

Draft

**A Guide to  
Service in  
Narcotics  
Anonymous,  
Part One**

**GENERAL REVIEW DRAFT  
NOT CONFERENCE APPROVED  
WSC Ad Hoc Committee  
on N.A. Service  
December 5, 1989**

## The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous.

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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A Guide to Service in Narcotics Anonymous, Part One

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To: The Fellowship  
From: WSC Ad Hoc on N.A. Service  
Date: December 5, 1989

Enclosed you'll find committee drafts of the first three chapters of *A Guide to Service*, entitled: "The N.A. Group," "The Area Service Committee" and "The Regional Service Committee," along with various related material. Also enclosed are study and discussion notes for the three chapters, as well as a brief "inventory" of remaining chapters and our work schedule for completion of the *Guide to Service*.

It is important to note that the enclosed drafts should *not* be considered "review and input drafts," nor are they in "approval-form." They are for information to the fellowship on the status of the project, and to provide the fellowship with an opportunity to start discussing our work. At WSC 1990, sharing sessions will be held to talk about the concepts presented in *A Guide to Service*, and to consider a process for review.

It is hoped the enclosed "study notes" will help those who wish to take a careful look through the material, consider some of the issues, and discuss them with their RSR. We are looking not so much for a line-by-line review as for discussion on the underlying concepts, which will hopefully give your RSR a sense of how local N.A. members feel about the concepts presented in the material.

The Twelve Concepts for N.A. Service, previously released, will also be part of *A Guide to Service*. We are interested in the same type of conceptual review on the Twelve Concepts, with your RSR getting a sense of how local members view them.

Keep in mind that the enclosed documents are only "pieces" of our proposal for a reorganization of N.A. services, which would ultimately call for the establishment of a national level in our service structure, a "world" services structure with a much different focus than currently exists, and adoption of a basic service charter. Please see the December 1989 *Fellowship Report* for further information on the committee's work.

References to unfamiliar terms or bodies should be much clearer once the completed *Guide to Service* is in your hands. Until then, here are a few terms which appear in the *Guide, Part 1* which may require some explanation:

*Group Services bulletins*--these are publications which are *not* produced by today's WSO, but *would* be produced by the kind of national service office--under the heading of its group services department--which we project for the future. These bulletins would cover service topics of special or limited interest in a timely fashion. Some would be technical in nature. All would be able to be updated whenever necessary to reflect the latest information. They would *not* be pieces of conference-approved literature.

*It Works: How and Why*--the steps and traditions book which has been discussed for so many years is listed in the *Guide* as if it were an already-published document. In writing, we've been thinking of what kinds of tools N.A. will have available when and if the *Guide* is finally approved. If *It Works* is not completed by that time, references to it will be removed from the *Guide*.

*Area Literature Workbook*--a tool, not currently in publication, projected to contain the forms necessary to effectively manage literature distribution through area committees.

*N.A. Service Charter*--also called the International Basis for Service; a document describing the basic elements of the N.A. service structure and the essential bodies of concepts defining the Narcotics Anonymous approach to recovery, unity, and service; to appear in *A Guide to Service, Part Two*.



## **GUIDE TO SERVICE INVENTORY**

*Items in bold type are scheduled for general review draft distribution in A Guide to Service, Part Two. The other items, with the exception of the introduction and the transition plan, are published here in the general review draft release of A Guide to Service, Part One.*

### **Table of contents**

<b>Foreword</b> .....	<b>final review draft</b>
<i>Introduction</i> .....	<i>deferred indefinitely</i>
Twelve Concepts .....	complete
<b>International Basis</b> .....	<b>final review draft</b>
The N.A. Group .....	complete
The Area Service Committee .....	complete
The Regional Service Committee.....	complete
<b>Local Service Centers</b> .....	<b>2 pages--not reviewed</b>
<b>Developing National Movements</b> .....	<b>3 pages--not reviewed</b>
<b>National Service Conference</b> .....	<b>final review draft</b>
<b>National Service Board</b> .....	<b>final review draft</b>
<b>N.A. World Services</b> .....	<b>final review draft</b>

### **Addenda**

Sample Rules of Order.....	complete
Trusted Servant Selection Procedure .....	complete

### **Bulletins**

Starting a New N.A. Group--a Checklist.....	complete
<b>Metropolitan Services</b> .....	<b>not reviewed</b>

### **Other**

<i>Cover material</i> .....	<i>complete for March 3-4, 1990 meeting</i>
<i>Transition plan</i> .....	<i>deferred to WSC 1990</i>

## **COMPLETION SCHEDULE, A Guide to Service, Part Two**

Full committee (finish Part 2 for Albuquerque II) .....	December 9-10, 1989
Distribution for Albuquerque II .....	December 22
Albuquerque II (to review Part 2) .....	January 26-28, 1990
Small group (collate input from Albuquerque II).....	February 17-18
Full committee (integrate Albuquerque II input) .....	March 3-4
Release Part 2 .....	March 23
WSC annual meeting .....	April 22-27

STUDY AND DISCUSSION NOTES:

## **The N.A. group**

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*These notes and questions have been put together to help you review A Guide to Service, Part One, and conduct study and review groups. Under each section are brief summary notes, touching the major points. Also included are questions you or your group may wish to ask yourselves, both about how N.A. services work today in your locale and about how they might work.*

### **Introduction, p. 1**

Group autonomy is cited as a guiding principle for groups. "In N.A., we encourage unity, not uniformity."

The tone of the group chapter is deliberately non-directive. Given some basic criteria, the N.A. group is perfectly capable of making its own decisions for itself. This chapter offers successful experience, not instruction.

Does your group do things differently than other groups in your area? If it does, why do you think it's important?

### **What is an N.A. group?, pp. 1-2**

Six points describing a group, applying the traditions most relevant to the identity of a Narcotics Anonymous group.

*Groups and meetings*--is there a difference? Do you think it matters?

Some groups host a single weekly meeting, some host more than one.

The importance of group registration. How would your group benefit by being registered?

Specialized groups--additional identification, but same focus: recovery. All N.A. meetings open to any addict who wishes to attend.

Some N.A. meetings are *not* sponsored by an N.A. group. Does your community have any meetings like this? Do you think these types of meetings would be useful in your community?

### **What is a "home group"?, pp. 2-3**

Basic definition of the "home group" concept. Not universal, and not required--but many communities find "home groups" useful. Are there "home groups" in your area? Do you think "home groups" are of benefit to personal recovery? To a group's ability to carry the message?

### **Who can be a member?, p. 3**

Any drug addict can be a member of N.A., and, if he desires, of any N.A. group he chooses.



### **What are "open" and "closed" meetings?, p. 3**

"Closed" meetings are for addicts only, or those who think they might have a drug problem. Why do you think "closed" meetings are the norm in many places?

"Open" meetings are open to anyone who wishes to attend.

Can you think of ways in which open meetings might help develop closer ties with the surrounding community?

### **Where can we hold N.A. meetings?, pp. 3-4**

Considerations for attendance by addicts with additional needs.

In your community, have there been meetings held in members' homes, or in treatment centers, clubhouses, etc.? What kinds of problems have you encountered with any of these locations?

### **What kind of meeting format can we use?, pp. 4-5**

Listing a variety of the most commonly used formats.

### **Developing your format, p. 5**

What are the needs of your individual group? What sort of format works best for you?

As meetings in your community have grown, have meeting formats changed?

### **What kinds of literature should we use?, p. 6**

Criteria to consider in deciding what kinds of literature to read in a recovery meeting, and what sorts of material to make available on the literature table at a meeting. What literature do you have at your meeting?

### **What is a group business meeting?, pp. 6-7**

Questions a group might ask itself in considering how to run a meeting that more effectively carries the N.A. recovery message.

Business meetings are usually held before or after the regular recovery meeting. When does your group hold its business meetings? How often does it hold them?

How does your group conduct its business? Would changes in the style of your business meeting help your group function better?

### **How does the work get done?, pp. 7-8**

Setting up chairs, making refreshments... all the things a group does in hosting a meeting. Who handles it? Officers, and *everyone*, even new members--that's part of how a group stays self-supporting. Group service can strengthen recovery.

### **How do we choose group officers?, p. 8**

A few criteria for group members to consider in selecting trusted servants. Is this different from the way you choose trusted servants?

**What officers does a group need?, pp. 8-10**

Job descriptions for group secretary, treasurer, GSR, and alternate GSR.

What is a *regional assembly*? (A description of the regional assembly appears on page 41.) Would your GSR's participation in such a regional assembly keep your group in more direct contact with N.A. services nationwide?

**What about rotation?, pp. 10-11**

Is rotation important? What about the balance provided by long-term involvement?

**What responsibilities does an N.A. group have?, p. 11**

An N.A. group is responsible to carry the message in its meetings, and to take part in the continuing evolution of N.A. as a whole. How does *your* group fulfill its responsibilities?

**How can our group support other N.A. services?, pp. 11-12**

Groups support other N.A. services by sending stable, active GSRs into the service structure, and providing service funds.

Is too much money in the group treasury a dangerous thing? How much is too much?

A plan for group financial support of N.A. services is described, one that differs from our current plan. Today, our service literature suggests that groups give all their extra funds to their area committee; if the area committee has any extra, they give it to the region, and the region to the world. *A Guide to Service* suggests that groups contribute funds directly to each level of service. What advantages could this have? What disadvantages?

**How can our group better serve our community?, p. 12**

The N.A. group is part of the larger community around it. As a member of the community, it has certain responsibilities. How does your group serve the community?

**How can our group solve its problems?, pp. 12-13**

A group's most effective problem-solving tool can be found in the revived conscience of recovering group members--in its group conscience. Other sources of information that can serve to better inform that group conscience are cited.

What kinds of problems does your group encounter? How does it solve them?



STUDY AND DISCUSSION NOTES:

**The area service committee**

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**Introduction, pp. 15-16**

The kinds of work done by area committees.

The division of labor between the group and the area committee helps each be more effective at what it does best.

For newly formed area committees: *easy does it.*

**The area committee and other N.A. services, p. 16**

Relationships between the group and the area, and between the area and regional, national, and world services.

**Area committee participants, p. 16**

Three groups of participants: GSRs, officers, and subcommittee chairpersons.

What does the Eighth Concept for N.A. Service say about the participation of GSRs, officers, and subcommittee chairpersons in the area committee? How does your area define participation? What are the benefits of full participation for all these members? What are the drawbacks?

**General officers, pp. 17-19**

Job descriptions for area chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, treasurer, and *regional committee members*, or RCMs.

RCMs serve a function similar to that fulfilled today by area service representatives. The name has been changed because the focus of the RCM's responsibilities has been shifted. The *Guide* does not portray them primarily as representing the area in voting matters, but as a participant in the regional service resource team.

How are RCMs the same as today's ASRs? How are they different? How is the regional committee itself, as described in *A Guide to Service*, different than today's RSC? (You may want to hold off on lengthy discussion of this subject until you get into the chapter on the regional committee itself.)

**Subcommittees, pp. 19-23**

The range of subcommittee services offered by well-developed area committees is described. Newer areas will probably not be able to offer the full range of services described.

Note that no area subcommittees are described for policy or literature review. Pages 23 through 25 provide a fuller discussion of area committee policy and guidelines. A different literature development process for N.A. is detailed in the chapters on national and world services in Part Two of *A Guide to Service*, to be

released for general review early next year. Groups and members will still be involved in the process, but in a different way.

Under outreach subcommittees, reference is made to addicts and groups who "are isolated by factors other than geography--social, economic, and cultural factors, for instance." Can you think of addicts--clean or not--or groups in your community isolated by such factors from the rest of your N.A. community? How might your community reach out to them more effectively?

Under the discussion of meeting lists, mention is made of excluding certain N.A. meetings from the list. Has your area ever done such a thing? Why, or why not? What criteria has it used in making its decision?

### **Electing officers and subcommittee chairpersons, p. 23**

Basic remarks.

### **Rotation, p. 23**

Rotation and continuity in leadership at the area level. Because areas are different than groups, should rotation and continuity be applied differently at the area level than it is in groups?

### **Area committee policy and guidelines, pp. 23-25**

Area committees can get bogged down in policy and guidelines discussions, and become distracted from the work at hand. This section describes tools to help manage those discussions effectively.

The Twelve Concepts: tailor-made resources for policy questions.

Reflection on N.A.'s primary purpose.

The log of area policy actions--so that, once a conclusion is reached, it doesn't have to be argued again.

Has your area been sidetracked by policy questions from time to time? How could the tools described here help put your area back on line?

Remarks on area guidelines, sample guidelines, and ad hoc committees established to adapt the samples to the area's own needs.

Does your area committee have guidelines? Does it need them?

### **Area inventory, pp. 25-26**

Annually, many areas take time "to stop, consider their actions and attitudes, and rededicate themselves to their ideals." This section describes particular questions for an area inventory, how to prepare for the inventory, and how to "make amends" if the inventory calls for them. Would an annual inventory help your area committee serve more effectively?



### **Participation, pp. 26-27**

Dealing with lagging participation in area services--reasons for it, and ways to more effectively draw N.A. members into service. How well-supported are your area committee's services?

The second paragraph on page 27 acknowledges that some groups will not be interested in supporting area services, but asserts that the area committee has a responsibility to serve such groups anyway. What do you think of this?

### **Area budgeting, p. 27**

Basic remarks on a useful tool in administering area services.

### **Other funding considerations, pp. 27-28**

Area committees can support regional and national services with their surplus funds, in addition to funds contributed by groups for those services.

Maintaining a single account for all area money. Is this how your area handles its money? If not, do you think this method would serve your area better? Why, or why not?

Discussion of fundraising vs. group contributions--not black and white, but not completely grey, either. Does your area raise funds for service through dances, raffles, or other activities? How has this affected your area?

### **The monthly meeting, p. 28**

A general description of the meeting format. (A sample format appears on page 48.)

### **The sharing session, pp. 28-30**

Open forum, brainstorming--whatever you call it, it's a more relaxed way of dealing with general issues than the more formal part of an area business meeting. The sharing session is a time when a group conscience can be formed that will later inform the committee's vote on particular motions.

Does your area have a sharing session? Do the groups need an opportunity to discuss challenges and solutions they've encountered? How do you think a sharing session would benefit your area committee?

### **Area committees in rural areas, p. 30**

Area committees in rural districts function differently than big city areas. How?

### **Learning days, workshops, pp. 30-31**

Tools for increasing local members' awareness of N.A. services.

**Growing area committees, p. 31**

Sometimes an area committee grows to the point where it needs to divide in order to function effectively. How do you know when your area has reached that point? Is there such a thing as a "bad" reason for an area division?

**Creating new area committees, pp. 32-33**

When forming a new area committee where no committee has served before, it's *first things first*. What was it like when your area first formed?

## STUDY AND DISCUSSION NOTES:

### The regional service committee

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#### Introduction, p. 35

The regional committee is described as "a service *resource* group rather than a service *delivery* group," composed primarily of RCMs (regional committee members). Others are sometimes added on to the committee.

The model for regional services described here differs in many ways from the model currently in place in many regions. Too often, regions act like large areas, with the same kinds of subcommittees areas have, often duplicating services provided more effectively by area committees. This chapter describes the regional service committee as having a function distinct from that of the area committee. Rather than providing direct services like phonelines, H&I meetings, and the like, it brings together the most experienced trusted servants from each area in the region to form a service resource that all the groups and areas can tap. Keep this new regional service model in mind as you read and discuss your way through the rest of this chapter.

#### How the regional committee works, pp. 35-36

Regional committees usually have no standing subcommittees; the kind of work they do is done best by all their members together.

Regional officers are elected each year from among the current RCMs, and continue to serve as RCMs. How do you think this arrangement would benefit your region? Can you think of any drawbacks?

#### Regional committee members, p. 36

What does an RCM do? How does she link her area to other areas? To the region? How does she link national services to her area and groups?

#### Regional resource assignments, p. 37

RCMs are assigned particular fields of service--P.I., H&I, and the like--with which to familiarize themselves. They serve as resources to the region's areas in their special fields. Would resource assignments serve a useful function in your region? How would this differ from the current structure in your region?

#### Conference delegate, pp. 37-38

The conference delegate described in the *Guide* serves a similar function to that fulfilled today by the regional service representative, or RSR. The name has been changed for the same reason the *Guide* talks about RCMs instead of ASRs--the delegate is primarily a participant in the National Service Conference, responsible to act in the best interests of N.A. as a whole, rather than being primarily a representative of his region's interests.



What does a conference delegate do? .

How does your region currently view the responsibility of the RSR?

**The sharing session, pp. 38-39**

"Following reports from the RCMs and the conference delegate, much of the region's meeting time is spent in a sharing session." Does your region currently allow for a free exchange of experience? How do you think this would affect your region?

**Service seminars, pp. 39-40**

One of the primary "products" of the regional resource team, the service seminar provides a way for RCMs to share the region's experience in different fields of service with all the areas and groups served by the committee.

**Conventions, p. 40**

Basic remarks.

**Activities, p. 40**

Basic remarks.

**Regional finances, p. 41**

Basic remarks on handling money.

**The regional assembly, p. 41**

The assembly is something new in the *Guide*. Rather than encourage every group to review and vote on an agenda book for the conference, or suggest that ASRs get together to review conference ideas, the regional assembly draws together the representatives of every group in the region, not only to discuss national service affairs with their conference delegate, but to elect the conference delegate themselves.

Do you think your current RSR has a good "feel" for how the members and groups in your region think? Would a regional assembly promote unity in your region?

**Electing conference delegates, pp. 41-42**

Using the *trusted servant selection procedure* (described on page 44), GSRs and RCMs elect the region's conference delegate and alternate.

What advantages does the trusted servant selection procedure have over more commonly used nomination and voting procedures? What disadvantages?

**Rotation of delegates, p. 42**

Basic remarks.



**Dividing regions, pp. 42-43**

A regional division should be carefully considered by everyone affected, especially the region's groups. This section describes a careful, lengthy examination and decision process regions might use in considering division.

What are "good" reasons for dividing a region? What are "bad" reasons? Are you a region when you say you are?





## The N.A. group

### Introduction

Narcotics Anonymous groups are self-governing (the Twelve Traditions use the word *autonomous*). N.A.'s service charter reinforces that idea: "In the conduct of its own affairs, the group is responsible to no authority other than its own conscience." So what we offer here is not a "rule book," but the shared experience of how many of our groups have met with success in conducting meetings and tending to business. Newer members may find this chapter helps them understand who does what to keep the group going, and how to help. For more experienced members, it may lend some perspective to their group involvement. But no matter how much information we pack into this chapter, you're still going to find that the best source of guidance for your group is in your group itself.

There are many ways of doing things in Narcotics Anonymous. And just as all of us have our own individual personalities, so will your group develop its own identity, its own way of doing things, and its own special knack for carrying the N.A. message. That's the way it should be. In N.A. we encourage *unity*, not *uniformity*.

This chapter does not even attempt to say everything that could be said about operating an N.A. group. What you'll find here are some brief answers to a few very basic questions: What is an N.A. group? How does the work get done? What kinds of meetings can a group have? When problems arise, how are they solved? We hope this chapter proves useful as your group seeks to fulfill its primary purpose: to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

### What is an N.A. group?

When two or more addicts come together to help each other stay clean, they may form a Narcotics Anonymous group. Here are six points based on our traditions which describe an N.A. group:\*

1. All members of a group are drug addicts, and all drug addicts are eligible for membership.
2. As a group, they are self-supporting.
3. As a group, their single goal is to help drug addicts recover through application of the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous.
4. As a group, they have no affiliation outside Narcotics Anonymous.
5. As a group, they express no opinion on outside issues.
6. As a group, their public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion.

N.A. groups are formed by addicts who wish to support one another in recovery, in carrying the message directly to other addicts, and in participating in the activities

\* The six points describing a group have been adapted from The A.A. Group, published by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Reprinted by permission.



1 and services of N.A. as a whole. One of the primary means an N.A. group uses to  
2 fulfill these ends is to conduct N.A. *meetings* where addicts can share their recovery  
3 experience, thus supporting one another and at the same time carrying the message  
4 to others. Some groups host a single weekly meeting; others host a number of  
5 meetings each week. The quality of an N.A. meeting is often directly dependent on  
6 the strength and solidarity of the N.A. group which sponsors it.

7 N.A. *groups*--not N.A. *meetings*--are the foundation of the N.A. service structure.  
8 Groups maintain contact with the rest of Narcotics Anonymous through  
9 representatives selected to participate on the groups' behalf in the N.A. service  
10 structure. Mailings from the National Service Office, including the national service  
11 newsletter, keep N.A. groups informed on issues affecting the fellowship nationwide.  
12 If your group is not receiving the national service newsletter, ask your secretary to  
13 register the group's current mailing address with the Group Services Department at  
14 the National Service Office. Narcotics Anonymous groups also support the service  
15 structure through their donations to N.A. service boards and committees.

16 Sometimes specialized N.A. groups form--men's or women's groups, for example--  
17 to provide additional identification for addicts with particular needs in common.  
18 But the focus of any N.A. meeting--even if it's conducted by a specialized group--is  
19 on recovery from drug addiction, and any addict is welcome to attend.

20 N.A. meetings are events at which addicts share with one another their experience  
21 in recovery and in the application of the Twelve Steps. While many--if not most--  
22 N.A. meetings *are* in fact hosted by an N.A. group, other N.A. meetings occur all the  
23 time: informally among friends, at large area or regional speaker meetings, at  
24 conventions, in schools, and so forth. The N.A. group is an *entity*; the N.A. meeting  
25 is an *event*; and N.A. meetings may be held without the sponsorship of an N.A.  
26 group.

### 27 What is a "home group"?

28 In some N.A. communities, it has become customary for members of the  
29 fellowship to make a personal commitment to support one particular group--their  
30 "home group." Though this custom is not universal, many believe its practice can  
31 benefit the individual member as well as the group. For the individual member, it  
32 can provide a stable recovery base--a place to call "home," a place to know and be  
33 known by other recovering addicts. For the group, it insures the support of a core of  
34 regular, committed members. A strong home group can also foster a spirit of  
35 camaraderie among its members that makes the group both more attractive and  
36 more supportive of newcomers. The home group is one very specific way in which,  
37 by making a personal commitment to N.A. unity, group members can enhance their  
38 own recovery as well as insure that the same opportunity exists for others.

39 While the home group concept is the accepted norm in some N.A. communities,  
40 it's unheard of in others. There are many, many ways of talking and thinking about



1 the bond established among addicts in their groups. Do what seems most suitable in  
2 your own N.A. community.

3 **Who can be a member?**

4 If a drug addict wants to be a member of Narcotics Anonymous, all he must have is  
5 a desire to stop using. Our Third Tradition insures that. Whether the individual  
6 member of Narcotics Anonymous chooses to be a member of a particular group as  
7 well is entirely up to the individual.

8 **What are "open" and "closed" meetings?**

9 "Closed" N.A. meetings are only for drug addicts or those who think they might  
10 have a drug problem. Closed meetings are the norm in many places, because they  
11 provide an atmosphere in which addicts can feel more certain that those attending  
12 will be able to identify with them. Newcomers may be more inclined to show up at a  
13 closed meeting for the same reason. The leader often reads a statement at the  
14 beginning of a closed meeting, explaining why the meeting is closed and offering to  
15 direct non-addicts who may be attending to an open meeting.

16 "Open" N.A. meetings are just that: open to anyone who wants to attend. Some  
17 groups have open meetings once a month to allow non-addict friends and relatives  
18 of N.A. members to celebrate recovery anniversaries with them. Groups that have  
19 open meetings may structure their format in such a way that opportunities for  
20 participation by non-addicts are limited only to short birthday or anniversary  
21 presentations, so that the meeting retains its focus on recovery shared one addict to  
22 another. It should be made clear during the meeting that N.A. groups do not accept  
23 monetary contributions from non-addicts.

24 Other groups use carefully planned open meetings--particularly open speaker  
25 meetings--as an opportunity to let members of the community at large see for  
26 themselves what Narcotics Anonymous is all about, and even to ask questions. At  
27 such public meetings, a statement regarding our tradition of anonymity is often read,  
28 asking visitors not to use full-face photographs, last names, or personal details when  
29 they describe the meeting to others. A sample anonymity statement appears at the  
30 back of this book. For more information on public meetings, see *A Guide to Public*  
31 *Information*, available through your group service representative or by writing the  
32 National Service Office.

33 **Where can we hold N.A. meetings?**

34 N.A. meetings can be held almost anywhere. Groups usually want to find an easily  
35 accessible public place where they can hold their meetings on a weekly basis.  
36 Facilities run by public agencies and religious and civic organizations often have  
37 rooms for rent at moderate rates that will meet a group's needs. Others in your  
38 N.A. community may already be aware of appropriate space available for your  
39 meeting; speak with them.



1 Before securing a location, it may be well to consider whether or not the room will  
2 be accessible to addicts with physical limitations. Does the building have ramps,  
3 elevators with wide doors, and bathroom facilities able to accommodate someone in  
4 a wheelchair? There are other similar considerations your group may wish to make  
5 itself aware of. Ask your group service representative for the bulletin, *Addicts with*  
6 *Additional Needs*, or write to the Group Services Department at the National  
7 Service Office.

8 It's generally recommended that group meetings not be held in members' homes.  
9 Most groups find it desirable to hold their meetings in public facilities, for a variety  
10 of reasons: Stable meetings held in public places tend to enhance N.A.'s credibility  
11 in the community. Because of varying work and vacation schedules, it is often  
12 difficult to maintain consistent times for meetings held in individuals' homes.  
13 Holding a meeting in an individual's home may affect the willingness of some  
14 members to attend. A group asking a member to host meetings in his home is  
15 asking him to risk potential personal loss from theft and property damage.  
16 Although some groups may hold their first few meetings in a member's home, it's  
17 generally recommended that they relocate their meetings to public facilities as soon  
18 as possible.

19 Holding regular N.A. group meetings in some types of facilities--drug addiction  
20 treatment centers, clubhouses, or political party headquarters, for instance--can  
21 compromise the independent identity of the group. Before deciding to locate your  
22 meeting in such a facility, your group may wish to consider a few questions: Is the  
23 facility open to any addict wishing to attend the meeting? Does the facility  
24 administration place any restrictions on your use of the room that could challenge  
25 any of our traditions? Is it clear to all concerned that your N.A. group--not the  
26 facility--is sponsoring the meeting? Do you have a clear rental agreement with  
27 facility management, and is the rent you're being charged moderate enough to allow  
28 your group to contribute funds to the rest of the N.A. service structure? Are so  
29 many of your community's N.A. meetings already located in this particular facility  
30 that, if it were to fold, your N.A. community as a whole would be crippled? These  
31 are some of the questions a group should carefully consider before deciding where  
32 to hold an N.A. meeting.

### 33 What kind of meeting format can we use?

34 Groups use a variety of formats to enhance the atmosphere of recovery in their  
35 meetings. Most meetings last an hour or an hour and a half. Some groups have a  
36 single format for their meetings. Other groups have a schedule of rotating formats:  
37 one week a step study, the next week a speaker meeting, and so forth. Still others  
38 divide their large meetings into sessions after the meeting has opened, each with its  
39 own format. Here are a few basic descriptions of some of the meeting formats that,  
40 with variations, seem to be among the most common. For reference, we've also  
41 included a sample meeting format at the end of this book.



1 **Participation meetings.** The leader opens the meeting up for members to share  
2 on any subject related to recovery.

3 **Topic discussion meetings.** The leader selects a particular recovery-related  
4 topic for discussion, or asks someone else to provide a topic.

5 **Study meetings.** There are a number of different types of study meetings. Some  
6 read a portion of an N.A. conference-approved book or pamphlet each week and  
7 discuss it--for example, a Basic Text study. Others have discussions focussing on the  
8 Twelve Steps.

9 **Speaker meetings.** Some meetings ask a single speaker to share his recovery  
10 story, or his experience in a particular aspect of recovery. Others ask two or three  
11 speakers to talk for a shorter period. Still others use a combination format, with a  
12 speaker sharing first, and a topic discussion afterward.

13 **Newcomer meetings.** These meetings are often conducted by two or three of the  
14 group's more experienced members. The "oldtimers" share their experience with  
15 drug addiction and with recovery in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. If time  
16 allows, the meeting is then opened for questions from the newer members.

17 Newcomer meetings are sometimes held a half hour before or after the group's  
18 regular meeting. Other groups conduct them as smaller sections of a large meeting.  
19 Still others hold a newcomer meeting one day of the week, their regular meeting  
20 another. Whatever the format, newcomer meetings provide a means for your group  
21 to give addicts new to N.A. an introduction to the basics of recovery.

22 **Question and answer meetings.** At Q&A meetings, people are asked to think of  
23 questions related to recovery and the fellowship, write those questions down, and  
24 place them in "the ask-it basket." The leader of the meeting pulls a slip of paper  
25 from the basket, reads the question, and asks for someone to answer it. After one or  
26 two members have spoken to one question, the leader selects another question from  
27 the basket, and so forth, until the meeting is over.

### 28 **Developing your format**

29 These are basic descriptions of just a few of the many different types of formats  
30 used in N.A. meetings; the variations on even these few format types can be endless.  
31 Feel free to innovate. Vary the format in whatever way seems to best suit the  
32 "personality" of your group and the needs of addicts in your community.

33 Often, a meeting will grow far larger than the group originally foresaw. A meeting  
34 format that worked well for a small meeting may not work as well for a larger one.  
35 When one of your group's meetings experiences that kind of growth, you may want  
36 to consider making some adjustments in your format, perhaps even replacing it  
37 altogether. Many groups experiencing such growth break their larger meetings  
38 down into smaller sections (although many do not) to allow more members the  
39 chance to participate. Some even use a different type of format in each section.



1 **What kinds of literature should we use?**

2 It's up to each group to determine for itself what N.A. literature is appropriate for  
3 use in its meetings. Various service boards and committees in Narcotics  
4 Anonymous produce a number of different kinds of publications. When  
5 determining whether to use a particular publication, a group may want to consider  
6 whether the publication or particular article is *recovery* oriented or *service* oriented.  
7 Most groups find that reading recovery oriented material in their meetings better  
8 supports the primary purpose of the meeting than reading handbooks or bulletins.  
9 And while groups may not wish to have service oriented publications read aloud  
10 during their recovery meetings, they usually make those publications available on  
11 their literature tables.

12 The group may also want to consider the process used to insure the publication's  
13 fidelity to the N.A. message. Each individual piece of Narcotics Anonymous  
14 *conference-approved* literature--N.A. books and pamphlets on recovery--is subject to  
15 the most rigorous kind of approval process. Selections from conference-approved  
16 books and pamphlets are usually read at the beginning of an N.A. meeting, and  
17 some meetings use them as the core of their format. N.A. conference-approved  
18 literature represents the widest range of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous.

19 Groups often make other kinds of N.A. literature available at their meetings: the  
20 national service newsletter, various N.A. service bulletins and handbooks, the  
21 national fellowship magazine, and local N.A. newsletters.

22 Literature produced by other twelve step fellowships, or by other organizations, is  
23 inappropriate either for display on group literature tables or for reading at group  
24 meetings. To do either implies an endorsement of an outside enterprise, directly  
25 contradicting N.A.'s Sixth Tradition.<sup>1</sup>

26 **What is a group business meeting?**

27 The purpose of the group business meeting is fairly self-explanatory: to conduct  
28 the business of the group in such a way that the group remains effective in carrying  
29 the recovery message. Some of the questions a typical group business meeting  
30 addresses are:

- 31 \* Is the group effective in carrying the N.A. message?
- 32 \* Are newcomers being made welcome?
- 33 \* Do solutions for problems at recent meetings need to be sought?
- 34 \* Is the meeting format providing sufficient direction?
- 35 \* Is attendance steady, or growing?
- 36 \* Are there good relations between the group and the facility in which the meeting
- 37 is held?
- 38 \* Between the group and the community?

<sup>1</sup> Sixth Tradition: "An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose."



- 1 \* Are the group's funds being used wisely?
- 2 \* Is there enough money being donated at meetings to meet the group's needs and
- 3 also provide for contributions to the rest of the service structure?
- 4 \* Are literature and refreshment supplies holding up?
- 5 \* Is there a service vacancy in the group?
- 6 \* Has the area, the region, or the National Service Conference asked the group for
- 7 advice or support?

8 Group business meetings--sometimes called steering committee meetings--are  
9 usually held before or after a regular recovery meeting, so that the recovery meeting  
10 remains focused on its primary purpose. The group selects someone to lead the  
11 business meeting. Group officers give reports on their areas of responsibility, and  
12 subjects of importance to the group are raised for discussion. Some groups hold  
13 business meetings on a regular basis; others only call them when something specific  
14 comes up that needs the group's attention. All group members are welcome--even  
15 encouraged--to attend, raise questions related to the group's work, and take part in  
16 discussion.

17 The group, as the foundation of the N.A. service structure, is guided by both the  
18 Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts for N.A. Service. A good  
19 understanding of both will help a group business meeting steer a straight course.  
20 N.A.'s step and tradition book, *It Works: How and Why*, provides a wealth of  
21 information about the Twelve Traditions. Interested members can read essays on  
22 the Twelve Concepts in another chapter of this book.

### 23 How does the work get done?

24 Setting up chairs, preparing refreshments, buying literature, arranging for  
25 speakers, cleaning up after the meeting, paying the bills--most of the things an N.A.  
26 group does to host its meetings are pretty simple. But if one person had to do them  
27 all, those simple things would quickly become overwhelming. That's why a group  
28 elects officers (or, in the language of the Second Tradition, *trusted servants*): to help  
29 divide the work among the group's members.

30 Electing officers is one way the group practices N.A.'s tradition of self-support:  
31 "Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting . . . " Sometimes it seems that  
32 groups run all by themselves, but the fact is that someone has to do the work needed  
33 to support the group. By dividing the work, the group insures that the group as a  
34 whole is self-supporting, and that the group's burdens don't settle unevenly on the  
35 shoulders of just one or two individuals.

36 Electing officers provides the group with an opportunity to strengthen its members'  
37 recovery. When a group member agrees to serve as secretary or treasurer or tea- or  
38 coffee-maker, that acceptance of responsibility often helps advance his personal  
39 growth. It also gives that member a chance to help enhance the group's ability to  
40 carry the recovery message.



1 You don't have to be a group officer to be of service to the group. Every week,  
2 there's work to be done: helping set up the meeting, greeting newcomers, cleaning  
3 up, bringing refreshments, and other things of that sort. Asking new members to  
4 help with these kinds of jobs can make them feel a part of the group more quickly.

#### 5 How do we choose group officers?

6 There are a couple of things to consider when looking for a group officer. One is  
7 maturity in recovery. When those newly clean are elected to a position, they may  
8 find themselves deprived of time and energy they need for their early recovery. A  
9 group member with a year or two clean is probably already well-established in his  
10 personal recovery. He is also more likely than a new member to be familiar with  
11 N.A.'s traditions and service concepts, as well as group procedures.

12 A second thing to consider is consistent participation in the group. Do the  
13 candidates attend meetings regularly? Do they take an active part in the group's  
14 business meetings? Those who've demonstrated their commitment to the group by  
15 showing up every week will probably make better trusted servants than those who  
16 only attend sporadically.

17 When a vacancy occurs in a group office, the group holds a business meeting to  
18 consider how to fill it. Some groups use a simple nomination and election  
19 procedure. Another option is a process known as the *trusted servant selection*  
20 *procedure*. A description of the trusted servant selection procedure appears as an  
21 appendix at the back of this book. See it for further details.

#### 22 What officers does a group need? .

23 In different areas the work is divided differently, and the particular jobs are  
24 sometimes called by different names. What's important is not who does the job or  
25 what the job is called, but that the job gets done. What follows are general  
26 descriptions of some of the most common sorts of jobs N.A. groups have.

27 The **secretary** arranges the affairs of the group. What he doesn't do on his own,  
28 he finds other group members to do. One of the first jobs for a new secretary is  
29 registering the group's current mailing address and meeting information with the  
30 area committee secretary and the National Service Office. Each time a new  
31 secretary or group representative takes office, each time there is a change in the  
32 group's mailing address or in the time or location of a group meeting, both the area  
33 committee and National Service Office should be informed. Other things a group  
34 secretary is responsible for may include:

- 35 \* Opening the meeting room well before the meeting is scheduled to begin, setting  
36 up chairs and tables (if necessary), and cleaning and locking the room after the  
37 meeting is over.
- 38 \* Arranging a table with N.A. books and pamphlets, local meeting lists, N.A.  
39 activity fliers, service bulletins, the national fellowship magazine, and N.A.  
40 newsletters.



- \* Making tea or coffee.
- \* Buying refreshments and other supplies.
- \* Selecting meeting leaders and speakers.
- \* Keeping a list of group members' recovery anniversaries, if the group wishes.
- \* Conducting group business meetings.
- \* And doing whatever else needs to be done.

Many groups break all these jobs down separately: someone to open and close the room, another person responsible for refreshments, a third to take care of the literature table, and so forth. Groups that host more than one meeting will often have a different person responsible for all these jobs at each of their meetings.

The **treasurer** is responsible for the group's money. Because of the peculiar pitfalls associated with service as a group treasurer, it's important that groups look carefully at those they elect as treasurers. If the group elects someone who is not capable of handling the responsibilities of the job, then the group is at least partly responsible if something goes wrong. It's recommended that groups elect members who are financially secure, are good at managing their personal finances, and have at least a year clean. Because of the need to keep consistent records, it's also strongly recommended that groups elect treasurers to serve for a full year.

What do group treasurers do? They count the money that members have contributed at each meeting, pay back the people who buy group refreshments and literature, and keep good, simple records. The group treasurer's job requires close attention to details. To help the treasurer in managing those details, a *Group Treasurer's Workbook* is available from your area committee or from the National Service Office.

The essays on N.A.'s Twelve Concepts offer a basic description of the role of the **group service representative**: "Group service representatives, elected directly by each N.A. group, form the foundation of our service structure. By participating in area service, and by attending forums, assemblies, seminars, and workshops at both the area and regional levels, the GSRs provide constant, active influence over the discussions being carried on within the service structure."<sup>2</sup> "If we are vigilant in choosing stable, qualified leaders at this level of service, the remainder of the structure will almost certainly be sound. From this strong foundation, a service structure can be built that will nourish, inform, and support the groups, as the groups nourish and support the structure."<sup>3</sup>

Group service representatives bear great responsibility. While GSRs are *elected* by the group, they are not mere group *messengers*. They are selected by their groups to serve as active members of the area service committee. As such, they are

<sup>2</sup> See the First Concept for N.A. Service.

<sup>3</sup> Sixth Concept.



1 responsible to act in the best interests of N.A. as a whole, and not solely as  
2 advocates of their own groups' priorities.

3 As full participants in the area committee, GSRs need to be as well informed as  
4 they can be concerning the affairs of the committee. They study the reports of the  
5 committee's officers and subcommittee chairpersons. They read the various  
6 handbooks published by the National Service Office on each area of service. After  
7 carefully considering their own conscience, they take active, critical parts in the  
8 discussions which form the group conscience of the entire committee.

9 Once a year, the group service representative attends the regional assembly. Since  
10 broader discussion of regional assemblies occurs later, in the chapter on regional  
11 service committees, we won't go into any detail about assemblies here, except to  
12 mention that attendance at the regional assembly is one responsibility of the GSR.  
13 Where called for, most groups agree to cover the expenses associated with the  
14 GSR's attendance at the regional assembly.

15 Group service representatives link their groups with the rest of the N.A. service  
16 structure, particularly through the information conveyed in their reports to and from  
17 the area committee. At group business meetings, the GSR report provides a  
18 summary of area committee activities, often sparking discussions among group  
19 members that provide the GSR with a feel for how the area can better serve the  
20 group's needs. In group recovery meetings, GSRs make available fliers announcing  
21 area and regional activities.

22 At area committee meetings, GSR reports provide perspectives on group growth  
23 vital to the committee's work. If a group is having problems, the GSR can share  
24 those problems with the committee in his report. And if the group hasn't found  
25 solutions to those problems, the area chairperson will open a slot on the committee's  
26 "sharing session"<sup>4</sup> agenda so that the GSR can gather the experience others have  
27 had in similar situations. If any helpful solutions arise from the sharing session, the  
28 GSR can report those back to the group.

29 Groups also elect a second representative called an **alternate GSR**. The alternate  
30 GSR attends all the area service committee meetings (as a non-voting participant)  
31 with the GSR, so that she can see for herself how the committee works. And if the  
32 GSR cannot attend an area committee meeting, the alternate GSR participates in  
33 the GSR's place.

34 The alternate GSR, along with others, also serves on an area subcommittee.  
35 Subcommittee experience will give the alternate GSR added perspective on how  
36 area services are actually delivered. That perspective will make her a more effective  
37 area committee participant if her group asks her later to serve as its GSR.

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<sup>4</sup> In the chapter on the area service committee, see the section titled, "The Sharing Session."



1 **What about rotation?**

2 *Rotation* is the practice many groups have of electing new people to service  
3 positions at set intervals, rather than having the same person serve in the same  
4 position year after year. Rotation offers very definite benefits for the groups who  
5 practice it. By providing diversity in leadership, it helps a group stay fresh and  
6 energetic. It provides assurance that no one individual exercises so much influence  
7 that the group becomes a mere extension of his personality. The practice of rotation  
8 also reinforces the N.A. emphasis on *service* rather than the *servant*, consistent with  
9 our belief in the value of spiritual anonymity--what's important is the job being  
10 done, not the particular person doing it.

11 Some groups allow their members to serve more than one term in any given  
12 position, so that the group can take advantage of its trusted servants' experience.  
13 Once group officers have completed their terms, rotation allows them to step aside  
14 for a time, or to accept responsibilities elsewhere in the N.A. service structure,  
15 giving other members the chance to serve the group. The impact of rotation on the  
16 stability of the group is balanced by the continuing presence of its long-term group  
17 members. Those who have served in the past as group officers, and who maintain  
18 an active role in the life of the group, can provide a much-needed maturity of  
19 perspective to a growing group's discussions.

20 **What responsibilities does an N.A. group have?**

21 The first and most important responsibility of any N.A. group--its "primary  
22 purpose," according to the Fifth Tradition--is "to carry the message to the addict who  
23 still suffers." And the single most important thing a group can do to fulfill that  
24 primary purpose is to conduct meetings that provide an atmosphere in which N.A.  
25 recovery can be effectively shared between addicts. Groups conduct the details of  
26 their meetings in very different ways, but all of them seek the same end: to make  
27 recovery from drug addiction available to any addict in the community who seeks it.

28 As the foundation of the worldwide N.A. service structure, groups have another  
29 responsibility: to develop an understanding of the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve  
30 Concepts for N.A. Service. By doing so, they take part in the continuing evolution  
31 of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, as well as providing for themselves an  
32 understanding of how the highest ideals of our fellowship are to be applied in their  
33 group activities.

34 **How can our group support other N.A. services?**

35 The First Concept of Service says that, ultimately, the N.A. groups bear both the  
36 responsibility and the authority for all the services of the extended N.A. Fellowship.  
37 Each group should send stable, active GSRs to participate in the work of the service  
38 structure on the groups' behalf. And each group should consider how best to  
39 provide the funds the N.A. service structure needs to do its work.



1 Most groups set a little bit of money aside to use in case an emergency arises. But,  
2 oddly enough, groups usually find that too much money in the till causes far more  
3 problems than too little money. See the Eleventh Concept for N.A. Service for  
4 more discussion of this phenomenon.

5 If there's any money left after paying the bills, most groups contribute funds  
6 directly to the area committee, the regional committee, and the National Service  
7 Board. Groups may use a percentage formula to decide how much of their extra  
8 money to send to each of these service units--70% to their area committee, 20% to  
9 the region, and 10% to national services, for example. Your group should decide on  
10 whatever formula seems best to you.

### 11 How can our group better serve our community?

12 By its very existence, the group is already providing a substantial service to the  
13 community. It's providing the support addicts in the community need to reenter the  
14 mainstream of society. But how can a group become more effective in reaching out  
15 to addicts who've not yet found N.A.? There are two general ways in which a group  
16 can better serve its community: through activities coordinated by the group itself,  
17 and through the area service committee (ASC).

18 Some N.A. groups reach out to their communities themselves. This is particularly  
19 the case in small communities, and in areas where Narcotics Anonymous is very  
20 new. An N.A. group in a rural town obviously does not have as many people or as  
21 much money available as an area service committee in a large city, but opportunities  
22 exist nonetheless for carrying the recovery message effectively to others who may be  
23 seeking the solution we've found. If your group needs help in reaching out to the  
24 community, write to the NSO Group Services Department. Ask for their bulletin,  
25 *N.A. Groups in Small Communities*.

26 Most N.A. groups are served by an area committee.<sup>5</sup> Area service committees  
27 coordinate efforts to carry the N.A. message on behalf of all the groups they serve.  
28 Community public information services, telephone contact lines, and panel  
29 presentations to addicts in treatment centers and jails are three ways in which most  
30 area committees carry the message, either directly to the addict who still suffers or  
31 to those who may refer an addict to an N.A. meeting. Your group service  
32 representative can tell you more about how you and your group can more effectively  
33 join in the work of your area service committee. For further information, see the  
34 chapter later in this book on the area service committee.

### 35 How can our group solve its problems?

36 N.A. groups encounter a wide variety of problems: meetings are disrupted;  
37 treatment centers bus in large numbers of clients when the group is ill-prepared to  
38 receive them; the format goes stale; the clarity of our message becomes an issue; the

<sup>5</sup> If you don't know how to contact the nearest area service committee, write to the NSO Group Services Department. They'll be happy to put you in touch.



1 coffee tastes like industrial strength cleanser; the readings at the beginning of the  
2 meeting go on, and on, and on. These are just a few of the problems the average  
3 N.A. group must deal with from time to time. This book doesn't "lay down the law"  
4 on how to deal with these problems. It does point out some effective tools group  
5 members can use in solving their own problems.

6 The best source of solutions for the group's problems, in most cases, is the group  
7 itself. "Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps," our Twelfth Step  
8 says, "we tried . . . to practice these principles in all our affairs." When we  
9 collectively apply the insight received from that spiritual awakening to our group's  
10 problems, we call that *group conscience*. Common sense, open minds, calm  
11 discussion, accurate information, mutual respect, and healthy personal recovery  
12 enable a group to deal effectively with almost anything that comes its way.

13 There are a number of printed resources the group may choose to use in gathering  
14 the information it needs to reach sound decisions. The Basic Text and our step and  
15 tradition book, *It Works: How and Why*, both provide a great deal of information  
16 about how N.A.'s Twelve Traditions can be applied to given situations. The chapter  
17 in this book on the Twelve Concepts for N.A. Service gives in-depth explanations of  
18 the essential ideals underlying service activities in Narcotics Anonymous.  
19 Periodicals such as the national fellowship magazine and the national service  
20 newsletter often have articles addressing problems the group might face. And  
21 bulletins available from the National Service Office deal in detail with a variety of  
22 subjects relating to the group's work.

23 Another source of information the group might tap is the experience of other  
24 groups in its area or region. If the group has a problem and can't come up with its  
25 own solution, it might want to ask its group service representative to share that  
26 problem at the next area service committee meeting. Many ASCs set aside a  
27 portion of every meeting for exactly that purpose. And while the area committee  
28 can't tell a group what to do, it can provide a forum in which groups can share with  
29 one another what's worked for them. Workshops conducted by the regional service  
30 committee provide the same kind of opportunity on a larger scale. For details on  
31 how the area or regional committee can help with group problems, see the chapters  
32 on those committees later in this book.

1 Group services bulletins

2 (available in the U.S. from the National Service Office)

3 *Starting a New N.A. Group*

4 *Conducting a Group Business Meeting*

5 *Addicts with Additional Needs*

6 *N.A. Groups in Small Communities*

7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12 Other publications of group interest

13 (available in the U.S. from the National Service Office)

14 *Narcotics Anonymous*, the Basic Text of recovery.

15 *It Works: How and Why*, essays on N.A.'s Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

16 *Group Treasurer's Workbook*

17 *"Hey! What's the Basket For?"*, a pamphlet on N.A.'s tradition of self-support.

18 *A Guide to Public Information*

19 *The N.A. Way Magazine*, the U.S. national fellowship journal (published monthly).

20 *Fellowship Report*, the U.S. national service newsletter (published quarterly).



## 1 The area service committee

### 2 Introduction

3 "Workhorse" of the service structure--maybe that's the best way to describe the  
4 area service committee. Most of the hands-on work of delivering N.A. services to  
5 the groups and to the community occurs at the area level.

6 N.A. groups support meetings where addicts can share their recovery with one  
7 another. Only minimal organization is necessary to hold those meetings. But  
8 there's lots more that can be done to further the aims of Narcotics Anonymous:

- 9 \* N.A. panel presentations at addiction treatment centers and correctional  
10 facilities can reach addicts particularly in need of what we have to offer.
- 11 \* Public information presentations to schools and community groups, mailings to  
12 addiction treatment professionals, meeting notices in newspapers, and public  
13 service announcements on local radio and television stations can help direct  
14 people to N.A.
- 15 \* A phonenumber service can help addicts seeking recovery find a meeting in their  
16 area, and also provide information about N.A. to interested community  
17 members.
- 18 \* A readily available supply of N.A. books and pamphlets can make it easier for  
19 groups to stock their literature tables.
- 20 \* Social activities can help addicts feel more comfortable in their local N.A.  
21 community, and can increase unity and camaraderie among area members.\*

22 All of these services require a certain degree of organization, the complexity of  
23 which could easily divert N.A. groups from the week-in, week-out task of conducting  
24 Narcotics Anonymous meetings for their members. Most of these services also  
25 require more money and manpower than any single group could possibly muster.  
26 How do groups stay focused on their primary purpose, and still see that these other  
27 services are developed and maintained? They "... create service boards or  
28 committees," in the words of N.A.'s Ninth Tradition, "directly responsible to those  
29 they serve." And the service committee closest to home, the committee best situated  
30 to provide the most direct service to the groups and the community, is the area  
31 service committee.

32 A newly formed area committee will not be able to provide the same level of  
33 service as a longer established committee. That's as it should be, and a new area  
34 service committee should not expect to hit the ground running at full speed. The  
35 development of the full range of area services described in this chapter often takes a  
36 few years. Be patient, and keep plugging; it's worth the effort.

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\* Various handbooks describing these and other local services are available from the National Service Office, including the Hospitals and Institutions Handbook, A Guide to Public Information, A Guide to Phonenumber Services, and the Area Literature Workbook. For further information, see the section titled "Subcommittees" later in this chapter.



1 Just as individual members of N.A. rely upon one another for support, so do area  
2 committees. New committees in particular can draw upon the experience of their  
3 neighbors--whether those neighbors be in the next county or the next country--in  
4 charting a course for local services, and can also draw encouragement from their  
5 neighbors' assurance that, given time, effort, and the application of principles, "it  
6 works." None of us has to do it alone--not in personal recovery, and not in service  
7 either, not any more.

### 8 The area committee and other N.A. services

9 Area service committees are ultimately responsible to the groups they serve.  
10 Narcotics Anonymous groups send GSRs--group service representatives--to serve on  
11 the area committee and its subcommittees. While still maintaining *final*  
12 responsibility and authority for area services, they invest enough *delegated* authority  
13 in their GSRs--and through them, in the area committee--for the necessary work to  
14 get done.

15 N.A. groups also send money to the area committee, money needed to coordinate  
16 panels, maintain phonelines, and conduct public information activities. Through  
17 their contributions of money and manpower, the groups exercise both their  
18 responsibility and their authority for N.A. services.

19 How does the area service committee relate in turn to N.A.'s regional, national,  
20 and international services? In principle, in much the same way as the group relates  
21 to the area committee: through carefully selected representatives, delegated with  
22 the authority necessary for effective service. The specific ways in which all these  
23 elements of the N.A. service structure relate to one another are described in the  
24 N.A. service charter. You'll find the charter in the back of this book.

### 25 Area committee participants

26 There are three groups of participants in most area service committees: GSRs and  
27 their alternates, general officers, and subcommittee chairpersons. The Eighth  
28 Concept for N.A. Service says that "all those entrusted with substantial responsibility  
29 for our services should take part in the decision-making processes affecting those  
30 services." Group service representatives provide input to the area decision-making  
31 process from the "grass roots" level, helping insure that the committee's feet are  
32 planted firmly on the ground. Committee officers and subcommittee chairpersons  
33 "bear substantial responsibility for the fulfillment of area-level services. Their  
34 ongoing growth and experience in carrying out their duties is an invaluable resource  
35 to the area... We ought never allow a base of valuable experience to be created, and  
36 then leave that valuable resource to lay fallow."<sup>1</sup> Each area is responsible to create  
37 its own decision-making plan. Area committees should carefully consider the  
38 Eighth Concept when determining who votes.

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1 See the Eighth Concept for N.A. Service.



## **Group service representatives**

The group service representative (GSR) is the person who links the group with the rest of Narcotics Anonymous. Most groups also elect an alternate GSR who can fill in for the group representative when needed. The GSR takes part on the group's behalf in the area committee and the regional assembly, and brings back information on what's happening in the larger world of N.A. For more information on the GSR's job, see the earlier chapter in this book on the N.A. group.

Basic equipment for group service representatives usually includes copies of *A Guide to Service in Narcotics Anonymous*, area guidelines (if the area has them), and the log of area policy actions (available from the area secretary). Qualifications and terms of service for GSRs are determined by the groups which elect them.

## **General officers**

Most area service committees have six general officers: a chairperson, a vice chairperson, a treasurer, a secretary, and two regional committee members. These individuals are responsible for administering the general affairs of the entire area committee. Because of that, it's important that great care be taken in their selection. A substantial amount of clean time and personal maturity should be the first consideration, along with experience in the steps, traditions, and concepts of service. Our trusted servants should demonstrate the stability and personal sense of direction that serve as an example to others. They should be capable of serving without attempting to govern. The specific amount of clean time required for each office will vary from area to area, according to how long the local N.A. community has been in existence.

Significant area service experience often makes more effective general officers. Experience both as a group service representative and an area subcommittee member is helpful. Recent leadership experience as a subcommittee chairperson will prove invaluable. For more discussion of the role of leadership in N.A. services, see the essay on Concept Six in the Twelve Concepts of Service.

**Chairperson.** The area committee chairperson is responsible for conducting committee meetings, preparing the agenda, and various administrative duties. His primary tools are the rules of order which appear at the end of this book, a firm hand, a calm spirit, and a clear mind. Careful study of *Robert's Rules of Order* will help broaden a chairperson's understanding of how to conduct a well-ordered, productive business meeting.

**Vice chairperson.** The primary responsibility of the area committee vice chairperson is the coordination of the area subcommittees. She keeps in regular touch with the chairpersons of each subcommittee, even attending subcommittee meetings when possible, in order to stay informed of their projects and problems. If disputes arise, within a subcommittee or between subcommittees, she helps find



1 solutions to them. She works closely with subcommittee chairs when they prepare  
2 their annual reports and budget proposals.

3 The vice chairperson is also responsible to conduct area committee meetings in  
4 the chairperson's absence.

5 **Secretary.** If the area committee is the "workhorse of the service structure," then  
6 the area secretary is the "workhorse's workhorse." He handles all the committee's  
7 paperwork, a formidable job. His first responsibility is to take clear, accurate  
8 minutes of area committee meetings, and to distribute those minutes to all  
9 committee participants within a reasonable period of time after each meeting.

10 In the process of keeping the minutes of each meeting, the secretary should  
11 regularly update a log of area policy actions. The log lists motions the committee  
12 has passed regarding the activities of general officers and subcommittees. These  
13 motions should be listed chronologically under a heading for the officer or  
14 subcommittee they affect. The secretary should periodically distribute an updated  
15 log of policy actions to all area committee participants. He should also have copies  
16 of the most recent printing available for new GSRs.

17 Because most secretaries mail minutes to area committee members, they need to  
18 keep an updated list of participants' addresses. With their committee's permission,  
19 they should mail a copy of this list once or twice a year to the National Service  
20 Office. That list will make it possible for the NSO to provide groups,  
21 subcommittees, and committee officers with current information pertinent to their  
22 areas of service, and with timely national service reports.

23 **Treasurer.** The area treasurer's job is critical to the committee's work. As  
24 mentioned in the chapter in this book on the N.A. group, there are certain pitfalls  
25 peculiar to service as an N.A. treasurer. Because of that, it's especially important  
26 that area committees select their treasurers with care. If the committee selects  
27 someone who is not capable of handling the job, then the committee is at least  
28 partly responsible if something goes wrong. It's recommended that areas elect  
29 people to this position who are financially secure, are good at managing their  
30 personal finances, who inspire the trust of the committee, and who have substantial  
31 clean time. Experience in business, accounting, bookkeeping, or as a successful  
32 group treasurer is also very helpful.

33 The treasurer receives contributions from the groups, reimburses officers and  
34 subcommittee chairs for their budgeted expenses, keeps careful records of all  
35 transactions, and reports on the financial condition of the area committee at each of  
36 its meetings. As the administrator of the area's unified general fund, she is also  
37 responsible to prepare an annual budget<sup>2</sup> for the area committee. The *Treasurer's*  
38 *Handbook*, available from the National Service Office, contains a more detailed

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2 See the section later in this chapter, "Area Budgeting."



1 description of the treasurer's job, as well as most of the forms the treasurer will need  
2 to keep her records.

3 Along with other officers, she administers the area's checking account. When at  
4 all possible, group contributions should be made in the form of checks payable to  
5 the area service committee. Wide experience also strongly suggests that area  
6 committees should only use two-signature checks to pay their bills. These strong  
7 suggestions are offered to protect the treasurer from controversy as well as to  
8 protect area funds. Discussions of other considerations relating both to the  
9 treasurer's responsibilities and to area finances appear later in this chapter.

10 **Regional committee members.** Regional committee members are just that:  
11 they serve as the core of the regional service committee, a body which coordinates  
12 service seminars throughout the region, is responsible for the regional convention,  
13 and conducts the regional assembly. The regional committee also serves year 'round  
14 as a contact point between N.A. national and local services. RCMs keep their areas  
15 in touch with the larger world of N.A. by providing information on activities in  
16 neighboring areas, on functions being sponsored by the regional committee, and on  
17 important national service issues. Detailed information on the services provided by  
18 regional committees can be found in the next chapter of this book.

19 Regional committee members serve two-year terms. Some areas have two RCMs  
20 serving at any one time, one who is elected in odd-numbered years, the other in  
21 even-numbered years. This helps regional committees maintain a balance between  
22 experienced members and those just learning the ropes. It also insures that a  
23 regional committee serving only three or four areas will have enough members to be  
24 able to do its work.

### 25 Subcommittees

26 Area subcommittees deliver the direct services of the area committee: H&I, P.I.,  
27 phonelines, activities, and the rest. And much of the agenda of any area committee  
28 meeting is taken up with reports from subcommittee chairpersons and discussion of  
29 subcommittee activities. Most newly-formed area service committees will probably  
30 not be able to support the same wide range of subcommittee services as a longer  
31 established committee. Rather than attempt to set up all their subcommittees at  
32 once, it's recommended that new area committees take their time. Bring  
33 subcommittees on line one at a time, and give a great deal of attention to  
34 developing each subcommittee before bringing on another. *Easy does it.*

35 Since the area committee bears final responsibility for the operations of its  
36 subcommittees, all area committee participants need to be as informed as they can  
37 possibly be about subcommittee activities. Handbooks are available from the  
38 National Service Office for most of the subcommittees listed below. Specific  
39 directions for subcommittees in your area can be found in your log of policy actions,  
40 and (if applicable) in your area guidelines.



1     **Hospitals and institutions** subcommittees conduct panels presenting the  
2     Narcotics Anonymous program to addicts at two different kinds of facilities.  
3     *Treatment panels* are conducted for patients at addiction treatment centers, mental  
4     health facilities, and therapeutic communities. *Correctional panels* are held for jail  
5     and prison inmates. The *Hospitals and Institutions Handbook*, available from your  
6     local H&I subcommittee or by writing the National Service Office, explains more  
7     about how to conduct panels, interact with facility administrators, and organize  
8     subcommittee work. The amount of work your local H&I subcommittee does will  
9     depend on a number of factors: the number of treatment and correctional facilities  
10    in your area, the number of N.A. members in your area interested in H&I service,  
11    and the amount of collective experience in H&I work in your N.A. community.

12    **Public information.** The general mission of your area public information  
13    subcommittee is to inform addicts in the community, and others who might refer  
14    addicts, of the availability of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. Services provided  
15    by P.I. subcommittees vary widely from area to area. The simplest kind of P.I.  
16    project is the production and distribution of fliers throughout the community,  
17    announcing that N.A. is available and that more information can be had either by  
18    calling the local N.A. information phoneline or by attending an N.A. meeting. As  
19    P.I. subcommittees become better developed, they often conduct public meetings  
20    for community members, distribute public service announcements to local radio and  
21    television stations, and respond to public media inquiries. Some P.I. subcommittees  
22    develop separate working groups, called CPC panels (short for *cooperation with the*  
23    *professional community*), to focus especially on the N.A. community's relations with  
24    local treatment professionals. *A Guide to Public Information*, available from your  
25    local P.I. subcommittee or by writing the National Service Office, provides detailed  
26    information on conducting a wide range of projects designed to increase community  
27    awareness of Narcotics Anonymous.

28    Many public information projects serve primarily to encourage people to call the  
29    local phoneline for more information on N.A. Because of the close link between  
30    P.I. and phoneline work, it will often benefit these two subcommittees to cultivate  
31    close relationships with one another. Some phoneline and P.I. subcommittees make  
32    it a standard policy to send members to one another's meetings to better facilitate  
33    communication between the two.

34    The **phoneline** subcommittee maintains a telephone information service for  
35    Narcotics Anonymous that helps addicts and others in the community find us easily  
36    and quickly. Phoneline volunteers often serve as the first point of contact between  
37    the community at large and the N.A. Fellowship. For this reason, it's vital that  
38    careful attention be paid the work of this subcommittee.

39    Phoneline subcommittees in different N.A. communities organize their work in  
40    different ways to meet local needs. In some areas, P.I. and phoneline services are



operated jointly by a single subcommittee. In smaller communities, the phoneline may be as simple as a call forwarding service, connecting callers with N.A. members' home telephones. In the largest metropolitan areas, computerized systems may route incoming calls to the appropriate people and information. For more details on N.A. phonelines, consult *A Guide to Phoneline Services*, available from your local phoneline subcommittee or by writing the National Service Office.

**Literature supply.** One service of an area committee is the maintenance of a stock of N.A. books and pamphlets, available for group purchase. Many groups find they are able to keep a regular supply of literature on their meeting tables if they are able to purchase it easily at their area committee meeting. In some areas, this subcommittee may consist of only one or two people; in others, it may involve as many as half a dozen members who take responsibility for processing group orders, monitoring stock levels, and reordering materials from the local N.A. office or the National Service Office. In order to keep area funds in a single account, most areas ask their treasurers to serve as cashier for literature sales, and to write the checks when new material needs to be purchased to replenish stocks. To help organize the job of processing group orders, tracking inventory, and reordering depleted items, an *Area Literature Workbook* is available from the National Service Office.

**Newsletter.** Some areas form subcommittees which publish local newsletters, listing area and regional events. Some newsletters also run articles on local service activities, and on members' recovery experiences. Because of the highly visible nature of newsletters, the area committee is strongly encouraged to take steps that insure adequate control is maintained over the newsletter's editorial content. A *Handbook for N.A. Newsletters*, available from the National Service Office, provides more information on the work of the newsletter subcommittee.

**Activities.** Dances, picnics, campouts, special speaker meetings--these events are put on by area activities subcommittees. Activities like these can provide a greater sense of community for the local N.A. Fellowship and produce additional area income. It should always be kept in mind, however, that these functions are designed to enhance N.A.'s primary purpose, not to replace group contributions in funding area services. Because most of the arrangements necessary for a local activity depend on the kinds of local facilities available, and the money and manpower the local activities subcommittee has at its disposal, it's not possible to prepare a comprehensive handbook for N.A. activities subcommittees. Your local subcommittee members will have to exercise their creativity to discover the best ways of conducting activities for your N.A. community.

A couple of remarks must be made regarding legalities relevant to N.A. activities. Most activities subcommittees distribute fliers announcing their next event to N.A. groups in the area. If your subcommittee's flier displays one of the N.A. logos--either the stylized initials "N.A." within a circle, or the diamond in a circle--a small



1 circled letter "R" should appear to the right of the logo. This mark shows that the  
2 logo is a registered trademark of Narcotics Anonymous worldwide, and helps  
3 protect the logo from misuse outside the fellowship.

4 *[PRODUCTION NOTE: When setting up galleys for final publication, we will*  
5 *include graphic displays of the two logos and the name "Narcotics Anonymous" with*  
6 *registration marks shown.]*

7 Some activities subcommittees have conducted raffles of one sort or another,  
8 either as separate fundraising efforts or as parts of another activity. It should be  
9 noted that, in many U.S. states and in some other countries, such raffles are illegal.  
10 Activities subcommittees should also consider whether raffles--and especially cash  
11 raffles or lotteries--appeal more to the spirit of self-interest, rather than inspiring  
12 the spirit of voluntary support implicit in our Seventh Tradition.

13 **Outreach** subcommittees serve as the outstretched hand of an established N.A.  
14 community to isolated groups and addicts, particularly in large, rural areas. By  
15 phone, by mail, and by car, they make sure, if at all possible, that no group, no  
16 addict has to go it alone. The subcommittee helps keep geographically isolated  
17 groups and addicts in touch with the mainstream of the N.A. Fellowship.

18 The outreach subcommittee is not the only subcommittee concerned with reaching  
19 out to isolated addicts. Sometimes addicts are isolated by factors other than  
20 geography--social, economic, and cultural factors, for instance. P.I., H&I, and  
21 phonline subcommittees can help an area committee focus additional attention on  
22 the needs of addicts in our own towns who, for one reason or another, have not  
23 found N.A. accessible. Area service committees and their subcommittees need to  
24 do whatever they can to insure that recovery is available to *any* addict who seeks it,  
25 "regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion, or lack of religion." Area  
26 subcommittees engaging in community outreach activities may find help in the NSO  
27 Group Services bulletin, *N.A.: Serving the Community*.

28 **Meeting lists.** Though production of meeting lists does not usually require the  
29 creation of a separate subcommittee, most area committees do have one or two  
30 people who are responsible for printing meeting schedules on a regular basis. In  
31 some areas, this job is handled by one of the committee's general officers; in others,  
32 by one of the regular subcommittees. Meeting lists show days, times, locations, and  
33 other pertinent information for local N.A. meetings. Meeting schedules often show:

- 34 \* whether the meeting is "open" or "closed,"
- 35 \* meeting format (Basic Text study, discussion, etc.),
- 36 \* whether or not smoking is allowed at the meeting place,
- 37 \* additional needs services (wheelchair accessibility, availability of sign-language  
38 interpreter, etc.), and
- 39 \* if the meeting is conducted by a specialized group (for instance, a men's or  
40 women's group).



1 Most area committees have asked themselves, at one time or another, whether a  
 2 particular meeting should be included on the list. The list of six points describing an  
 3 N.A. group, appearing at the beginning of the "Group" chapter in this book, have  
 4 given most such area committees the criteria they've needed in making such a  
 5 decision.

6 Area committees are encouraged to send a copy of their meeting schedule to the  
 7 National Service Office each time the list is updated. Accurate, current lists of  
 8 meetings help NSO maintain an up-to-date directory for use in answering questions  
 9 from around the country.

### 10 Electing officers and subcommittee chairpersons

11 Most area committees hold officer and subcommittee chairperson elections at the  
 12 same time each year. Some area committees use a standard nomination and  
 13 election procedure. Others use another option, what we call the *trusted servant*  
 14 *selection procedure*; you'll find a description of it in an appendix at the end of this  
 15 book.

### 16 Rotation

17 General officers (with the exception of RCMs) and subcommittee chairpersons  
 18 usually serve one-year terms, and generally serve no more than two consecutive  
 19 terms in the same position. This allows for the rotation of a variety of individuals  
 20 through an area's trusted servant positions, providing a diversity of viewpoints and  
 21 talents and a freshness of perspective that would be lacking were these positions to  
 22 be held year after year by the same individuals. The rotation of trusted servants at  
 23 the area level also helps insure that the committee reflects the full range of insight  
 24 available among committee members, preventing the area committee from  
 25 becoming the mere extension of an individual's personality. The practice of rotation  
 26 is founded on this fellowship's belief that service is more important than the servant,  
 27 an extension of our tradition of spiritual anonymity.

28 Area committees maintain continuity in their services by encouraging those who  
 29 have completed terms as general officers and subcommittee chairs to remain active,  
 30 either informally or as individual members of one of the area's subcommittees. By  
 31 balancing the practice of rotation with the kind of experience available from past  
 32 officers, an area committee can partake of the best of both worlds.

### 33 Area committee policy and guidelines

34 One particular word comes to mind regarding area committee policy and  
 35 guidelines: *caution*. Some area committees have found themselves so tangled in  
 36 discussions of service policy and area guidelines--sometimes for months or even  
 37 *years* at a time--that they have been sorely hampered in providing the kinds of  
 38 services they were created to deliver in the first place. Here are a few points to  
 39 consider when entering into policy discussions, points that may keep the confusion  
 40 to a minimum and the committee squarely on track.



1 N.A.'s Twelve Concepts for Service can be of great value in untangling knotty  
2 policy questions; some consider the concepts tailor-made resources for such  
3 discussions. Time invested in studying the Twelve Concepts will repay itself many  
4 times over with the clarity they provide. In particular, the concepts speak to the  
5 subject of delegated authority. For instance, according to the concepts, when groups  
6 want the area committee to perform services on their behalf, they delegate to the  
7 committee sufficient authority for the work to get done. And when the area  
8 committee elects officers and subcommittee chairs, expecting them to perform  
9 particular tasks, the committee also delegates to them the authority to apply their  
10 best judgment to the fulfillment of those tasks. Our trusted servants do not govern;  
11 but they must be given the trust necessary for them to effectively serve. These kinds  
12 of simple, direct principles can be effectively applied to any number of service-  
13 related policy questions.

14 Another tool that can help an area committee find its way out of "the policy maze"  
15 is, simply, a moment's reflection on N.A.'s primary purpose. Unsophisticated as this  
16 may seem, it can be quite effective in solving some pretty complex problems. Area  
17 committees exist primarily to help make N.A. groups more effective in carrying the  
18 recovery message to the still-suffering addict. Area committee services either:

- 19 \* attract addicts to meetings,
- 20 \* provide materials for use in meetings,
- 21 \* conduct activities designed to strengthen meetings, or
- 22 \* perform the administrative functions necessary to do these things.

23 When caught in a conflict for which there seems to be no resolution, an area  
24 committee can stop, call for a moment of silence, and ask itself, "What does this  
25 discussion have to do with carrying the message?"

26 A regularly updated log of area policy actions can be of tremendous help. When  
27 confronted with a policy question, area committees can consult it to see what  
28 decisions have already been made regarding it. The policy log makes it unnecessary  
29 for area committees to rehash the same question over and over and over again.

30 Hopefully, enough tools already exist to provide adequate guidance for the work of  
31 most area committees: this chapter of *A Guide to Service*, the log of area policy  
32 actions, and the Twelve Concepts for N.A. Service. Some areas, though, will want to  
33 develop their own area guidelines, giving specific directions to their general officers  
34 and subcommittees. This will be the case particularly for large metropolitan area  
35 committees, whose subcommittees have substantial responsibilities. It's suggested  
36 that area committees give themselves some time to see what kinds of needs for  
37 guidelines actually exist in their areas before beginning to draft their own. An area  
38 committee equipped with a year or two of entries in the log of policy actions will be  
39 in a better position to see what kind of guidelines ought to be developed than an  
40 area committee trying to write guidelines during the committee's formation. You  
41 can get sample guidelines by writing to the Group Services Department at the



1 National Service Office. Areas who wish to prepare their own guidelines may wish  
2 to appoint an ad hoc committee to adapt those sample guidelines to local needs.

3 It should be remembered that guidelines, rules of order, logs of policy actions, and  
4 similar tools are designed to help keep things simple. If an area committee finds  
5 these tools, instead, making things more complicated, time should be scheduled  
6 during the sharing session to talk about it.

### 7 Area inventory

8 Some area committees set aside one day each year for conducting an area service  
9 inventory. Why? For much the same reason as N.A. members do personal  
10 inventories: to stop, consider their actions and attitudes, and rededicate themselves  
11 to their ideals. The area inventory considers three general topics:

- 12 1. How well has the area committee done this year at serving the *groups*, and how  
13 can it better serve them in the coming year?
- 14 2. How well has the area committee served the larger *community*, and how can the  
15 committee better serve the community at large?
- 16 3. How well has the area committee done at supporting N.A.'s *regional, national,*  
17 *and international services*? How can the area provide better support for these  
18 services?

19 A substantial amount of preparation is required on everyone's part for an effective  
20 area inventory. GSRs, officers, and subcommittees must take a fearless, searching  
21 look at their work over the last year, and come to the inventory session prepared to  
22 review their roles on the committee. GSRs should spend time with their groups  
23 considering what needs might be addressed by the area committee in the next year,  
24 and come to the inventory session with ideas in hand. Officers and subcommittees  
25 should take the time to look at the make-up of the larger community they live in,  
26 ask themselves how N.A. could be more effective in reaching out to that community,  
27 and be prepared to share their thoughts with the entire area committee. And  
28 perhaps most importantly, all area committee participants should make an extra  
29 effort to prepare themselves spiritually to make the most of the area inventory  
30 meeting. Because of the great differences among area committees in size, local  
31 custom, and specific services, each area committee will have to craft an inventory  
32 agenda suitable to its own activities and needs.

33 Having conducted an area inventory, many committees will come to the conclusion  
34 that certain aspects of their work need to be altered. It should be remembered that  
35 there is no one model for area service committees that will be completely  
36 appropriate to all areas. A number of factors will affect the kinds of services an  
37 area committee offers, and the ways in which it offers them: community size,  
38 number of meetings, availability of experienced N.A. members, geography, local  
39 laws and customs, and other such considerations. What works in a major  
40 metropolitan setting probably won't work at all in a rural community. What *will*  
41 work--in any setting--is an effort to maintain sensitivity to the needs of the groups



1 and the community. Each area committee will, to a great degree, have to find its  
2 own way of effectively providing services to those groups, and to the larger  
3 community of which those groups are a part.

4 Versatility is called for. Area committees in small or mid-sized communities may  
5 see fit to combine the work of some subcommittees, while well-established  
6 metropolitan committees might find themselves with a large number of highly  
7 specialized subcommittees, each with its own specific focus. Given reasonable  
8 consideration, an area committee should not be afraid to configure its services in  
9 whatever way it sees fit, so that it may help carry the N.A. message in the most  
10 effective way possible.

### 11 Participation

12 Participation is a critical factor in delivering services at any level. Lagging  
13 subcommittee participation and poor attendance at area committee meetings are  
14 problems all area committees must address from time to time, particularly during  
15 the annual inventory session. Sometimes the solutions to these problems are simple  
16 and quick; more often, they require deliberate, extended attention.

17 An area lacking support for the work of its subcommittees, or with little  
18 participation by GSRs at area committee meetings, probably has one or more of the  
19 four following problems:

- 20 \* Either the area is new or sparsely populated;
- 21 \* Groups and members in the area are not sufficiently informed concerning the  
22 role of the area committee and the kind of work being done by its  
23 subcommittees;
- 24 \* The area is not providing services that attract members' support;
- 25 \* Or, members are simply not interested in supporting area services.

26 Of these four general types of problems, the first is generally the easiest to  
27 address. If a new area is lacking in members available for service, the passage of  
28 time alone may well provide a solution; the section later in this chapter, "Creating  
29 New Area Committees," discusses this further. And if an area committee serves a  
30 sparsely populated territory, there are ways in which it can structure its services to  
31 match its circumstances. Write to the NSO Group Services Department and ask for  
32 their bulletin, *N.A. Groups in Small Communities*.

33 If one of the remaining three is actually the case, an area committee can  
34 determine which one it is by sending current committee participants out to the  
35 groups--especially to those groups who are not sending GSRs--and simply ask them  
36 what *they* think. If local N.A. members are unaware of the kind of work being done  
37 by the area committee, an ad hoc committee can be appointed to organize a service  
38 workshop. Such workshops, creatively conducted, can present groups and members  
39 with options for service of which they'd previously been unaware, and pique their  
40 interest in becoming a part of those services.



1 If the area committee is not currently providing services that local members are  
 2 interested in supporting, such a workshop could serve as a combination open forum  
 3 and brainstorming session. Drawing from the experience and insight of everyone  
 4 who cares to be involved in the discussion, such a forum could pinpoint  
 5 inadequacies in current services and develop directions for future services that have  
 6 the support of a broad spectrum of the local N.A. community.

7 Some N.A. groups, no matter how effective and inviting area services might be,  
 8 will not be interested in taking part. They may feel that their experienced members  
 9 have more than enough to do with just supporting their recovery meetings (which is,  
 10 after all, the group's primary purpose). N.A. groups *are* responsible to support N.A.  
 11 services--but they are responsible first to conduct N.A. meetings. Our tradition of  
 12 group autonomy gives them the right to decide for themselves whether or not they  
 13 are able or willing to extend their support to the area committee. And the area  
 14 committee has a responsibility to serve *all* the groups in its service territory,  
 15 regardless of whether or not a particular group has chosen to participate in the work  
 16 of the committee.

#### 17 Area budgeting

18 A budget helps an area committee be a better steward of the funds it receives.  
 19 The basic process for developing an area committee budget is pretty simple. On a  
 20 quarterly or annual basis, general officers and subcommittee chairpersons present  
 21 their plans for the next work period, along with estimates of how much that work  
 22 will cost. By comparing the projected work plans and expenses with income reports  
 23 from the last work period, the area committee will have a pretty good idea of how  
 24 feasible the budget proposal is, and can vote to either adopt it or alter it.

#### 25 Other funding considerations

26 Narcotics Anonymous groups directly support area, regional, and national services  
 27 from money left over after covering their own expenses. Area committees, after  
 28 setting a little aside to account for unforeseen expenses, are encouraged to do the  
 29 same with their surplus funds, providing much-needed financial support for N.A.'s  
 30 regional and national services.

31 Area committees generally maintain all their funds in a single account for which  
 32 the area treasurer is responsible. When an officer or subcommittee chairperson  
 33 needs money for a budgeted project, they go to the treasurer at the area committee  
 34 meeting and ask him to write them a check. The same general procedure can be  
 35 applied by area committees that do not develop quarterly or annual budgets, except  
 36 that specific spending proposals must be presented by officers and subcommittees to  
 37 the full area committee before funds can be drawn from the treasury. The officer or  
 38 subcommittee chair turns receipts for their expenses in to the treasurer, along with  
 39 whatever money may be left over from their advance. If the project produces  
 40 income, that money is also returned to the treasurer, to be deposited back into the



1 general fund. A single general fund helps insure that the area committee is able to  
2 maintain final responsibility for the activities of its subcommittees. It also  
3 eliminates the need for each subcommittee to duplicate the treasurer's job.

4 Most areas periodically struggle with the question of fundraising versus group  
5 contributions for support of their work. Activities subcommittees usually plan to  
6 have their projects come out in the black (as opposed to coming out in the red), so  
7 that unexpected expenses can be covered. As a result, most activities do in fact  
8 generate some excess funds. The time and energy that goes into putting on activities  
9 is contributed by N.A. members in the spirit of our Seventh Tradition, so plowing  
10 the extra money generated by those activities back into the area committee's general  
11 fund is not inappropriate. But the primary purpose of an area activity is to promote  
12 unity within the N.A. community, not specifically to raise funds for the area  
13 committee.

14 Some area service committees come to depend too greatly on extra income from  
15 activities. These area committees then sometimes tend to ignore the expressed  
16 needs of the groups. An area committee that finds itself in such a situation must ask  
17 itself whether it has become more a fundraising agency than a group of trusted  
18 servants devoted to the delivery of Narcotics Anonymous services. Once the  
19 question has been asked, and the committee has engaged in an honest evaluation of  
20 its activities, the area committee can correct its course and return to its work.

### 21 The monthly meeting

22 The monthly area service committee meeting, open to any N.A. member, is the  
23 event at which the work of the subcommittees and the well-being of the groups all  
24 comes into focus. Officers, group service representatives, and subcommittee  
25 chairpersons give reports on what's happened since last the committee met. The  
26 sharing session gives all participants the opportunity to engage in wide-open  
27 discussion of issues raised by the reports. After the sharing session, the committee is  
28 ready to go straight to business, considering questions about the work of its officers  
29 and subcommittees. The sample agenda which appears at the end of this book can  
30 be used by most area committees as a tool for organizing the monthly meeting. And  
31 the short-form rules of order, also appearing at the end of this book, can help the  
32 business of the committee be processed in an orderly, respectful fashion.

### 33 The sharing session

34 The sharing session has two types of agenda: discussion of group problems, and  
35 consideration of philosophical issues relating to the goals of the area committee.  
36 Agenda items for the sharing session usually come up during reports from group  
37 service representatives, general officers, and subcommittee chairpersons. After  
38 each report is given, anyone on the area committee--including the person who gave  
39 the report--can ask the committee chairperson to place a particular question on the  
40 sharing session agenda. Items discussed during the sharing session often relate to



1 motions considered later in the committee meeting; but no voting takes place during  
2 the sharing session itself.

3 The Fifth Concept of Service talks about group conscience as "the spiritual means  
4 by which a loving God influences our decisions," and carefully distinguishes the  
5 spiritual discipline of group conscience from the decision-making mechanism.  
6 Perhaps nowhere is that distinction more evident than in the sharing session. In the  
7 sharing session, committee participants consult their individual consciences--and  
8 their Higher Power--on the broad issues at hand, share the insights resulting from  
9 that, and together develop a collective direction for the committee. In the business  
10 portion of the meeting, those same participants try to express that group conscience  
11 in the specific form of motions and votes. But committee motions cannot be an  
12 effective expression of the spiritual aims of our fellowship without the free exchange  
13 necessary for the development of a group conscience having first occurred. The  
14 sharing session is designed specifically to facilitate that occurrence.

15 For area committees who've not conducted sharing sessions as part of their regular  
16 format, some trial and error may be required before the session runs smoothly. But  
17 with a minimum of "traffic direction" from the chairperson, and the mutual respect  
18 and common courtesy of committee members, most areas will find that a little time  
19 in the sharing session can save a lot of time on business motions.

20 **On group problems.** Groups are encouraged to seek their own solutions to the  
21 challenges they face--and most of the time, they find them. But sometimes a group  
22 faces a problem that is beyond any of its members' experience. When that occurs,  
23 groups can send their GSRs to the area committee sharing session with a request for  
24 help.

25 That help usually comes in the form of the shared experience of other groups in  
26 dealing with the same kinds of questions. Since N.A. groups are entirely self-  
27 governing, only rarely can an area committee motion deal in any appropriate way  
28 with a group problem. The sharing of committee members' experience with  
29 solutions to similar problems in their groups may, however, provide a GSR with just  
30 the information or insight her group has been lacking.

31 **On committee goals.** The sharing session is also a time when the area  
32 committee can focus on *issues* rather than *motions*. Although the rules of common  
33 courtesy are in place, Robert's Rules are not. It's an informal time in which ideas  
34 can be freely shared, ideas which can help the committee be more effective in  
35 fulfilling its mission.

36 How does it work? Well, let's say the public information subcommittee's report  
37 suggested in general terms the need to be more energetic in reaching out to drug  
38 abuse treatment professionals in the area. During the sharing session, a variety of  
39 issues pertaining to P.I.'s suggestion can be discussed: What's the difference  
40 between "energetic" P.I. work and outright promotion of N.A.? Beyond that, to what



1 extent, if any, does cooperation with the professional community border on the  
2 endorsement of outside enterprises? And is *this* where the area wants to spend  
3 more money, or are there other projects that have been on the back burner a while,  
4 projects more deserving of immediate attention? No motions, no calling of the  
5 question, no parliamentary inquiries--just a free exchange of ideas among N.A.  
6 trusted servants, producing greater understanding of directions in which area  
7 services might head.

8 The sharing session is the appropriate time for members to exercise N.A.'s Ninth  
9 and Tenth Concepts. These concepts remind us that our committees are  
10 responsible to listen to *all* participants' voices with respect, and that all members  
11 have a right to be heard. Minority opinions on committee business can be expressed  
12 freely and clearly in the sharing session. And problems potentially calling for the  
13 redress of a personal grievance on the part of a committee member can be aired in  
14 an open, supportive atmosphere.

#### 15 Area committees in rural areas

16 In many rural towns, even after many years of existence, only one N.A. group may  
17 have formed. The distances between those towns may make it impractical for an  
18 area committee to conduct any common services for its groups. The relatively few  
19 members available to serve on a rural area committee may also make it difficult to  
20 conduct the kinds of activities a metropolitan area committee conducts. It's more  
21 common in such areas for the individual groups to administer what direct services  
22 there are in each community. An NSO Group Services bulletin, *N.A. Groups in*  
23 *Small Communities*, provides more information on how individual groups in rural  
24 settings can carry the recovery message to their community.

25 Rural area committee meetings often become mostly a sharing session. Group  
26 service representatives discuss their groups' progress with one another, and provide  
27 solutions to each others' problems. Some rural areas conduct joint activities--  
28 dances, speaker meetings, and workshops--to promote unity and enhance their  
29 groups' effectiveness. Many rural committees appoint individual members as  
30 resource contacts for particular fields of service, whose job it is to gather  
31 information on H&I, P.I., or phonelines for other groups to use. Most rural groups  
32 find it easier to order literature by mail, either from the nearest local service center  
33 or directly from the National Service Office. Rural area committee operations are  
34 simple, but the strength gathered from the unity provided is just as important there  
35 as it is in the metropolitan setting.

#### 36 Learning days, workshops

37 Learning days and workshops sponsored by area subcommittees are valuable tools  
38 for increasing area members' awareness of the work conducted by the area  
39 committee. For most fields of service--H&I, P.I., phonelines, etc.--complete  
40 descriptions of how to conduct local learning days and workshops are provided in



the respective service handbooks. Many area committees also conduct topical workshops on the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts for N.A. Service, sponsorship, and other subjects. If experience in a particular subject or field of service is low in your area, you can ask your regional committee to conduct a workshop to help strengthen understanding of that branch of service in your area.

Group service workshops, conducted by an area ad hoc committee, can help focus trusted servants of local groups on their primary purpose and the tools available for fulfilling it. Some group service workshops begin with members of the area committee sharing their experience in different group service positions, using the chapter on the N.A. group from *A Guide to Service* as a reference. The workshop can then be opened for questions from those attending, or discussion. Others break up into small groups to review different topics relevant to group services--meeting formats, for example, relations with the community, or conducting group business meetings. However they're conducted, a group service workshop is one direct way for the members of an area committee to share their experience with the groups they serve.

### Growing area committees

Areas grow and change. As time passes, some area committees find themselves with so many GSRs attending that it's almost impossible to conduct orderly monthly meetings. Others start to ask whether an area committee that serves many towns, established when N.A. was young, might not be more effective if broken up into a number of committees separately serving those towns. Still others experience internal conflicts, and wonder whether it wouldn't be easier just to separate the camps into their own area service committees. Regardless of where the question comes from, it's important that the answer follow only upon careful consideration of the group conscience of the entire area committee. There's much to consider in dividing an area committee.

If, after careful discussion in the sharing session, an area committee feels it must divide in order to provide effective services, it may want to ask the regional committee for guidance on how to go about it. The regional committee can coordinate a workshop to help the current area committee facilitate a smooth transition to multiple area services. Following the regional workshop, an area may appoint an ad hoc committee to develop a timetable for division. That timetable should be carefully considered by all parties, including the groups belonging to the current area. An area partition conducted in this way insures that the new areas begin their service with adequate resources, and on good terms with their neighbors.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For information on how to coordinate common local-services among a number of area committees in a metropolitan community, write to the NSO Group Services Department for their bulletin, Metropolitan Services.



1 Creating new area committees

2 Each year, as Narcotics Anonymous grows, groups are formed where no area  
3 service structure exists. The first priority of such groups is, of course, getting the  
4 group on its feet and developing stable meetings. In larger communities, a stable  
5 group often sprouts new groups and new meetings. At some point, those groups  
6 begin to think about creating a common committee for themselves--what we call an  
7 area service committee--to serve their mutual needs and to make it easier for the  
8 groups to pool their efforts in reaching out to the community. Groups considering  
9 the formation of a new area committee can tap the experience of their regional  
10 service committee, or, if no regional service committee exists, their national service  
11 office. New area committees forming in countries without a national service office  
12 may wish to contact the World Service Office for assistance.

13 Some new area committees will try to start up all at once with a full complement  
14 of general officers and subcommittees, monthly dances, a convention, and a local  
15 service center. Area committees which try to do this may sorely disappoint  
16 themselves. Remember: *first things first*.

17 Area committees are formed, first, to strengthen the groups that create them.  
18 Before an area committee can start serving the community, the groups which make  
19 up that area must be on solid footing. An area committee just beginning its service  
20 journey may exist primarily as an environment in which groups can share their  
21 strengths and solutions with one another.

22 The new area committee might also consider focusing a considerable amount of its  
23 attention on the study of N.A.'s Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts for Service.  
24 An area committee that takes care to establish a firm foundation *before* attempting  
25 to erect even a simple service structure will not be likely to regret the time taken in  
26 doing so.

27 Once the new area committee has established a pattern of facilitating  
28 communication among the groups, and of nurturing an understanding among its  
29 members of the principles behind N.A. service, it will be ready to begin providing  
30 simple direct services to the groups and to the community. Fellowship gatherings--  
31 learning forums, cooperative speaker meetings, dances, picnics, and the like--require  
32 a minimum of organization, yet can go a long way toward increasing unity among  
33 the groups in the area. Area meeting lists made available through the groups, and  
34 simple N.A. posters distributed in the community, can help direct more addicts  
35 seeking recovery to more of an area's meetings. Direct services don't have to be  
36 grand, complicated, expensive enterprises in order to be effective in promoting unity  
37 and carrying the recovery message. New area committees will do well to start with  
38 simple projects.

39 There are a few more things a new area committee will want to keep in mind, both  
40 in its initial formation and in its first few years of operation. First is the need to  
41 share the workload--the need to make sure that no one person is burdened with



1 most of the area committee's work. Not all N.A. members in the area will be  
2 interested in serving on the area committee; most, in fact, will be satisfied to fulfill  
3 their primary commitment to their groups, leaving the area service committee to  
4 others. But those who *are* involved in the area committee should see to it that  
5 committee work is divided evenly among them. A committee supported primarily  
6 by one member is too vulnerable to collapse should that lone individual begin to  
7 suffer from "trusted servant burnout" or become unavailable for some other reason.  
8 If only a few members are involved in an area committee, they should consider  
9 keeping their workload light rather than overreaching their capacity.

10 A second consideration for new area committees is the idea of making a  
11 commitment right from the start to meet regularly--once a month, if possible. Most  
12 new committees will be occupying themselves primarily with developing means of  
13 supporting member-groups and the study of N.A. traditions and concepts of service.  
14 Those agenda items require regular, concentrated attention as the area committee  
15 establishes its foundation. A commitment to meeting regularly, right from the start,  
16 helps keep that need in the foreground.

17 Finally, the new area committee will greatly benefit from continued contact with  
18 its regional service committee, with neighboring area committees, and in some cases  
19 with groups and service committees in neighboring countries. Just as individual  
20 addicts don't often make it on their own, area committees can greatly benefit from  
21 the shared experience, strength, and hope of those who've gone before them. None  
22 of us has to do it alone--not any more.

1 Group services bulletins

2 (available in the U.S. from the National Service Office)

3 *N.A.: Serving the Community*

4 *N.A. Groups in Small Communities*

5 *Metropolitan Services*

9 Other publications of interest to area committees

10 (available in the U.S. from the National Service Office)

11 *Treasurer's Handbook*

12 *Hospitals and Institutions Handbook*

13 *A Guide to Public Information*

14 *A Guide to Phoneline Service*

15 *Area Literature Workbook*

16 *Handbook for N.A. Newsletters*

17 *It Works: How and Why*



## The regional service committee

### Introduction

The regional committee serves as a kind of pivot point in Narcotics Anonymous service. It is the junction between N.A.'s national and local services.

The regional committee is a service *resource* group rather than a service *delivery* organization. It is composed primarily of trusted servants elected by the areas which have joined to form the region. Those trusted servants are called *regional committee members* (or RCMs), and they represent the region's most important resource: its collective experience.

RCMs are elected on the basis of their knowledge and background in area service, their familiarity with the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts for N.A. Service, and their personal maturity. The regional committee pools that experience, insight, and character to create a service resource for all the areas to tap. Through discussion of current area affairs and consideration of our principles, the RCMs develop the kind of understanding among themselves necessary to conduct service seminars for the groups and areas in the region. Those seminars enhance the entire region's ability to carry the recovery message.

Reports on national service affairs given at regional committee meetings provide information that keeps areas and groups current on issues affecting the fellowship nationwide. Discussion between the RCMs and the conference delegate of those reports provide the National Service Board with feedback from the fellowship it serves.

Although the regional committee is made up primarily of RCMs, the region's National Service Conference delegate, and alternate delegate are also seated on the committee as full participants. Some committees seat other members from time to time as well, usually selected on the basis of special skills or background especially relevant to the committee's work. Such members are sometimes seated for a year or two at a time, with full rights of participation, but more often are asked on board specifically to help with a particular project.

### How the regional committee works

Since the regional service committee is primarily a service resource group rather than a service delivery organization, it usually has no need for standing subcommittees. The kind of work it does is best performed by the whole committee, or by ad hoc committees set up to conduct special projects. Direct N.A. services--phonelines, hospital and institution panels, public information work, and such--are more effectively administered at the area level rather than by regional committees. Area subcommittees are closer both to the groups and to the community, and thus are in a better position to assess local needs and determine the most efficient means of meeting those needs.



1     Though regional committees generally do not establish standing subcommittees,  
2     there are no absolute rules preventing them from doing so. In some regions it will  
3     be impractical, for a variety of reasons, for individual area committees to administer  
4     some kinds of direct service operations. Under such circumstances, a region may  
5     want to consider establishing a subcommittee to meet the specific need in question.

6     Regional committees try not to create unnecessary distinctions among their  
7     members. The regional committee does not elect a separate body of officers.  
8     Instead, each year it selects from among current RCMs individuals who act as  
9     committee chairperson, recording secretary, and treasurer. Those individuals  
10    continue to serve primarily as RCMs. To further emphasize the secondary nature of  
11    an RCM's service as a committee officer, some regions allow RCMs to serve only  
12    one term as officers.

### 13   Regional committee members

14    Regional committee members are part of a service resource team. The local  
15    Narcotics Anonymous community depends on them to be well-versed in N.A.  
16    service practices and principles. RCMs should be closely acquainted with the  
17    Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts, the fundamentals of service in our  
18    fellowship. Familiarity with all published service manuals and bulletins puts the  
19    resources of the whole fellowship at the RCM's fingertips.

20    The RCM's primary responsibility lies in his service as a participant in the regional  
21    committee, rather than as a member of the area committee which elects him. Yet in  
22    order for him to effectively fulfill his role on the regional committee, a good portion  
23    of his service time must be spent at area committee meetings and with other area  
24    committee members. The RCM should carefully study the reports from his own  
25    area's groups, officers, and subcommittee chairs, so that he can pass on his area's  
26    experience to others at the regional meeting. He will also serve as a more effective  
27    contact between his area and the regional committee if he takes time to talk  
28    personally with other area participants. That way, he can get a better idea of what  
29    kinds of needs and concerns the regional committee should address.

30    The regional committee member also plays a critical role in the N.A. national  
31    service model. He serves as the communication link between the groups and the  
32    National Service Board. His report to the regional committee on the welfare of the  
33    groups and the area committee he serves gives the National Service Conference  
34    delegate a better idea of where national service energies could best be concentrated.  
35    The RCM's participation in discussions of national service affairs at regional  
36    committee meetings lends perspective to the delegate's interaction with the trustees  
37    (as members of the National Service Board are known). The RCM's active  
38    participation also helps keep group service representatives in his area fully informed  
39    of National Service Board activities. And without an informed body of GSRs, the  
40    national service structure could easily find itself crippled.



1 Regional resource assignments

2 The regional committee pools the service experience of the groups and areas it  
3 serves, making it possible for all of them to tap the region's collective resources.  
4 Rather than establishing separate subcommittees to pool particular kinds of area  
5 experience, regional committees make *resource assignments* to RCMs who are not  
6 already serving as committee officers. Under such an arrangement, one regional  
7 committee member takes on the responsibility of being the best informed person he  
8 can be regarding public information work, or hospitals and institutions service, or  
9 phonelines organization.

10 The regional resource person makes it his job to know the manuals and bulletins  
11 on his resource subject, available from the National Service Office, backwards and  
12 forwards. Though by no means an "authority" or "director," he does take the time to  
13 keep in regular touch with the chairpersons of corresponding area subcommittees,  
14 familiarizing himself with their projects, making them aware of available resources,  
15 and trying to help them untangle problems their subcommittees have not been able  
16 to effectively address.

17 In turn, if an area subcommittee has a particular need, it can contact the regional  
18 resource person for help, or raise the issue at an informal sharing session with the  
19 regional resource person and trusted servants from other areas. Many regional  
20 resource persons conduct such sharing sessions from time to time, bringing together  
21 the members of the various area subcommittees to discuss subjects related to their  
22 particular branch of service.

23 Conference delegate

24 The National Service Conference delegate serves as the primary contact between  
25 N.A.'s national services and the local N.A. community. On the one hand, the  
26 delegate provides information on current national and international projects in his  
27 report to the regional committee. On the other, based on his discussions with  
28 regional committee members, he offers a "grass roots" perspective to the work of the  
29 National Service Board, and particularly to the efforts of the trustee committee to  
30 which he is assigned as a delegate review panel member. Each year during his two-  
31 year term, he attends the National Service Conference--as an active participant in  
32 his own right, and not solely as the region's advocate.

33 What the Sixth Concept of Service says about our leaders in general applies  
34 especially to the conference delegate: "Leadership qualities are highly valued, and  
35 should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants." The National  
36 Service Conference operates with the understanding that conference delegates are  
37 among the most experienced and knowledgeable people each region has to offer,  
38 and the regional committee relies upon them to exhibit these same qualities at  
39 home. Delegates need to have a thorough understanding of the Twelve Concepts,  
40 the Twelve Traditions, and the service structure, as well as detailed knowledge of  
41 activities and issues in the groups and areas which make up their region. They are



1 called upon for vigorous service from all directions; they must be fit to answer the  
2 call.

3 From time to time, the National Service Board asks conference delegates for their  
4 advice. At such times, the delegate *may* respond to the trustees' request himself. In  
5 matters of wide concern, however, he may feel he needs to hear broader discussion  
6 before he can responsibly reply. Then he may ask the regional committee to discuss  
7 the subject with him in its sharing session. With that foundation in the region's  
8 group conscience, he may feel more confident that the response he offers to the  
9 trustees is a well-considered one.

10 The conference delegate works closely with the *alternate delegate* from the region.  
11 Like the conference delegate, the alternate is a full participant in the regional  
12 service committee. These two trusted servants make up a team of those within the  
13 regional committee who are most knowledgeable of national service affairs. The  
14 delegate often consults with the alternate, asking for different perspectives and  
15 seeking to involve the alternate in helping carry the workload. The alternate  
16 delegate is a full participant in the National Service Conference only in the event of  
17 the primary delegate's absence at the conference annual meeting. However, he may  
18 be asked to participate as a member of one of the delegate review panels attached  
19 to a trustee committee. He attends regional committee meetings, the regional  
20 assembly, and the annual conference meeting, offering support where he can and  
21 learning his way while he's at it. At the end of his two-year term, he will very likely  
22 be the region's most promising candidate for full delegate service.

### 23 The sharing session

24 The regional service committee meets to form a consensus among its members  
25 concerning the service needs of the groups and areas composing the region, as well  
26 as the needs of the fellowship nationwide. Following reports from the RCMs and  
27 the conference delegate, much of the region's meeting time is spent in a sharing  
28 session.

29 The regional committee's sharing session begins with discussion of challenges and  
30 innovations disclosed in the RCMs' area reports. If a subcommittee of one of the  
31 areas has taken a new tack in approaching a particular job, the RCMs may want to  
32 spend time discussing it so that they can share that experience with their own area  
33 committees. And if one of the areas has had a problem it's not been able to solve by  
34 itself, its RCM can ask other regional committee members to talk with him about  
35 the experience of their areas.

36 Sometimes solutions can be found in one of the N.A. service handbooks. At other  
37 times, the question is not of *procedure* but of *principle*. Then the sharing session  
38 focuses specifically on the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts for N.A.  
39 Service, trying to see how the simplicity of those principles might clarify an  
40 otherwise confusing situation.



1 The sharing session can also be a time for discussion of national service issues  
 2 raised in the conference delegate's report. This opportunity for the conference  
 3 delegate to consult with the RCMs on questions relating to the work of the National  
 4 Service Board is crucial to his effectiveness. This portion of the sharing session also  
 5 helps prepare RCMs for the annual regional assembly, an event sponsored by the  
 6 regional committee which brings the region's group service representatives together  
 7 to review topics of importance in national service. Maintaining the fluency of  
 8 regional committee members in national service issues is doubly important,  
 9 considering that new conference delegates and alternate delegates are drawn from  
 10 among them.

### 11 Service seminars

12 In the sharing session, the regional committee has focused most of its attention on  
 13 group and area needs. With that perspective, the committee is in a good position to  
 14 consider its agenda of service seminars--what kinds of seminars are needed, and  
 15 where. A pattern may have emerged in the sharing session, showing the need to  
 16 further develop a general understanding of public information work among all N.A.  
 17 members in the region. An area forming a brand new hospitals and institutions  
 18 subcommittee might have asked the regional committee to conduct a seminar for  
 19 prospective members of the subcommittee. Special support may be needed for an  
 20 area committee in transition, either a large committee considering division or a  
 21 brand new committee serving a new area. Or perhaps it's time for another group  
 22 services seminar. Topics for service seminars can range all the way from taxes and  
 23 liability insurance for service committees to sponsorship and Twelfth Step work--  
 24 anything useful to the areas and groups served by the region. Whatever the needs,  
 25 the regional committee takes a look at its calendar, considers its resources, and goes  
 26 over plans for upcoming seminars.

27 Regional service seminars are usually organized by the entire regional committee,  
 28 although sometimes a small ad hoc committee of RCMs and others will be formed  
 29 to conduct one specific seminar. When planning a seminar, the regional committee  
 30 should consult with the area service committee responsible for the territory in which  
 31 the event is to be held. This is especially important in regions where area  
 32 committees assume the responsibility of making arrangements for seminar facilities,  
 33 leaving the regional committee free to focus its attention on developing an agenda  
 34 for the seminar. If the seminar is being organized primarily to serve one particular  
 35 area, the regional committee should involve some members of that area committee  
 36 in developing plans for the seminar.

37 The regional committee can draw upon a number of resources in developing  
 38 service seminars. Committee members may know of a similar seminar that has been  
 39 conducted in a neighboring region. A phone call to a member of that regional  
 40 committee, and perhaps an invitation to attend, can make additional experience  
 41 available to the seminar. Some support for regional seminars is available from the



1 National Service Office. A wide range of bulletins and handbooks covering specific  
2 topics and fields of service are available. The office may also be able to provide  
3 descriptions of seminars other regions have conducted on similar subjects, or other  
4 useful materials. For further information, contact the National Service Office.

### 5 Conventions

6 Annual fellowship conventions are conducted in many regions. Conventions are  
7 celebrations of recovery and unity, a time when all N.A. members in the region can  
8 gather to share their experience, strength, and hope with one another. The task of  
9 organizing a regional convention, however, is a major undertaking. Some regional  
10 committees create separate convention committees to handle the job. Such a  
11 committee is responsible to the region establishing it, and gives a thorough report of  
12 its activity at each regional committee meeting. However, once a "seed fund"  
13 sufficient for starting the convention committee off on its work is set up, it's  
14 recommended that regional committee money and convention committee money be  
15 accounted for separately. Regional *conventions* are then made self-supporting from  
16 their own income; and, by depending solely on group and area contributions,  
17 regional *committees* preserve the financial bond between themselves and the areas  
18 and groups they serve.

19 Some regional committees create service corporations especially for the purpose  
20 of handling the oftentimes complex financial and legal obligations of regional  
21 conventions. In regions which have established regional service centers,  
22 responsibility for convention organizing is sometimes assigned to the board of  
23 directors of the service center corporation. Some information on local service  
24 center operations is given in the next chapter in this book. For further information  
25 on regional convention corporations, contact the National Service Office.

26 More detailed information on regional conventions can be found in the  
27 *Convention Handbook*, available from the National Service Office. The NSO also  
28 conducts convention workshops several times a year, bringing local convention  
29 volunteers together with members of the national convention team to review the  
30 latest information on N.A. convention planning. Additional consultation is  
31 sometimes available, for new convention committees and corporations as well as for  
32 those experiencing difficulties. For further information, contact the National  
33 Service Office.

### 34 Activities

35 Some regions conduct activities in addition to service seminars and the regional  
36 convention--dances, special speaker meetings, campouts, retreats, and the like.  
37 Regionwide activities can foster a broader sense of unity among members of all the  
38 groups and areas served by the regional committee. Some of the same topics that  
39 came up for discussion under area activities apply to regional activities as well; see  
40 the chapter on area service committees earlier in this book for more detail.



## Regional finances

Money is handled at the regional level in pretty much the same way as it's managed by area treasurers. The regional committee as a whole considers the cost for each of its functions--space rental for committee meetings, service seminars, activities, and mailings--and authorizes expenditures to cover those costs.<sup>1</sup> After setting aside a small portion of any surplus funds they may have (to cover the expenses of the annual regional assembly), most regions contribute whatever money may be left over to the National Service Board. Two-signature checks and a single general fund help the regional treasurer manage contributions and the reimbursement of expenses in a responsible way. Additional suggestions for handling the regional treasury can be found in the *Treasurer's Handbook*, available from the National Service Office.

## The regional assembly

One weekend a year--usually two or three months prior to the annual National Service Conference meeting--the regional committee organizes an assembly of group service representatives. At the assembly they discuss important national service matters, including those likely to come before the National Service Conference. The annual regional assembly puts representatives of N.A. groups together with their conference delegate for the purpose of developing a collective conscience concerning those issues affecting Narcotics Anonymous nationwide. That direct contact between the groups and the conference helps keep our national services attuned to the needs of our fellowship. Without the kind of primary foundation provided by the regional assemblies, it would be much more difficult for the National Service Conference to effectively address the concerns of the N.A. groups. Regional assemblies are a key ingredient in the maintenance of N.A.'s First Concept for Service.<sup>2</sup>

Members of the regional committee conduct a number of individual discussion panels throughout the course of the weekend. Each panel considers a specific field of national service, paying special attention to those subjects scheduled to be addressed at the annual conference. When the panels have finished their work, all the GSRs and RCMs gather in a large group to hear reports from spokespersons selected by each panel. A sharing session follows the reports, in which all participants are encouraged to speak their mind.

## Electing conference delegates

An additional expression of the First Concept occurs at the regional assembly when group service representatives take part in electing the region's conference

<sup>1</sup> Some regional committees offer assistance in covering their members' travel expenses related to attending committee meetings. Conference delegate and alternate delegate expenses related to attending the NSC are considered conference expenses, not regional expenses, and are covered from the National Service Board general fund.

<sup>2</sup> The First Concept: "The responsibility and authority for N.A. services rests ultimately with the N.A. groups."



1 delegate and alternate delegate. Since the delegate and the alternate serve  
2 concurrent two-year terms, elections usually take place every other year, except  
3 when a delegate or alternate resigns in mid-term.

4 Because the alternate has spent two years becoming familiar with the National  
5 Service Conference, she is usually affirmed to replace the outgoing delegate, and the  
6 assembly only has to elect a new alternate delegate to replace her. If she's not  
7 affirmed as conference delegate, however, the assembly elects a new delegate and a  
8 new alternate at the same time. Under such circumstances, special care should be  
9 taken to select a conference delegate who is already fairly familiar with current  
10 national service affairs.

11 The delegate and alternate are chosen from among the current regional  
12 committee members according to the trusted servant selection procedure (described  
13 in an appendix at the end of this book). All RCMs, except those who make it known  
14 that they're unavailable for such service, are automatically considered candidates.  
15 Group service representatives and regional committee members are all eligible to  
16 take part in the selection process. If both conference delegate and alternate  
17 delegate are to be selected at the same assembly, separate balloting rounds are used  
18 to select each of them.

### 19 Rotation of delegates

20 Just as area committees generally do not select the same individual to serve more  
21 than two consecutive terms as RCM, so do most regional assemblies observe the  
22 practice of trusted servant rotation when selecting conference delegates, for many of  
23 the same reasons. The freshness of perspective ensured by rotation serves both the  
24 region and the conference well. By periodically replacing delegates, the region is  
25 assured of being provided with varying views of national service affairs. And a  
26 conference that constantly sees new faces, hears new voices, and is encountered with  
27 new outlooks on national service work will be better able to meet the challenges of  
28 each new year. Once their terms are done, past conference delegates are often  
29 asked to serve both the region and the National Service Board in various capacities.  
30 Their experience lends stability to the services of both bodies.

### 31 Dividing regions

32 Regions are formed to facilitate communication among member-areas and  
33 between the local N.A. community and national services, to pool local service  
34 experience, and to provide learning opportunities for areas and groups. If  
35 developments within an existing region occur which make it impossible for the  
36 regional committee to continue providing those services effectively, then it's time for  
37 the entire committee--and the groups and areas belonging to the region--to consider  
38 making changes in the way the region is organized.

39 The process used for considering those changes needs to be a thorough and  
40 thoughtful one. The idea of dividing the region may come initially from any of a



1 number of sources, for any of a number of particular reasons. The possible reasons  
2 for dividing regions are as diverse as the regions themselves, and their comparative  
3 merits can only be decided by the groups and areas belonging to each individual  
4 region considering a division.

5 Wherever it comes from, whatever the reason, the idea should be discussed first by  
6 the entire regional committee. In evaluating the possibility of a regional split, many  
7 regions consult with the NSC Conference Admissions Panel to find out how other  
8 regions have handled this question. If a division appears to the RCMs to be  
9 warranted, the next step should be a discussion including all the region's group  
10 service representatives at the regional assembly. If, following that discussion, a  
11 broad consensus for division appears, the assembly can appoint an ad hoc  
12 committee to develop a specific plan. Once the plan is reviewed by the regional  
13 committee, it should be presented to each area service committee in the region for  
14 full discussion. Ratification of the plan then takes place at the next regional  
15 assembly. By using this method, a region can be assured that a division plan truly  
16 meets the needs of all the groups and areas it serves.



## **The trusted servant selection procedure**

Though by no means the officially sanctioned method for selecting trusted servants in N.A., what we call the *trusted servant selection procedure* is one option you may wish to consider. It is a non-political, non-competitive alternative to the nomination and election procedure that most N.A. members are familiar with. It can be applied with equal effectiveness in almost any setting where someone must be selected to serve. It works like this: Everyone who meets basic eligibility requirements (as laid out by whatever service body is conducting the process) is considered nominated for the open position, except those who make it known that they're not available for the job. The individual nominee, not the group, determines whether he meets those eligibility requirements. Written ballots are cast, then collected and tallied. If no one person receives a majority on the first ballot, a second written vote is taken between the two people who received the most votes the first time.



## 1 Sample meeting format

2 *This sample meeting format is just that: a sample. It's designed so that, if your group*  
 3 *chooses, you can use it exactly as it is. However, you're encouraged to change it and*  
 4 *rearrange it according to the needs of your group.*

6 **Leader:** *Welcome members to the meeting and introduce yourself. Hello, my name is*  
 7 *\_\_\_\_\_, and I'm an addict. Welcome to this meeting of the \_\_\_\_\_ Group of*  
 8 *Narcotics Anonymous. I'd like to open this meeting with a moment of silence*  
 9 *(15 to 20 seconds) for the addict who still suffers, followed by the Serenity*  
 10 *Prayer.*

11 *We like to extend a special welcome to newcomers. Is there anyone attending their*  
 12 *first N.A. meeting? Would you like to introduce yourselves? Is there anyone*  
 13 *attending this meeting for the first time?*

14 *If this is a closed meeting:* This is a "closed" Narcotics Anonymous meeting. "Closed"  
 15 N.A. meetings are only for drug addicts or those who think they might have a  
 16 drug problem. Closed meetings provide an atmosphere in which drug addicts  
 17 can feel more certain that those attending will be able to identify with them. If  
 18 there are any non-addicts visiting, we'd like to thank you for your interest in  
 19 Narcotics Anonymous. Our local N.A. meeting list on the literature table will  
 20 direct you to an N.A. meeting in our community that is open to non-addicts.

21 *If this is an open meeting:* This is an "open" Narcotics Anonymous meeting, which  
 22 means that non-addict friends, relatives, and community members are welcome  
 23 to attend. Other N.A. meetings may be closed to non-addicts. We'd like to  
 24 welcome our visitors, and thank you for your interest in Narcotics Anonymous.  
 25 We ask that you respect the primary purpose of this meeting, which is to provide  
 26 a place where drug addicts can share their recovery with one another. **Leader:**  
 27 *You may want to read an anonymity statement at the beginning of an open*  
 28 *meeting. A sample anonymity statement appears immediately following this*  
 29 *sample meeting format.*

30 *For the protection of our group as well as the meeting facility, we ask that no drugs*  
 31 *or drug paraphernalia be on your person at the meeting.*

32 *It costs nothing to belong to Narcotics Anonymous. You are a member when you*  
 33 *say you are.*

34 **Leader:** *Recognize those with various periods of clean time. Keytags, chips, or*  
 35 *medallions may be given out.*

36 *Select people before the meeting to read one or more of the following short pieces.*

37 *These readings can be found either in our Little White Booklet or the group reading*  
 38 *cards.*

39 a) Who is an addict?

40 b) What is the N.A. program?

1 c) Why are we here?

2 d) How it works.

3 e) The Twelve Traditions.

4 **Leader:** *Ask for topic or step for discussion, and call on people to share, or introduce*  
5 *the speaker.*

6 **Leader:** *About ten minutes before the meeting is scheduled to close, announce:* That's  
7 *all the time we have tonight. I'd like to thank you for attending.*

8 **Leader:** *Begin passing the basket around, announcing:* The basket being passed  
9 *around is one way of practicing our Seventh Tradition, which says, "Every N.A.*  
10 *group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions." The*  
11 *money we collect pays for rent, literature, and refreshments. Through*  
12 *contributions from this group to various N.A. service committees, it also helps*  
13 *carry the N.A. message of recovery in our area and around the world.*

14 *If this is an "open" meeting:* I'd like once again to thank our non-addict guests for  
15 *the interest they've shown in Narcotics Anonymous. Because of N.A.'s tradition*  
16 *of self-support, this group asks that you not contribute any money when the*  
17 *basket passes your way.*

18 Does the group service representative have any announcements? *(The GSR will*  
19 *make announcements of upcoming group activities and N.A. events in the area.)*

20 *After the basket has come back around:* Again, thanks for coming tonight. Would all  
21 *those who care to, join in a circle to close? Various groups close in different ways:*  
22 *with prayers, brief recitations from N.A. literature, etc.*

23 Keep coming back--it works!  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29

### 30 **Sample anonymity statement**

31 N.A.'s Eleventh Tradition reads, "Our public relations policy is based on attraction  
32 rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of  
33 press, radio, and films." We ask everyone attending to respect our members'  
34 anonymity by not using full-face photographs, last names, or personal details when  
35 describing this meeting to others.



## Starting a new N.A. group--a checklist

## NSO GROUP SERVICES DEPARTMENT BULLETIN

So, you're starting a new group. Most of what you need to know about N.A. groups and Narcotics Anonymous meetings can be found in the booklet, *The N.A. Group*. We suggest that you and your fellow group members read through the booklet together, so that you're all thoroughly familiar with the issues other N.A. groups have faced in trying to carry the message. This bulletin is a checklist of the things most groups feel are important to line up before opening their first meeting.

— **Get in touch with the nearest service committee.**

An area committee meeting is the ideal place for announcing your intention to start a new group. There, you can gather experience from representatives of other groups in the area, and learn of the services available to your group when you need them.

— **Obtain a meeting place.** *The N.A. Group* booklet already discusses many of the things to be considered about obtaining meeting space. Here are some of the things to be nailed down when opening a new meeting:

\* **Where?** \_\_\_\_\_

\* **When?** Day, time, and duration of the meeting. \_\_\_\_\_

\* **How much?** What is the facility charging for rent? \_\_\_\_\_

Is that realistic, keeping in mind the number of people you can expect to attend the meeting? \_\_\_\_\_

When is the rent due? \_\_\_\_\_

\* **What does the facility require?** No smoking? *Absolutely* no litter? Sweep, mop after the meeting? Close windows, lock doors? \_\_\_\_\_

\* **Can your group's mail be sent to the facility address?** Will they set up a box where you can pick up newsletters and announcements mailed to your group? \_\_\_\_\_

— **Name your group.** A few things you may want to consider are: Is the name recovery oriented? Does the name create the impression that the group is affiliated with the facility in which it holds its meetings? \_\_\_\_\_

— **What group trusted servants are needed? What does the group expect those people to do?** The booklet on *The N.A. Group* gives descriptions of a number of group officers. Make sure all group members agree on what they want *their* officers to do.

— **What kind of meeting format will you use?** *The N.A. Group* describes a number of format variations commonly used in our fellowship. Which format—or combination of formats—does your group want to use? \_\_\_\_\_

— **Will this be a "closed" N.A. meeting? Or an "open" meeting?** For explanation of these two different types of meetings, see *The N.A. Group*. \_\_\_\_\_

— **What kinds of N.A. literature does your group want to stock?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

— **What kinds of refreshments should be purchased?** \_\_\_\_\_

— **Have you registered your group with the National Service Office?** The secretary of your area service committee? On the reverse, you'll find an NSO group registration form. By filling it out and mailing it in, you'll be insuring that your group is kept in touch with N.A. as a whole in this country through the national service newsletter and all other regular NSO group mailings.

Also available from NSO:  
Group Treasurers Workbook  
N.A. Literature Sample Kit  
Local service contact information

For more information, write or call:  
Group Services Department  
National Service Office  
P.O. Box 9999  
Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999  
(818) 780-3951

1 **Sample area committee agenda**

---

2  
3 The typical agenda for an area committee meeting often looks something like this.  
4 The committee fills it in each month with more specific topics under each heading.

5 **Call to order**

- 6 \* reading of the serenity prayer  
7 \* roll call  
8 \* recognition of new groups  
9 \* reading of last month's minutes (additions or corrections are made)

10 **Reports**

- 11 \* general officers' reports  
12 \* group reports  
13 \* special (ad hoc) committee reports  
14 \* standing subcommittee reports  
15 1. H&I  
16 2. P.I.  
17 3. phonedines  
18 4. activities  
19 5. literature supply  
20 6. outreach

21 **Sharing session**

22 General discussion of group concerns and issues raised by reports.

23 **Old business**

24 Motions are in order regarding business left over from previous meetings. (Some  
25 areas also conduct their elections of trusted servants during this portion of the  
26 agenda.)

27 **New business**

28 Motions are in order regarding business that is new to this committee.

29 **Adjournment**



## 1 Sample rules of order

2 On the following pages you'll find a simple set of rules of order. They have been  
 3 adapted from Robert's Rules of Order, which in turn are based on the Rules of the U.S.  
 4 House of Representatives. These sample rules differ in some details from Robert's  
 5 Rules; to cover such differences, your committee may wish to make a blanket decision  
 6 to accept these rules as authoritative. In countries where Robert's Rules of Order are  
 7 not in common use, and where some other body of parliamentary rules is more  
 8 commonly used by deliberative assemblies, service committees may want to consider  
 9 adapting these rules so that they conform to those commonly in use in their countries.

### 10 Decorum statement

11 Meetings will be conducted according to these rules of order, adapted from  
 12 Robert's Rules of Order. This time-honored system for conducting business is the  
 13 clearest way yet devised for getting a maximum amount of business done in a  
 14 minimum of time, and to get it done regardless of the degree of disagreement  
 15 among the participants. By following these rules of order, we strive to be sure that  
 16 we are making decisions on the basis of principle, rather than personality. In  
 17 keeping with that spirit, we encourage all participants to become familiar with these  
 18 rules of order, and to conduct themselves accordingly. Once the meeting is under  
 19 way, only one matter will be before the committee at any one time, and no other  
 20 discussion is in order. Please respect the chairperson's right to be in control of the  
 21 process of this meeting, so that you can have maximum benefit of its *content*.

### 22 Debate, limits

23 Debate is the formal exchange of views on an idea. Unless otherwise specified,  
 24 debate on both main motions and parliamentary motions is usually limited to two or  
 25 three *pro's* and two or three *con's* (speakers for and against the motion). Speakers  
 26 addressing a motion in debate usually have two or three minutes in which to speak  
 27 their minds.

### 28 Motions

29 There are two basic types of motions. It is important to understand the difference  
 30 between them. The two kinds of motions are *main motions* and *parliamentary*  
 31 *motions*.

### 32 Main motions

33 A *motion* is a statement of an idea a committee member wants the committee to  
 34 put into practice. After being recognized by the chairperson, the member says, "I  
 35 move that such-and-such be done by (this committee, one of its subcommittees, or a  
 36 particular individual) under these terms." The person making the motion then  
 37 speaks briefly about why he feels the idea is important--this is called speaking to the  
 38 *intent* of a motion. Because the exact wording of all motions must be recorded in the



minutes, the maker of the motion should write it out whenever possible. This is especially important for complicated or long motions.

Every motion requires a *second*--the backing of another person who also wants the idea put into practice, or who simply wants to see further discussion of the idea take place. The chairperson will ask, after one person makes a motion, whether the motion has a second. The seconder simply raises his hand and, when recognized by the chair, says, "I second that." If nobody seconds a motion, the chair will say, "The motion dies for lack of a second." This means that the idea will not be discussed any further because there is not enough interest in it. The committee then moves on to other business.

Once a motion has been made, the chairperson may rule it *out of order*. A motion may be ruled out of order for any one of a number of reasons: the motion goes against the committee's standing policy, clearly contradicts one of the Twelve Concepts for N.A. Service or Twelve Traditions, or is inappropriate at the particular point in the meeting at which it is made. *Robert's Rules of Order* can be consulted for more specific examples of motions which are out of order at any given time.

Any member of the committee who wishes to challenge a ruling made by the chairperson may *appeal* that ruling, as described below. If no appeal is made, or if the decision of the chair is upheld, the committee moves on to other business.

#### **Parliamentary motions**

*Parliamentary motions* can be best understood as "sub-motions" that are made during debate on a main motion, which affect in some way the main motion. There are many more of these than space and practicality permits us to include here, but a few that seem to be the most practical are discussed here.

##### **1. Motion to AMEND.**

**SIMPLE majority required.**

**Is DEBATABLE.**

This is perhaps the most commonly used parliamentary motion. During debate on a motion, if a member feels that the motion would benefit from a change in its language, she can say, "*I move to amend* the motion..." and suggest specific language changes in the motion. If an amendment has been moved and seconded, debate then turns to the merits of the amendment. When debate on the amendment is exhausted, the body votes on the amendment. Then, debate resumes on the merits of the main motion (as amended, if the amendment carried). When debate is exhausted on the merits of the main motion itself, a vote is taken and the body moves on to the next item of business.



1 **2. Motion to call the PREVIOUS QUESTION.**  
2 **TWO-THIRDS majority required.**  
3 **Is NOT DEBATABLE.**

4 For our purposes, this may be the most important parliamentary motion. Use it  
5 often. This motion is made by a member saying, "*I call for the question,*" or "*I move*  
6 *the previous question.*" It is another way of saying, "I move that debate stops right  
7 now and that we vote immediately." This is one of many that can be used to prevent  
8 needless, lengthy debate once an issue is clearly understood. This motion is in order  
9 after any speaker is finished. You need not be called on. The chair must recognize  
10 you when you make this motion, and a vote must be taken with no debate. If two-  
11 thirds of the body feels that no more debate is necessary, then it is time to vote and  
12 move on.

13 One point worth making about this motion is that you must be careful not to  
14 squelch debate before an issue has been thoroughly aired. Be sure to vote "no" to  
15 this motion if you are still confused about the issue, or if you are unsure of how to  
16 vote. By allowing debate to continue, we avoid half-baked decisions about half-  
17 understood questions. On the other hand, the liberal use of this motion makes it  
18 unnecessary for the chair to be heavy-handed in stopping discussion, because he  
19 knows you will stop it soon enough.

20 **3. Motion to TABLE.**  
21 **SIMPLE majority required.**  
22 **Is NOT DEBATABLE.**

23 One way of disposing of a motion that is not ready for a vote is to *table* it. This is  
24 done by saying, "*I move we table this motion until such-and-such a date/meeting.*"  
25 This motion is not debatable; if it is made and seconded, it is voted on immediately.  
26 If it fails, debate continues on the motion itself. If it passes, the committee moves  
27 on to its next item of business. The tabled motion will be included in the committee  
28 agenda on the date specified.

29 **4. Motion to REMOVE FROM THE TABLE.**  
30 **SIMPLE majority required.**  
31 **Is DEBATABLE.**

32 A motion that has been tabled can be taken up before the time originally set in the  
33 motion to table. This is done by saying, "I move to remove from the table the  
34 motion to such-and-such." If this motion passes, the motion that had been tabled  
35 becomes the main motion, and debate on it begins again. If the motion to remove  
36 from the table fails, the body moves on to the next item of business.

1   **5. Motion to REFER.**  
2       **SIMPLE majority required.**  
3       **Is NOT DEBATABLE.**

4       Sometimes the committee does not have enough information to make an  
5       immediate decision on a motion. Such motions can be removed from debate and  
6       sent to one of the subcommittees for further study; or, it can be sent to a special ad  
7       hoc committee.\* This can be done by a member saying, "*I move to refer the motion*  
8       *to the such-and-such subcommittee.*" If the motion to refer passes, the committee  
9       moves on to its next item of business. The subcommittee to which the motion is  
10      assigned will take it up at its next meeting. The subcommittee will report back on  
11      what it has come up with at the next meeting of the full committee.

12   **6. Motions to RECONSIDER or RESCIND.**  
13       **TWO-THIRDS majority required.**  
14       **Is DEBATABLE.**

15      Sometimes a member feels that a motion the committee has passed will prove  
16      harmful. He can move to either *reconsider* (reopen for debate and voting) or *rescind*  
17      (void the effect of) the original motion.

18      There are a few conditions on motions to reconsider or rescind:

- 19      \* The motion must have been passed in either the last month's or the current  
20         meeting.
- 21      \* The member making the motion must have information on the issue that was not  
22         available in the original debate on the motion.
- 23      \* The member must have been with the winning side in the original vote.

24      These limits are placed to protect the committee from having to reconsider again  
25      and again the motions it passes, while still allowing it to examine potentially harmful  
26      situations it has created inadvertently. If any of these requirements are not met, the  
27      chairperson will declare the motion out of order.

28   **7. Request to WITHDRAW A MOTION.**  
29       **UNANIMOUS CONSENT required.**  
30       **Is NOT DEBATABLE.**

31      Once a motion is made and the debate begins, the maker of the motion may move  
32      to withdraw it. The chair asks if there are any objections. If there is even one  
33      objection, the motion stays on the floor, and debate resumes. If there are no  
34      objections, the motion is withdrawn and the body moves on.

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\* See below, the section on ad hoc committees under the title, "Committees," for further information.



1 **8. Offering a SUBSTITUTE MOTION.**  
2 **SIMPLE majority required.**  
3 **Is DEBATABLE.**

4 A *substitute motion* is the same thing as an amendment to a main motion. The  
5 only difference is that it is offered to entirely replace the original idea, instead of  
6 merely revising a portion of it. It is handled in the same way an amendment is  
7 handled.

8 **9. Motion to ADJOURN.**  
9 **TWO-THIRDS majority required.**  
10 **Is NOT DEBATABLE.**

11 Any voting member may move to adjourn at any time. This motion is always in  
12 order, is not debatable, and requires two-thirds to pass. Obviously frivolous motions  
13 to adjourn may be ruled out of order. After all business is finished, the chair may  
14 declare the meeting adjourned without a motion.

15 **Other procedures**

16 In addition to parliamentary motions, there are other ways in which members may  
17 alter or clarify the proceedings. Here are a few of the most common.

18 **Order of the day.** If a committee member feels that business is going too far  
19 astray from the original agenda, he can help get things back on track. He says, "*I*  
20 *call for the order of the day.*" This means, "I move that the chair bring us back on  
21 track and conduct the meeting according to procedure, adhering to the agenda."  
22 This does not require a second, and is not debatable. Regardless of what else is  
23 going on at the time, it requires an immediate vote.

24 **Point of order.** If a committee member feels that something that is happening is  
25 in violation of the rules of order, and if the chairperson does not appear likely to do  
26 anything about it, the member can raise a point of order. She need not raise her  
27 hand, but may simply say out loud, "*Point of order.*" The chairperson then says,  
28 "What is your point of order?" The member then states how she feels the rules of  
29 order are being violated. If the chair agrees with her judgement, he says "Your  
30 point is well taken," and the situation is cleared up. If he does not agree, he says,  
31 "Overruled." This decision, as all others, can be appealed.

32 **Point of appeal.** Any time the chair makes a decision, that decision may be  
33 appealed. Any voting member who wishes to appeal a decision may do so by saying,  
34 "*I appeal the decision of the chair.*" The chair then says, "On what grounds?" The  
35 member states his reasons. The chairperson then speaks briefly to the intent of his  
36 ruling. A vote is taken, requiring a two-thirds majority to overrule the decision of  
37 the chair.



1 **Parliamentary inquiry.** If a committee member wants to do something, but  
2 doesn't know how it fits in with the rules of order, all he has to do is ask. Without  
3 raising his hand, he simply says out loud, "*Point of parliamentary inquiry.*" The  
4 chairperson must immediately recognize him, so that he may ask how to do such-  
5 and-such. The chair will answer the question, possibly by referring to a specific  
6 passage in this document in his explanation.

7 **Point of personal privilege.** If the smoke is getting too heavy for you, the air  
8 conditioner or heater is on too high, or if there is too much noise in the room, you  
9 can ask that something be done about it. You may interrupt the proceedings by  
10 saying, "*Point of personal privilege*" The chair must recognize you immediately. State  
11 the situation, and ask that it be corrected. The chair will request that whatever  
12 needs to be done, and is reasonable, be done to help make you comfortable.

### 13 Voting procedures

14 There are several ways that votes can be taken. Two of them are described here.

15 **Show of hands.** This is the most commonly used method. With rare exceptions,  
16 votes will be taken by a request from the chair to see the hands of all in favor, then  
17 all opposed, then all abstaining on each issue. The chair should ask for all three  
18 categories every time, just to be thorough, even when the majority is overwhelming.

19 **Roll call vote.** Sometimes when a vote is taken on a controversial issue, or a very  
20 important one, members may call for a roll call vote. This request must be honored,  
21 whether or not it is made after a show-of-hands vote was already taken. The  
22 secretary calls out the group or position titles of all the voting members and asks for  
23 their voice vote, yes or no. Each person's vote is then recorded in the minutes by  
24 position title or group.

### 25 Committees

26 There are two kinds of subcommittees: standing subcommittees and ad hoc  
27 committees.

28 **Standing subcommittees.** These are the regular subcommittees of the area,  
29 such as H&I and P.I. The basic descriptions of these, and how they relate to the  
30 committee as a whole, are detailed elsewhere under the descriptions of each level of  
31 service.

32 **Special (ad hoc) committees.** Sometimes a question or special project needs to  
33 be referred to a subcommittee, but the question does not fit in with the focus of any  
34 existing subcommittee. In such cases, the motion can be made to *refer to a special*  
35 *committee.* These special committees are set up for specific purposes, and they have  
36 limited lives--when they have finished their jobs and have reported back, they are  
37 disbanded. A motion to refer to a special committee should specify what the  
38 committee's purpose will be. The chair may then appoint an ad hoc committee in its



1 entirety, or he may appoint just the ad hoc committee chairperson, who will put the  
2 committee together himself later.

3  
4 \*\*\*\*\*

5  
6 These are only brief notes on rules of order for business meetings. For further  
7 information, see *Robert's Rules of Order--Newly Revised*.





## **The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous.**

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.
2. 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.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or N.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. N.A., as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.



## TWELVE CONCEPTS FOR N.A. SERVICE

1. The responsibility and authority for N.A. services rests ultimately with the N.A. groups.
2. The N.A. groups delegate to the service structure the responsibility to develop and maintain services on behalf of N.A. as a whole.
3. Each service responsibility must be matched by a carefully defined service authority.
4. For each responsibility, a single point of decision and accountability should be clearly defined.
5. Group conscience is the spiritual means by which a loving God influences our decisions.
6. Leadership qualities are highly valued, and should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.
7. Our service boards and committees ought to be given the ability to determine which decisions fall within their own defined authority and which will be brought back to the delegating body for further consultation.
8. All those entrusted with substantial responsibility for our services should take part in the decision-making processes affecting those services.
9. Our service boards and committees have the responsibility to carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes.
10. Any member of our service structure may, without fear of reprisal, make petition for the redress of a personal grievance.
11. At all levels, the N.A. service structure should take care never to accumulate funds beyond those sufficient to operate.
12. Our structure at all levels is one of service, never of government. No one element of our service structure should have unqualified authority over any other.