

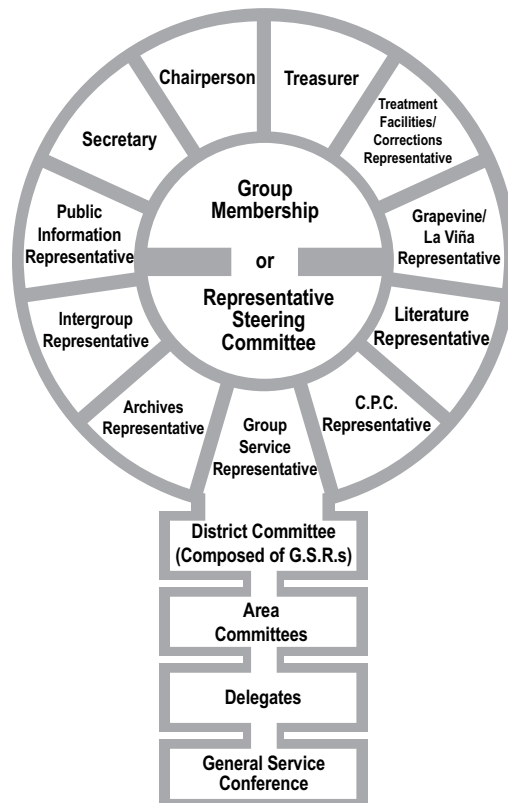
never be "organized." However, without endangering our commitment to preserve our spiritual and democratic Fellowship, we can "create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve." (Tradition Nine) In A.A. groups, these trusted servants are sometimes called "officers" and usually are chosen by the group for limited terms of service. As Tradition Two reminds us, "Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern."

Each group determines the minimum length of sobriety for A.A. members to be eligible for any position (or office). The general guideline might be stable sobriety of six months to a year, or longer.

These service positions may have titles. But titles in A.A. do not bring authority or honor; they describe services and responsibilities. And it has generally been found that giving members service positions solely to help them stay sober does not work; instead, the group's welfare is of primary concern in choosing officers. At election time, a review of Traditions One and Two can be helpful.

Individual groups have many ways of making sure that the necessary services are performed with a minimum of organization. The chart below shows possibilities for service at the group level.

SERVICE STRUCTURE INSIDE THE A.A. GROUP



Some groups have positions that do not appear on this chart, such as greeter, archivist, special needs representative, and liaison to a meeting facility. Following are the offices established by numerous groups in order to serve the group "at home" and in the community at large.

Chairperson: Group chairpersons serve for a specified period of time (usually six months to a year). Experience suggests that they should have been sober awhile, at least a year; and ideally, they have held other group offices first.

The chairperson coordinates activities with other group officers—and with those members who assume the responsibility for literature, hospitality, coffee-making, programming individual meetings within the group, and other vital functions.

The more informed that chairpersons—and other group officers—are about A.A. as a whole, the better they function. By keeping Tradition One firmly in mind and encouraging members to become familiar with all the Traditions, they will help to ensure a healthy A.A. group.

Secretary: Like chairpersons, secretaries need to be good all-around group servants. For groups that have no chairpersons, they may perform the tasks associated with that position. While each group has its own procedures, the secretary is generally expected to:

- Announce and/or mail information about important A.A. activities and events.
- Maintain minutes of business meetings.
- Maintain and update a strictly confidential file of names, addresses, and telephone numbers of group members (subject to each member's approval); and know which members are available to visit still-suffering alcoholics (Twelfth-Step calls).
- Keep a record of members' sobriety dates, if the group so wishes.
- Maintain a bulletin board for posting A.A. announcements, bulletins and newsletters.
- Make certain that the General Service Office and other service entities are informed, in writing, of any changes of address, meeting place or group officers.
- Accept and assign calls for Twelfth-Step help (unless there is a Twelfth-Step chairperson for this task).
- Share with group members the mail from other groups and the intergroup (central office), unless this is done by the intergroup representative.

Treasurer: A.A. groups are fully self-supporting through their members' voluntary contributions. Passing the basket at meetings usually covers the group's monetary needs, with enough left over so the group can do its fair share of supporting the local intergroup (central office), the general service district and area offices, and the General Service Office.

Group funds ordinarily are earmarked for such expenses as:

- Rent
- A.A. literature
- Local meeting lists, usually purchased from your nearest intergroup (central office), general service district or area committee
- Coffee and refreshments
- Support of all A.A. service entities, usually on a monthly or quarterly basis.

Treasurers generally maintain clear records (a ledger is helpful) and keep their groups informed about how much money is taken in and how it is spent. They may make periodic reports to the group and post financial statements quarterly. Problems can be avoided by keeping group funds in a separate group bank account that requires two signatures on each check. The flyer "The A.A. Group Treasurer" offers many other helpful suggestions.

A.A. experience clearly shows that it is not a good idea for a group to accumulate large funds in excess of what is needed for rent and other expenses. It is wise, though, to keep a prudent reserve in case an unforeseen need arises (an amount to be determined by the group conscience). Group troubles also may arise when extra-large donations—in money, goods or services—are accepted from one member.

The Conference-approved pamphlet "Self-Support—Where Money and Spirituality Mix" makes suggestions as to how groups may support A.A. services.

Additionally, G.S.O., area and sometimes district committees and your local intergroup accept contributions from individual A.A. members. A.A. members are free to contribute whatever they wish, within the limits set by A.A. service entities. The maximum individual contribution to the General Service Office is \$2,000 annually. Bequests or in – memoriam contributions of not more than \$2,000 are acceptable on a one-time basis, but only from A.A. members. Check with other A.A. service entities for the maximum yearly contributions they accept.

Some members celebrate their A.A. anniversaries by sending a gratitude gift to the General Service Office for its world services. With this "Birthday Plan,"

some members send one dollar for each year of sobriety, while others use the figure \$3.65, a penny a day, for each year. Other members give more, but not in excess of \$2,000 per year. For additional information, talk to your general service representative or contact G.S.O.

General service representative (G.S.R.): Working via the district and area committees, the G.S.R. is the group's link with the General Service Conference, through which U.S. and Canadian groups share their experience and voice A.A.'s collective conscience. Sometimes called "the guardians of the Traditions," G.S.R.s become familiar with A.A.'s Third Legacy—our spiritual responsibility to give service freely. Usually elected to serve two-year terms, they:

- Represent the group at district meetings and area assemblies.
- Keep group members informed about general service activities in their local areas.
- Receive and share with their groups all mail from the General Service Office, including the newsletter Box 4-5-9, which is G.S.O.'s primary tool for communicating with the Fellowship.

G.S.R.s also may assist their groups in solving a variety of problems, especially those related to the Traditions. In serving their groups, they can draw on all the services offered by G.S.O. (see p. 30).

An alternate G.S.R. is elected at the same time in the event that the G.S.R. may be unable to attend all district and area meetings. Alternate G.S.R.s should be encouraged to share the responsibilities of the G.S.R. at the group, district and area levels. (See *The A.A. Service Manual*, Chapter 2, The Group and its G.S.R., for further information.)

Intergroup (central office) representative: In the many locations where an intergroup (or central office association) has been formed, each group usually elects an intergroup representative, who participates in business meetings with other such representatives several times a year to share their groups' experience in carrying the A.A. message. The intergroup representative tries to keep the group well-informed about what the local intergroup is doing.

A.A. Grapevine/La Viña representative (GvR/RLV): The job of the GvR and RLV is to familiarize members with the Fellowship's international journal, *The A.A. Grapevine*, and its bi-monthly Spanish-language magazine *La Viña*, and the enhancements to sobriety the magazines offer. The magazines contain articles written by A.A. members based upon their personal experiences; discussion topics; regular features, and a calendar of special A.A. events.

GvRs and RLVs participate in the activities of their

area's Grapevine committee, announce the arrival of new magazines at the group each month, encourage members to submit articles and illustrations, and explain how members can order their own subscriptions. In some groups, the GvR and RLV positions are combined.

A new GvR or RLV should send his/her name, address, group name and group service number to: The A.A. Grapevine, P.O. Box 1980, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163, Attn: GVR/RLV Coordinator. Representatives will then receive quarterly mailings containing order forms for the magazine and for books, audio and other Grapevine items. GVRs and RLVs can also register online at the Grapevine website: www.aagrapevine.org. Make out magazine subscription checks to the Grapevine, Inc.

Literature representative: The group's literature representative makes certain that A.A. Conference-approved books and pamphlets, ordered from the General Service Office, or purchased from the local intergroup (central office), are on hand for meetings and properly displayed.

Group literature representatives can obtain information on their responsibilities by writing to the literature coordinator at G.S.O. Regular communications are sent to literature representatives from G.S.O. The A.A. Guideline for Literature Committees is also a valuable resource.

For A.A. literature and subscriptions to the A.A. newsletter *Box 4-5-9*, checks should be made out to A.A. World Services, Inc. Many A.A. groups purchase bulk subscriptions to *Box 4-5-9* (in units of 10) for distribution to their members, thus providing them regular communication with A.A. in the U.S., Canada and countries throughout the world.

Why Have a Steering Committee?

Some groups have steering committees. At steering committee meetings, questions related to group practices, selecting a slate of candidates for office, and other group issues often are tackled first by the steering committee (or group service committee), which goes to the group for its members' group-conscience decision. In many cases, the officers and/or past officers make up the committee, which usually meets at regularly scheduled times.

For a small group, a steering committee composed of three to five members has been found to work well. For larger groups, 12 or more members provide a better cross-section of group experience and can share the workload more easily. In some groups, a rotating committee (with members rotated on and off periodically) serves the same purpose as a steering committee.

How Can Newcomers be Reached and Helped?

Naturally, alcoholics cannot be helped by A.A. unless they know A.A. exists, and where to find it. So it is a good idea for groups in smaller towns to communicate their meeting place and times to public agencies. Along with such a notice, it is helpful to distribute the flyer "A.A. at a Glance" or the pamphlet "Alcoholics Anonymous in Your Community."

In large urban areas, the central office, intergroup, or district meeting list of all groups can be used for this purpose.

Should an A.A. group let the public know how to obtain information on open A.A. meetings? Some groups do, but for only one reason—to let the community know of the availability of help for alcoholics through our program. Such small notices are usually placed in community service sections of the local newspaper to let people know how to get in touch with nearby A.A. meetings, if they so desire.

A typical notice might look like this:

Faced with a Drinking Problem?

Perhaps Alcoholics Anonymous Can Help

Write to P.O. Box 111

City, State, Zip Code

or call (123) 123-4567

Weekly Meetings Open to the Public

Civic Building, Tuesday at 8:00 p.m.

Some groups keep lists of members available to do Twelfth Step work. Groups may have hospitality committees and/or greeters to make sure no new member, visitor or inquiring prospect goes unwelcomed.

Sponsors usually take the responsibility for helping newcomers find their way in A.A. Much help can be found in the A.A. pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship."

The A.A. Group's Relations With Others In The Community

Tradition Eleven: 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.

How Service Committee Representatives Serve A.A.

A.A. service committees, composed mainly of representatives, or liaisons, from area groups, shoulder major responsibility for carrying the A.A. message into the community and around the world (see *The A.A. Service Manual*). Each of these committees may serve as a resource for the community through our Sixth Tradition of cooperation but not affiliation.

To assist service committees in their local efforts, their counterparts at A.A. World Services—the trustees' and General Service Conference committees—offer suggested guidelines to local committees when asked, with the help of the General Service Office.

Corrections Committee Liaison

Group Corrections representatives take part in local intergroup (central office), district or area Corrections committee meetings. They keep their home groups informed about local Twelfth-Step activities in nearby institutions and encourage group members to participate.

Corrections representatives, known in some areas as Hospitals and Institutions (H&I) representatives, take A.A. meetings into prisons and jails, where allowed by the correctional facility, to help alcoholic inmates recover and prepare for sober, fulfilling lives after release. As part of the temporary contact program known in some areas as Bridging the Gap, they may also serve as correspondents and as A.A. contacts when the inmates are released. The pamphlet "A.A. in Correctional Facilities" and the *Corrections Workbook* can be of help to A.A.s in corrections service work.

Treatment Facilities Committee Liaison

Some groups have treatment facilities (T.F.) representatives who serve as the group liaison with the local intergroup (central office), district or area treatment facilities committee. They share this vital service work with home group members and encourage them to join in this responsibility.

Members of the T.F. committee, known in some areas as Hospitals and Institutions (H&I) representatives, work to help hospital and treatment center staffs better understand A.A., and to take the A.A. tools of recovery to alcoholics in treatment. As part of the Bridging the Gap program (Temporary Contact) T.F. committee members also may act as contacts when alcoholic patients are discharged.

The pamphlet "A.A. in Treatment Facilities" and the *Treatment Facilities Workbook* can be of help to A.A.s in T.F. service work.

Public Information Committee Liaison

Group Public Information representatives (P.I.) usually work with the local intergroup (central office), district or area P.I. committee to carry the A.A. message locally. They periodically inform their home groups of local activity and may arrange for group volunteers to participate in P.I. programs requested by schools, businesses, law-enforcement agencies and other organizations interested in the A.A. approach to recovery from alcoholism.

Most groups realize that alcoholics can't come to A.A. for help unless they know where we are. Using many suggested methods ranging from personal contact to public service announcements on radio and TV, groups and their members reach out, working within the framework of Tradition Eleven. Sometimes a small sign saying "A.A. meeting tonight" outside the meeting-place door points the way. And from A.A.'s earliest days, radio announcements and small newspaper announcements of A.A. meetings have been used to attract alcoholics in need of help.

The Public Information Workbook offers suggested guidelines in furthering this vital group-service activity.

Cooperation With The Professional Community Committee Liaison

Group Cooperation with the Professional Community (C.P.C.) representatives, usually working with their local intergroup (central office), district or area C.P.C. committees, focus on cooperation but not affiliation with professionals in the community—educators, physicians, the clergy, court officials and others who often are in contact with active alcoholics. They keep their home groups informed of area C.P.C. activities