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**TEMPORARY  
WORKING GUIDE  
TO OUR  
SERVICE STRUCTURE**

## 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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**THE PURPOSE AND FUNCTION OF THE SERVICE  
UNITS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS**

1. The primary purpose of an N.A. MEMBER is to stay clean a day at a time and carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers by working with others.

2. The primary purpose of an N.A. GROUP is to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers by providing a setting for identification, and a healthy atmosphere for recovery, where addicts can come for help if they have a desire to stop using.

3. The purpose of an AREA SERVICE COMMITTEE is to be supportive of its areas and groups and their primary purpose, by associating a group with other groups locally, and by helping a group deal with its day-to-day situations and needs.

4. The purpose of a REGIONAL SERVICE COMMITTEE is to be supportive to its areas and groups and their primary purpose, by linking together the areas and groups within a region, by helping areas and groups deal with their basic situations and needs, and by encouraging the growth of the Fellowship.

5. The purpose of a WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE is to be supportive of the Fellowship as a whole, and to define and take action according to the group conscience of Narcotics Anonymous.

6. The purpose of a WORLD SERVICE OFFICE, our main service center, is to carry out the directives of the World Service Conference in matters that relate to communications and information for the Fellowship of N.A., its services, groups and members. The World Service Office achieves this purpose by maintaining correspondence with N.A. groups and service committees, by printing and distributing WSC-approved literature, and by maintaining the archives and files of Narcotics Anonymous.

7. The purpose of a BOARD OF TRUSTEES, who act as guardians of the Twelve Traditions, is to ensure the continuation and growth of N.A. by seeking new and better ways to carry the message to the addict who still suffers, by seeking to ensure the maintenance of the Twelve Traditions, and by dealing with those things, both within and outside the Fellowship, which affect its continuation and growth.

### **MEMBER**

The front line, so to speak, of N.A. service is an individual N.A. member. Any addict can be a member—the only requirement is a desire to stop using. The services that each of us provides are the most important in N.A. It is a member who carries our message of recovery and works with others. Without an active membership there would be no need for the rest of this service structure. There would be no N.A.

The benefits of membership are clear to us all: a drug-free life, the chance to grow, friendship, and freedom. However, membership is not without its responsibilities. It is the responsibility of all members to maintain their personal recovery. Also, it is the responsibility of each of us to share freely our experience, strength and hope with an addict who still suffers, and work to ensure that what was freely given to us remains available to the newcomer and old-timer alike.

The gathering together of two or more member addicts for the purpose of learning how to live a drug-free life by practicing the principles of N.A. constitutes an N.A. meeting. When such a meeting is held regularly, it can become a group.

### **GROUP**

An N.A. group is any meeting which meets regularly at a specified place and time, providing that it follows the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (has no outside affiliations and receives no outside financial

support). To facilitate communications and unity, and to better serve N.A. as a whole, groups should register with the World Service Office of Narcotics Anonymous. The group is the second level of our N.A. service structure.

The primary purpose of an N.A. group is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. However, it also provides to all members the chance to express ourselves and to hear the experiences of other members who are learning how to live a better life.

Groups hold two basic types of meetings: Those which are open to the general public and those closed to the public (for addicts only). Meetings vary widely in format from group to group. Some are participation meetings, some speaker, some question and answer, some topic discussion, and some have a combination of these formats.

Despite the type of format a group uses in its meetings, the function of a group is always the same: to provide a suitable and reliable environment for personal recovery and to promote such recovery.

A group has proven to be the most successful vehicle for Twelfth Step work. After sharing one's personal experience, strength and hope, the most valuable thing a member can do is to bring prospective new members (addicts) to a group meeting. In this way, a group meeting becomes a place where newcomers know they can come for help. Often the first thing that can open the doors of recovery for addicts is the recognition of themselves in others. A group provides a setting in which the newcomer can find this identification by hearing a number of recovering addicts, rather than just one or two.

The group is the level at which we first find some of the day-to-day business of N.A. being taken care of. There is rent to pay, literature to buy and distribute, refreshments to be provided, a meeting hall to be kept clean, a time schedule to follow, announcements to be made and other things to be done for the maintenance of a group. A group should stay in contact with other groups in its local area and with the rest of N.A., so it can find out about activities, learn of new groups opening up, get new literature, and find



out what's happening in N.A. This can best be accomplished by a number of groups in an area creating an area service committee (ASC). This will be further discussed later in this manual. This is also the first level at which Fellowship funds are handled, and the correct use of this money is essential for the preservation of a group. It is at a group level that the principle of the trusted servant comes into being: "Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern." The officers of a group are elected by a majority vote of the group conscience. They are: (A) a secretary, (B) a treasurer, (C) the group service representative, (D) the group service representative-alternate. These trusted servants are the nucleus of the steering committee. The steering committee is made up of those people who regularly attend, support a group and attend the business meetings.

#### **A. Group Secretary**

A secretary is responsible for the day-to-day functions of a group. It is his or her responsibility to assure that the group meeting takes place when and where it is supposed to. The secretary selects a leader for each meeting, makes sure the coffee and refreshments are ready, arranges for group business meetings, arranges for the celebrations of "birthdays," makes sure that the meeting hall is left in proper order, and answers all correspondence. This job is important because without a good secretary a group has little chance of surviving and providing an atmosphere of recovery.

#### **B. Group Treasurer**

A treasurer of an N.A. group is responsible for the funds which come into a group from the collection, and for the handling and distribution of these funds. The money collected in our meetings must be carefully budgeted. There are numerous expenses necessary for running a group. The treasurer keeps an accurate record of all the group's financial transactions, maintains meeting log books, maintains a group

bank account, and distributes money to pay the rent, purchase literature, provide refreshments, buy supplies, and cover the cost of any miscellaneous expenses a group incurs. In order to maintain our Fellowship and freedom, monies which come from a group's collections and member's contributions must always be used to further our primary purpose. A group must first support itself.

After paying its bills, any remaining funds should be placed in a group bank account, accumulating a reserve adequate to run a group for one month. After this "prudent reserve" has been established, excess funds should be diverted to the area service committee. In cases where no ASC exists, send this balance to your regional service committee (RSC). If no RSC exists, send this balance to the WSC Treasurer. One of the biggest problems we have faced has been the misuse of a group's money. This abuse severely limits what the N.A. Fellowship can offer to recovering addicts. A Treasurer has a grave responsibility, and much thought should be given to selecting a member to perform this function. (Also see the *Treasurer's Handbook*.)

As a general guide we have found that the treasurer and secretary are most successful if they have certain assets necessary for the performance of their responsibilities. These qualifications include:

1. The willingness and desire to serve;
2. We suggest a minimum of six (6) months continuous abstinence from all drugs;
3. Knowledge of the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions;
4. Active participation in the group they are to serve.

The two remaining trusted servants of an N.A. group are a group service representative (GSR) and a GSR-Alt. Because the roles of the GSR and GSR-Alt. are so important to the success of an N.A. group, these two trusted servants will be discussed in greater detail in the next section of the manual.

A group secretary and a treasurer serve for a period of one year, after which time they are

succeeded by another member who has been elected by the group. The use of any drug while serving as an officer constitutes an automatic resignation of that office.

NOTE: One of the responsibilities of officers of a group is to train other group members to replace them. A group can be strengthened by new officers who are prepared to take over the responsibilities of those they replace. Continuity of service can be aided by staggering the election of trusted servants and overlapping the terms of service. For example a secretary might be elected in November to begin serving in January, and the treasurer elected in March can begin serving in May. This would always allow a group to have representation from experienced officers. Remember: Choose your trusted servants well. It is you whom they will be serving.

### **C. Group Service Representative and GSR-Alternate**

A group service representative (GSR) is first in line of communication between a group and Narcotics Anonymous as a whole. They are the links that bind the groups together in the performance of our primary purpose. It is their responsibility to keep a group informed and to express a group's conscience in all matters. In other words, they are, in fact, the voice of their group. Electing GSR's who will take an active part in the business of N.A. is probably the most important thing we can do to improve the unity of the Fellowship. Active representation, more than any other thing, can strengthen the ties that bind us together and promote our common welfare.

The GSR's speak for their group at area service committee meetings. They take part in the planning and implementation of any functions which affect the members of their group. As a result of their participation they can keep their group informed about what is happening in N.A. Members of a group should always be able to go to their representative and find out about activities, other groups, how our N.A. service structure works, the Twelve Traditions, and how they can become more involved.

A group service representative normally serves for a period of two (2) years. The first year is spent as a GSR-alternate, working closely with an existing GSR, learning the duties of the office and taking over in case the GSR is ill, or cannot for any reason continue to serve. Also, if the GSR cannot attend one of the monthly area service committee meetings, the GSR-alternate has the responsibility to vote in their absence. It is also suggested that a GSR share some of the responsibilities with the GSR-alternate. The second year they become the group's GSR, taking over the full responsibilities and functions of the office, and in turn are helped by a newly elected GSR-alternate. The "apprentice" system serves two purposes: First of all, it helps to provide a continuity of service which never leaves a group unrepresented; and secondly, the year spent as an alternate provides the training necessary for an effective GSR. As you can see, the role of a GSR is not a simple one, not one to be taken lightly. The election of effective GSR's and GSR-alternates is probably the most important thing that you, as an individual member, can do for the unity of N.A. In choosing your representative, remember that they are your voice and your ears in N.A. If you wish to be well represented and well informed, it is your responsibility to elect the best possible nominee. For this reason we suggest that candidates for GSR should have:

1. The willingness and desire to serve.
2. We suggest a minimum of one (1) year of continuous abstinence from all drugs.
3. An active participation in the group they are to serve.
4. Knowledge of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.
5. An understanding of our N.A. service structure and the responsibilities of a GSR.

The requirements for the office of GSR-alternate are the same as those for GSR, except that there is a minimum of (6) months of continuous abstinence from all drugs. These qualifications are not, of course, hard fast rules. They are, however, some of the things you

should consider in the selection of your representatives. The group service representatives, as we have described them, are your link to the rest of N.A. They are also the ties that bind the personal service you and your group perform to the next type of service which is offered by N.A.: area and regional service.

It is suggested that when holding elections for group officers, the description of each officer's job and the suggested qualifications for nominees be read, and members of the group fully appreciate the responsibilities and ramifications of each office.

### AREA AND REGIONAL SERVICE

The next level of service in N.A. is area and regional service. These services provide the support necessary for groups of N.A. members to work together for their common welfare.

In 1969, N.A.'s first committee specifically designed to fill our general service needs at the group level, was established. This committee and others like it have contributed greatly to the growth of N.A. However, today it is no longer enough to have a few members getting together to keep their groups going. N.A. is growing.

~~Area and regional services are both geographic and functional designations. When an area or region grows to a point where it cannot efficiently serve its members' needs, that area or region should divide.~~ An area is designed to provide service to individual groups with specific needs, and a region to provide services to areas with common needs. This difference in function is important to keep in mind as we discuss, in the following section, these very similar services. Our experience has shown that our groups have situations which they cannot handle on their own. In the spirit of our Fellowship, we as individuals seek help from one another to deal with our living situations; just so, groups can find help from other groups. However, most of the situations a group faces are of such nature that another group located many miles away can be of little assistance; and for this reason this part of our service structure contains both area and regional committees.

A DESIGNATED AREA within N.A. is any local area, community or town with a significant number of N.A. groups. Any set of groups within definable geographic boundaries that need to function together as an area can be a designated area.

A DESIGNATED REGION is a broader geographic unit made up of a significant number of areas. Normally we consider a region to be any state in the United States, or any other country. Again, the definition of a region is ultimately one of need. Areas with this need can be considered a designated region. We feel it is necessary to stress that, for the purposes of N.A., the designation of a region should always be based on specific needs. Successful growth of any region will result in dividing into additional regional committees. This is beneficial since it allows these service committees to more effectively serve the needs of their member groups.

A. Suggested Service Committee Meeting Format:

1. Opening prayer
2. Reading of the Twelve Traditions
3. Minutes of the last service meeting
4. Treasurer's report
5. Representative reports
6. Subcommittee reports
7. Group reports
8. Old business
9. New business
10. Announcements
11. Closing prayer

NOTE: GSR's are the only voting members at ASC meetings; ASR's are the only voting members at an RSC meeting; all service committee meetings are open to the Fellowship.

## AREA SERVICE COMMITTEE

An area service committee (ASC) is a committee made up of representatives (GSR's) from groups within a designated Area, which meets monthly for the express purpose of serving the specific needs of its member groups.

There are certain facilities which are necessary to the service provided by an ASC. In the beginning these may simply be a permanent mailing address (usually a post office box), a bank account, and a place to hold meetings.

As the membership and number of groups within an area increases, or when an area decides that it needs a broader spectrum of services, more facilities may be needed. These might include a telephone answering referral service, a ditto machine, a typewriter, an adding machine and a place to store literature, among other things. As an area grows still more, the members may decide to consolidate and improve these facilities by opening and staffing a local office.

Most ASC's have found that a subcommittee does the actual work to implement ASC directives. The subcommittees normally deal with a single service such as public information, hospitals, and institutions, or entertainment, and may meet to do the work as needed during the month between regular ASC meetings.

The most important service which an ASC provides is that of group support. Whenever a group has a specific situation or need which it has not been able to handle on its own, it can come to its area service committee for help. These situations are almost limitless in scope; however, we have learned that we can get much accomplished when we work together.

An ASC performs other functions which are of help to the groups. It can help new groups get started or give aid to floundering groups. It may hold workshops or seminars to train trusted servants. It can look for potential places or keep a stock of literature which the groups can purchase. The point is that an

ASC handles whatever functions are necessary or helpful to its groups.

In order to provide these services, an ASC needs the active participation of its GSR's. A group supports its area service committee both financially and emotionally. It takes money to provide the services we have described. It is a group's responsibility to offer this support. When an ASC is first formed, this need for funds may be minimal: just enough to pay for a post office box and a meeting place. However, as an area grows, the financial needs of the committee also grow. In order to provide a full line of services it requires a steady, reliable flow of money. Some areas provide these funds through activities. These alternate sources of financial support are helpful, but the bulk of the responsibility still falls on the members of a group.

The active participation of each group representative is essential for a successful ASC. Each GSR must keep his or her own group informed, and must represent that group's conscience in all committee decisions. An agenda for an ASC should be sent to the groups ten (10) days before the committee meets. Representatives should evaluate each vote in terms of the needs of those they serve or take it back to the group. In addition to this, a GSR participates in helping to carry out the ASC's other specific functions. The attracting of new members, the planning and implementation of activities, and the aid given to groups with special situations are services which require much more effort than a monthly meeting.

In order to coordinate its services, each ASC elects officers yearly. These officers include a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, a secretary, a treasurer, an area service representative (ASR), and an area service representative-alternate (ASR-alt.) Leadership and the ability to organize and give the committee direction and incentive must come from its officers. Upon election, the officers shall resign as GSR's. Their groups then elect new representatives, thus ensuring all groups equality of representation.



## **A. Officers**

1. A **chairperson** arranges an agenda for and presides over the monthly meetings. They are also responsible for correspondence, maintaining area files and archives. The chairperson should be one of the co-signers of the ASC's bank account. At committee meetings they can vote only in case of a tie. A chairperson must be capable of conducting a business meeting with a firm, yet understanding hand. For this reason, it is suggested that they have a minimum of two (2) years' continuous abstinence from all drugs.

2. A **vice-chairperson** coordinates all subcommittee functions. In the absence of the chairperson, the vice-chairperson shall perform the duties of the chairperson. The vice-chairperson should be one of the co-signers of an ASC's bank account. It is suggested that a vice-chairperson have a minimum of one (1) year's continuous abstinence from all drugs.

3. A **secretary** keeps accurate minutes of each ASC business meeting, types and distributes copies of the minutes to each GSR no later than one (1) week following each ASC meeting. These minutes should be verified by the chairperson before copies are made. It is suggested that a secretary have a minimum of one (1) year's continuous abstinence from all drugs.

4. A **treasurer** shall make a report of contributions and expenditures at every regular ASC meeting, as well as an annual report at the end of a calendar year. The treasurer shall be the other co-signer of an ASC's bank account. The treasurer can also be made responsible for bulk purchases of literature for the groups. It is suggested that a treasurer have a minimum of two (2) years' continuous abstinence from all drugs.

5. An **area service representative (ASR)** is to an ASC what a GSR is to a group. As the representative of the area, the ASR's speak for the members and groups within the area service committee. The primary

responsibility of an ASR is to work for the good of N.A., providing two way communication between the Area and the rest of N.A., particularly with neighboring ASC's. They represent the group conscience of an ASC at a regional level and provide the area with the agenda for the RSC at least ten (10) days before the RSC meets. An ASR attends all regional service committee meetings and takes part in any decisions which affect the region, speaking as the voice of the ASC's group conscience. An ASR may serve on one or more of its ASC and RSC subcommittees but not as a chairperson. The office of ASR is immensely important, for an ASR is the next link in expressing the will of a loving God. An ASR must be able to work for the common good, placing principles before personalities at all times. Therefore, in addition to the regular qualifications for GSR's, it is recommended that nominees to the post of ASR also have:

1. Service experience
2. The willingness to give the time and resources necessary for the job.
3. A suggested minimum of three (3) years of continuous abstinence from all drugs.

The office of ASR also parallels that of GSR's in that it is a two (2) year commitment. The first year of service is spent as an ASR-alternate becoming familiar with the job, attending all ASC and RSC meetings, and filling in for the ASR if he or she are absent or for any reason unable to complete the term in office. Naturally, the recommended qualifications for election of ASR-alt. are the same as for ASR, with one exception: a suggestion of two (2) years' continuous abstinence.

#### B. Election of ASC Officers

Committee officers should be elected from the active GSR's. Prior service experiences such as group secretary, group treasurer and subcommittee member are of value. ASC officers do not normally represent any group and have no vote at an ASC. Any ASC member

or officer may be removed during their term in office by a majority vote of that ASC. Also, all ASC members and officers may succeed themselves in office, but in keeping with the Ninth Tradition and the principle of rotating leadership, it is recommended that no officer serve more than two (2) consecutive terms.

Note: A word to the wise: Committees are notorious for getting lost in their own dust as they stumble down the road of uncertain destiny.

### REGIONAL SERVICE COMMITTEE

A regional service committee (RSC) is a committee made up of the ASR'S from all the areas within a designated region. This service committee is designed to provide service to its member areas. An ASC and an RSC are similar in nature and purpose, but their respective functions are slightly different. While an ASC serves the specific needs of its individual member groups, an RSC serves the common needs of its member areas.

The primary function of an RSC is to unify the areas within its region. Another function is to carry the N.A. message of recovery through RSC public information subcommittees. Addicts who cannot attend regular meetings are served through an RSC hospitals & institutions subcommittee. A third basic function of this committee is to contribute to the growth of N.A., both by initiating much of the work to be finalized at the World Service Conference and by helping to support our world services.

Just as an ASC often deals with situations that the groups cannot deal with on their own, an RSC responds to situations that the areas cannot resolve on their own. This is one way in which an RSC strives for unity; another is by providing a meeting place for areas and a center of communication with other regions and the N.A. Fellowship.

Area and regional service committees are autonomous, just as the groups they serve "except in matters affecting other groups or N.A. as a whole." The first thing an RSC must have in order to establish its identity is a permanent mailing address (post office

box). After the p.o. box, the next thing an RSC should do is register with the WSO, Inc. Groups and committees must be registered if they are to be listed in the World Directory and to receive information and support.

The final thing that must be done when forming a region is to set down some kind of framework or guidelines within which to function. Generally, ASC meetings are fairly flexible in their format in order to deal with a wide variety of situations that might come up.

RSC meetings, on the other hand, are usually pretty well structured. The format of an RSC meeting is virtually identical to that of an ASC meeting, but an RSC deals primarily with common situations, working on a broader scale.

Some regions have found it valuable to conduct their meetings according to a pre-arranged agenda. The RSC officers get in touch with the ASC officers through their ASR and collect topics for discussion so situations can be dealt with on a priority basis, and similar situations can be combined to prevent duplication of effort.

Each service committee should have some kind of guidelines to ensure that its services continue to be provided regardless of changes in officers or representatives. These guidelines should include a description of the committee, its purpose, and the scope of its services, and should define the functions and responsibilities of its participants, officers and subcommittees.

A regional service committee sponsors major activities such as service conferences, conventions, camp outs and round-ups. These functions can stimulate N.A. unity in a region. Most of us have, at some time, attended an activity of this type and we are aware of the unity and fellowship they can inspire. Each region is encouraged to hold at least one major function or activity each year. These can be as simple as a camping trip or as involved as a service conference. Usually the planning and implementation of such an event is left to a regional activities subcommittee specifically established for this purpose. We have found