the importance of the Representative to the group and the Fellowship as a whole, special care should be exercised in their selection. Unless there is not another member of the group with more time and service experience, a Representative should not be selected who has less than two years clean time and service within the group. It is particularly helpful if the person selected had previously served a full year as an Alternate Group Service Representative.

#### GROUP SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE-ALTERNATE

The Group Service Representative has one of the most important and busy jobs in the Fellowship. With so many activities going on that the Representative needs to be aware of and involved with, our experience has shown the need for an alternate representative to help carry the load. Accordingly when most groups get large enough to have a full complement of officers an Alternate Group Service Representative is also elected.

This members responsibilities are to attend the business meeting of the group, attend meetings of the area service committee and serve as a member of an area service subcommittee. In order to gain the widest possible benefit from this members participation and attendance at area service committee meetings and subcommittees the Alternate should not serve on the same subcommittee that the Representative serves.

When the Representative is unable to attend the area service committee meeting, the Alternate represents the group and has the responsibility to act for the group in the Representatives absence. In order to effectively do so, the Alternate must be almost as well versed about what is going on at the area and within their own group. This clearly shows the necessity for the Alternate to take their job seriously and be an active Alternate.

Because the Alternate usually becomes the next Representative, frequently before the next regularly scheduled election, an effort should be made to select an Alternate with the same basic qualifications and experience as the Representative. Unless there is absolutely not another member of the Group with more recovery time and experience, an Alternate should not be selected who has less than two years and served actively within the group at meetings.

## CHAIRPERSON AND/OR DISCUSSION LEADER

These are the people who actually guide the meeting so that it provides an atmosphere of recovery. A Chairperson or Discussion Leader should be teachable and willing to learn. The individuals chosen should also be members who share on a positive note. The Chairperson and Discussion Leader really set the tone for the meeting and can do woeful disservice to the group if they start off the meeting in a negative way. We must always remember that our N.A. meetings are not "dumping grounds" for us to air all of our complaints. We are there for the specific reason of staying clean and helping other addicts to find recovery from addiction. It is for this reason that we try to choose members with at least 90 days clean for Chairpersons, and Discussion Leaders with 6 months of abstinence. Some groups elect a Chairperson and Discussion Leader for a month. Other groups choose different people each week.

The Chairperson is responsible for carrying out the format of the meeting. The Chairperson opens the meeting, goes through the readings, introduces the Discussion Leader, gives out the chips or keytags, explains the Seventh and Twelfth Traditions, and closes the meeting.

The Discussion Leader is responsible for keeping the discussion moving smoothly. The Discussion Leader usually asks if anyone has anything they would like to hear discussed. If no one suggests anything, the Discussion Leader introduces a topic for discussion. The Discussion Leader should make sure the discussion stays on the topic. It is always preferable to generally discuss recovery and the N.A. principles, rather than directing comments to a specific member about a specific problem. It is also advisable to keep the sharing down to a reasonable time so that each person who wants to share has a chance to do so.

An important aspect of the Discussion Leader's responsibility is handling Tradition violations when they happen at a meeting. An attitude of recovery must be maintained at all times and divisive or violent arguments over real or suspected Tradition violations diverts the meeting from serving the needs of recovery. For this reason the Discussion Leader will need to learn how to avoid such disruptions and handle them correctly if they occur. In this area of responsibility, the Secretary and Group Service Representative are usually available and supportive to the maintenance of a good atmosphere for recovery.

Typical problems in this area are the reading of literature other than approved Narcotics Anonymous literature and discussing outside issues. While such

activities should not occur in our meetings, they do from time to time. The Discussion Leader should provide guidance to the individual involved that it is not appropriate to continue in such direction. In most cases this gentle reminder is sufficient to end such indiscretions. However in some circumstances it may not. It is not desirable to initiate a verbal battle and disrupt the meeting over such an occurrence, but after the problem has passed the Discussion Leader should convey to the meeting the necessity for remaining within our Traditions. Using this approach it keeps the meeting from disintegrating into a verbal battle and allows the Discussion Leader to remind the group of the necessity of providing an atmosphere conducive to recovery from addiction.

It is a good idea to discuss these incidents with the individual after the meeting in order to clear up the matter if possible. The Secretary, Discussion Leader and Chairperson should all meet with the member to review the situation to determine if a violation had occurred and how to avoid such incidents in the future.

#### BUSINESS MEETINGS

Most groups have found that there is an increasing pressure to conduct business of the Fellowship at the regular meeting of the Group. This has tended to distract many groups from the fulfillment of the needs of the members for a meeting that satisfactorily meets their needs for maintenance of their recovery. There are business matters for the group, the area, the region and also the world Fellowship. With so much going on, it would be possible for every group to occupy more than half of their meeting with the business of the Fellowship. This is detrimental and should be avoided.

The solution to this problem in most areas of the Fellowship has been the institution of business meeting for the group. These business meetings are held separately from the recovery meeting but are usually always open to all members of the group. In some places around the Fellowship the business meetings are held just before or after a regular recovery meeting. In other places they may be held on regular schedules at other times or days. The individual group will find among their members the most practical solution to this need.

Even for those groups that utilize the business meeting approach, they do provide a few minutes at each recovery meeting for the Group Service Representative to make announcements of pending events at the area or region

level. It is very helpful for the Representative to make copies of flyers or announcements that can be handed out rather than taking a lot of time to explain each activity.

For most groups that use the business meeting approach, the business meeting is held on a regular schedule or may be called anytime by the group. Frequently they are held just prior or after an area service committee meeting so the group can work with the Group Service Representative so they are properly represented at the area level. Sometimes the business meeting will be held when the Minutes of the last area committee meeting are available or when the agenda for the next meeting is on hand. This helps the group in its ability to develop a group conscience on any matters to be discussed at the area committee.

Another aspect of scheduling business meetings are when there are any problems in the group. When Tradition problems or difficulties related to the conduct of the meeting, the meeting place or unusual needs, there should be the ability of the group to have special meetings. When Tradition problems do arise, the group should exercise every effort to resolve the problem within the group at the business meeting. If this proves impossible to do, the matter should be discussed with the Chairperson of the Area Service Committee. Hopefully the Area Chairperson can help resolve the matter. If not it should be formally taken to the Area Service Committee for consideration and assistance.

If the situation cannot be resolved by advice and action from the area committee, the matter should be successively taken to the region and world level services for consideration and advice. Unfortunately, but also important, is the ability of the group to have business meetings to discuss and resolve problems related to their elected trusted servants.

When it is time to elect new or additional trusted servants are other occasions for business meetings. If a member wants his group to call a business meeting, he should contact the Secretary and ask that a business meeting be called and provide reason for having the meeting. The group should be informed at least one week in advance of the date set for each business meeting, even if it is held on a regular schedule and if possible, the business to be discussed should be announced. This gives the members of the group an opportunity to be present and to vote on the matters at hand.

Usually at the business meeting financial matters will be discussed and decision reached about how much and when to forward money to the area service committee. Many groups have elected to delegate the responsibility to its trusted

servants what amount above a prudent reserve to donate to the area service committee. However it is generally accepted that a group should not retain in their treasury an amount of funds that exceed the routine expenses of the group that would be experience in a three month period. To hold larger amounts of funds is to deny their use to help carry the message of recovery to other addicts.

### GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

There is a propensity among recovering addicts to take on new responsibilities every time the opportunity comes up. This frequently results in one member having two, three or four different jobs in the Fellowship. Our experience has shown that this is not a good idea. It is not good for the recovery of the individual involved and it is not good for the Fellowship. Each member should be encouraged to accept one trusted servant responsibility at a time.

A common trait among addicts is the drive to personal excess. We want to cram as much recovery into as short a time as possible; we want to cram a lot of recovery down the throats of other addicts we know; and we want to force the group to succeed. We frequently find ourselves thinking that the job cannot be done as well by anyone else or "if I don't do it, no one else will."

Especially with newcomers, this rush to excess is both common and dangerous. We sometimes find newer members active on Twelve Step calls, working on the phone lines, serving as secretary or treasurer of a group, active on various area committees, etc. It is easy under these circumstances to build the burden of responsibility so high that failure results. Older members may tire of their commitments and welcome the vitality and enthusiasm of newcomers. However, it must always be remembered that the newer members have had only a brief reprieve from active addiction and lack the experience and clean time of the long-term members. It is a contradiction of the spiritual principles of N.A. to allow one member to do more than his or her fair share. We must be vigilant about recovery--not only our own, but also that of the newer member--and guard against over commitments which often lead to failure. This is crucial because failure under these circumstances frequently leads back to the streets and using.

Some of the common problems that arise when groups are not careful in the selection of their trusted servants are meetings not being opened by secretaries who either have forgotten or haven't cared enough to be on time. Sometimes Seventh Tradition funds have been assumed by Treasurers who have not yet learned to

separate their own funds (or lack of them) from the group's donations. Groups sometimes carelessly elect GSR's who are overwhelmed by the area business meetings or who are unable to communicate to their group the issues or functions which pertain to them or to N.A. as a whole.

With all of these problems, a common occurrence usually takes place: the old nemesis, fear, is often covered up with an "I don't care" attitude and the result is usually chaotic, both to the trusted servant and the group. Service positions are not popularity contests, nor are they a substitute for working the Twelve Steps. The problems mentioned above keep occurring over and over when we ignore the common sense suggestion of choosing people who are not only willing and able, but have sufficient lengths of recovery. Steering committee meetings are vital to the trusted servants who work together to keep the lines of communication open within the committee and between the trusted servants and the group they serve. By holding regular steering committee meetings, the secretary, treasurer, group service representative and the group service representative-alternate can often prevent these problems.

Because the operation of the Group is so important the Fellowship has created several important resources to help groups, their officers and members. The first resource is the area service committee. This committee is discussed in Chapter Four. In addition to the area service committee, there is the regional service committee and then world services. There is assistance available from the World Service Conference, the Board of Trustees and the World Service Office. If or when problems arise or help is needed all of these resources are available to every group.

## CHAPTER THREE

### GROUP CONSCIENCE

Discussion of group conscience generally focuses on either the process or the principle and prompts questions for most N.A. members. What constitutes a group conscience? How can we invite a loving God to be expressed in our group conscience? Does group conscience only apply to groups, or also to service committees and boards? What issues are to be decided by the groups? Who can vote? Is the group conscience for a group with fifty members weighted the same as that for a group with twenty-five members when it comes to Fellowship business? What is the responsibility of the trusted servant in relation to group conscience? These and many other questions are routinely asked.

It is essential to understand the concept of group conscience as a fundamental guide for conduct and procedure within Narcotics Anonymous. Our recovery and our service efforts are dependent upon this concept. In fact, rejection of the principle and/or the process would undermine and damage the Fellowship upon which our very lives depend.

#### DEVELOPING A GROUP CONSCIENCE

One of the miracles of Narcotics Anonymous is that we can get a large number of addicts to work together, individuals with differing personalities and opinions that may conflict. This tends to set forth a rocky ground over which we must travel to achieve the goals of the Fellowship at group, area, regional, and world services. By applying the spiritual principles of Narcotics Anonymous, we learn how to disagree without being disagreeable. We learn that when we act with fear, anger, or resentment our motives are usually based in ego. However, when we suppress our individual wants and self-obsession in the interest of the Fellowship, our decisions are based in love. To make these decisions based in love at times when we may not feel very loving is a gift of our recovery.

The primary purpose, as stated in our Traditions, calls for us to provide an atmosphere of recovery in our meetings in order to carry the message of recovery to other addicts. Unrestrained or uncoordinated efforts by all of our members to accomplish this primary purpose would lead to mass confusion and duplicated efforts. We must avoid this and move toward coordinated activities as a unified Fellowship. The starting place for this is in the decision-making process we call group conscience.

Group conscience is a difficult term to define and a process that has many variations in its implementation. Group conscience cannot be defined in clear authoritative terms (although our need for clear and specific direction might call out for an authoritative definition), but is rather described as a process.

There are many different interpretations of what group conscience is, how it is derived, and what it means. Nearly every member has his or her own understanding and when we explain our own version it is a little different from the next member's interpretation. This is understandable since Narcotics Anonymous does not require regementation or conformity in personal beliefs. We are concerned about unity, and our decision making process should make provision to strengthen unity, even when there is little regementation of thought or conformity of practice.

To understand group conscience we can examine some traditions that relate to the purpose and practice of group conscience. "Our common welfare" and "N.A. unity" as they are presented in the First Tradition clearly declare that a decision-making process is involved. We could not arrive at a practical understanding of what our "common welfare" is unless we went through a decision-making process. The same is true for "N.A. unity." The determination of what detracts from our unity or promotes unity implies a decision-making process. We must remember that once a group conscience decision is reached, it is time for us to put aside our personal differences and work together in the spirit of N.A. unity to accomplish the task at hand. If the decision is opposed to our personal point of view, we should do our best to surrender to the group conscience. By refusing to participate, quitting the group, or acting negatively towards the group conscience decision, we are stating that it is only a "good" group conscience if it coincides with our opinion. This resistance weakens the unity upon which our common welfare depends. Even if we disagree we can work with the group and trust a loving God with the results.

The Second Tradition clarifies this process by telling us that our efforts to arrive at a group conscience is a manifestation of the authority in our Fellowship which comes from a loving God. This should tell us that group conscience should include guidance from our Higher Power rather than the strong personalities or preferences of our members. If a loving God is involved in our exercise of group conscience, then we should be instruments of His expression rather than bullhorns demanding our way.



"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, " should mean more of a heartfelt search for a common understanding of the issue than for a demand that one view is right while another is wrong. A loving God is not expressed by fearful, punitive, or resentful actions. Group conscience decisions should not be made to punish individuals or place restricting directives on the Fellowship it serves. Group conscience actions should be made in light of our primary purpose and reflect the spiritual principles of N.A. The importance of this simplistic approach cannot be overemphasized, and if we do this many unnecessary problems can be avoided. This spiritual process of inviting a loving God to be expressed through our group conscience as stated in Tradition Two is closely related to the concept of spiritual anonymity which is set forth in our Twelfth Tradition.

Addicts tend to be very sensitive people. This should imply a sensitivity to others but more often it means we are easily hurt. Our personality, self image and self worth may be right on the surface of things we do. If we understand this and apply the spiritual principle of anonymity that is stated in our Twelfth Tradition to our participation in group conscience, we are less likely to become defensive or aggressive, and God is more likely to be expressed. This principle teaches us to quell our egos in the interest of the Fellowship and to place principles before personalities.

Two of the stumbling blocks to a spiritually based group conscience process are: (1) the issues become identified with people who propose or oppose them, and (2) we become emotionally involved. For group conscience as a process, it should not make a difference who is involved in the discussion or who or what is the subject of the discussion. We must deal with the principle, not the personality. This sounds so simple, but in fact is very difficult. It may take years for us as individuals to mature enough to leave our emotions out of our discussions of issues. This can be especially true when the issue is related to money, power, the Traditions, or N.A. as a whole. These must be overcome, especially by those who are most trusted in the group conscience process. It is hard for some of us who are heavily involved to let someone else have the last word in a discussion, but it may be that we should speak less and have faith that a loving God can express His will through others too.

Group conscience is a process which facilitates a group decision. Group conscience requires the group's awareness of the principles involved in their

motives and actions. The group should closely evaluate its decision-making process to insure it is acting in harmony with the spiritual principles of Narcotics Anonymous, the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions. The awareness of each member of a group will vary according to that member's personal circumstances in recovery. Therefore, the awareness of the group as a whole will represent a combined mixture of the spiritual recovery of each of its members. This general notion of awareness is only the beginning of understanding group conscience.

Group conscience is the method by which we process the mixture of factual information, personal opinions, and experiences. All of these are ingredients which exist in varying proportions in every group. The built-in catalyst and safeguard is the loving God Who is referred to in Tradition Two. Without this spiritual ingredient, the group conscience becomes an expression of our will rather than the will of a loving God.

The most crucial part of the group conscience process is involving a loving God in our decision making. Most of us have experienced group conscience situations where a loving God was expressed despite our clumsiest efforts. We have also experienced situations where group conscience was forced and subsequent disharmony resulted. Usually in these painful situations we have somehow blocked the expression of a loving God, by our own actions. Powerful personalities, rushed actions, misinformation, and/or lack of information are the underlying causes of our problems. These underlying causes can result in a group conscience that is not the best course of action and may even be destructive. Our group conscience will usually twinge uncomfortably as a result of these mistakes. When this occurs it is the responsibility of the group conscience to take stock of itself, focus once again on our primary purpose and N.A. principles, and then make the necessary group conscience decision to correct the mishap.

We can avoid unnecessary struggles by allowing a loving God to be expressed through our group conscience. This can be enhanced by providing full information, allowing ample discussion of all sides of the issue, keeping an open mind, and inviting God into the proceedings via a group prayer and/or moment of silence. Striving for substantial unanimity can enhance discussion, however this ideal cannot always be attained and our goal is to gain a mutual understanding of the issue. Our group conscience is a collective conscience of our individual consciences. This necessarily entails the efforts of each individual to set aside his or her ego, personal wants, and prejudices in an effort to reach what is best for the represented Fellowship. Clearing this clutter from our minds allows the spirit

of a loving God to be expressed through the channel of our collective group conscience. This allows us the joyous experience of humbly putting aside our individual wants and differences to work together in unity. While each member is an individual and each group is autonomous, it is important during the group conscience process to ascertain if our actions will possibly affect other people, groups, or even N.A. as a whole. This application of our Fourth Tradition allows us to experience the spiritual principle of rising above our own wants in the interest of others.

The more we develop and practice spiritual principles and apply the Steps and Traditions in our lives, the better our capability of inviting a loving God into our group conscience to provide the best possible direction. This spiritual component is essential to group conscience both as a concept and as a process. Because of this stabilizing ingredient, group conscience provides a process which can eliminate decisions based upon fear, self-will, resentment, retaliation, and other character defects. While no member of a group will be free of character defects at any given time, the group as a whole need not be guided by them as long as each member employs his or her personal Higher Power. In this process, the group takes on a collective Higher Power.

#### GROUP CONSCIENCE AND THE TRUSTED SERVANT

The Second Tradition states that for our group purpose our ultimate authority is a loving God Who may be expressed through our group conscience. It goes on to state that our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern. Obviously, these trusted servants have something to do with our group conscience or they would not have been mentioned in our Second Tradition.

The word ultimate means final; this automatically implies that there are other, lesser authorities. Though the final authority rests within the N.A. groups, they have the right to delegate certain responsibilities and the corresponding authority to get the work done. There are some decisions the N.A. groups will always want to participate in directly such as, changes in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, new literature approval, or any change in the nature of our Fellowship. Otherwise, the N.A. groups have delegated much of the active responsibility for N.A. services to their trusted servants through the adoption of the N.A. Service Structure.

The words leaders and authority may have negative overtones when we first arrive in Narcotics Anonymous. However, as we gain new insight on their meaning

and relationship to our spiritual Fellowship, we view them as they are stated in our Second Tradition. The word authority is defined as the right to act. In Narcotics Anonymous authority does not represent government, but the capability to perform the necessary functions that allow our Fellowship to grow and provide its services. This authority enables the trusted servant to perform his or her delegated responsibilities within the confines of those responsibilities. N.A. leaders are not the conventional types of leaders most of us have been accustomed to. N.A. leaders are trusted servants; they do not govern. N.A. leaders lead by example, not by directives. They maintain a mutual respect with the Fellowship they serve. Their example prompts us to want to support their efforts as they have developed our trust.

In choosing a trusted servant it is important to select a member who is an example of N.A. recovery. The member should have the necessary skills and/or spiritual attributes that suit the position. It is important that we select the best possible choice and not base our decision on popularity or availability. Effective trusted servants will have experience in working the steps, for only through an application of the steps in our lives can we begin to understand the spiritual principles underlying the traditions. They will have demonstrated in their service experience the ability to fulfill their terms, commitments, and responsibilities. They must be able to put principles before personalities in conducting their service responsibilities and themselves. They should be resources for guidance in areas concerning their responsibilities and yet be able to say "I don't know" when they are unsure and then research to locate the source of the answer. The trusted servant should be willing to bring about compromises, yet always adhere to N.A. principles. Most importantly, N.A. trusted servants must be open-minded, even to their critics, since they must always be looking for the most effective way to serve the Fellowship.

The reason N.A. leaders are called trusted servants is because they are placed in a position of trust by the group conscience of the Fellowship they serve. By trust we mean that we are placing with them the authority to act responsibly within their best judgment. The reason we place trusted servants in these positions is so they can perform the general administrative and related personal services that are necessary to the ongoing needs of Narcotics Anonymous. This insures that the message of recovery will continue to be available not only to the present members but to the addicts who are, and will be, stumbling blindly through the darkness and horrors of drug addiction. These services that are handled by the trusted

servants free the N.A. groups to focus on the primary purpose and provide the personal service that is the trademark of Narcotics Anonymous.

Trusted servants have decisions to make in performing their duties. Part of our trust is allowing them to make these decision. They are usually the ones with the most hands-on experience and information regarding the needs of the particular situations they are handling. If we insisted that they return to us with every decision, they would not be trusted servants at all, they would simply be messengers. If we made every decision for them, it would quickly demoralize them and take away their effectiveness. However, it is very important that the trusted servant keep the Fellowship informed of the actions they have taken in conducting their responsibilities.

Another part of our trust is giving them the right to decide which issues they should handle and which need wider consultation and subsequent direction. We must remember that we elected them to a position of trust and that they will use their best discretion and report to us on their actions. We should not expect them to bring every issue back to us for us to decide if we should handle it. This would make N.A. just another red tape bureaucracy which most addicts tend to revile. We must remember that any action that the trusted servant may make in error can be corrected by the Fellowship they serve. And we can be quite sure that the trusted servant will be promptly notified of our concerns. Though the trusted servant has been delegated these responsibilities and the right to make decisions, if there is any uncertainty with the decision, he or she should seek the experience and counsel of members, groups, or service committees, prior to the decision and its implementation. The Fellowship that is being served should receive a report on all actions taken by the trusted servant. Nothing can change the fact that some members are simply not interested in what they may see as "politics." We cannot force people to get involved or informed. Even when the members appear disinterested, the trusted servants have an obligation to inform and provide the opportunity for group conscience to take place. Reporting to the Fellowship on actions taken removes the potential for distrust that accompanies actions not reported on or explained.

Responsibility and trust is the beautiful balance within Tradition Two that captures the spirit of mutual respect that is necessary to effectively operate our services. Trusted servants, living examples of the principles of our Steps and Traditions, necessarily have been delegated the immediate responsibility of conducting our service affairs. In order to reasonably carry out these

responsibilities a certain amount of authority has to be delegated. If this were not the case, we would have one group with all the responsibility (trusted servants) and another with all the authority (the NA groups). Back and forth we would go, accomplishing very little in actual services. As a Fellowship we have a principal obligation to the addict who still suffers. If our services are ineffective and unable to respond, addicts will not recover. Granting our trusted servants the ability to act in accordance with our principles is how we can best serve our needs as a Fellowship.

This delegated authority and responsibility does not come without checks and balances. To insure the right relationship between delegated and ultimate authority, the NA groups should give careful consideration when choosing members to represent them. If their choice proves to be unacceptable they can always recall them or, in cases of great importance or urgency, they may withdraw all support of the service structure. If the groups don't support the service structure it will crumble. This is ultimate authority and shouldn't be used unwisely or in haste, but always exists if the N.A. groups feel it necessary to correct unacceptable actions of its servants. This is the full implication of Tradition Two, a right balance, providing our trusted servants with the ability to actively respond, keeping in mind to whom they must ultimately be responsible.

Our program is a set of principles that when applied provide a constant source of guidance for us all. Individuals as well as groups know too well the consequences of intolerance or indifference to them. Addicts will die and groups may dissolve. We must have faith that these principles will guide our trusted servants actions according to the will of a loving God Who guides us all. Mutual trust and respect between servant and group, and group and servant, will insure that N.A. services always remain responsible to those they serve.

Much confusion arises over the carrying of group conscience. Trusted servants frequently face challenging group conscience situations. A group conscience issue can be voted on by the Fellowship which is being represented and later, additional information may be available which sheds new light on the issue. At the service meeting, the issue could be amended to a point where it is quite different from the issue that was originally presented to that representative's Fellowship. This is where the right of decision takes place. The representatives must decide whether these changes are significant enough to be returned to those they serve. If not, the representatives utilize the trust bestowed upon them to make a decision based on the best possible understanding of the issue. In essence,

we instill our confidence in our trusted servants as a matter of course when they assume the duties and responsibilities of the position to which they have been entrusted.

As we can see, there are difficult situations that may arise requiring informed choices, and our trusted servants need to know that they have our loving support, confidence, and trust when handling these challenges. One of the ways the trusted servant earns and facilitates this trust is by regular communication. Presentation of information should be objective and fair with adequate explanation.

Realizing that these trusted servants are entrusted with the right of decision in handling and voting our group conscience issues places a new light on group conscience. Since we trust them to handle these responsibilities, it becomes apparent that group conscience is not only formed by the N.A. groups, but also by the service boards and committees that serve the N.A. Fellowship. Committees and boards are also given the right to decide which issues to handle and which to return to the service body to which they are responsible. This entrusts the most informed and experienced members to make decisions affecting their area of service expertise. It is important that we recognize the right of these committees and service boards to handle their responsibilities. They are made up of trusted servants and have correspondingly been delegated the responsibility and related rights of decision by the N.A. groups via the adoption of the N.A. Service Structure. They also operate according to our Ninth Tradition that states that we may create these service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve. The Fellowship has a deep commitment to insure the continuation of the service boards, committees, and trusted servants that make up the N.A. Service Structure. Further, it is the responsibility of the Fellowship which created this service structure to support it financially, emotionally, and with the human resources--the trusted servants themselves.

Over the years, service committees have adopted a variety of procedures to conduct their business. In many places around the Fellowship, the question of who participates as a voting member of a particular service body has stirred a great deal of discussion. Many arguments in our groups, area or regional committees and even the WSC have centered on who has the right to vote based on who does or does not "truly" represent a group conscience. It is not our desire to decide or dictate to our service committees how they should answer these questions. Each service body in N.A. should decide for itself, its voting participants.

(Each duly elected trusted servant is representative of the collective conscience of the members who so elected him, whether they be a group secretary, area subcommittee chairperson, regional treasurer, or trustee.)

As we can see, group conscience is not always a cut-and-dried issue. However, its spiritual basis in trusting a loving God will always adequately guide us as members and as trusted servants. Group conscience will continue to work as long as we let it.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### AREA SERVICE COMMITTEE

Area Service Committees (ASR's) are formed when groups in a geographical location begin to realize there are services needed that the groups themselves cannot provide. Usually this begins where N.A. is brand new or where the fellowship grows from one or two meetings to a larger number. In a related manner, new ASR's are also formed where an existing ASC grows to represent so many groups that it becomes necessary to subdivide the existing ASC in order to provide the services needed. The first ASC was formed in 1969. This chapter reflects the experience gained from that committee and the many that have followed.

Usually ASC's meet on a monthly basis and in the same location, although this may differ from Area to Area. These ASC's are made up of Group Service Representatives, Subcommittee Chairpersons and Administrative Trusted Servants, usually a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer. The job descriptions for these positions can be found later in this chapter.

ASC's exist primarily to provide support to the groups and outreach services to the local community. Support comes in the form of sharing experience among the groups when a new group needs help, or when an older group goes through a cycle of change. One of the strongest sources of growth for an ASC is the faith and satisfaction gained by working together to help solve problems and improve N.A. services. The ASC is the place where much of this takes place.

It is the ASC that performs much of the "hands on work". The ASC utilizes a subcommittee system to more efficiently serve it's member groups and local community. These subcommittees are responsible to the ASC just as the ASC is directly responsible to it's member groups. The services performed by the ASC's subcommittees vary slightly from ASC to ASC. The following subcommittee descriptions outline the most common services provided by ASC subcommittees.

#### LITERATURE SUBCOMMITTEE

Many ASC Literature Subcommittees help keep N.A. literature available for the groups. Literature is purchased from the WSO or the local service office and sold to the groups. The \*GSR can purchase literature for their group right at the ASC meeting, saving the expense of multiple small shipments. In addition, many Literature Subcommittees partake in the development and approval process of new N.A. literature.

## HOSPITALS AND INSTITUTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

One of the primary outreach functions of the ASC comes in the form of a Hospitals and Institutions Subcommittee. Many of us felt our first taste of freedom from addiction while hospitalized or institutionalized. Members of N.A. came into these facilities and told us of this new way of life, a life that revolved around not using "Just for Today".

Carrying the message to addicts in hospitals, jails, mental institutions, rehab centers, etc., is the purpose of this subcommittee. For a more detailed description of the services reference the *Hospitals and Institutions Handbook*.

## PUBLIC INFORMATION SUBCOMMITTEE

Another primary outreach service provided by the ASC is the responsibility of a Public Information Subcommittee. The essence of Narcotics Anonymous surrounds carrying the message of recovery to the addict that still suffers. For this to happen, we must inform the addict where to find us and how earnestly we care.

Many Public Information Subcommittees set up telephone helplines, provide information to the local media and prepare presentations at community events. For more information see the *Guide to P.I. Services* and *Guide to Phoneline Service*.

## POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE

Many ASC's feel the need to form a Policy Subcommittee. A Policy Subcommittee can perform a variety of services for the ASC. Many times this subcommittee will research and seek guidance in better understanding our traditions. A clear knowledge of our traditions is essential to the ASC in providing services to its member groups and local community.

In addition, it has proven quite useful for an ASC to develop comprehensive committee guidelines. These guidelines can explain how the ASC meeting functions, defining its purpose, membership and procedures. Your ASC might find it useful to form a Policy Subcommittee to compile and maintain these guidelines. Copies of existing committee guidelines from around the Fellowship are available upon request from the WSO.

## ACTIVITIES SUBCOMMITTEE

From time to time, the ASC may find it useful to organize learning days and workshops. These workshops promote unity and attract people to group services, as well as inform members about the do's and don'ts of our collective

experience has revealed. Some common topics of workshops and learning days are; public information, hospitals and institutions, new N.A. literature, traditions, trusted servants of the groups, dances picnics and camp outs.

Quite often an ASC finds that these events are more properly coordinated through the efforts of an Activities Subcommittee. In addition, although fund-raisers should only be organized as a last resort, the ASC might find it useful to rely on an Activities Subcommittee to coordinate these events as well.

N.A. is not a social club, but these functions can provide an informal place for us to begin to feel "apart of" the WE in N.A. and enhance the enjoyment of our recovery. There are many other services that an ASC can provide throughout the Fellowship. The important thing to remember is that the ASC exists to serve it's member groups and local community within the spiritual principles of N.A.

### ASC PROCEDURES

An important task for an ASC in it's formative stages is the creation of committee procedures and guidelines. These tools help maintain order and give the ASC direction in which to function. These procedures and guidelines should be comprehensive enough to all the meeting to run smoothly while allowing the committee some flexibility. Rigid guidelines are notorious for continual amendments and less productive meetings.

ASC guidelines should describe procedures of how the ASC is to conduct business, who is to vote and on what issues. Some ASC's believe that many issues that come before the committee need to be brought back to the groups for a group conscience decision. Matters of administration are usually decided by the ASC itself.

Some ASC's allow their trusted servants to decide which issues go back to the groups and which are decided by the ASC. Neither method is better than the other. Most ASC's fall somewhere in between these two concepts. It is important that the committee decides which is best and reflect this policy in the ASC guidelines.

Another procedure that differs from ASC to ASC concerns who may address the Floor, make and second motions and who may vote at the ASC meeting. Some ASC's allow only GSR's or their Alternate to vote. The ASC officers, Subcommittee Chairpersons and the ASR and Alternate ASR are often sought out for their guidance and opinions, and are quite often allowed to make motions, but do not vote.

In other ASC's, all the elected trusted servants ( chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, treasurer, subcommittee chairpersons) are allowed to vote along with the GSR's. Again, neither way is right, wrong, better or worse. These procedures should be clearly outlines in the ASC guidelines. For a more detailed discussion of these issues, please refer to chapter Three (3) of this manual.

Another important item to be included in the ASC guidelines is an agenda for the committee to follow. This is usually prepared by the ASC Chairperson and the ASC officers. Topics of a typical ASC agenda include items carried over from the last meeting, reports from the ASC officers and subcommittees and new issues to receive the ASC's attention. A common agenda format: (1) Moment of silence to contemplate the ASC's purpose (2) A brief prayer (3) Reading the N.A. Traditions (4) Secretaries minutes of the previous meeting (5) Welcoming, introduction and, where necessary, orientation of new GSR's and Alternates (6) ASC Treasures report (7) ASR report (8) Group reports by GSR's including average attendance, financial summery and comments on strengths, problems and solutions of groups. In this manner, sharing by other groups' experience is possible (9) Old business - ongoing ASC projects and concerns, including matters previously tabled (10) New business - including discussions of questions or issues affecting the ASC or N.A. as a whole (11) Announcements, including date, time and place of the next ASC meeting (12) Collection (13) Closing prayer.

Some other common subjects discussed in ASC guidelines include descriptions of ASC and subcommittee purposes, trusted servants duties descriptions and qualifications, who will be the signatures on the ASC bank account, donations to the RSC and WSC. It would literally take a manual in itself to list all the policies and procedures that exist in all the ASC's in our fellowship. Usually an ASC will find what is needed for itself through trial and error and the spiritual growth of the ASC members over a period of "just for todays".

#### TRUSTED SERVANTS OF THE ASC

The following are general descriptions of ASC trusted servants; including clean time requirements and duties. Clean time requirements reflect a level of recovery. This level of recovery concerns an individuals ability to apply our Twelve Steps to his/her personal life, as well as apply our Twelve Traditions to his/her interactions with other people. ( For more on qualifications please see chapters One and Three).

Some positions at the ASC put a greater demand on the trusted servant than others. This is reflected by a longer clean time qualification. There are times

when an ASC may need to lower the clean time qualification of a certain position, but we would caution ASC's of making this common practice.

#### AREA SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE (ASR) AND ASC ALTERNATE

The ASR and ASR Alternate serve as a team, sharing the many responsibilities. Each has a two year commitment, the first year spent as an Alternate and the second as the ASR. They are the communication link between the ASC and the RSC (and thus the remainder of N.A. as a whole). In order to accomplish this, the ASR and Alternate must become informed of issues from Area, Regional and World levels of N.A. service. Therefore, it is essential for both the ASR and Alternate to attend all meetings of the ASC and RSC, including Regional Conferences. The ASR should prepare a written report to the RSC on the ASC's progress, projects and dilemmas. In addition, the ASR should prepare a written report to the ASC of the RSC meetings.

Part of the ASR's responsibility is to support the RSC. This is done by encouraging the ASC (and it's groups) to financially support the RSC (see section on ASC finances later in this chapter) as well as to encourage the physical, emotional and spiritual support of the RSC.

Many ASR's have become active participants of the RSC, either as a member of a RSC subcommittee or even an officer of the RSC. This type of involvement for an ASR has brought the ASC that much closer to all the other service committees in the region and Narcotics Anonymous as a whole.

When the WSC Conference Agenda Report comes out at the beginning of each year, the ASR will need to be well informed on all agenda items to disseminate this information to the groups. This is a primary responsibility of the ASR and Alternate. Usually the ASR and Alternate presents the WSC conference agenda items to the groups in a workshop form where group members may ask questions pertaining to these items.

Whatever the duties of the ASR and Alternate within a particular area or region, these duties should be included in the ASC guidelines and explained to the groups and nominees along with the following qualifications: Four years clean time; an example of living recovery through the application of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of N.A.; prior fulfilled commitment as a GSR; prior participation in the ASC as an officer or member of an ASC subcommittee; the time and resources to perform the responsibilities of the position.

## CHAIRPERSON

The Chairperson of the ASC presides over the ASC meeting with a firm but understanding hand. The ideal attributes of a Chairperson would be an individual who is sensitive to the needs of the area, region and N.A. as a whole, yet tolerant and objective with those who are unable to see beyond the needs of their groups. The Chairperson usually formulates or participates in the formulation of the ASC agenda, reviews the secretaries minutes prior to their distribution, keeps discussions focused on the topic and within a reasonable time frame, and serves as an available resource for the GSR's between ASC meetings.

It is essential that the Chairperson attend all ASC meetings, Regional Conferences and other ASC subcommittee meetings where requested. Quite often the Chairperson is one of the signatures on the ASC bank account. In addition, organizational skills are a plus such as locating an ASC meeting place, helping to preserve ASC archives and assisting the maintenance of the ASC guidelines.

In addition to whatever responsibilities the ASC feels are appropriate, the ASC guidelines should reflect the following qualifications: Four years clean time, an example of living recovery through the application of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of N.A., prior service experience as ASC Vice-Chairperson, Subcommittee Chairperson or GSR.

## VICE-CHAIRPERSON

Customarily, the Vice Chairperson presides over the ASC meeting in the absence of the Chairperson. Therefore, the qualifications and responsibilities mentioned under "Chairperson" apply equally here. In addition, it is quite often the responsibility of the Vice Chairperson to coordinate the ASC subcommittees. This is accomplished by frequent communication with each of the Subcommittee Chairpersons and to act as a resource to the subcommittees in an effort to facilitate the continuation of their duties. Quite often, it is also the responsibility of the Vice Chairperson to assist the Subcommittees continue on with business in the event of an absence or resignation of a Subcommittee Chairperson or Vice Chairperson.

Due to the similar responsibilities of both the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, many ASC's have set the qualifications for the Vice Chairperson identical to the Chairperson: Four years clean time, and example of living recovery through the application of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of N.A.; prior service experience as a Subcommittee Chairperson or GSR.

## SECRETARY

The ASC position of ASC Secretary is vital to the clarification and documentation of the policies of the ASC. If we understand that the policies of the ASC are actually set during the ASC meetings, through the process of presenting motions and consequently voting on those motions, we begin to see the need for a Secretary to have adequate skills to perform the task of recording the ASC meeting. Since the minutes of the ASC meetings are historical archives of policies set by the ASC, it is essential that the Secretary possess a good sense of order about what transpires at ASC meetings. Experience has shown that it would be unrealistic to expect the Secretary to create a transcript of the ASC meeting, but instead to draft concise minutes that reflect the essence of what is conducted at the meeting.

Many ASC's make it the responsibility of the Secretary to take roll at ASC meetings and assist in tabulating votes, as well as maintaining a file system for all information generated by the ASC, including certain materials created by the subcommittees. Some ASC's also feel it is the responsibility of the Secretary to prepare letters and other communications for the officers and if necessary the subcommittees. Quite often a Secretary will maintain a record of officers, subcommittees and groups, as well as a record of motions, reports and correspondence for the ASC archives.

The Secretary types and distributes minutes of the ASC meeting (after the chairpersons review) along with an agenda for the next meetings, to all ASC participants within the time frame stipulated in the ASC guidelines, usually one week or ten days following the ASC meeting. It is usually the responsibility of the Secretary register the ASC with the WSO, RSC and local service office. In larger ASCs we quite often see the duties of Secretary shared with a Vice Secretary who usually becomes the Secretary at the completion of his/her term.

In addition to the qualifications for Secretary, reflected in the ASC guidelines, our experience has shown that the following qualifications are essential: Three years clean time, an example of living recovery through the application of the twelve steps and twelve traditions of N.A.; general office or secretarial skills; access to a typewriter or word processor; prior service experience as secretary of a group or ASC subcommittee.

## TREASURER

The ASC Treasurer performs a most visible and essential service to N.A.. The Treasurer is mainly responsible for the management of ASC funds. The Treasurer is usually the first signature on the ASC bank account and generally maintains the checkbook. The Treasurer is responsible for complete accounting of all funds received through donations from members and groups, as well as monies generated by activities. A general principle, that assures good records, is that of encouraging members and groups to forward all monies in the form of checks or money orders. Where cash is handled, receipts should be issued immediately. The *Treasurers Handbook* provides guidelines for these transactions and should be studied thoroughly.

In most every ASC the Treasurer presents a detailed report of finance at each ASC meeting and whatever else is requested by the ASC or its members. During this report many Treasurers encourage the GSR's to remind their groups of the importance of our Seventh Tradition at every level of service, beginning with the member and then the group. It is explained how all this money goes to provide service at all levels of the N.A. service structure, which in turn assists the groups to fulfill our Fifth Tradition. The attraction that these services provide (when the members are informed) helps our Seventh Tradition become reality.

Usually the ASC bank account will contain all fund for the ASC, including subcommittees. The Treasurer, therefore, keeps separate balances for the ASC general fund, each subcommittee and any other reoccurring funding or finance the ASC feels is appropriate. In this way, all funds are under one set of books, and the Treasurer makes disbursements upon direction of the ASC.

The accuracy and promptness of the Treasures report can go far in avoiding problems of money and prestige that can divert an ASC from its primary purpose, as well as assure that the services that fulfill that primary purpose are adequately funded. Further, it is unfair to burden any member with the responsibility of handling large sums of money when that member has little personal means of support. It should be common knowledge that we elect a Treasurer who has previously exemplified their ability to fulfill the responsibilities of Treasurer. This position should not be used as a means of allowing someone to prove themselves.

In addition to the qualifications for Treasurer, as reflected in the ASC guidelines, our collective experience has shown that the following qualifications are essential: Four years clean time, an example of living recovery through the



application of the twelve steps and the twelve traditions of N.A.; bookkeeping or accounting experience; prior service experience as a group treasurer and prior participation in the ASC.

#### SUBCOMMITTEE TRUSTED SERVANTS

The subcommittees mentioned earlier in this chapter perform much of the actual work of the ASC. Electing competent subcommittee trusted servants is an important responsibility of the ASC. Many ASC's elect only subcommittees Chairpersons and allow each subcommittee to elect their own Vice Chairperson, Secretary and any other subcommittee officers needed. Other ASC's elect all the officers of each subcommittee during the ASC meeting. The subcommittee members are usually composed of GSRs and other members of the fellowship with a willingness to serve on the subcommittee. Whatever method your ASC decides should be reflected in the ASC Guidelines.

Usually the responsibilities of the subcommittee Chairperson are quite similar to the Chairperson of the ASC; good organization and communication skills; sensitive to the needs of the groups, local community, the region and N.A. as a whole; the ability to preside over the subcommittee meeting with a firm but understanding hand. In addition, the subcommittee Chairperson prepares and presents a written report to the ASC of all the subcommittee projects, schedules the subcommittee meeting as directed by the ASC Guidelines, prepares an agenda, keeps a record of the subcommittee financial balance within the ASC bank account and performs much of the subcommittee administrative duties.

The Vice Chairperson of the subcommittee would preside over the meeting in the absence of the Chairperson and assist in those responsibilities. The Secretary of the subcommittee would keep accurate Vice Chairpersons the responsibility of taking minutes of the subcommittee meetings, thus a Secretary would not be needed.

In an effort to facilitate a wider scope of services, and cooperation in N.A. services, it is strongly urged that each ASC subcommittee elect or appoint a representative to the corresponding service subcommittee of the RSC. This concept would open dialogue between all ASC subcommittees of common service function within the Region. These representatives could share experience, strength and hope in projects the ASC subcommittees are proposing, bringing us one step closer to unifying our service efforts.

It is generally accepted that the qualifications for subcommittee Chairpersons should include: Three years clean time, an example of living

recovery through the application of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of N.A.; prior service experience with chairing group business meetings (as Group Secretary or GSR); prior service on an ASC subcommittee as a GSR or subcommittee member.

#### AREA SERVICE COMMITTEE FINANCES

In order to provide services, the ASC needs active GSR's, qualified leadership and the support of its groups. The ASC must be actively supported by each group financially, functionally and spiritually. The ASC provides services to and for all the groups. Because it takes money to provide some of these services, every group has a responsibility to share part of their Seventh Tradition funds with the ASC. When an area service committee is first formed, the need for funds may be minimal--the cost of a post office box, rental for a meeting room, and coffee. But as an area grows, so do the financial needs of an ASC. The subcommittees mentioned earlier need money to operate and it is the GSR's responsibility to explain this to the members in the group business meeting. In order to provide a full range of services, the GSR's should inform their groups of the importance of supporting the ASC financially. To help them do this, the ASC treasurer should supply the GSR's with accurate monthly financial reports covering general committee income and expenses as well as costs incurred by the subcommittees in performing their tasks.

Our experience has proven the need for each ASC to maintain a prudent reserve sufficient to meet its needs as it grows. This reserve should contain enough to cover at least one month of average expenses. Sometimes the ASC needs more money than what it takes in at any one time--when the ASC expands its activities, for example, or encounters a financial dry spell. The ASC prudent reserve will help the committee through those times. In emergencies, ASC's may hold activities designed to promote unity, provide a place for fellowship, but also raise funds. These activities should only raise money from N.A. members. ASC officers and subcommittee chairpersons will have to put their heads together to determine what amount will truly serve as a prudent reserve--neither too much nor too little. They will have periodically review that reserve level to ensure that, as time goes by and the ASC's operations evolve, the reserve continues to be adequate and realistic. The prudent reserve level should be reviewed at least once a year. Funds held in excess of that reserve should automatically be forwarded on a monthly basis to the regional service committee. It is important for ASC's to support the RSC. The maintenance of the fund flow as described in the "Treasurer's Handbook" is the

essence of the Seventh and Ninth Traditions.. When our services become significantly funded through group contributions, they become more directly responsible or the groups end their funding. The RSC performs important communications tasks, and it cannot do so if there are no funds. Further, the RSC forwards its excess funding to the WSC for their support. These services assist all groups and areas.

#### FORMING AN AREA SERVICE COMMITTEE

The formation of N.A. groups provide an environment in which recovering addicts can enhance one another's recovery and reach out to newcomers. The formation of an area service committee does the same thing for the groups forming it. The formation of an ASC enhances the ability of existing groups to fulfill their primary purpose, and assists new groups as they begin their journeys. For this reason it is important to form an ASC as soon as is practical. It has been our experience as a Fellowship that the area service committee consistently plays a key role in making the N.A. message widely available to those who need it.

The early states of development of an ASC may be very much like the early stages of a group. Depending upon the size of the local N.A. population, the number of groups and the length of time the N.A. community has existed, progress may be quick or painfully slow. The primary prerequisites are having more than one N.A. group, enough experienced N.A. members to serve as GSR's, officers and subcommittee chairs, and a prevailing attitude of dedication and willingness.

When local groups decide the time has come to form an ASC, their first step is to gather information. Members who are to be involved in formation of the committee should become aware of the major areas of service--public information, H&I and literature. Handbooks for each of these are available from the World Service Office. The roles of committee officers, subcommittee chairpersons, GSR's and the ASR should be thoroughly reviewed by all concerned.

The first temptation when reviewing all this information is to become overwhelmed and think, "We're not ready for all this yet." Certainly a just-forming ASC is not ready to function as a seasoned ASC. Remember that, just as in our personal recovery, the ASC will grow one day at a time.

After initial discussions, the next step is to get the names, addresses and phone numbers of key members of the regional service committee. If none of you organizing members know who these people might be, the Group Services Department at the World Service Office will help you locate them. The regional service committee exists primarily to help ASC's. Be sure to make use of it.

If the new ASC is already part of an existing ASC, then those trusted servants should be contacted for help. In this situation, it is important to maintain unity so that the primary purpose is not interrupted.

Equipped with the above information and resources, interested members can now schedule ASC planning sessions. It may be helpful to invite the regional service representative to attend these sessions. Announce the sessions well in advance at all meetings in the area. A good turnout is important so that the new ASC is understood and supported by as many local NA members as possible.

Each ASC designs the planning session according to its own needs. If the regional service representative is able to attend, it may be a good idea to have them preside over the first session. Some ASC's have allowed all present to vote during these planning sessions. The most important matters are to elect ASC officers and to decide which subcommittees need to be formed right away. From there, each area service committee grows and develops according to local needs. As long as both the ASC and the groups remember that the ASC is formed by the groups to serve the groups, the committee will stay on track.

Among the first actions of a newly created area service committee should be to register the ASC with the regional service committee and with the World Service Office. Any change in the ASC mailing address should be reported to both the ASC and the WSO. The area service committee is an integral participant in the RSC, just as the groups are in the area. The RSC can provide additional assistance to the area service committee, so contact with the regional service committee at the earliest possible opportunity is of the utmost importance.

The most successful area service committees are those that adjust to the changing needs of the N.A. Communities they serve. When an ASC is new, it may provide a limited number of activities and services. As the need arises and experience is gained, the ASC frequently broadens the scope of its services. Old or new, all area service committees serve but one purpose: to assist the groups in carrying the N.A. message of recovery in whatever ways possible. Toward this end, this is our pledge: That no addict seeking recovery need die without having had the chance to find a better way of life, from this day forward may we better provide the necessary services.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE REGIONAL SERVICE COMMITTEE

Over the years, the Regional Service Committee (RSC) has contributed greatly to the growth of Narcotics Anonymous all over the world. In many instances the establishment of RSC's gave our scattered, isolated groups some form of association through communication by linking them together for their common welfare. This unifying force has served us well as Narcotics Anonymous has grown, for it has brought the message of N.A. recovery within reach of addicts everywhere.

From the very beginning, the RSC was to play a very important role in the development of our Fellowship. It was first outlined in the N.A. Tree and adopted by the Fellowship in 1978 at the World Service Conference as the accepted service structure of Narcotics Anonymous. Member-group-area-region-world would serve as the approved method for gathering the collective conscience of the Fellowship and to bring our message to the general public by informing them of our existence and purpose. Since that first publication the basics of our service structure have not changed. However, the functioning of the individual service units has undergone various modifications.

In the first edition of the N.A. Tree, the Regional Committee was made up of GSR's only, and the RSC was primarily responsible for all H&I and public information work through its subcommittees, allowing the area committees to concentrate on Twelfth Step work by providing hotlines, sponsor lists, and by encouraging new members. The ASC was also the suggested service committee where our service centers would be developed and literature stockpiled. The second edition of the N.A. Tree reflected some changes, including the creation of the ASR position to take the place of GSR's attending the regional meeting.

The "Blue" Service Manual of Narcotics Anonymous was approved at WSC '79. This manual made significant changes in world service responsibilities and divided services between the ASC's and RSC's. The ASC became primarily responsible to attract addicts to the Program through public information work, while the RSC's concentrated their efforts to bring the message to the addict through H&I services. This Blue manual, with modifications, became what we now know as the Temporary Working Guide to the Service Structure (TWGSS).

The TWGSS has served the Fellowship since WSC '83. Through all the changes adopted to the service manuals, the description of the RSC remained about the same, with each region choosing the specific details of how it was to operate.

Through all these changes one thing has remained clear: the purpose and function of our ASC's and RSC's are separate and distinct. The ASC's do the actual service work while the RSC's provide guidance and experience. Many regions and their subcommittees have developed a system of assisting and coordinating the service efforts of area subcommittees by providing the opportunity to exchange information and experience. The Areas, on the other hand, have concentrated on direct services through the efforts of its subcommittees.

The regional conference meetings (outlined in this chapter) furthers this concept. It provides the opportunity for understanding and resolving common problems experienced by service committees and groups, that may or may not fit into the specific concerns of subcommittees. This means more direct communication to a wider number of members and the chance for better comprehension and expression. These conferences also provide the opportunity for the collective conscience of member areas and groups to give guidance on regional matters and those affecting the worldwide Fellowship.

Today, we have a large number of regions in various stages of growth and development. Examining their experiences we find a number of examples of what has worked, and what hasn't. Through the process of evaluating the actual experience of our Fellowship and what has previously been written in our service manuals, we have tried to combine the wisdom of the two with provisions for the demands of a rapidly growing membership. In the years to come it is certain more modifications will need to be made but the basic structural foundation is sound, The Twelve Traditions.

The Twelve Traditions and how we, as a Fellowship, apply them to ourselves are the framework our service committees work within. The Guide to Service in Narcotics Anonymous will be the method we have accepted to provide our services within that framework. The regions, areas, and groups in accordance with our Fourth Tradition retain the autonomy to choose for themselves specific details and requirements to fit their individual needs. In the past few years we have been developing a wealth of experienced and knowledgeable trusted servants. It is their experience with the Steps and Traditions our RSC's will come to rely upon, to guide them in the continuation and growth of the N.A. Fellowship.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the Regional Service Committee is to support and encourage the common welfare of its members, areas and groups by serving as a resource of experience, and to provide the opportunity for the collective conscience of its areas and groups to be expressed. This intermediate position in our structure is of great importance, for it is the RSC that brings together and links our local services with the worldwide services of Narcotics Anonymous.

Each year the RSC will plan a Regional Service Conference(s) and encourage the participation of all the groups in the region. The general purpose of these Conferences is to promote more active and involved area service committees and groups, and to share information and ideas within the region and with the Fellowship as a whole. This Conference should be well planned in advance and, perhaps, take on the better part of a weekend (actual scheduling should consider the date of the World Service Conference when planning). They can either be rotated or centralized in a convenient location, or held more than once a year depending on the region's needs. A sample of a typical Conference format can be found later in this chapter.

The combined experience and knowledge of the RSC can provide a positive approach in resolving the difficulties common to newly forming groups, areas, and service committees. Through trusted servant learning days and service workshops, and the Regional Service Conference, they help familiarize GSR's and other group members with the Twelve Traditions, the N.A. service manual, handbooks, procedures, reports, and the overall benefits of N.A. service.

The RSC is also responsible for contacting and communicating with state, provincial, or national agencies. The RSC and its subcommittees provide information ( literature, helpline numbers, meeting lists, etc.) about our program and which direct services ( H&I panels, PI presentations) are available through the services of the ASC's in the region. Our service committees have two distinct responsibilities; to the Fellowship they serve, and the community they service.

Usually, the RSC meets quarterly or every other month to conduct its administrative business and for meetings of its subcommittees. The chairperson plans the agenda by consulting with committee members, subcommittee chairpersons and communicating with the ASR's. The agenda and minutes from the previous RSC meeting are then distributed to all RSC members in advance, allowing time to adequately prepare for the next meeting.

Each Regional Service Committee should have some kind of guidelines to insure that its services continue to be provided regardless of changes in officers or representatives. These guidelines should describe the committee, its purpose and function, membership, officers and their responsibilities, provide for any subcommittees that may be formed, and be comprehensive enough to allow the RSC to function between meetings.

One of the first things an RSC should do is to establish a permanent mailing address (a post office box is preferable) and register with the World Service Office. Along with this service committee registration, other information such as a list of officers, minutes of your RSC meetings, boundaries, active helpline numbers, and a list of ASC's that are served should all be included. Once you have registered your RSC you will receive publications such as The Fellowship Report and the Newslane which give information about the activities of our World Service boards and committees.

The Regional Service Committee also has an essential responsibility for contributing to the continuation and growth of the Fellowship as a whole and the health of our World Service Conference structure. Each year a Regional Service Representative (RSR) and Alternate (RSR-ALT) are chosen, to share the experience and concerns of their membership, and to participate in guiding our world service efforts. Many regions sponsor their representatives to the annual Spring meeting of the World Service Conference (WSC) in the Los Angeles area, and to the WSC committee meetings held twice a year in different locations. Ninety (90) days prior to the annual meeting of the WSC each registered RSC is mailed the Conference Agenda Report. This report contains the issues of business presented for action by the WSC Committees and Boards. Each region is requested to give these proposals the widest possible review by their membership and provide guidance to their RSR and RSR-Alternate on each issue. Often these suggestions, ideas and proposals submitted by the WSC Committees, and subsequently acted on by the Conference, have originated from RSCs. (For more information on this see the section on WSC procedures).

The RSCs support the work of the World Service Conference in many ways. Members of the RSC and its' subcommittees sometimes serve as participants on WSC committees. The work of our WSC Committees and Boards is also supported financially through the contributions of the RSC's. Throughout the year these committees are busy accomplishing the tasks given to them by the participants of the WSC. This work benefits the efforts of all our members, groups, and service



committees in the form of new literature, service handbooks, and recommending better ways to carry the message. In order to complete this important work, adequate regional support is necessary. Therefore, any excess funds accumulated by the RSC's are contributed directly to the WSC Treasurer in accordance with the approved fund flow system.

### SUBCOMMITTEES

The subcommittees of the RSC serve the common needs of area subcommittees and their specialized service interests. Exchanging information and experience with ASC subcommittee members about our Twelve Traditions and approved methods for providing services is an integral part of RSC subcommittee functions. Public Information, Policy, Hospitals and Institutions, Activities, and Literature, are just some of the working subcommittees found at the RSC level.

It is important to remember that these subcommittees are responsible to the RSC. Subcommittee chairpersons who are elected by the RSC, report to the RSC all activities of the subcommittee since the last meeting. This will keep everyone well informed and keep scheduling conflicts to a minimum.

The RSC subcommittees help coordinate and communicate the service efforts of the ASC subcommittees within the region. ASC subcommittees should send a representative to the regular meeting of the RSC subcommittee to keep them informed of their local activities and share their experience with other area subcommittee representatives. This will also support any regionwide service efforts and keep them up to date on world service activities.

Each subcommittee formed by the RSC should have an adequate set of guidelines outlining its purpose and function, membership, officers responsibilities, schedule of meetings. The approval of these guidelines should proceed the actual forming of the subcommittee so that the subcommittee has a full understanding of the work it is to accomplish. When forming a new subcommittee adequate funds should be available to support the commitment it is to achieve. The chairperson of the subcommittee should be given all the appropriate handbooks, manuals, policies, literature, and contact information that is relevant to the subcommittee's proposed work.

The chairperson of each subcommittee shall be elected by the RSC at a regular meeting. Each RSC should develop a set of qualifications for the subcommittee chairpersons according to the needs and availability of trusted servants within the region. Some general qualifications should be: substantial cleantime, experience with N.A. service on the area and group level, the

willingness and ability to serve, leadership and organizational skills. Before each nomination of a service position, the complete description and qualifications should be read.

From time to time, the RSC will be requested to assist the groups and areas within its boundaries with their collective experience of, and sensitivity to, our Twelve Traditions. When the needs of the region call for special or temporary committees, the RSC will appoint a committee of experienced members to pursue the project. These committees are usually chaired by one of the ASR's and consist of other ASR's and experienced members from throughout the region. The goals of each committee are determined by the RSC who is also responsible for providing support.

### PARTICIPANTS

The Regional Service Committee is composed of all the ASR's from the Area committees it serves, RSC officers and subcommittee chairpersons, who are responsible for the administrative needs of the RSC. These needs are usually handled by the committee in regular RSC meetings, or in between or just prior to, the regional Conference meeting. The RSR and RSR-Alternate take part in all the meetings and Conferences and assist in proposing agendas and issues for discussion. Officers of the RSC consist of a chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, and treasurer, who are responsible for the administrative duties they may be assigned and for facilitating meetings and conferences. Nominations for RSC officers should be open to all qualified member within the region.

Participants of the Regional Service Conference meeting should include the GSR's as voting members also. This is especially valuable when choosing the RSR and RSR-Alternate, and for deciding issues presented in the WSC Conference Agenda Report, which is distributed ninety (90) days before the annual WSC meeting in the Spring.

### ACTIVITIES

Besides the normal activities necessary to facilitate meetings and conferences (see section on RSC meetings), the RSC is responsible for large-scale activities, bringing together all the members in the region. These events promote unity and harmony by celebrating our mutual recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. We find this attitude best expressed in conventions, campouts, and other such gatherings. These activities take a considerable amount of planning, scheduling,

and participation of members, who understand the business aspects and recovery concerns of such events.

Regional Services Committees have accomplished the goals of these events in several ways, either with a continuing involvement of experienced members, or by appointing new members and providing guidance. Sites can be rotated from area to area, giving different members the opportunity of hosting these events. Guidelines for such events can be obtained through the WSO.

#### WHEN SERVICES NEED EXPANDING

New regions should take great care not to proceed too hastily with their development of services. Careful planning may avoid the difficulties often experienced with a growing Fellowship. First, determine if there is a definite need for creating new services or expanding the current service structure. Consult with the areas and groups that are served and listen carefully to their concerns and suggestions. Try to build your new or additional services on a strong foundation of existing services. If it is not necessary to have a functioning subcommittee or its work has been completed, dissolve it. Concentrate your efforts on improving the opportunity for personal recovery and all your service efforts will benefit as a result.

#### SERVICE CENTERS

As our Fellowship has grown, so has the necessity for more localized inventory and distribution centers. These centers have been more commonly known as offices and have served the Fellowship in many ways. The first and perhaps most obvious function of these centers is to more efficiently serve the N.A. groups and the local communities. The second is to function as a central communication point for our service committees.

The operation of our service centers is usually the responsibility of the service committee that creates it, but usually maintained by electing or appointing members to serve on a board of directors. Once guidelines have been adopted for the service committee or board, the RSC should begin to search for individuals to serve on the board. This process of finding qualified members is important to the continuing operation of the service center because of the necessity for prudent business management. This is not to say that the only people qualified for serving on the Board need to be businessmen, but that the board members have sufficient experience among themselves to soundly operate a business, guided by the Twelve Traditions and keeping in mind the spiritual nature of our fellowship.

( As we expand to meet the needs of our growing Fellowship, we may find it necessary to establish these service centers on a more localized basis as part of an area committee function as well. However, it is important that the existing services do not suffer as a result of supporting these Fellowship service centers. Careful planning is important. To better understand the function of our Fellowship service centers, guidelines are available through the WSO to assist your committee in developing and operating such a service center.

#### SUPPORTING THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

As with any service body in Narcotics Anonymous, the RSC needs substantial financial support from its participating areas and groups. When an area service committee has met its financial obligations including its prudent reserve, they should contribute the excess funds to the RSC as a matter of course, in the spirit of the Seventh Tradition.

Funds generated as part of our Seventh Tradition are just as important to our services as it is to our groups. In order to provide the necessary services we must be responsible to adequately support them through regular contributions. Fellowship activities have customarily passed on any excess monies to service committees also. Although, we may wish to continue this practice it would be unwise to become overly dependent on these activities as a prime source of financial support. This ensures our Fellowship the freedom to decide for itself the course of future service efforts, without the sometimes burdensome influences of fundraising or other such activities.

#### COMMITTEE OFFICERS

The officers elected to provide the region with effective leadership should have the ability to organize and provide direction for the Regional Service Committee efforts. Our experience has shown that their enthusiasm and knowledge can go a long way in contributing to the success of the committee. Committee officers and other trusted servants are most effective when they serve as living examples of the N.A. Program. By sharing their example with other members and demonstrating how service has enhanced their personal lives, we will ensure that Narcotics Anonymous will be ably and effectively served for now and in the future.

It is the duty of the RSC officers to provide guidance, support, understanding and act as a resource with the region. The RSR and RSR-Alt. share with the officers, the duty of disseminating information from World Services and

the rest of the N.A. Fellowship to the region they serve. This allows for the broadest overview of the challenge to take place while ensuring unity.

#### CHAIRPERSON

The qualifications most frequently associated with this position include a minimum of four to five years clean, N.A. service experience on the group and area level, time and resources to fulfill the commitment, and a sound understanding of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Leadership and organizational skills, along with good planning ability, have proven to be most successful assets for a good chairperson.

One of the most important responsibilities a chairperson has is communication, both within the region and with other RSC's and world services. Arranging for the agenda and overseeing the distribution of minutes and reports for the meetings and conferences are just part of the communication efforts. Keeping in close contact with other committee members and assisting the areas by providing information and experience are some of the others.

Conducting regional meetings and conferences in an orderly manner with a firm but loving hand, and keeping the meeting focused on one issue at a time is a most effective function of the chairperson. Sensitivity, tolerance, a sense of humor, patience and understanding are especially important during the course of the meeting and even outside of the meeting.

#### VICE-CHAIRPERSON

The RSC subcommittees are primarily overseen and coordinated by the vice-chairperson. Besides these duties, the vice-chairperson serves as the liaison to any service boards created by the RSC such as Convention Board or Service Center Board. In this way, the RSC can stay on top of the activities of each board.

It is essential that this position be filled by a member who has virtually the same qualifications required of the chairperson, as the vice-chairperson is expected and should be prepared to step in and assume the responsibilities of the chairperson or an RSC subcommittee chairperson at any time.

#### SECRETARY

An active secretary will inspire enthusiasm and interest in the RSC through his or her dedication. Their position is vital in keeping a high level of interest in the work of the committee and, through the compilation of the minutes of meetings, in keeping a sense of order to the business of the committee. Working closely with the chairperson, the secretary assists with correspondence, record

keeping and maintaining any archives material. Skills should include the understanding of what is and isn't important to include in the minutes, general office and clerical experience, at least three to four years clean, prior experience in N.A. service, and the time and resources necessary for the job.

#### **TREASURER**

The position of treasurer in N.A. service is always a very sensitive one since he or she is responsible for handling the regions funds, disbursing and collecting, and keeping accurate records of all funding transactions. For these reasons it is necessary for the treasurer to have some background skills in bookkeeping and/or accounting, four years cleantime, prior N.A. service experience, and a good track record of responsibility to service commitments.

An important part of the treasurer's responsibilities is to bring about an understanding of the need for financial support of RSC activities. Keeping the groups and areas aware of our Seventh Tradition and fund flow system and how it benefits the important work of our Fellowship services is another part of the treasurer's duties. For more detailed information regarding this service position see the pamphlet, the *Treasurer's Handbook*.

#### **THE REGIONAL SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE**

The position of RSR is often a very time-consuming but fulfilling commitment. Every potential RSR and RSR-Alt nominee should review the demands of the position and consult with their sponsor, family, and especially past RSR's to understand the challenge. The responsibilities associated with this position reduces the time spent with family, friends, recovery meetings, and work related obligations. This commitment often results in having to delay other plans (continuing education, career development, etc.) until the term of service is completed. The long-term benefits of such service truly exceed the short-term sacrifices, but these sacrifices are real and should be considered prior to accepting the responsibility.

Despite the varied and in-depth responsibilities, the potential RSR and RSR-Alternate need not be intimidated by the challenge. The job can be done and done effectively. Probably every N.A. member ever elected to this position has at one time or another, felt inadequate and anxious about their responsibilities. This is quite common but as we proceed with fulfilling our obligations we find there is support at every turn in the nature of emotional, spiritual, and informational resources.

The term is two years; one year is served as RSR-Alternate and one year as RSR. Due to the challenge of the RSR and RSR-Alternate positions, it is strongly recommended that the candidate have five years cleantime, a solid foundation of experience with the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, previous N.A. service experience in area and regional committees, and the ability to effectively communicate. The qualifications of the position of RSR-Alternate parallels that of RSR, as they will be sharing many of the responsibilities.

The RSR and RSR-Alternate upon their election, should contact the WSC Administrative committee through the World Service Office. This initial contact is important and should be done as soon as possible, as much of the communication regarding world service activities is reported directly to the RSR and RSR-Alt. The RSR should also familiarize himself with the resources of N.A. world services at this time, so that he/she may contact the most appropriate services for information regarding important questions from the membership, which come up from time to time.

The RSR and RSR-Alternate should try to attend as many activities within the region as possible and keep on top of the issues and concerns of the membership. Many long hours are spent sharing information with individuals, groups, and service committees at these activities which in turn helps the RSR to provide better service to the Fellowship.

The World Service Conference held in the Spring, in the Los Angeles, Calif., area, lasts for one week, and the hours can extend from 9:00 A.M. to 11:00 P.M. Preparation for the Conference is a year around responsibility and includes communication with and awareness of local needs and concerns, familiarization with world services, close review of the Conference Agenda Report, the service manual, and the past two or three final reports from the Conference. This week, in particular, will be both exhausting and exhilarating, so physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual preparation is a must.

The RSR also prepares a report to the Conference. This report should reflect the actual struggles, successes, and learning experiences of the region. This report should be read to the RSC before presentation at the Conference. At the Conference, a summary of this written report is given verbally by the RSR to the rest of the participants.

The RSR, when participating at the Conference, not only represents a certain section of the N.A. Fellowship, but also represents the best interests of N.A. as a whole. This is in conjunction with the spiritual principles of our First

and Fourth Traditions, which encourage us to reach beyond our personal wants and needs to the needs of our Fellowship as a whole. This is sometimes difficult, but we must broaden our horizons to understand the importance of our common welfare in Narcotics Anonymous.

The RSR and RSR-Alternate participate as members of a World Service Conference Committee, though not the same one. These committees are where a lot of the actual work gets initiated and finalized before coming to the Conference as a whole. This committee experience gives them new insights to the issues affecting N.A. as a whole. Most WSC committees meet in quarterly workshops and RSR attendance is both beneficial to the committee and the Fellowship they serve.

Due to the demands of these positions, we should not place these responsibilities on anyone's shoulders for a longer period than one term. It is also a good idea not to re-elect a previous RSR as RSR or RSR-Alternate. Our Fellowship is now large enough, to offer new service experiences to those qualified, and re-election denies both the past RSR's and potential new candidates of these most rewarding opportunities.

#### FORMING NEW REGIONS

Each region should conform to established boundaries, equivalent to state, territorial, provincial, or national boundaries, unless there are extraordinary circumstances to the contrary.

Extraordinary conditions under which divisions shall be considered to establish multiple regions within the existing boundaries are restricted to large N.A. populations, great geographic distances, specific legal concerns, or such diversity of language or custom so as to impede effective, direct communication. Regional boundaries may be re-formed after the petition for re-formation has been given substantial consideration and approval.

As the Narcotics Anonymous population of a region grows to the point where the RSR and other trusted servants can no longer provide adequate service and communication, it may become necessary to form new regions. When considering this action, every effort should be made to determine if the existing problems warrant the creation of a new region or if they could be resolved by improving the existing structure or by adding new local services.

#### PROCEDURE FOR NEW REGIONS

Each application is considered on its own merit. Upon receiving notification from the region, the WSC Policy Committee provides a form to be



filled in by the RSR, requesting information on the current structure and past history of the service committees within the region. Geographical and N.A. population data, pattern of growth, attendance at service meetings, minutes of those meetings, reporting procedures, financial statements, and the adequacy of the local structure are all important issues that are asked about in this form. The addition of new regions should be given careful consideration within the existing region, with special attention given to resolving obvious problems within the local service structure.

1. All the groups within the region are notified in advance by the regional committee of the necessity--both pros and cons--in order to make a sound decision for the re-formation of the region. Two-thirds majority of the Regional Service Conference should agree that this request for reformation is appropriate before the RSC petitions for change to the WSC Policy Committee.
2. The information from the form will be reviewed by the full WSC Policy Committee, who will work directly with the RSR and RSC to obtain any further information. Suggestions and recommendations may be offered to the requesting region as to possible options that exist. A report of the information will then be made at the annual meeting of the WSC.
3. Upon the presentation of this information from the WSC Policy committee and the RSR from that respective region, the participants of the World Service Conference will decide the issue of an additional Regional Service Conference by a two-thirds vote of approval.
4. The addition of the new region will take effect upon the close of the World Service Conference at which its application is approved.

#### RSC MEETING

This meeting is for the purpose of administering the normal business activities of the RSC. It should be held on a regular basis during the year. The business of the region is discussed including reports from the officers, activities of

the subcommittees and boards, finances, plans for next RSC meeting and/or the Regional Service Conference, etc. Each ASR also discusses the activities of his or her respective area. The summary of these reports is then prepared and communicated within the region through written reports and presented directly to the ASC's by the ASR or ASR-Alternate.

Electing new officers of the RSC or its subcommittees should be scheduled during one of the regular meetings of the RSC. Notification should be sent well in advance of the planned election meeting so that interested, qualified members may attend.

### **PLANNING FOR THE REGIONAL SERVICE CONFERENCE**

1. The chairperson consulting with the members of the RSC selects the date of the conference and discusses the proposed agenda items.
2. Notification is sent out to all the groups and ASC's in the region, advising them to send their service representatives. Information on place, time, date, and other arrangements is sent out with the notification.
3. The chairperson consulting with the ASRs, committee officers, and subcommittee chairpersons prepares the agenda paying particular notice to issues commonly affecting groups and areas in their service efforts. Consulting with the RSR and Alternate also will make the committee aware of any business from our World Services that need attention.
4. Proper planning and organization by RSC members will provide those in attendance with an interesting and smoothly run conference. The schedule of the Conference(s) should take into consideration the calendar of events of the WSC. Accurate minutes are kept of the whole meeting.
5. The most important aspect to emphasize for the Regional Service Conference, is its primary purpose: to gather the collective conscience of the region and to select the representative (RSR) to the World Service Conference.

## THE REGIONAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

### SESSION ONE

The session begins with everyone assembled. A roll call is usually taken or service representatives are asked to sign in so they may be recorded as attending. The RSC presents a summary on the administrative activities of the region and a short question-and-answer period follows each report.

If the RSR or Alternate is to be chosen at the session, the election process is the next agenda item. All members of the RSC are eligible and are automatically placed in nomination unless they decline. All GSR's and RSC members may vote. A paper ballot is used and the process is continued until a nominee receives two-thirds support of those included in the roll call as eligible to cast ballots.

The RSR or Alternate then gives a report on recent activities of our World Services boards and committees and allows time to answer questions.

Any subcommittees that have issues or reports to bring before the Conference are recognized.

General sharing time is allotted; any issues, problems, suggestions, or criticisms from the GSR's regarding RSC activities are heard.

### SESSION TWO--SUBCOMMITTEES

Each RSC subcommittee and board will meet separately to share information with any interested GSR's or other members and discuss that specific subcommittee's area of work. New approaches, common problems, how to get involved, improving services, are just some of the topics discussed during this session.

### SESSION THREE--- THE CONFERENCE SESSION

The Conference Session is where everyone gets to contribute their "say" to what's happening in N.A. Local issues and other matters that affect the Fellowship as a whole are discussed by everyone who wants to speak. Hopefully, even those members who are usually less willing to address a meeting will take this opportunity to be heard. Opinions are voiced in a supportive atmosphere without the need to defend what has been said.

Sometimes the Conference Session will be planned to address specific issues or concerns common to the areas or groups. "How to Raise Interest in Service," "Promoting an Atmosphere of Recovery in Our Meetings," "Group Conscience and It's Relationship to the Trusted Servant," are just a few of the topics that a Conference Session could address.

In order to facilitate some discussions in the Conference Session more appropriately, you may want to break up into smaller groups to discuss each item thoroughly and choose a spokesperson to address the full Conference with what each smaller group has discussed. (Sometimes these smaller groups are actually all the representatives from a specific area or you may prefer to mix it up.) This allows for a large number of people to take an active part in our group conscience process and provides our trusted servants with an opportunity to listen and sense the concerns of the region.

(Ninety days prior to the annual World Service Conference each regional committee is mailed a Conference Agenda Report. This report contains the issues that have been developed by WSC committees, trustees, the WSO, and sometimes regional committees, during the past year. These reports contain important information on the issues to be considered during the WSC, held in the spring of each year. The Fellowship is asked to review these items thoroughly and to express their concerns in a Conference Session especially set aside for this purpose. Each RSC will want to plan ahead to determine the best way to distribute the information and collect the conscience of its areas and groups.)

## CHAPTER SIX

### WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE

The World Service Conference serves as the framework upon which the Fellowship has evolved for making decisions for N.A. as a whole. However, it was not always that way. For sixteen years after the first meeting started in 1953, there was not even an area service committee. Until 1969 the groups existed in a loose association with one another, working together, but without the formalized relationship we know today. Growing into that first area service committee was a gradual process.

As the number of groups increased and many were started in places distant from the Los Angeles area, discussions began to arise about a structure for the Fellowship. There were concerns about a structure because everyone seemed to have different ideas of how it should be.

That first area committee was started in Southern California because there were enough addicts and meetings close together. This area service committee served the Southern California area and a considerable distance beyond. The area committee had a rocky start and was the scene of many loud and strongly felt disagreements.

Among the actions taken the first year was the decision to hold a convention. Even though the Fellowship was relatively small, it was decided to call the Convention the World Convention for Narcotics Anonymous. The event was a rousing success, bringing participants from all over the Fellowship. This first large gathering also accelerated the discussions about a structure and discussions ensued about having a World Service Conference in a manner similar to A.A.

As time passed, more groups were started in more cities in other states. Northern California decided in 1971 that they had grown enough to start an area service committee, and did so. In 1972 serious discussions began on the idea of creating a structure for a conference composed of representatives from around the Fellowship. Work was begun in 1973 on the draft of a document that might be considered as the framework from which the Conference, when held, might be organized.

The first World Service Conference was held in 1976 in conjunction with Narcotics Anonymous's Sixth World Convention in Ventura, California. That Conference established an Adhoc Committee of representatives of the Fellowship,

to review and revise the service structure that had been proposed for Narcotics Anonymous in *The N.A. Tree*.

The Adhoc Committee presented the results of their efforts for group conscience decision at N.A.'s first World Service Conference held independent from World Conventions. That Conference occurred in the Spring of 1978 in Van Nuys, California. The Conference accepted the draft but referred it along with other suggestions and input to the newly established World Service Conference Literature Committee for finalization.

The Literature Committee work was completed and presented to the Fellowship for approval at the World Service Conference held in the spring of 1979.

The Conference is more than simply a meeting of trusted servants, yet it is not quite the government within Narcotics Anonymous, as some believe. The World Service Conference does have certain duties and responsibilities as they relate to matters and issues which affect our Fellowship as a whole. Issues which have impact on our entire Fellowship are examined and studied by the appropriate WSC Standing Committee or Service Board. The Fellowship as a whole utilizes the WSC as the vehicle for making decisions on matters which affect our Fellowship Worldwide. These duties and responsibilities have been shaped by the Fellowship through the trials of experience and our understanding of the Twelve Traditions.

We find in the Traditions all of the parameters which form the purpose, pattern and duties of the Conference. For example, Traditions Nine, "N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve" is one of the foundations upon which the Conference has relied when shaping and outlining its duties. This Tradition seems to many non-addicts to be contradictory, yet it speaks clearly to the method for arranging the Conference and the relationship of the Conference to the members of the N.A. Fellowship.

The ultimate authority in Narcotics Anonymous is a "loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience." One of the functions of the World Service Conference is to serve as the element through which Fellowship-wide group conscience is expressed. The Conference has sometimes been described as a general deliberative assembly of the Fellowship. While this may sound correct in an organizational sense, because the Conference meets, the members make motions and vote on them, it is not correct in the sense that the members attending as voting

participants have power in and of themselves. The authority delegated to the World Service Conference is the expression of Fellowship conscience.

The WSC is comprised of an Administrative Committee, Standing Committees, Service Boards and RSR's/RSR-Alternate. Voting participants at the WSC consist of Regional Service Representatives, Officers, Standing Committee Chairpersons, the Chairperson of the WSO Board of Directors and members of the Board of Trustees.

The Conference holds three (3) meetings each year; an annual meeting and two workshop meetings in July and October. The annual meeting may last up to a week; however, the planning and implementation associated with the Conference is a year round proposition. The location and dates for the Conference workshop meetings are determined by the Administrative committee and announced at the annual meeting of the Conference. These Conference workshops have one primary objective and that is to allow the Conference Committees to continue work on the tasks assigned to them. One of the benefits of a rotating workshop system is that there is opportunity for the Fellowship in the host city to interact with the trusted servants of the Conference and their Committees. An additional benefit is that world level trusted servants learn first hand what is happening in the Fellowship at the host region and benefit from that association. All of the voting Committee participants and selected staff members of the World Service Office attend each of these Conference workshop meetings.

The annual meeting is always held within the Los Angeles area in order to utilize the staff and facilities of the World Service Office and to have access to the records and archives of the Fellowship which are stored at the World Service Office. The World Service Office is responsible for the logistical planning of the Conference itself, arranging for supplies, equipment and special services that the Conference might need.

#### **THE ANNUAL WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE MEETING**

The Annual meeting of the WSC is generally held in the Spring of each year and the workload is such that a week is set aside for this conference.

We have learned and grown from the experiences of past Conferences. We experimented with different policies and procedures for participation and organization of the Conference. And each year has disclosed weakness and strengths that improved conferences held in subsequent years. The sessions and

procedures of the Conference shown on the following pages reflect the best experience from prior conferences. Our workload almost always taxes our schedule. However, we try to build in some flexibility in order to handle unexpected situations. If any session concludes early the next session is started early. When a session is found to be running late, discussion often has to be curtailed.

Conferences have proven to be both exhilarating and exhausting. At the Conference, the future of the Fellowship is shaped through actions of Fellowship conscience on proposals that had been submitted to the Fellowship.

The annual World Service Conference usually begins with a welcoming session which includes introductions of participants, a welcoming speaker, and regional reports. This is followed by a general sharing session during which the voting participants are afforded the opportunity to share the concerns and problems facing the Conference and the Fellowship.

On the second day, committee meetings are held for each of the standing Committees and special Committees. These meetings provide opportunity for detailed discussion concerning suggestions, questions, and problems that have been submitted concerning the Committees proposals and new items relative to the Committees area of responsibility. At the end of the session each Committee prepares a report concerning every item discussed. For every item that involves more than one Committee, each Committee will separately review the item and make recommendation concerning the part that is within their area of responsibility. The World Service Boards may also elect to have meetings at this time to address issues within their scope of responsibility.

After the Committee sessions, the first general meeting is held. This session provides time for each of the officers of the Conference, Committee chairpersons, Trustees, and World Service Office to present written and oral reports of their activities during the year. At this time also, written reports are presented on the discussions and actions taken in the Committee meeting session that preceded the report session. This is when most of the work is done. The voting participants interact with the Committee chairpersons and other trusted servants concerning various aspects of the reports given. Motions are made, debated and disposed of according to the procedures of the Conference. At the end of this session all of the work received prior to the Conference will have been disposed of by action from the Committee or the Conference or included in the work the Committee will schedule to accomplish in the coming year.



The next session is for elections, at which time nominations are opened for the various world level positions. Elections are held and the new trusted servants introduced to the Conference. The procedure for elections is discussed later in this chapter.

Following completion of elections, the next session is a new Committee meeting session. At this time the outgoing Committee officers and committee members meet jointly with the incoming officers and Committee members. This is a general planning session during which plans are discussed and outlined for work to be accomplished during the ensuing twelve months. The Committee returns to the next general session with a report including proposed plans for the committee that will be acted on by the full conference.

The final session, usually on the last day of the Conference is another general session during which unfinished business or new business can be addressed. It is during this session that each Committee submits their proposed work program and budget for the following twelve months. When the work is completed the Conference closes until the following year.

The workshop meetings of the Conference are held according to a different format than the annual meeting. There is usually an opening session which may include an inspirational speaker from the Fellowship. Because no general session is held wherein voting for the whole conference is conducted, the rest of the meeting is devoted to meetings of the various Committees and service boards. The committees may meet separately to work on issues related to their own area of responsibility or jointly to work on problems related to other Committees. It is at these sessions that the majority of the productive work of each Committee is accomplished. The chairpersons and members present reports and proposals which the Committee examines, debates, changes and finalizes in the form of proposed policies, procedures, new pamphlets, handbooks and other tools that can be used by the Fellowship.

In order to have the most productive workshop sessions, the work to be considered is mailed to the appropriate Committee members in advance, at the time notice of the workshop is given. The workshop meetings are held in July and October and are where most of the basic work of the Committee is done. New input is worked on, new proposals are received and the formulation of final drafts of reports and policies are generated. The material completed at the October workshop by each Committee is then made available to the Fellowship in the Conference Agenda Report. The Conference Agenda Report is sent to each

conference participant not less than 90 days prior to the date of the conference. All Committee members are responsible to be present at each workshop where their Committee will hold a meeting. Other members of the Fellowship are invited to attend these workshop sessions and observe the Committee working but should not participate or vote.

A January administrative meeting is held for the chairpersons of the standing committees, service boards and the officers of the Conference to review the final report from each committee and board before it is published in the Conference Agenda Report. It also serves as a planning session for the April Conference and to prepare the budget for the upcoming conference year.

It should be emphasized that the Conference is not a political body, demanding a completely rigid formula of representation. If this were the principle followed, each voting participant would have to represent an equal number of members or groups or in other ways reflect the representative equality that such "direct representation" concepts would call for.

The Fellowship has learned that lengthy cleantime, broad experience in service and a good personal understanding of the Steps and Traditions are the best foundations for world level service. The requirements for election to various service positions at the area, region and at world level attest to the importance of that experience, strength and hope. The Fellowship very early recognized the importance of retaining that experience as part of the decision making that does occur at the World Service Conference.

The WSC officers, WSC Committee Chairpersons, members of the World Service Board of Trustees, and WSO Board of Director members are generally well informed, experienced members of the Conference. These positions bring with them a requirement for various and significant lengths of cleantime. Generally speaking lengthy cleantime has a positive impact on judgment and decision-making. These trusted servants generally travel throughout the Fellowship in the conduct of their duties and have a broader perspective of the Fellowship from that experience. They are the members most directly involved in the Fellowship-wide work being done by the Conference and usually have more specific knowledge of the issues being presented.

The Fellowship created a WSO to handle our business affairs and to facilitate N.A. services. The office needed to be separate from the Fellowship, yet at the same time accountable through our Service Structure. The Fellowship, through the WSC, created a Service Board, "The WSO Board of Directors" to be

accountable to the Fellowship through the WSC. To provide for adequate interaction between the World Service Office and the Fellowship, a representative of the Board of Directors of the World Service Office is included as a voting participant of the Conference. This has been found to be a valuable and productive arrangement. The Office Directors and staff have experience and service knowledge which may facilitate many of the decisions the Conferences needs to make. With a representative from the Office as a voting member of the Conference there is the ability to have that experience and knowledge easily accessible to the Conference and provides opportunity for closer service by the Office.

The Chairperson of the World Service Conference is the presiding officer of the Conference and when presiding does not vote except to make or break a tie vote or to cast a vote in a roll call vote. When the Vice-Chairperson is acting as the presiding officer at the Conference, he/she similarly does not vote except to make or break a tie vote or cast a vote in a roll call vote. Other individuals are not authorized to participate in the Conference without a 2/3 vote of approval by the Conference, except for the participation of a parliamentarian, the Executive Director of the World Service Office and guest speakers. These exceptions have been found to be essential for reasonable and proper operation of the Conference. In the absence of the elected regional service representative from any region, the alternate regional service representative is recognized to perform the duties of the RSR's and to participate and vote in place of the RSR.

The decision making process of our World Service Conference needs to reflect all the necessary characteristics, checks and balances, sectional influences, experience, strengths, and hopes that are, N.A. as a whole. In order to accomplish this, the participants of the Conference are both regional representatives (who usually serve for a year) and world service trusted servants (who usually serve for an extended time period). To reflect the appropriate balance between the two, the WSC maintains a 2/3 majority of RSRs to the remaining participants of the Conference. This relationship insures that our WSC decisions have the best possible knowledge, experience, and understanding to guide our Fellowship in all its affairs.

## ELECTIONS AT THE CONFERENCE

An important part of the annual meeting of the Conference is the election of trusted servants to serve at the world level. Experience has shown that considerable care has to be exercised in the selection of world level trusted servants.

The system now provides for a Nominating Committee responsible for providing information to the WSC participants on submitted nominees whom are most likely, based on past experience in service, to capably serve the Fellowship in world level service.

The Conference elects the following trusted servants who must be present to be elected:

- A. A Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Treasurer of the Conference.
- B. A Chairperson for these Standing Committee: Policy, Literature, Public Information, Hospitals and Institutions, and Group Services.
- C. A Vice-Chairperson for these Standing Committee: Policy, Literature, Public Information, Hospitals and Institutions, and Group Services.
- D. Two members to the International Fellowship Committee.
- E. Four members to the Nominating Committee.
- F. Trustees
- G. Three members to the World Service Board of Directors.
- H. Three members to the reserve pool for directors of the World Service Board of Directors.
- I. The Conference may also elect other members or individuals to Adhoc, special or new Committees if such are created and their election is provided for.

The elections are held for each position separately.

The acceptance of responsibility as a world level trusted servant can be disastrous if rushed or if sandwiched on top of other service commitments at the area or region. Experience has proven that the tendency to serve as an RSR and also as a vice-chairperson or chairperson of a WSC committee has created terrible results for the individual, the region, and for the success of world level services. Some have attempted to remedy this problem by resigning from their position as an RSR. This has frequently left the region with problems of continuity and inadequate service experience. It is important to fulfill our obligation and commitments to those we serve prior to accepting another service position, especially at the world level.

All members meeting the requirements for service in any of the positions listed above can be nominated. The nomination becomes official when made at the Conference. Upon acceptance of nomination, the individual resigns from every conflicting service position.

The terms of office for all of the officers listed in A, B, C, D, and H, shall be for one year from the close of the Conference meeting at which they are elected to office. Every individual elected to a position in paragraphs A, B, C, D, and H, may be reelected for a successive term of office without having had to discontinue service in their present position and without having to leave service for one year. Those members currently serving in each position will automatically be renominated by the Nominating Committee if they desire to continue service for a second term of office. The Fellowship has found that there should be rotation in world level service positions, therefore a member cannot be renominated for a third term of service in the same position.

#### **DUTIES OF OFFICER ELECTED BY THE CONFERENCE**

The officers of the Conference shall be the Conference Chairperson, Conference Vice-Chairperson, and the Conference Treasurer. The basic purpose of standing committees are to collect, clarify, define, and articulate the decisions that the Fellowship must make within their specific areas of concern. Committees, through their meetings, collect data from the Fellowship, and prepare recommendations for the Fellowship that can receive final deliberation at the World Service Conference. The Committees are advisory rather than decision making in their nature as trusted servants of the Fellowship.

The World Service Conference is an important part of the Fellowship because it affects every aspect of the Fellowship, from the member right through every level of service. These world level trusted servants help shape the activities of the Fellowship through their spiritual leadership, insight to the needs of the Fellowship and their administrative abilities. Although the following descriptions of major duties of world level trusted servants portrays many of the aspects of each position, any such list would be confusing and lengthy if every separate responsibility was listed which covered their duties for every separate situation that they may find themselves involved with for the Fellowship. So the list is necessarily short. But trusted servants are expected to exercise restraint in

judgment while basing their actions on spiritual application of the principles of N.A.

**CHAIRPERSON OF THE WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE:** The Chairperson is responsible for general administration of world level services. While the WSC Chairperson does not have direct supervisorial responsibility for the activities of the Conference Service Boards (World Service Board of Trustees and WSO Board of Directors), dialogue between those service boards and the WSC Chairperson is vital. Our Service Boards were created by the Fellowship and are responsible and accountable to our Fellowship through the WSC. At first glance one might conclude that World Services is made up of three distinct elements. WSC, World Service Board of Trustees, and WSO. Further examination allows for a more realistic view of this situation. The WSC is in fact a single entity consisting of service boards and committees. While each Service Board and Committee has areas of specific interest and responsibility all are responsible and accountable to the Fellowship as a whole through the WSC. A greater discussion of the purposes and roles of our World Service Boards will be found in subsequent chapters.

The Chairperson works with each of the Conference Committee Chairpersons and their Committees to accomplish the separate tasks of the Committees. The Chairperson helps the Committees with programs and activities that encompass more than one Committee area of responsibility and monitors expenditures within budgets of the Committees and concurs or does not concur with proposed budget changes within individual Committee budget allocations. Additional allocations may be authorized when necessary and funds are otherwise available upon concurrence of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Treasurer of the World Service Conference. The World Service Conference Chairperson with advice from Committee chairpersons and the chairperson of the World Service Board of Trustees, establishes the location and agenda for the annual meeting and each of the workshop meetings. The Chairperson establishes the agenda for the Conference, arranges for such administrative duties related to the Conference as may be necessary and serves as presiding officer of the Conference. The Chairperson monitors the activities and meetings of each Committee and if it shall be necessary for the best interests of the Fellowship assists directly in the operation of Committees if or when the Committee chairperson and/or vice-chairperson fail to properly administrate the affairs of the Committee. As Chairperson of the Administrative Committee of the Conference, appoints special Committees and makes appointments to such Committees as may be directed by the

Conference or this service manual and arranges for action of the Administrative Committee to concur or withhold concurrence to vice-chairpersons of Committees to succeed as Chairperson of a Committee when the chairperson of the Committee resigns or otherwise fails to discharge the duties of the Office.

**VICE-CHAIRPERSON OF THE WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE:** The Vice-Chairperson assists the Chairperson in the discharge of the responsibilities of the Conference, oversees activities of the Committees under the direction of the chairperson and other duties as may be assigned by the Chairperson. In the event of the resignation, incapacitation or failure of the Chairperson to perform the duties of Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson assumes the duties and responsibilities of the Chairperson. When this does occur the Vice-Chairperson serves as Chairperson of the Conference until the Chairperson is able to resume their responsibilities or the next meeting of the World Service Conference. The Vice-Chairperson may preside over the Conference when required and discharge such other duties as may be directed by the Conference.

**TREASURER OF THE WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE:** The Treasurer is responsible for the receipt, recording and distribution of funds received and expended by the World Service Conference, the World Service Conference Committees and the Board of Trustees. This shall include the financial activities of the Conference Committees, their officers and participants. The Treasurer manages the funds through such number and type of accounts as may be desirable. The exact details of the discharge of these duties are more clearly described in the Financial Guidelines publication of the Fellowship. The records of the treasurer are reviewed each year by an certified public accountant and open to inspection by the Chairperson of the Conference and the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees at any time upon reasonable notice. This fiscal review is submitted to the Fellowship within sixty (60) days following completion of the fiscal year of the Conference. The Treasurer is responsible for the distribution of funds as may from time to time be required, but shall not be responsible to determine the appropriateness of expenditure of such funds as may be requested by the Committee chairpersons, the chairperson of the Conference. If there is question of the appropriateness of proposed expenditures the matter shall be resolved by the Administrative Committee of the Conference.

The duties normally associated with the position of secretary of the Conference are assigned to the officer manager of the World Service Office. The officer manager serves in a ministerial role in this capacity. For many years the

Conference elected a secretary from among the participants of the Conference. It has been found that the office manager, through utilization of the World Service Office staff and resources, provides the best service to the Conference as a general secretary. As there is no elected position for a secretary, the office manager performs these duties without a vote in the conference and/or the Administrative Committee.

**CHAIRPERSONS OF THE COMMITTEES:** The Chairpersons of each Committee serve as the general administrators of the Committee they are elected to serve with. They are responsible for scheduling work of the Committee, assigning tasks to individuals and subcommittees of their Committee and reporting to the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Conference and the Fellowship. They organize agendas for their workshops and assure that the workshops properly process information and material of the Committees area of responsibility.

**VICE-CHAIRPERSONS OF COMMITTEES:** Experience has shown that the Fellowship is best served if a Chairperson of a Committee has previously served as a Vice-Chairperson of the Committee for at least one year prior to their election to become the Chairperson. If for any reason the post of Chairperson of a Standing Committee becomes vacant, the Vice-Chairperson may assume the position of chairperson for the remainder of the unexpired term and may continue to serve their own full term as Chairperson. In the case of this succession of office, the position of the then vacant Vice-Chairperson may remain vacant, or the World Service Conference may appoint a temporary Vice-Chairperson upon the advice of the Committee involved.

The Vice-Chairpersons assist the Chairperson of the Committee to which they are elected under the leadership of the Chairperson. They work with Committees and help organize material for workshops and reports as may be needed by the Chairperson of the Committee. They may assume the duties and responsibilities of the Chairperson of their Committee if such action is concurred with by action of the Conference Administrative Committee.

## **THE CONFERENCE AGENDA REPORT**

The cornerstone of the deliberations and decisions of the World Service Conference is the advance consideration of the issues by the Fellowship. In order to provide opportunity for the Fellowship to be fully informed about items to be considered by the Conference, the agenda (known as the Conference Agenda



Report) including major items to be voted on are submitted to the participants of the Conference not less than ninety (90) days prior to the Conference. All participants are expected to study the material carefully. Regional service representatives may have this material disseminated throughout their region in order to receive input from their Fellowship on the agenda items. In some regions the GSR of the groups takes the group conscience on each item to the area committee meeting with specific instructions on how to vote on each item when the area committee considered each item. This pattern may then be repeated at the area level as the ASR's are instructed by action of the voting members of the area committee and sent off to the regional meeting to vote as instructed. Similarly the RSR may be instructed by the vote of the ASR's and is expected to carry that vote to the Conference.

However, not every group is interested in taking the time from their recovery meetings to discuss the lengthy reports that comprised the agenda of the Conference. In many of these cases the attitude and group conscience is that these matters are the responsibility of the GSR and that is what the GSR was elected for anyway. But because not all groups feel this way, there is an uneven evaluation of the Conference Agenda Report at the area committee level too. This creates problems in the area committee because some ASR's are specifically instructed and some are not. Those who are given authority to do so, vote as their conscience best reveals the issues to them. Other ASR's are specifically instructed by votes taken on each item individually.

The same experience is reflected at the regional level also. Some RSR's are given explicit instructions while other RSR's are given great latitude or even complete freedom to represent the region as their individual experience and wisdom dictates.

At the Conference, there have been constant conflicts over the handling of many issues because those who had been specifically instructed frequently did not have the authority from their regions to vote on issues that the groups, areas and region had not developed a specific group conscience on. This is made more complex when items that had been sent out to the Fellowship for consideration contained specific language and at the Conference, that language was amended prior to final action on the matter.

This circumstance is highlighted when regions send specific amendments with their RSR to be introduced on a certain item and other regions send their RSR with amendments that conflict. At this point a new problem comes up. After

the amendments are all added on or in their inclusion alters the specific language of the specific language of the original proposal, was any RSR who had been specifically instructed, able to vote on the issue because it is now different than when it had been acted on by their groups, areas and the region?

This circumstance was made more difficult because of the provision allowing for direct input to the Conference from the Fellowship for items to be considered by the Conference. There was not a provision that these "input" items be sent out to the Fellowship ninety (90) days prior to the Conference. Because of this, other regions were not able to consider these input items for group conscience.

The resolution of this conflict, one of the most divisive conflicts the Fellowship has had to wrestle with, is found in Chapter 3. In brief there is only one solution. The Fellowship must utilize greater reliance on trusted servants to reflect group conscience at each level of service. For those regions that chose to specifically instruct their RSR, they may continue to do so. But the Conference cannot withhold action on items because the RSR does not have latitude to vote on items if they are changed. And the regions must accept these actions of the Conference even if their own procedures are more restrictive.

Every RSR may serve on one Conference Committee. Our experience gained from years of operation of Committees and RSR participation has shown that the Fellowship overall is best served if the RSR serves on a Committee wherein the individual member has a special interest. And to the best degree possible this is accomplished, while at the same time, some Committees are not loaded up with members and other Committees have only a few members. Each RSR that desire to serve on a Conference Committee completes a Committee assignment preference form and send it to the Conference Chairperson at the time the RSR begins service for the Region. If the first Committee of choice has a vacancy the assignment is made, if not then a secondary choice assignment is made in sequence of the preference shown on the form.

In a similar manner RSR-Alternates may be assigned to Committees if they desire when they are elected by their region and begin to serve. The RSR-Alternates although assigned to Committee are not voting members of the Committees. They participate in the discussion and may introduce proposals for the Committee to discuss and act upon, however they do not vote when the Committee takes action on proposals. In order to provide for the greater interests of the Fellowship, RSR-Alternates are not assigned to Committees to which the RSR from the same region is assigned. This allows the region from which these

two members come to have representation in different areas of Fellowship activities.

### WHEN THE CONFERENCE DOES TAKE ACTION

The Conference, as the embodiment of the Fellowship conscience, is always mindful that the actions and decisions of the Conference set the course for the Fellowship. The impact of each vote affects the nature of the Fellowship as a whole and each member of the Fellowship. Every participant of the Conference must remember always that Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual program and there are hundreds of thousands of addicts in the Fellowship around the world depending on N.A. for their recovery.

Every form of collective human activity must have fair and equitable procedures and policies that are available for all member to have knowledge of. The experience of past conferences has shown this need and that to fulfill our desire for unity, they must be simple but precise procedures. The procedures followed by the Conference are the result of trial and error, input and reflection and application of N.A. principles to our needs for participation at the World Service Conference.

As the Conference has matured in experience and wisdom there has been a growing movement to abide by the standard procedures of order detailed in Roberts Rules of Order. While these procedures have been used and will continue to be used in some circumstances, the policies detailed here take precedence over those in Roberts Rules when they may conflict. Accordingly, the WSC has afforded considerable flexibility to the Chairperson when conducting the proceedings.

Actions taken by the Conference are determined by a voice vote if possible and when that is not practical or if there is doubt about a voice vote result or on matters that require a specific percentage number of votes, then a standing vote is taken. For most matters a simple majority vote is all that is required. But in those matters where a special vote percentage is stipulated careful attention to the vote count is required.

A roll call vote may be asked for and approved, upon an approval by a majority of the Conference participants. When conducting a standing vote, three separate vote counters will be used. The presiding officer will announce the result of every vote, in order that no misunderstanding result and so that the minutes may be accurately maintained. In the manner which votes are taken at the

Conference, effort will be exerted to permit informality so that new representatives will not feel intimidated by more seasoned members.

To permit a fair representation of the Fellowship, no individual may carry or cast more than one vote. Because the Fellowship utilizes a system of RSR-Alternates, the RSR or RSR-Alternate is expected to attend and be present for all deliberations. For this reason no proxy vote may be cast or counted. A voting participant must be present to cast a vote in order for it to be counted. It is the nature of our spiritual Fellowship that decisions should not be made in haste and that the fullest possible discussion precede action. To facilitate clear understanding of issues being considered by the Conference, motions, other than procedural motions, must be displayed in writing so that voting participants can read them before a vote is taken.

As a spiritual Fellowship, Narcotics Anonymous has chosen to require that certain major decisions be made by a greater number of participants than a simple majority. Motions to affect the following must receive a 2/3 vote of all eligible voting participants who answered the previous roll call in order to be approved: Change in the manual on service, approval of new regions, approval of literature, modifications of the procedure of the Conference, or to permit consideration of or adopt any item of business that has not been submitted to the Fellowship ninety (90) days in advance of the Conference, election of members to our World Service Board of Trustees.

In keeping with the need for unity and in an effort to utilize the spiritual nature of the Fellowship, a special approach to voting is used whenever possible. Disunity is fostered when participants leave the Conference disagreeing with the final action on any particular matter. Our experience has shown that much of the disunity and discontent could have been avoided if sufficient discussion had been permitted or if the reasons for disagreement had been fully understood. For this reason, debate may be extended in order to permit substantial unanimity in decisions. It may not be possible for all actions of the Conference to be by unanimous vote, but every effort is exerted to attain this ideal. The Conference cannot however, become stuck on single issues and in such cases, will proceed by applying the 2/3 majority standard.

If any matter considered by the Conference is rejected, it can be returned to the appropriate Committee for additional consideration. Experience has shown that there is a tendency for some items to be brought up at nearly every conference, even if it had been acted on the previous year. Although the

Fellowship must have the ability to consider any item of concern to the Fellowship, a minority should not have the ability to force the entire Fellowship to discuss the same issue year after year. Consequently any matter that is rejected twice is not appropriate to again be proposed to the Conference for five years from the date of its second rejection. If the matter is adopted, but then or later found to be in need of review or revision, such suggestions for change will be handled in the same manner as for new material: submitted to the Fellowship through the action of a Committee in a subsequent Conference Agenda Report.

This system has the additional advantage of reinforcing the importance and necessity of an active Committee system. It permits the work to be accomplished under more positive circumstances, leaving the Conference to be more productive and absent of the rancor, suspicion and conflict found in earlier Conference.

#### **DECISION MAKING WHEN THE CONFERENCE IS NOT IN SESSION**

There is a clear understanding of decision making authority and responsibility when the World Service Conference is in session. The WSC as a whole is the decision making body and all World Service Committees and Service Boards must comply with the directives of the Conference. What about when the Conference is not in session?

The Chairperson of the Conference is responsible for the general administration of World level services and as such technically bears responsibility for world service decision when the Conference is not in session.

Although the proverbial "buck must stop with someone," the WSC has employed an informal decision making process involving several WSC Trusted Servants when the Conference is not in session.

When decisions affecting world services must be made and authority for such decision making is not vested with a specific Service Board or Committee the WSC Chairperson assembles a special committee consisting of the WSC Chairperson, WSC Vice-Chairperson, WSC Treasurer, Chair and Vice-Chair of the WSB of Trustees, Chair and Vice-Chair of the WSO Board of Directors and the Chair and Vice-Chair of Committee affected by the decision, if decision affects a service board the WSC Chairperson may include the Chair and Vice-Chair of any WSC Standing Committee to assist with decision making process.

The decision should, whenever possible, reflect unanimity, but if unanimity cannot be achieved a 2/3 majority vote shall be considered as binding. In the

event a 2/3 majority cannot be arrived at the WSC, Chairperson shall be required to suggest a course of action. The Committee or Service Board, affected by the suggested course of action may choose not to comply with the suggestion. In such cases the matter will be resolved by the WSC at its annual meeting. The WSC Chairperson will submit a written report outlining the problem, suggested course of action, rationale for decision, etc. and the service board or committee involved will also provide written explanation for non-compliance with WSC Chairperson's suggested course of action. The final decision of the WSC will be binding.

The WSC Chairperson shall report to the Conference participants and discuss the activities of the special Committee as they relate to decisions made while the WSC is not in session. This is done through the Fellowship Report, special reports, and again in the chairperson's annual report made at the World Service Conference.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE COMMITTEES**

An important strength of the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship is the ability to accomplish our needs, goals and objectives through the ongoing work of our service boards and committees. As the World Service Conference has grown and strengthened, so has the importance of committee work.

Throughout each year, the WSC committees work on the projects the Conference has given them, meet to consider the issues, publish their recommendations, and present to the Fellowship their conclusions, at the annual meeting of the WSC. These conclusions are then discussed, accepted, modified, or rejected, in a general session of the Conference participants. In this manner, they serve an advisory role to the WSC, preparing the work for final consideration.

Each standing committee of the WSC has a specialized area of responsibility. The membership of each standing committee includes the chairperson and the vice-chairperson elected by the conference, regional service representatives and alternates, and experienced members of the Fellowship. WSO project coordinators act as the general secretaries for each committee and do not vote. Non-addicts may serve by invitation.

The activities of each committee are coordinated through the WSC Administrative committee ( described in Chapter Six ). WSC standing committees will meet at least twice a year at the regularly scheduled WSC workshops. Special meetings of the committees may be conducted upon approval of the WSC Administrative committee. Notice of this special meeting of the full committee shall include; the agenda, time, date, place of the meeting and participants expected, and published thirty days in advance to the Fellowship.

From time to time, the World Service Conference may establish other standing committees and special committees. The formation of new standing committees shall be considered upon the presentation of need, identification of purpose, and the approval of guidelines by the WSC.

The standing committees of the World Service Conference are:

1. The WSC Administrative Committee shall be the WSC Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Treasurer. The Administrative Committee shall coordinate the work of all the WSC Committees and schedule meetings and reports of the Conference. The Committee shall prepare a quarterly report to the Fellowship that will contain reports from each of the Standing Committee Chairpersons and Adhoc Committees. The Fellowship Report may contain

additional reports from the other service arms and from regions and the Trustees.

2. **The Policy Committee.** The purpose of the Policy committee is twofold, the first of which is to evaluate suggestions in Conference policy or procedure and proposed changes or modifications to the service structure. The second purpose of this Committee is to compile information on requests for the addition of new regions within a state, province or country, according to the need for improvement of services and/or communication within the local structure. This information is then presented to the participants of the World Service Conference at the annual meeting.
3. **The World Service Conference Literature Committee** deals with our primary purpose as it is achieved in writing. This committee seeks the input of the Fellowship, compiles this input and presents it to the World Service Conference.
4. **The Hospitals and Institutions Committee** acts as a resource to the Fellowship in efforts to carry the message of recovery to hospitals, institutions, jails, detoxification centers and recovery facilities. The purpose of this committee is to provide guidance to local, area and regional committees that work with individuals in these institutions and in the formation of new meetings within these institutions. The Committee may from time to time propose policy that may be necessary or desirable, to assist those working with members of the Fellowship in such institutions.
5. **The World Service Conference Public Information Committee** deals with how Narcotics Anonymous interfaces with society; the image of Narcotics Anonymous, and how we can get those outside of the Fellowship to carry our message to addicts we cannot reach. This committee deal with matters of attraction through the media, (i.e., supplies regions and areas with the information necessary to initiate public information campaigns).
6. **The Group Services Committee** shall develop programs and policies which, if adopted by the World Service Conference, will assist the effectiveness of each group. The programs or policies will include methods to improve the training and skills of trusted servants at the group level.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### WORLD SERVICE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The first Board of Trustees was elected by the Fellowship in Southern California 1963, because that was about all there was of the Fellowship at the time. Both addict and non-addict trustees were selected. The Trustees were given "indefinite terms" of office and authorized to select other trustees as the need developed.

The number of trustees has fluctuated periodically from a low of six trustees to a high of fourteen. Meetings of the Trustees were held periodically, usually in the home of one of the Trustee members and were rotated for convenience. For many years all of the Trustees lived in the Southern California area so it was not difficult to have meetings.

One of the principal activities of the Board of Trustees was to respond to letters from members and groups involved in controversies. The Trustees discussed these letters and answered each one hoping that their accumulated experience, gained through service, would be of some help.

The Board of Trustees has evolved in recent years into a hard-working and efficient service board. Gaining internal strength from the necessity of regular meetings and solving difficult problems, the Board has been welded into a highly visible and stable force in the Fellowship. The guidelines established in the N.A. Tree were changed regularly, almost each year, but the Trustees have kept pace with the growing needs of the Fellowship.

Although the Board of Trustees evolved from a need to resolve conflicts over interpretation of traditions they have never felt that their role or responsibility is to dictate to, or run, the Fellowship. They have found their duty and position more in the nature of a resource for understanding and sharing of experience. When it was practical, the Trustees encouraged the World Service Conference to resolve difficult problems, feeling that the development of a Fellowship conscience was better than their judgment

alone. When clarification of the Traditions is needed between meetings of the World Service Conference, the Board of Trustees is responsible to act for the Fellowship.

This practical arrangement, for the Trustees to perform as trusted servants to act for the Fellowship, is accomplished with great care. The Trustees evaluate every issue in considerable depth and trust the resolution to their collective experience, strength and hope. Constant temptations arise throughout the Fellowship to erode the strength and meaning of the Traditions and to apply unusual and not acceptable interpretations. The Board of Trustees are charged with the responsibility to provide guidance and education to keep the Fellowship clearly in sight of appropriate understanding and use of the Traditions.

Addict members of the Board of Trustees are chosen for their experience, strength and hope, as examples for all addicts to be guided by and for their wisdom and judgment in understanding and applying the Traditions. The Trustees are not empowered or directed to issue demands or edicts but are to be a resource for understanding and clarity when disputes arise. Trustees provide guidance and enlightenment in our understanding of traditions, and to how they apply to the complex issues confronting the Fellowship.

A principle duty of the Trustees is education. Knowledge and experience gained from years of personal application of The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions can be passed on to others in the Fellowship through writings and oral presentations by the Trustees. The Trustees publish a continuing series of articles about the Twelve Traditions, based on issues presented to them for consideration. These articles are published in Fellowship periodicals and are available from the World Service Office.

The Trustees also serve as the "custodians of our traditions" to prevent accidental or intentional change through misunderstanding or error. They are relied upon to review all items of proposed Narcotics Anonymous literature and world level periodicals for inaccuracies pertaining to traditions. If the Trustees find that in their judgment, proposed literature is in violation of a traditions, they should act to correct the specific

language which violates the tradition before the piece of literature is published. The trustees are accepted as the principal resource in the resolution of disputes over the application, interpretation and meaning of traditions between meetings of the World Service Conference and/or prior to consummation of a Fellowship conscience on a particular issue. The World Service Conference, as the embodiment of Fellowship conscience at their annual meeting, is the final authority on matters of interpretation and meaning of the Traditions, and may alter actions by the Board of Trustees.

The Trustees serve as a principal resource for review of public information materials, tapes, public service announcements, movies and printed matter, that are generated within the Fellowship. Although it is not intended or practical for the Trustees to review all such materials prior to their use, when disputes arise over the appropriateness of such materials, these items should be sent to the Board of Trustees for review.

Although the Fellowship does not have "spokespersons," as such, the Trustees act for the Fellowship if or when public controversy arises in the media or the society in general over the activities of the Fellowship. It is not intended that the Trustees become the "on camera personalities" of the Fellowship, but they serve as the resource for clear understanding of what the Fellowship is and how the Fellowship carries the message of recovery. If or when the Fellowship may become involved in a public controversy, the issue should be referred to the Trustees for consideration and appropriate action.

Our experience has shown that Trustee members are asked to make a tremendous number of interpretations of traditions and provide guidance on matters related to suspected violation of traditions on almost a daily basis. Some of these cannot be avoided, so the Trustees regularly ask that such matters be developed in the form of a letter and sent to the Board for consideration. Although it is more appropriate for the Trustees to act on matters that have been referred to them in writing, there are many situation where that is not practical or possible.

Because most of the responses from the Trustees have been provided in writing, and these responses have been collated and published for widespread use, the volume of correspondence referring new issues to the Board for action has decreased. Additionally, the growth and maturity of the Fellowship in most areas has afforded opportunity for many problems to be handled effectively at other levels within the Fellowship.

Although any member of the Fellowship who has a concern that cannot be resolved at another level of service can forward their question to the Board of Trustees, every effort should be exerted to resolve the issue locally. In this way an issue involving actions by an individual should usually be brought to and decided by the home group, or by the area service committee.

Issues referred to the area service committee or issues related to the area service committee or area service subcommittee activities should be resolved by the area service committee, and if not should be referred to the regional service committee.

Similarly, matters referred to the regional service committee for action or matters related to the regional service committee or regional service subcommittee actions should be resolved by the regional service committee if possible, and if not, then be referred to the World Service Conference, its' committees or boards.

Every effort should be made to resolve difficulties by taking them out at the level of service where the problem arose. There is how many of the same problems and issues were resolved in the early years of the Fellowship before there were Trustees. The experience of a group, area or region in resolving strongly felt issues concerning possible tradition violations can be a spiritually rewarding endeavor beneficial to all concerned. All members involved in these controversies and their resolution will grow in their understanding of the Twelve Traditions and learn from development of group conscience on such issues.

It should be clearly recognized that there can be no compromise with the Twelve Traditions. It is through our adherence to the traditions that an atmosphere and circumstance for recovery is possible.

The Board of Trustees holds at least four regular meetings each year and special meetings can be called by the Chairperson of the Board of any three members.

At least two of the Boards meetings are scheduled to be held at the World Service Office over a two day period. In this way, the Trustees have the availability of an adequate facility and supporting staff which are important in their work.

Trustee meetings are conducted according to customary parliamentary procedures with slight modifications, and follow a standard agenda as outlined in Robert's Rules of Order. The voting actions of the Trustees are different from the routine majority vote system used in other organizations. Because Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual Fellowship, there has grown within the practice of the Trustees a different approach to counting votes when making important decisions. Accordingly, the Trustees strive for substantial unanimity in developing group conscience of the Trustees in all matters affecting the N.A. Fellowship as a whole. If a member is not satisfied that a proposed resolution is entirely supportable, continued discussion proceeds until a substantially unanimous decision can be reached. In this way, all Trustees are provided the opportunity to reveal every aspect of their thinking before an issue is concluded. Because most of the actions of the Trustees are related to the Twelve Traditions and their application, substantial unanimity is added assurance that the principles of the Traditions will be maintained.

Minutes are kept of every meeting of the Board and published within thirty (30) days of the close of the meeting of the Trustees at which they are approved. Copies of the minutes are sent to every Trustee, the officers and committee chairpersons of the World Service Conference and every regional service representative. Copies of the

minutes can be obtained from the secretary of the Board of Trustees at the World Service Office.

The Trustees select from among themselves, by election, two officers: a chairperson and a vice-chairperson. Elections for these officer positions are held at the meeting scheduled prior to the World Service Conference. The officers serve for a twelve month period. Both officers may succeed themselves if re-elected by the Board the following year, but may not serve a third consecutive term of office. The Trustees utilize a staff member of the World Service Office as secretary of the Board of Trustees but this person does not have a vote or voice in the proceedings.

The Chairperson of the Board is responsible for general management of the affairs of the Trustees including all communications, chairing trustee meetings, establishing Ad-hoc Subcommittees and appointing trustees to subcommittees of the BOT when appropriate. The chairperson assigns responsibilities to other members of the Board as required.

The vice-chairperson assists the chairperson and assumes the responsibilities and authorities of the chairperson when asked by the chairperson to do so or in the event of incapacitation or failure or refusal by the chairperson to perform the duties of the chairperson.

Each trustee is assigned by the Chairperson of the Board to serve with a committee of the World Service Conference. The Trustee has the responsibility to attend every meeting of the World Service Conference committee that he or she is assigned to. In this way, the committee benefits from the experience and strength of the Trustee. This new and important working relationship has been established between the Conference Committees and the Board of Trustee in order to strengthen the Conference Committee system. This working relationship has strengthened the ability of the world level trusted servants to provide better service and more thoroughly developed responses to new problems and needs.

Addict members of the Board always continue their individual participation in N.A. activities as part of their own continued recovery from addiction. The participation of a Trustee in a Local N.A. activity or subcommittee, however, should not be construed to be that of the Trustees as a whole or for the Board of Trustees. The Trustee members are careful to avoid situations where they may be drawn into controversy involving Fellowship issues which may be referred to the full Board for action.

Experience has shown that there does not need to be a constant number of trustees; therefore the number of trustees fluctuates periodically, depending on the needs of the Fellowship. There can be no more than twenty-one (21) members of the Board of Trustees, of whom not more than six (6) can be non-addict members. Regardless of the total number of Trustees serving concurrently, the balance of membership shall always remain at least 2/3 addict Trustees. Trustees are nominated and elected by the World Service Conference. Nominees for addict trusteeship will have a minimum of eight (8) years' total abstinence from drugs, at the time of their nomination, have served as an officer, committee chairperson or RSR at one or more World Service Conference (s) and have the personal time and resources necessary for active participation as a Trustee.

Non-addict nominees will have demonstrated a good understanding of the nature of addiction and of the Narcotics Anonymous Program of recovery, have the time and personal commitment necessary for active participation and have a good working knowledge of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Non-addict nominees are usually selected for expertise in a particular field of experience and knowledge that will be helpful to the Fellowship.

#### NOMINATION OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees will include in their report to the WSC Nominating committee, the names of each of the individuals that they believe should be considered for nomination and election.

When the elections take place, the Conference may elect to follow the suggestions of the Board of Trustees or they may select other members. Each nominee is voted on separately. A nominee is elected when two thirds of those voting vote to elect the member to the Board.

Upon election of a nominee at a World Service Conference, the individual serves as a Trustee for five years. At the end of the five-year term of office, the Trustee's position may be filled through the process described above. A Trustee can be re-elected for a subsequent term.

As with all service boards and committees, vacancies occur in the Board of Trustees for a variety of reasons. Vacancies are only filled in the routine manner described above for Trustee positions.

The range of service that trustees provide to the Fellowship is extensive and growing as the needs of the Fellowship grow. The most effective and productive trustees are those with good communication skills, because so much of their work involves written reports. Good verbal communicative skills are important, as trustees are called upon constantly to moderate learning days, represent the Trustees on World Service Conference Committees and speak at numerous Fellowship events.

Important considerations also include the availability of the personal time and resources necessary to serve as a Trustee. As the Trustees have taken a more active role in Fellowship activities and as the Fellowship has grown at a tremendous rate, Trustees are being called upon to travel frequently to meetings of the Trustees, Conference Committees and other Fellowship meetings.

However, the most important attributes are those involved with a mature understanding and application of the Twelve Steps in the member's personal life. Service as a Trustee should always be a reflection of the growth and maturity of the individual's personal recovery.



## CHAPTER NINE

### WORLD SERVICE OFFICE

The necessity for having a World Service Office was not immediately apparent when the Fellowship began. Each of the groups knew about the others so little logistical or administrative support was necessary. But as more addicts were brought into the Fellowship and some of us moved to distant places to live and start new meetings, the need for a central office did arise.

The primary purposes for an office were to produce and distribute literature and to be a resource for those starting new meetings. In some respects an office had existed from the mid 1960's. It was run informally by the Board of Trustees. For the most part it consisted of a small supply of literature and more was printed when funds could be collected. There were several attempts at starting an office in a commercial building but these failed because of a lack of sufficient income. Everything depended on volunteers and when a key volunteer was experiencing some problems the "office" fell apart.

The first items of Narcotics Anonymous literature were mimeographed copies of single page messages about recovery and an early but small version of the White Booklet printed with a yellow cover. These were used widely in most meetings. The next was the "Little White Booklet." By the middle 1970's a standardization of sorts had been achieved in the use of the Little White Booklet, and the first four pamphlets. By 1976 the Fellowship had grown to about 100 meetings and was to grow rapidly as each year passed. As a Fellowship conscience began to evolve, more interest and energy was invested in developing material by members for use in our Fellowship.

It was through the auspices of the World Service Office that the organizational work was done to host the World Service Conference. Evolving from this first conference meeting was a recognition and acceptance of the existing World Service Office operation. There was one significant change however, the Office became separate from the Board of Trustees and a Board of Directors for the Office was created.

In 1977, the Board of Directors of the World Service Office incorporated under the laws of the State of California and applied for tax exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service and the California Franchise Tax Board. The Office also assumed full responsibility for printing literature and moved to copyright the literature for the protection of the Fellowship.

By 1980, literature sales began to creep up and a little money now came in from individuals and groups through the Seventh Tradition. The volume of letters, inquiries, and group registrations began to increase and the Office had to be moved to a regular commercial office. Space was located and rented in Sun Valley. It was between a flower shop and a Chinese restaurant. The Office, furnished with used donated desks, file cabinets and two old wooden television cabinets for a shipping counter, opened for business.

Having rented enough space, at first complicated the problems rather than simplifying them. It seemed harder to entice volunteers to come by to help with the office in a commercial building rather than in a members home. Calls for volunteers and contributions went out periodically but there was never enough of either.

During the 1982/83 fiscal and administrative year, the Office began hiring part-time help to get work accomplished at the office. Two members of the Fellowship were paid for part-time work to handle some of the shipping and general office work, including typing.

In June of 1983, the Fellowship's first full-time paid office manager was hired. Soon thereafter, two additional employees were added and first steps toward modernization of the office procedures, policies and equipment began. Whereas in every year prior to 1983, there was never enough money to meet the expenses, much less buy equipment or hire full-time staff, the income rose significantly to the point that these needs could be accommodated. This was the result of sales of the Text and the addition of 13 other information pamphlets to the inventory.

In November of that year the Office moved from Sun Valley to a larger building in Van Nuys. This new office, though at the time thought to have sufficient space to accommodate growth for several years, proved to be insufficient for the growth experienced in the following twelve months. By the time of the World Service Conference in April of 1984, the Office had a staff of seven full-time and one part-time employee.

#### THE WORLD SERVICE OFFICE

The World Service Office provides assistance to the Fellowship through a wide range of services. Although the principal duty is that of publishing literature for the Fellowship, its services have grown to include administrative support services to the World Service Conference and its committees and service boards.

Additionally, the Office continues to be the central source of information for the general public.

It can clearly be seen that the World Service Office, although it is a corporation and subject to the laws of the state of California and the United States in the conduct of its business affairs, has as its primary obligation the furtherance of the primary purpose of Narcotics Anonymous.

The Office operates in response to Fellowship needs; its role and relationship to the Fellowship is defined by the Conference and the Traditions. Although the Office is managed with a mindful eye to adhere to all of the Traditions, there are six Traditions which relate specifically to the activities of the Office. Understanding how these six Traditions are particularly applicable provides an overview of how the office is part of the Fellowship, a servant of the Fellowship and also an independent corporation.

The office also operates under the provisions of Tradition Eight. As a "service center" of the Fellowship, the office "may employ special workers" to perform certain activities and services. The World Service Office employs addicts and non-addicts as special workers. The Fellowship has a fundamental need for a permanent service center to act as the publisher for literature and to accomplish a full range of administrative tasks.

The relationship between the World Service Office, a service center corporation, and the Fellowship is understood as a service center (Tradition Eight) with a service board to direct it (Tradition Nine) created by the Fellowship. With respect to Tradition Nine, the Office is responsible to the Conference. While, in a technical sense, the World Service Office is a provisional entity, its activities are directed and guided by the WSO Board of Directors. The Board of Directors are guided directly by the will of the Fellowship through election of its members by the Conference and its symbiotic relationship with the actions of the Conference.

For instance, the Fellowship through the World Service Conference, approves literature which the World Service Office is then expected to copyright, print and make available to the Fellowship. The corporation retains the full authorities of a corporation: to enter contracts, expend funds, become indebted, etc., but does so in accordance with the desires of the Fellowship and an understanding and application of our Traditions. The World Service Office makes reports of these activities to the Fellowship through the World Service Conference. Among the reports submitted to the Conference is a financial report prepared by a

Certified Public Accountant who, through an independent contract is responsible to prepare the report on the financial activities of the Office.

The Seventh Tradition also has specific application to the activities of the World Service Office. The Office is entirely self-supporting through the sale of Conference-approved literature. The Office, like other parts of the Fellowship creates a prudent reserve to handle routine and emergency needs. Because the Office is self-supporting in this way, this allows all funds generated within the Fellowship for World Service to be used by the Conference.

Of particular importance is the application of Tradition Six to the operation of the World Service Office. Specific care is exercised to avoid any possible link between the World Service Office and non-N.A. facilities or enterprises which could be construed as an endorsement or lending of the Narcotics Anonymous name. The World Service Office is especially mindful of the relationship between the Office and suppliers of products, services, or materials used by the Office or included in the inventory. Written agreements specify that the business relationship to the World Service Office not be used in any form of advertisement in order to avoid intimation of endorsement.

Tradition Five provides additional purpose for the existence of the World Service Office. The Office was formed for the purpose;- of producing the literature approved by the Fellowship in order to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. The Office is committed to providing assistance to the Fellowship in any way desired by the Conference so that the message of recovery through N.A. can be carried to every addict.

Tradition Four establishes the framework for the Office to conduct on their own the business tasks common to their business ventures while at the same time being responsive to Traditions and the Fellowship in matters affecting "N.A. as a whole". The World Service Conference provides guidance on matters affecting "N.A. as a whole" to the World Service Office, which then effectuates Fellowship conscience decisions that have been arrived at by the Conference. In practice the Conference seldom gives the Office specific or direct orders other than to approve or remove items of literature from the inventory. In all other aspects of the operation of the Office, the Fellowship relies upon the trusted servants selected to be the Board of Directors and special workers to responsibly direct the the affairs of the Office.

This does not mean that the Office operates completely on its own. Usually the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees and the Chairperson of the Conference

attend all meetings of the Board of Directors. Additionally the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees and the Chairperson of the Conference are consulted on most major decisions that occur between meetings of the Board of Directors of the Office.

Because the Office is a legal entity and conducts a business, there are the normal legal matters that may from time to time confront the Office. The necessity for having the ability of the office to respond to such legal matters is the paramount example of why the Fellowship expects the Board of Directors to conduct the responsibilities of the Office rather than having the entire Fellowship involved in such matters. However, even in this sensitive area of responsibility the Office does not exercise independent judgment without prior consultation and consent from the World Service Conference and its trusted servants.

#### FUNCTIONS OF THE WORLD SERVICE OFFICE

The variety of responsibilities and activities of the World Service Office have increased as the Fellowship has grown. The growth has been so rapid in recent years that the increase in office staff has hardly been able to keep up with the need. A major function of the Office is to publish and make available to the Fellowship and other interested individuals literature approved by the World Service Conference. In this manner the Office functions as a retail literature store.

The Office serves as the general secretary for many Fellowship purposes. Inquiries from the general public about Narcotics Anonymous are handled by the Office as are requests for starter kits. When new meetings are started, they are registered with the Office and included in future printing of world directories. Groups and individuals frequently write to the Office for assistance when their groups experience difficulties. These issues are each handled with care and discretion.

Because the Office address is on every item of literature, and published so widely, the Office receives many inquiries from individuals, professionals, hospitals and treatment programs. The Office responds to every inquiry with information and individual letters as appropriate. The Office also receives considerable communication from radio, television, newspaper and magazine companies. These inquiries for information for stories or background information are handled in cooperation with the Board of Trustees and the World Service Conference Public Information Subcommittee.

The Office publishes the *Newsline*, a monthly Fellowship newsletter distributed widely within the Fellowship. It contains articles from Trustees and

reports from various Conference subcommittee officers and regional services representatives. The newsletter has also evolved to include official communications and notices related to the operation of the Conference.

Among the important specialized activities is the Loner Group operated through the Office. This group, whose members span the globe, include members who are unable to attend meetings because of distance or incarceration. The group includes "sponsors" who are attending their own regular meetings and communicate with individual loners by mail through the Office.

A Fellowship magazine, the N.A. Way, is published by the Office. Details about the magazine are contained in Chapter 10. The magazine includes articles and stories promoting recovery through personal experiences from members of the Fellowship.

The Office staff acts as the general secretary for most activities of the World Service Conference, its committees and boards. Through the availability of the staff, facilities and equipment afforded by the Office, most conference committees utilize the Office for their clerical support in the furtherance of their separate responsibilities.

The Office has accumulated copies of guidelines and formats used by a number of area and regional service and activity committees. This library resource is available to committees upon request.

Many requests are received at the Office pertaining to legal and financial concerns within the Fellowship. The Office has accumulated some experience in these areas and is able to assist with most of these problems with additional information and insight. The Office does not act as legal counsel but can make available reports and examples pertaining to many situations already faced within the Fellowship.

The World Service Office generally serves, it can be said, as a publishing agency for the Fellowship and as an administrative service for groups, areas, regions and world services.

#### WORLD SERVICE OFFICE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

There are twelve members of the Fellowship serving on the Board of Directors of the World Service Office Corporation. Qualification for membership as a Director is specified in the by-laws of the corporation and they provide that a Director currently be a member in good standing in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, with at least five years clean.

Three positions on the Board of Directors are reserved for members selected directly by the World Service Conference. These three Directors serve for a one year term of office and are selected by election by the Conference at its annual meeting. The three Directors selected by the Conference shall be replaced by the World Service Conference at their next annual Conference although there is no provision which limits the right of the World Service Conference to re-elect the same Directors for additional terms providing they continue to meet the qualifications required for clean time.

Nine of the twelve Directors are selected for membership as a Director from a panel of potential Directors. This panel of potential members is created by action of the World Service Conference at the annual meeting of the Conference. The Conference adds new members for the panel each year by election. The existing Directors select from the panel, the appropriate number of Directors. Each of the nine Directors selected from the panel are selected to serve for a three year term. One third of the Directors positions filled in this manner are replaced each year although there is no limitation on a Director succeeding themselves providing they otherwise meet the qualifications required for abstinence from drugs.

In the Conference Agenda Report the Conference Nominating Subcommittee lists at least one nomination for each position for the WSO Board to be filled at the annual meeting of the Conference. Each nomination should include a short resume of the individual. The Conference then elects the appropriate number of Directors and selects others to fill the panel from which the WSO Board will subsequently select Directors as provided in their by-laws.

If any of the three Conference elected Directors is removed, or becomes ineligible to serve, refuses or fails to serve in such capacity, that Director's seat may be filled by interim appointment by the chairperson of the Conference from the panel of potential Directors then still eligible for membership on the Board.

#### **OFFICERS AND OPERATION OF THE WORLD SERVICE OFFICE**

The Board of Directors elects four officers at the annual meeting for the World Service Office held in June of each year. These positions are Chairperson, Vice chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary. These positions require of the office holder the performance of certain responsibilities and tasks associated with the management of the corporation as a legal entity. The Chairperson is a voting

participant of the Conference and in this manner serves as the direct and official link to the Conference.

The voting participation of the chairperson of the World Service Office has been found to be an important and practical arrangement in order for the office to participate in deliberations and decisions of the Conference. Because the Office is vested with so much responsibility by the Fellowship and because of their experience and knowledge relating to these responsibilities it is essential to the Fellowship's interest that the World Service Office have one vote at the Conference and be able to have motions made and debated. Without this voting participation the Fellowship would not as effectively be served by the Office.

The Board of Directors meets according to an established schedule each year in order to facilitate proper discharge of their responsibilities. The Board has established a series of internal administrative policies that provide for the routine management of affairs of the Office. The Board selects an executive director as a chief management employee to direct and manage the office on a daily basis. The executive director selects, hires and supervises all other employees to accomplish the duties assigned to the Office by the Fellowship or the Board of Directors.

The Minutes of the Board meetings are not generally distributed throughout the Fellowship. The Minutes are however, open for inspection by voting members of the World Service Conference and the Office does provide detailed information about the completed actions of the Board that would usually be of importance or of interest to the Fellowship at large in the *Newsline*. Additionally the Office does publish special reports on subjects of great importance and interest within the Fellowship.



## CHAPTER TEN

### THE N.A. WAY MAGAZINE

A Fellowship magazine is published by the World Service Office. The magazine, entitled *The N.A. Way*, is a monthly publication which includes written essays and stories about recovery in the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship. All members of the Fellowship are encouraged to write articles for the magazine, making it a "meeting in print." Occasionally an article may be printed from a non-member, such as a non-addict Trustee or other friend of the Fellowship, if the article is in keeping with the steps and traditions of N.A.

The magazine is a subscription financed activity of the World Service Office. The subscription price, when multiplied by the total number of subscribers, should cover the total costs of publication, staff, materials and distribution.

The major section of the magazine includes the experience, strength and hope of members of N.A. Essays which share ideas about the Fellowship and personal stories which share experience, strength and hope in applying the principles of the N.A. Program make up the total content of this section. Poetry is not included because of its subjective nature, which makes editing impossible, and because of the difficulties inherent in choosing which poems to print and which to leave out.

A separate section of the magazine, always considerably shorter and less prominent than the above described section, is the editorial section. Letters to the Editor are printed here, along with any essays which are persuasive or informative in nature and any guest editorials. This section will always carry a spirit of recovery and service, in keeping with the spiritual principles of the N.A. Fellowship.

The WSO staff member responsible for the magazine is the Managing Editor. The person chosen for this position will always be a member of the Fellowship with a minimum of five years clean time. He or she must have previous N.A. service experience at the group and area levels, and if possible at the regional level as RSR or RSC Chairperson. In order to produce an excellent magazine there are also educational and life experience requirements. The Managing Editor must have a bachelor's degree in English or journalism, or at least four years journalism experience in print media as a staff writer or editor or equivalent education and work experience.

All material to be included in the magazine is edited by the Managing Editor with the guidance of both the Review Panel and the Editorial Board described below. This editing is limited to correction of grammatical, syntactical and structural problems in an effort to promote continuity without altering the content or flavor of the article. Letters to the Editor and guest editorials may not be edited beyond correcting errors in grammar, punctuation and diction.

#### REVIEW PANEL

All proposed input for the magazine is screened by a review panel prior to inclusion in the magazine. The Review Panel is composed of three members of the World Service Board of Trustees and three World Service Conference appointees. The Review Panel members perform two functions: a) they vote to reject or accept each item of input, and state their reasons; and b) they make specific suggestions for editing those items they voted to accept. This input is written in narrative form and mailed to the Managing Editor for use in editing the material. Because the various suggestions of any given panel member may be in conflict with an other, they serve as guidance in the editing process. Whenever a majority of the panel members vote to reject a given item, that item may not be included in the magazine.

The panel consists of three Trustees and three Conference appointees. The Trustees are selected by the WSB in whatever manner the board may choose. If for any reason one or more of the Trustees selected fails to serve in this capacity, the WSC will be notified. Until such time as a replacement is appointed, the Review Panel will continue to function without interruption. Trustees selected for this service should serve for a period not less than two years.

At each meeting of the World Service Conference held in alternate years, three individuals will be selected to serve for two years as members of the Review Panel. Each of the persons chosen must have served for at least one year as a voting participant of the World Service Conference. If for any reason the appointee fails to serve, the WSC Chairperson will appoint a suitable replacement within 30 days of notification. The replacement will complete the term, and will be eligible for election to another full term.

#### THE EDITORIAL BOARD

After all material has been screen and edited, and before any material item is published, the final draft is screened by an Editorial Board. This board is composed of one Trustee and one Conference appointee and the Managing Editor.

These members carefully review the material for Tradition violations or language which is not consistent with N.A. principles of recovery, and make one of three recommendations: a) accept in its entirety b) reject the specific item article c) accept all the item articles, but make specific language changes. The recommendations of any member of the Editorial Board are discussed with the other members by phone or in person, and any majority opinion is binding.

Members of the Editorial Board are chosen in even numbered years in the same manner as Review Panel members, but no person may serve on both the panel and the board at the same time. The Trustee and Conference appointee are called Associate Editors, and serve for a period of two years. In the event that an Editorial Board member fails to perform his or her duties, replacement procedures are the same as for the Review Panel.

