Baltimore Intergroup Council of Alcoholics Anonymous

The Intergroup Representative

Phone: 410-663-1922
Fax: 410-663-7465
Email: intergroup@baltimoreaa.org
Website: www.baltimoreaa.org

8635 Loch Raven Boulevard Suite 4
Baltimore Maryland 21286
EACH GROUP ELECTS ONE MEMBER AS ITS REPRESENTATIVE (REP) to the Intergroup Council. The Rep is the link between the Group and the Council as well as the Intergroup Office. Through the Rep the Council learns of the needs and issues of the Group and the Group learns of the needs and issues before the Council. The Rep takes issues discussed at the council back to the Group and seeks the group conscience. The Rep then votes on those issues at the Intergroup Council meeting.

THE INTERGROUP REPRESENTATIVE informs the Group of all the ways members may participate in service opportunities and self-support strategies. The Rep encourages volunteering for the Answering Service, the 12 Step List, assisting at the Intergroup Office and serving on the various committees of the Intergroup Council as well as supporting the activities sponsored by those committees. The Rep also encourages participation in the Birthday Plan, In Memoriam, and individual contributions to assist in "carrying the message." It is important that the Rep suggest to the secretary to read the Bulletin to the Group and keep the group aware of issues presently before the Intergroup Council and of upcoming events supported by the Council.
THE BALTIMORE INTERGROUP COUNCIL

THE BALTIMORE INTERGROUP COUNCIL is composed of the Inter-group Representatives, Officers of the Council, the committee Chairs, and the Administrator of the Intergroup. The meeting is held the second Monday of every month. This is a business meeting for reporting to the Groups financial and committee reports. The standing Committees are: Advisory, Answering, Activities, Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC), Literature, Outreach, Personnel, Public Information, and Speakers. Ad Hoc Committees are Meeting on Wheels and Website. Motions can be made by Officers or Intergroup Reps. The Council has By-Laws which govern the Council. The meeting is run by Roberts Rules of Order and The Twelve Concepts of AA World Service. All business of the Intergroup Council is voted on by majority vote with the right of the minority opinion to respond after the vote. It is the purpose of the Intergroup Council to uphold AA’s Twelve Traditions and to organize service so as to best "carry the message" to the still suffering alcoholic.
THE BALTIMORE INTERGROUP OFFICE

THE BALTIMORE INTERGROUP OFFICE, located at 8635 Loch Raven Blvd, has one full-time employee, the "Administrator", and four part-time employees who carry out the day-to-day operation of "carrying the message." There are volunteers who answer the phones and assist in office business during office hours (Monday through Friday, 9:00 am -5:00 pm). The most important job of the Office is make 12th Step work possible for the A.A. member. Part of that responsibility is met by providing a 24 hrs. a day and 7 days per week phone service to answer requests for the time, date and place of meetings as well as requests for 12th Step calls. To do that the office maintains a Directory of meetings, an Answering Service list and a 12th Step list. There is a website for Baltimore Intergroup with meeting information. There is a stock of A.A. literature, chips, and related items for sale to groups, individual members and other interested parties. The bi-monthly Bulletin, printed and mailed by the office, gives information on member and Group anniversaries, notices of "alkathons", workshops, meeting changes and upcoming events as well as the "contribution list", activity flyers and the minutes of Intergroup Council meetings. The office supports and coordinates Council committee activities.
This we owe to A.A.’s future:

To place our common welfare first,

To keep our fellowship united.

For on A.A. unity depend our lives

And the lives of those to come.
I AM RESPONSIBLE.....
WHEN ANYONE, ANYWHERE
REACHES OUT FOR HELP,
I WANT THE HAND OF
A.A. ALWAYS TO BE THERE.
AND FOR THAT:
I AM RESPONSIBLE
What is Intergroup?

A pamphlet on the purpose of Our Intergroup Council and Office

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is the official title of what is more commonly known as Baltimore Intergroup.

The Intergroup Council exists to serve and unify the activities of A.A. groups in the Baltimore Metropolitan area and to uphold the Twelve Traditions of A.A. The Council consists of one representative from each of the more than 500 groups in the Baltimore area who desire to participate.

Through representatives working together, the Intergroup Council is able to accomplish tasks individual groups could not do alone.

THE INTERGROUP OFFICE

The Intergroup Office is an extension of the Intergroup Council and employs one full-time Administrator and several part-time assistants, (all A.A. members) who coordinate necessary services for A.A. members and groups.

Answering the hot line, facilitating the work of the committees and serving as a clearinghouse of information, the Intergroup Office also houses a bookstore for the convenience of the groups. The A.A. bookstore stocks a variety of pamphlets, books and supplies used by groups to carry the message.

DIRECTORIES & BULLETINS

For those seeking an A.A. meeting, the Intergroup Office publishes area directories and maintains a Web site that lists over 800 meetings with times, days and locations. Additional updated information about new or discontinued meetings, council and contributions are also made available on a monthly basis in the bulletin.
12 STEP LIST AND ANSWERING SERVICE

A call to the Intergroup hotline is often the first contact a suffering alcoholic has with A.A. For this reason, it is essential to have a twenty-four-hour service available to respond to calls for help. Intergroup has an organized schedule of volunteers to answer the A.A. hotline at the Intergroup Office as well as at their homes when the Office is closed.

When needed, the answering service volunteers refer to a 12th Step list compiled by the Intergroup Office containing the names and telephone numbers of A.A. members who have agreed to be available for help. In this way, Intergroup is a direct link between the suffering alcoholic and A.A. members and groups, where more help can be found.

THE INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE

The Institutions Committee of Intergroup cooperates with the many institutions by arranging meetings in prisons, detention centers, detoxification units and hospitals in the Baltimore area. The committee secures sponsors for such meetings and prints a monthly schedule of dates and times for groups that participate. The Institutions Committee also purchases A.A. literature for inmates and patients in these institutions.

This committee, which meets the third Friday of every month, is always open to members who would like to learn more and become involved.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

The Intergroup Council informs the community about A.A. through three committees: the Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC), the Public Information Committee and the Speakers Committee. The CPC Committee provides information about A.A.'s purpose and function to those who have contact
with alcoholics through their professions, including physicians, nurses, clergy, lawyers, social workers and those working in the field of alcoholism.

ACTIVITIES

The Activities Committee organizes, conducts and promotes all social affairs that are held by the Baltimore Intergroup Council. These include the Bull Roast, Gratitude Breakfast, Banquet, Sobriety Show and Sober in the Woods. Besides providing fellowship for A.A. members, these events help raise funds for the Intergroup Council so vital 12th Step work can continue.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Service work is a fulfilling way of showing gratitude. Here are some ways to give back by joining as volunteer:

- Answering Service
- CPC Committee
- Institutions Committee
- Intergroup Office
- Meetings on Wheels
- Outreach Committee
- Public Information Committee
- Speakers Committee

Or, become involved in your Home Group as a secretary, coffee maker, Intergroup Representative, Institution Representative or GSR. Call the Intergroup Office for more information.

PHONE: 410-663-1922
FAX: 410-663-7465

Email: aabalt@baltimoreaa.org
www.baltimoreaa.org
SELF-SUPPORTING

The Seventh Tradition states, "Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

For support, our Intergroup relies on the contributions of its groups, members, and planned activities, so the real work of carrying the message can continue. Groups contribute monthly to Intergroup, while members may make tax-deductible donations of up to $5000 yearly, through the Birthday Plan, In Memoriam, and individual contributions. A contribution list is published monthly as part of the bulletin, and detailed financial reports are presented monthly at the Intergroup meeting. Support of your group demonstrates gratitude for sobriety, and a willingness to share with the alcoholic who still suffers.

"To people familiar with the endless drives for charitable funds, A.A. presented a strange and refreshing spectacle. Approving editorials here and abroad generated a wave of confidence in the integrity of Alcoholics Anonymous.

They pointed out that the irresponsible had become responsible, and that by making financial independence part of its tradition, Alcoholics Anonymous had revived an ideal that its era had almost forgotten." (P.165, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.)
INTERGROUP MEETING
2nd Monday of each month
Episcopal Cathedral
St. Paul St. & University Pkwy
(entrance on St. Paul Street)

INSTITUTION COMMITTEE
3rd Friday of each month
University Baptist Church
34th and Greenway
Meeting begins at 7:00 pm

ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE
Meets Thursdays as scheduled at the
Intergroup Office

OUTREACH COMMITTEE
Meetings are scheduled monthly
at the Intergroup Office

ANSWERING SERVICE
Evenings and weekend shifts are available. AA members answer calls from their own home.
For more information call 410-663-1922

INTERGROUP OFFICE VOLUNTEERS
Volunteers needed in office. There are 2 shifts
daily 9:00-1:00 pm and 1:00-5:00 pm. For more information call 410-663-1922
Information on Alcoholics Anonymous

For Anyone New Coming to A.A.
For Anyone Referring People to A.A.

This information is both for people who may have a drinking problem and for those in contact with people who have, or are suspected of having, a problem. Most of the information is available in more detail in literature published by A.A. World Services, Inc. This sheet tells what to expect from Alcoholics Anonymous. It describes what A.A. is, what A.A. does, and what A.A. does not do.

What Is A.A.?
Alcoholics Anonymous is an international fellowship of men and women who have had a drinking problem. It is nonprofessional, self-supporting, multiracial, apolitical, and available almost everywhere. There are no age or education requirements. Membership is open to anyone who wants to do something about his or her drinking problem.

Singleness of Purpose and Problems Other Than Alcohol
Some professionals refer to alcoholism and drug addiction as “substance abuse” or “chemical dependency.” Nonalcoholics are, therefore, sometimes introduced to A.A. and encouraged to attend A.A. meetings. Nonalcoholics may attend open A.A. meetings as observers, but only those with a drinking problem may attend closed A.A. meetings.

What Does A.A. Do?
1. A.A. members share their experience with anyone seeking help with a drinking problem; they give person-to-person service or “sponsorship” to the alcoholic coming to A.A. from any source.
2. The A.A. program, set forth in our Twelve Steps, offers the alcoholic a way to develop a satisfying life without alcohol.
3. This program is discussed at A.A. group meetings.
   a. Open speaker meetings — open to alcoholics and nonalcoholics. (Attendance at an open A.A. meeting is the best way to learn what A.A. is, what it does, and what it does not do.) At speaker meetings, A.A. members “tell their stories.” They describe their experiences with alcohol, how they came to A.A., and how their lives have changed as a result of Alcoholics Anonymous.
   b. Open discussion meetings — one member speaks briefly about his or her drinking experience, and then leads a discussion on A.A. recovery or any drinking-related problem anyone brings up. (Closed meetings are for A.A.s or anyone who may have a drinking problem.)
   c. Closed discussion meetings — conducted just as open discussions are, but for alcoholics or prospective A.A.s only.
   d. Step meetings (usually closed) — discussion of one of the Twelve Steps.
   e. A.A. members also take meetings into correctional facilities and treatment settings.
   f. A.A. members may be asked to conduct the informational meetings about A.A. as a part of A.S.A.P. (Alcohol Safety Action Project) and D.W.I. (Driving While Intoxicated) programs. These meetings about A.A. are not regular A.A. group meetings.

What A.A. Does Not Do
A.A. does not:
1. Furnish initial motivation for alcoholics to recover.
2. Solicit members.
3. Engage in or sponsor research.
4. Keep attendance records or case histories.
5. Join “councils” of social agencies (although A.A. members, groups and service offices frequently cooperate with them).
6. Follow up or try to control its members.
7. Make medical or psychological diagnoses or prognoses.
8. Provide detox or nursing services, hospitalization, drugs, or any medical or psychiatric treatment.
9. Offer religious services or host/sponsor retreats.
11. Provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money, or any other welfare or social services.
12. Provide domestic or vocational counseling.
13. Accept any money for its services, or any contributions from non-A.A. sources.
14. Provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers, court officials, social agencies, employers, etc.
Members From Court Programs and Treatment Facilities

In recent years, A.A. groups have welcomed many new members from court programs and treatment settings. Some have come to A.A. voluntarily; others, under a degree of pressure. In our pamphlet “How A.A. Members Cooperate,” the following appears:

We cannot discriminate against any prospective A.A. member, even if he or she comes to us under pressure from a court, an employer, or any other agency.

Although the strength of our program lies in the voluntary nature of membership in A.A., many of us first attended meetings because we were forced to, either by someone else or by inner discomfort. But continual exposure to A.A. educated us to the true nature of the illness…. Who made the referral to A.A. is not what A.A. is interested in. It is the problem drinker who is our concern…. We cannot predict who will recover, nor have we the authority to decide how recovery should be sought by any other alcoholic.

Proof of Attendance at Meetings

Sometimes a referral source asks for proof of attendance at A.A. meetings. Groups cooperate in different ways. There is no set procedure. The nature and extent of any group’s involvement in this process is entirely up to the individual group.

Some groups, with the consent of the prospective member, have an A.A. member acknowledge attendance on a slip that has been furnished by the referral source. The referred person is responsible for returning the proof of attendance.

This proof of attendance at meetings is not part of A.A.’s procedure. Each group is autonomous and has the right to choose whether or not to sign court slips. In some areas the attendees report on themselves, at the request of the referring agency, and thus alleviate breaking A.A. members’ anonymity.

Literature

A.A. Conference-approved literature is available in French and Spanish. For additional copies of this paper, or for a literature catalog please write or call the General Service Office.

AA Grapevine, a monthly international journal — also known as “our meeting in print” — features many interesting stories about recovery from alcoholism written primarily by members of A.A. It is a useful introduction and ongoing link to A.A.’s diverse fellowship and wealth of recovery experience. The Spanish-language magazine La Viña is published bimonthly.

For Grapevine information or to order a subscription to either AA Grapevine or La Viña: (212) 870-3404; fax (212) 870-3301; website: www.aagrapevine.org.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of A.A. is to carry its message of recovery to the alcoholic seeking help. Almost every alcoholism treatment tries to help the alcoholic maintain sobriety. Regardless of the road we follow, we all head for the same destination, recovery of the alcoholic person. Together, we can do what none of us could accomplish alone. We can serve as a source of personal experience and be an ongoing support system for recovering alcoholics.

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163. Tel. (212) 870-3400. www.aa.org
I am responsible…
When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there.
And for that: I am responsible.

This is A.A. General Service Conference-approved literature.
P-18

Inside A.A.
Understanding the Fellowship and its Services

A DECLARATION OF UNITY
This we owe to A.A.'s future: To place our common welfare first; to keep our fellowship united. For on A.A. unity depend our lives and the lives of those to come.
Alcoholics Anonymous® is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

• The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

• A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

• Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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Mail address:
Box 459, Grand Central Station,
New York, NY 10163

www.aa.org
Since the Fellowship of A.A. was founded in 1935 it has grown from two members to over 2,000,000. With more than 118,000 groups located in over 180 countries, a broad range of services have developed to help support and guide alcoholics in recovery. Service centers have been established around the world, handling inquiries from suffering alcoholics and those interested in helping them. More than 35 million copies of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the basic text from which the Fellowship got its name, have been published and distributed, and a diverse body of literature is produced in more than 90 languages to reach those who may not yet know about our program of hope and recovery.

As A.A. has grown, so have its service needs. Members and committees have recognized the need to carry our message to professionals who work with alcoholics on a regular basis — doctors, judges, clergy and many others; underrepresented populations need information about our program; diverse technologies have opened new opportunities to reach young people and those who face different challenges of accessibility.

All of this requires some measure of organization — organization inspired by A.A.’s Responsibility Declaration, which states, “When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.”
Service and the A.A. member

In A.A., everything starts with the group — it is the basic building block of the entire Fellowship and the place where recovery begins for most alcoholics. But, for a group to keep going, all kinds of service must be done. It is through the combined efforts and ongoing commitment of group members that:

• A meeting place is readily available and maintained.
• Programs are arranged for the benefit of the alcoholics in attendance.
• Calls for help are answered.
• Voluntary contributions are collected to keep the group and the Fellowship going financially.
• Literature is provided for all members and lists of local group meetings are made available.
• Continuing contact is sustained with the rest of A.A.

While it is noted in A.A.’s Ninth Tradition that each A.A. group needs the least possible organization, “the aim of our services is to bring sobriety within reach of all who want it.” This starts with the A.A. group.

A G.S.R. represents your group

Within a group, there are many service positions to help it fulfill its primary purpose of carrying the A.A. message to the alcoholic who still suffers. One important aspect of an A.A. group, no matter how remote it may be, is continuing contact with the rest of A.A. In order to stay connected, groups often elect a general service
representative (G.S.R.) to represent it within the wider A.A. service structure. G.S.R.s are a group’s link with the A.A. world beyond the group and help to carry the group’s voice and collective conscience to other groups and to A.A. as a whole. Usually elected to serve two-year terms, they:

- Keep group members informed about general service activities and opportunities in their local areas.
- Represent the group at district meetings and area assemblies.
- Receive and share with their groups all mail from the General Service Office (G.S.O.).

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

Additionally, in the many locations where an intergroup (or central office association) has been formed, groups usually elect an intergroup representative, who tries to keep the group well informed about what the local intergroup is doing, such as coordinating local Twelfth Step calls, providing meeting lists, and in some places furnishing public information speakers for non-A.A. groups and for A.A. meetings in institutions.

**Service beyond the group**

As a community is made up of all of its members, each group is part of a larger whole, and its G.S.R. usually participates along with the G.S.R.s of other local groups in monthly or quarterly district meetings, where plans are discussed and decisions are made on how to best serve the needs of the local fellowship and to learn more about A.A.’s world services. A district committee member (D.C.M.) passes on the district’s thinking to area committees and service workers and carries information back to local G.S.R.s, who in turn keep their group members informed on various A.A. issues.

Many groups, districts and areas carry the message into treatment settings and correctional
institutions in an effort to ensure that the A.A. message reaches those who may be the most in need. Often organized by A.A. service committees, this kind of service work can involve working with members of the professional community and other non-A.A. members. Groups often provide speakers to go into these institutions and can also provide contacts for A.A. members who are released from these institutions, helping them to make contact with A.A. in their communities when they get out.

**Area assemblies, delegates and the General Service Conference**

Periodically, all G.S.R.s and D.C.M.s from a given area get together in an area assembly to discuss matters of interest to the Fellowship as a whole and to elect an area delegate to attend A.A.’s annual General Service Conference, which serves as “the actual voice and the effective conscience for our whole Society.” Often considered A.A.’s annual business meeting, the Conference comes closer to “government” than anything else in A.A., but as A.A. co-founder Bill W. put it, “The Conference represents us, but cannot rule us.”

The General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada) is the link between A.A. groups and the General Service Office and Board. About 134 Conference members — area delegates, trustees, directors, G.S.O. and Grapevine staffs — are active in Conference matters throughout the year, providing a forum for sharing A.A. experience and expressing the group conscience of the Fellowship.
Conference sessions

Conference members meet annually in New York for six days, reviewing reports on activities of G.S.O., Grapevine and the General Service Board, hearing presentations on a wide range of A.A. topics and reflecting on service needs all over the world. They also review significant trends and developments in A.A. Each Conference member is encouraged to act as a representative of A.A. as a whole and not just as a representative of one particular area.

Elected for two-year terms, delegates serve as a continuing link between the areas and the General Service Office and Board by:

- Reporting to the area on G.S.O. and General Service Board activities.
- Relaying area opinion to G.S.O. and the trustees.
- Developing area support for world service.

At the Conference, delegates work within the committee system to address the many agenda items that come from the Fellowship for consideration. Most items suggested for the Conference agenda are assigned to a committee, where each one can be discussed in a small group before being forwarded for discussion to the full Conference. Without committees, it is doubtful that any Conference would be able to function effectively.
General Service Board (the Trustees)

Traditionally composed of nonalcoholics as well as A.A. members, the General Service Board was the first movement-wide service unit in A.A. It is responsible for safeguarding A.A. tradition and A.A.’s service funds. It oversees the General Service Office and the two operating service arms of A.A. World Services, Inc. and AA Grapevine, Inc.

The board is comprised of 21 trustees, seven of whom are known as Class A (nonalcoholic) trustees who are selected principally for their business or professional backgrounds. The other 14, known as Class B (alcoholic) trustees, are a mix of regional, general service and at-large trustees who bring varying talents and backgrounds to their service responsibilities.

The General Service Board is the chief service arm of the Conference and is essentially custodial in nature.

General Service Office (G.S.O.)

G.S.O., in New York City, under the guidance of A.A. World Services, Inc., serves all A.A. groups in the United States and Canada, and also offers services to A.A. overseas, especially in countries where there is no service structure. While many other countries have their own G.S.O.s, the U.S./Canada General Service Office, the earliest to be established, is generally regarded as the “senior” office.

Working closely with committees of A.A.’s
General Service Board and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada), G.S.O. has broad responsibilities to its member groups, including the following:

• To collect, organize and pass along to A.A. groups and members throughout the U.S. and Canada the shared experiences on group challenges and solutions, when asked.

• To work with alcoholics overseas, as well as A.A.s living in areas with no meetings, housebound members, seagoing A.A.s, A.A.s in the armed forces and A.A.s in treatment and correctional facilities.

• To answer numerous letters requesting information about A.A. and the help it provides for alcoholics.

• To publish the A.A. newsletter, *Box 4-5-9*, and other bulletins; distribute A.A. books and pamphlets approved by the General Service Conference; and provide complimentary literature and service materials to each new group.

• To disseminate public information at the national and international levels for A.A. as a whole — cooperating with the print and electronic media as well as with organizations concerned with the treatment of alcoholism.

• To coordinate and support the work of General Service Conference committees.

• To maintain A.A. Archives.

• To operate and maintain the General Service Office A.A. website.
AA Grapevine, Inc.

Grapevine is incorporated as one of the two independent arms of A.A.’s General Service Board, with its own corporate board, staff, and financial operation separate from that of the General Service Office. Grapevine is responsible for publishing the print magazines Grapevine and La Viña, and has its own unique website, books, audio and other products to carry the A.A. message. Grapevine mirrors the Fellowship by publishing members’ stories of recovery from alcoholism in print, audio and online. *The Language of the Heart,* containing all of the Grapevine writings of co-founder Bill W., covers a broad spectrum of A.A. history and the development of A.A.’s core principles.

A network of Grapevine and La Viña representatives (GVRs and RLVs) help to carry the message of Grapevine throughout the Fellowship.

Service — our Third Legacy

As noted by Bill W., “Our Twelfth Step — carrying the message — is the basic service that the A.A. Fellowship gives; this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, A.A. is more than a set of principles; it is a society of alcoholics in action. We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven’t been given the truth may die.

“Hence, an A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer — ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.’s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service.
“Services include meeting places, hospital co-operation, and intergroup offices; they mean pamphlets, books, and good publicity of almost every description. They call for committees, delegates, trustees, and conferences. And, not to be forgotten, they need voluntary money contributions from within the Fellowship.

“These services, whether performed by individuals, groups, areas, or A.A. as a whole, are utterly vital to our existence and growth.”

Additional Resources

For more information on the topic of service in A.A. and how our Fellowship operates, a number of additional resources are available:

“The A.A. Group”
“G.S.R.: Your group’s link to A.A. as a whole”
“Your D.C.M.”
“Circles of Love and Service”
“Your A.A. General Service Office”
“A.A.’s Legacy of Service”
*The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service*
“AA Grapevine and La Viña: Our Meetings in Print and Other Media”
GVR Workbook/Handbook

For more information, contact:

General Service Office
PO Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163
212-870-3400
www.aa.org

To contact Grapevine:

AA Grapevine, Inc.
475 Riverside Drive
New York, NY 10115
212-870-3400
www.aagrapevine.org
1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11. 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 the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.
1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.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 A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.

5. Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.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.
I. Final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

II. The General Service Conference of A.A. has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society in its world affairs.

III. To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of A.A. — the Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees, and executives — with a traditional “Right of Decision.”

IV. At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional “Right of Participation,” allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

V. Throughout our structure, a traditional “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.

VI. The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the General Service Board.

VII. The Charter and Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the A.A. purse for final effectiveness.

VIII. The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.

IX. Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.

X. Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.

XI. The trustees should always have the best possible committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction procedures, and rights and duties will always be matters of serious concern.

XII. The Conference shall observe the spirit of A.A. tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government, and that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.
A.A. PUBLICATIONS  Below is a partial listing of A.A. publications. Complete order forms are available from the General Service Office of ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163. Telephone: (212) 870-3400; Website: aa.org.

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PROBLEMS OTHER THAN ALCOHOL
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A.A. IN TREATMENT SETTINGS
BRIDGING THE GAP
A.A. TRADITION—HOW IT DEVELOPED
LET'S BE FRIENDLY WITH OUR FRIENDS
UNDERSTANDING ANONYMITY

For Professionals:
A.A. IN YOUR COMMUNITY
A BRIEF GUIDE TO A.A.
IF YOU ARE A PROFESSIONAL
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AS A RESOURCE
FOR THE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL
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A.A. VIDEO FOR EMPLOYMENT/HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS

PERIODICALS
AA GRAPEVINE (monthly)
LA VINA (bimonthly, in Spanish)
A DECLARATION OF UNITY

This we owe to A.A.’s future: To place our common welfare first; to keep our fellowship united. For on A.A. unity depend our lives and the lives of those to come.

I am responsible…

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there.

And for that: **I am responsible.**

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P-42

A Brief Guide to A.A.
Alcoholics Anonymous® is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

- The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.
- A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.
- Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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A Brief Guide to Alcoholics Anonymous
For many years, alcoholism has been recognized as a highly prevalent and disabling health problem, one that affects far more than just the alcoholic alone. Family, friends and others are hurt by its effects — in the home, on the job, on our highways and roads. Alcoholism costs lives, as well as costing communities millions of dollars. So, whether or not you ever become an alcoholic yourself, alcoholism can still have a devastating impact on your life.

We in A.A. have learned a great deal about alcoholism — how to identify and arrest it, and how to live a life in recovery. But so far, no one has discovered a way to prevent it; it is still unknown just why some drinkers turn into alcoholics and others do not. Many doctors and scientists in the field have studied this question but have not been able to determine a definitive cause (or causes) of alcoholism.

For that reason, we in A.A. concentrate on helping those who are already alcoholics, those who may have a desire to stop drinking, so that they can begin to recover and to learn how to live a normal, happy life without alcohol.
What is alcoholism?

As A.A. sees it, alcoholism is an illness. Alcoholics cannot control their drinking, because they are ill in their bodies and in their minds (or emotions), A.A. believes. If they do not stop drinking, their alcoholism almost always gets worse and worse.

Both the American Medical Association and the British Medical Association, chief organizations of doctors in those countries, also have said that alcoholism is an illness.

What are the symptoms?

Not all alcoholics have the same symptoms, but many — at different stages in the illness — show these signs: They find that only alcohol can make them feel self-confident and at ease with other people; often want “just one more” at the end of a party; look forward to drinking occasions and think about them a lot; get drunk when they had not planned to; try to control their drinking by changing types of liquor, going on the wagon, or taking pledges; sneak drinks; lie about their drinking; hide bottles; drink at work (or in school); drink alone; have blackouts (that is, cannot remember the next day what they said or did the night before); drink in the morning, to relieve severe hangovers, guilty feelings and fears; fail to eat and become malnourished; get cirrhosis of the liver; shake violently, hallucinate, or have convulsions when withdrawn from liquor.

What is A.A.?

Alcoholics Anonymous is a worldwide fellowship of men and women who help each other to stay sober. They offer the same help to anyone who
has a drinking problem and wants to do something about it. Since they are all alcoholics themselves, they have a special understanding of each other. They know what the illness feels like — and they have learned how to recover from it in A.A.

A.A. members say that they are alcoholics today — even when they have not had a drink for many years. They do not say that they are “cured.” Once people have lost their ability to control their drinking, they can never again be sure of drinking safely — or, in other words, they can never become “former alcoholics” or “ex-alcoholics.” But in A.A., they can become sober alcoholics, recovered alcoholics.

**How does A.A. help the alcoholic?**

Through the example and friendship of the recovered alcoholics in A.A., new members are encouraged to stay away from a drink “one day at a time,” as the A.A.s do. Instead of “swearing off forever” or worrying about whether they will be sober tomorrow, A.A.s concentrate on not drinking right now — today.

By keeping alcohol out of their systems, newcomers take care of one part of their illness — their bodies have a chance to get well. But remember, there is another part. If they are going to stay sober, they need healthy minds and healthy emotions, too. So they begin to straighten out their confused thinking and unhappy feelings by following A.A.’s “Twelve Steps” to recovery. These Steps suggest ideas and actions that can guide alcoholics toward happy and useful lives.

To be in touch with other members and to learn about the recovery program, new members go to A.A. meetings regularly.

**What are A.A. meetings?**

Alcoholics Anonymous is established in approximately 180 countries. The people in each group get together, usually once or twice a week, to hold A.A. meetings, of two main types:

(1) At “open meetings,” speakers tell how they drank, how they discovered A.A., and how its
program has helped them. Members may bring relatives or friends, and usually anyone interested in A.A. is also welcome to attend “open meetings” as an observer.

(2) “Closed meetings” are for alcoholics only. These are group discussions, and any members who want to may speak up, to ask questions and to share their thoughts with fellow members. At “closed meetings,” A.A.s can get help with personal problems in staying sober and in everyday living. Some other A.A.s can explain how they have already handled the same problems — often by using one or more of the Twelve Steps.

Our groups endeavor to provide a safe meeting place for all attendees and encourage a secure and welcoming environment in which our meetings can take place. The formation and operation of an A.A. group resides with the group conscience. Our common suffering as alcoholics and our common solution in A.A. transcend most difficulties and help us to create as safe an environment as possible to carry A.A.’s message of hope and recovery to the still-suffering alcoholic.

Who belongs to A.A.?

Like other illnesses, alcoholism strikes all sorts of people. So the men and women in A.A. are of all races and nationalities, all religions and no religion at all. They are rich and poor and just average. They work at all occupations, as lawyers and housewives, teachers and truck drivers, waitresses and members of the clergy.

A.A. does not keep a list of members, but groups do report how many people belong to each one. From these reports, total A.A. membership is estimated at over 2,000,000.

Does an alcoholic have to go “all the way down” before A.A. can help?

A.A. was started in 1935 by a New York stockbroker and an Ohio surgeon, who had both been “hopeless” drunks. At first, most A.A. members also had been seriously ill; their drinking had
sent them to hospitals, sanitariums, or jails. But more and more people began to hear about A.A., and soon many alcoholics found they did not have to let their illness do that much damage. They could recover in A.A. *before* their health had been totally wrecked, while they still had their jobs and their families.

**Are there any young people in A.A.?**

The pamphlet “Young People and A.A.” gives the personal stories of ten who joined when they were under 30. The cartoon pamphlets “Too Young?” and “A Message to Teenagers” tell how some teenage alcoholics found A.A. Many young people like these are cheerfully staying sober and taking part in A.A. activities.

**Who runs A.A.?**

A.A. has no real government. Each group is free to work out its own customs and ways of holding meetings, as long as it does not hurt other groups or A.A. as a whole. The members elect a chairperson, a secretary, and other group officers. These officers do not give orders to anybody; mostly, their job is to see that the meetings run smoothly. In the average group, new officers are elected twice a year.

But the individual group is not cut off from the rest of A.A. Just as A.A. members help each other, so do A.A. groups. Here are three of the means they use to exchange help:

1. Groups in the same area set up a central office or “intergroup” office.

2. Groups everywhere share their experiences by writing to the A.A. General Service Office, in New York City.

3. Groups in the U.S. and Canada choose representatives to go to the A.A. General Service Conference, held once a year.

All these A.A. offices and the representatives at the Conference make *suggestions*, based on the experiences of many different A.A. groups. But they do not make rules or issue commands to any groups or members.
What does it cost to belong to A.A.?

Newcomers do not pay any fees for membership. And members do not pay dues.

But money is needed for some purposes: renting the meeting hall, buying coffee and other refreshments, buying A.A. books, pamphlets, and magazines. So a basket is usually passed around during the meeting, and members put in whatever they can afford or wish to give. Groups also contribute money to support central offices, the General Service Office, and other A.A. activities.

In return for the A.A. help that members give to other alcoholics, these members are never paid. Their reward is something much better than money — it is their own health. A.A.s have found that helping other alcoholics is the best way to stay sober themselves.

What can the families of alcoholics do?

A.A. is just for the alcoholics, but two other fellowships can help their relatives. One is Al-Anon Family Groups. The other is Alateen, for teenagers who have alcoholic parents.

What does A.A. NOT do?

1. A.A. does not run membership drives to try to argue alcoholics into joining. A.A. is for alcoholics who want to get sober.

2. A.A. does not check up on its members to see that they don’t drink. It helps alcoholics to help themselves.

3. A.A. is not a religious organization. All members are free to decide on their own personal ideas about the meaning of life.

4. A.A. is not a medical organization, does not give out medicines or psychiatric advice.

5. A.A. does not run any hospitals, wards, or treatment centers or provide nursing services.

6. A.A. is not affiliated with any other organization. But A.A. does cooperate with organizations that are interested in recovery. Some members
work for such organizations — but on their own — *not* as representatives of A.A.

7. A.A. does *not* accept money from sources outside A.A., either private or government.

8. A.A. does *not* offer any social services, does *not* provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, or money. It helps alcoholics stay sober, so they can earn these things for themselves.

9. Alcoholics Anonymous lives up to the “Anonymous” part of its title. It does *not* want members’ full names or faces to be revealed on radio, TV, newspapers or on new media technologies such as the Internet. And members do not tell other members’ names to people outside A.A. But members are *not* ashamed of belonging to A.A. They just want to encourage more alcoholics to come to A.A. for help. And they do *not* want to make heroes and heroines of themselves simply for taking care of their own health.

10. A.A. does *not* provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers, court officials, social agencies, employers, etc.

How can you find out more about A.A.?

1. Most towns and cities have an A.A. listing in the telephone book, for a group or central office. Often, local A.A. has a public information committee to tell people what they want to know about A.A.

2. If you do not find an A.A. listing in your phone book, contact:
   
   General Service Office  
   Box 459, Grand Central Station  
   New York, NY 10163  
   www.aa.org

3. You can get other A.A. pamphlets either from your town’s A.A. office or by writing to the General Service Office (address above), which will send you free *one* copy of each pamphlet you want. Some titles are:

   FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT A.A.
   YOUNG PEOPLE AND A.A.
   WHAT HAPPENED TO JOE and  
   IT HAPPENED TO ALICE  
   (two A.A. stories told in cartoon form)
4. In local libraries, you may find copies of these A.A. books:

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS COMES OF AGE
TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS
AS BILL SEES IT
DR. BOB AND THE GOOD OLDTIMERS
‘PASS IT ON’
EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH AND HOPE

5. The A.A. Grapevine (monthly magazine) may be obtained from your local A.A. office or by contacting:

Box 1980
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163
www.aagrapevine.org
THE TWELVE STEPS
OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11. 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 the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.
THE TWELVE TRADITIONS
OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.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 A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.

5. Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.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.
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The A.A. Group

...where it all begins

How a group functions.
How to get started.

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The A.A. Group
...Where it all begins

How a group functions
How to get started
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How To Use This Pamphlet

This pamphlet is designed as a handy information tool and suggested guide for an A.A. group. It serves as a complement to The A.A. Service Manual, the A.A. Group Handbook and other literature (see inside back cover), which cover specific group matters at greater depth.

Designed for easy reference, the pamphlet covers four main areas: what an A.A. group is; how a group functions; group relations with others in the community; and how the group fits into the structure of A.A. as a whole.

The table of contents details the group-related subjects covered in the body of the pamphlet. If you have further questions, please contact the General Service Office (G.S.O.) of A.A., which stands ready to help in every way it can.
A.A.’s Single Purpose

Tradition Five: Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

“There are those who predict that A.A. may well become a new spearhead for a spiritual awakening throughout the world. When our friends say these things, they are both generous and sincere. But we of A.A. must reflect that such a tribute and such a prophecy could well prove to be a heady drink for most of us — that is, if we really came to believe this to be the real purpose of A.A., and if we commenced to behave accordingly.

“Our Society, therefore, will prudently cleave to its single purpose: the carrying of the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. Let us resist the proud assumption that since God has enabled us to do well in one area we are destined to be a channel of saving grace for everybody.”

A.A. co-founder Bill W., 1955
The Importance of Anonymity

Tradition Twelve: Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

What is the purpose of anonymity in A.A.? Why is it often referred to as the greatest single protection the Fellowship has to assure its continued existence and growth?

At the level of press, television, radio, film and the Internet, anonymity stresses the equality in A.A. of all its members. It puts the brake on our easily inflatable egos, our misplaced conviction that violating our anonymity will help someone, and our desire for personal recognition or control. Most importantly, the Anonymity Tradition reminds us that it is the A.A. message, not the messenger, that counts.

At the personal level, anonymity assures privacy for all members, a safeguard often of special significance to newcomers who may hesitate to seek help in A.A. if they have any reason to believe their alcoholism may be exposed publicly.

In theory, the anonymity principle seems clear, but putting it into effect is not always easy. Following are some general guidelines culled from A.A. group experience that may be helpful.

Maintaining Anonymity at the Public Level

When appearing on radio, television, film or on the Internet as A.A. members, we refrain from showing our faces or revealing our last names. In printed articles, on websites or email, we are identified by our first names and last initials only.

We use our first names and last initials only when speaking as A.A. members at non-A.A. meetings. (See the A.A. pamphlet “Speaking at Non-A.A. Meetings.”)

We do not put “A.A.” on envelopes sent through the mail, not even on correspondence directed to A.A. entities. On material to be posted on A.A. bulletin boards and printed on A.A. programs that the general public might see, we omit all members’ last names and identifying titles, such as “Reverend,” “Professor” or “Sergeant.”
**Understanding Anonymity at the A.A. Group Level**

We may use last names within our group. At the same time, we respect the right of other members to maintain their own anonymity however they wish, and as closely as they wish. Some groups keep a list of names and telephone numbers volunteered by their members, and may provide phone lists — but for the eyes of the group members only.

We repeat no one’s personal sharing made in A.A. meetings. The word “anonymous” in our name is a promise of privacy. Besides, the only story of recovery we can truly share is our own.

In our personal relationships with nonalcoholics — and with those we think might have a problem with alcohol — we may feel free to say that we are recovering alcoholics (without divulging the names of other A.A. members), although discretion is recommended. Here our openness may help to carry the message.

We refrain from videotaping that special A.A. talk or meeting, which might receive exposure at the public level. And, as the 1980 General Service Conference recommended, it is wiser that talks by A.A. members be given in person, in view of the temptation when videotaping to place personalities before principles and thus encourage the development of a “star” system in Alcoholics Anonymous.

For more information about this important Tradition, see the A.A. pamphlet “Understanding Anonymity.”
Introduction

As it says in Concept I:

The final responsibility and the ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

The A.A. Group — the Final Voice of the Fellowship

“Alcoholics Anonymous has been called an upside-down organization because “the ultimate responsibility and final authority for world services resides with the groups — rather than with the trustees, the General Service Board or the General Service Office in New York.”

“Twelve Concepts For World Service Illustrated”

The entire structure of A.A. depends upon the participation and conscience of the individual groups, and how each of these groups conducts its affairs has a ripple effect on A.A. everywhere. Thus, we are ever individually conscious of our responsibility for our own sobriety and, as a group, for carrying the A.A. message to the suffering alcoholic who reaches out to us for help.

A.A. has no central authority, minimal organization, and a handful of Traditions instead of laws. As co-founder Bill W. noted in 1960, “We obey [the Twelve Traditions] willingly because we ought to and because we want to. Perhaps the secret of their power lies in the fact that these life-giving communications spring out of living experience and are rooted in love.”

A.A. is shaped by the collective voice of its local groups and their representatives to the General Service Conference, which works toward unanimity on matters vital to the Fellowship. Each group functions independently, except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.

A.A.’s essential group work is done by alcoholics who are themselves recovering in the Fellowship, and each of us is entitled to do our A.A. service in the way we think best within the spirit of the Traditions. This means that we function as a democracy, with all plans for group action approved by the majority voice. No single individual is appointed to act for the group or for Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole.
Each group is as unique as a thumbprint, and approaches to carrying the message of sobriety vary not just from group to group but from region to region. Acting autonomously, each group charts its own course. The better informed the members, the stronger and more cohesive the group — and the greater the assurance that when a newcomer reaches out for help, the hand of A.A. always will be there.

Most of us cannot recover unless there is a group. As Bill said, “Realization dawns on each member that he is but a small part of a great whole. ...He learns that the clamor of desires and ambitions within him must be silenced whenever these could damage the group. It becomes plain that the group must survive or the individual will not.”
The Group... Where A.A.’s Service Structure Begins

What Is an A.A. Group?

As the long form of Tradition Three clearly states, “Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.”

Further clarification of an A.A. group may be found in the Twelve Concepts for World Service, Concept Twelve, Warranty Six:

- no penalties to be inflicted for nonconformity to A.A. principles;
- no fees or dues to be levied — voluntary contributions only;
- no member to be expelled from A.A. — membership always to be the choice of the individual;
- each A.A. group to conduct its internal affairs as it wishes — it being merely requested to abstain from acts that might injure A.A. as a whole; and finally
- that any group of alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group provided that, as a group, they have no other purpose or affiliation.

Some A.A.s come together as specialized A.A. groups — for men, women, young people, doctors, gays and others. If the members are all alcoholics, and if they open the door to all alcoholics who seek help, regardless of profession, gender or other distinction, and meet all the other aspects defining an A.A. group, they may call themselves an A.A. group.

Is There a Difference Between a Meeting and a Group?

Most A.A. members meet in A.A. groups as defined by the long form of our Third Tradition (see page 44). However, some A.A. members hold A.A. meetings that differ from the common understanding of a group. These members simply gather at a set time
and place for a meeting, perhaps for convenience or other special situations. The main difference between meetings and groups is that A.A. groups generally continue to exist outside the prescribed meeting hours, ready to provide Twelfth Step help when needed.

A.A. groups are encouraged to get listed with G.S.O., as well as with their local offices: area, district, intergroup or central office. A.A. meetings can be listed in local meeting lists.

**How Do You Become an A.A. Group Member?**

“The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking” (Tradition Three). Thus, group membership requires no formal application. Just as we are members of A.A. if we say we are, so are we members of a group if we say we are.

**The Difference Between Open and Closed A.A. Meetings**

The purpose of all A.A. group meetings, as the Preamble states, is for A.A. members to “share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.” Toward this end, A.A. groups have both open and closed meetings.

**Closed meetings** are for A.A. members only, or for those who have a drinking problem and “have a desire to stop drinking.”

**Open meetings** are available to anyone interested in Alcoholics Anonymous’ program of recovery from alcoholism. Nonalcoholics may attend open meetings as observers.

At both types of meetings, the A.A. chairperson may request that participants confine their discussion to matters pertaining to recovery from alcoholism.

Whether open or closed, A.A. group meetings are conducted by A.A. members who determine the format of their meetings.

**What Kinds of Meetings Do A.A. Groups Hold?**

“Each group should be autonomous,” our Fourth Tradition says, “except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.” So, predictably, each meeting held by our thousands of groups has its own imprint.

The most common kinds of A.A. meetings are:

1. **Discussion.** Whether closed or open, an A.A. member serving as “leader” or “chair” opens the meeting using that group’s format, and selects a topic for discussion.
Background for many topic meetings derives from A.A. literature, such as *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Big Book), *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, *As Bill Sees It, Daily Reflections*, and from the A.A. Grapevine. A few specific topic suggestions may include:

- attitude
- defects of character
- fear
- freedom through sobriety
- gratitude
- higher power
- honesty
- humility
- making amends
- resentments
- sponsorship
- surrender
- the tools of recovery
- tolerance
- willingness

2. *Speaker*. One or more members selected beforehand “share,” as described in the Big Book, telling what they were like, what happened and what they are like now.

   Depending upon the group conscience for general guidelines, some groups prefer that members who speak have a minimum period of continuous sobriety. Speaker meetings often are open meetings.

3. *Beginners*. Usually led by a group member who has been sober awhile, these are often question-and-answer sessions to help newcomers. Beginners meetings may also follow a discussion format, or focus on Steps One, Two and Three. (A Guide for Leading Beginners Meetings is available from G.S.O.)

4. *Step, Tradition or Big Book*. Because the Twelve Steps are the foundation of personal recovery in A.A., many groups devote one or more meetings a week to the study of each Step in rotation; some discuss two or three Steps at a time. These same formats may be applied to group meetings on the Big Book or the Twelve Traditions. Many groups make it a practice to read aloud pertinent material from the Big Book or *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* at the beginning of the meeting.

   In addition to the meetings described above, groups also hold the following kinds of meetings:

   - **Business**. Some groups schedule special sessions
throughout the year, apart from regular meetings, for reports from group officers to discuss group affairs and obtain group guidance. Group officers usually are elected at such meetings. (See section on Business Meetings, p. 30.)

**Group Inventory.** These are meetings at which members work toward understanding how well the group is fulfilling its primary purpose. (See section on Group Inventory, p. 29.)

**Service.** These are general information meetings about service; they may also function as a forum for delegate reports or other communications.

**A.A. Grapevine/La Viña.** These are meetings where A.A. topics from the A.A. Grapevine or La Viña may be discussed.

### Suggested A.A. Meeting Procedures

No one type or format is the best for an A.A. meeting, but some work better than others.

The chairperson usually opens the meeting with the A.A. Preamble and a few remarks. Some call for a moment of silence and/or recite the Serenity Prayer. Others have a reading from the Big Book — frequently a portion of Chapter 5 (“How It Works”) or Chapter 3 (“More About Alcoholism”). At many group meetings, a chapter, or a part of a chapter, from *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* is read aloud. Having different members or visiting A.A.s do the reading helps newcomers especially to feel they are sharing in group life.

The chairperson may stress the importance of preserving the anonymity of A.A. members outside the meeting room and further caution attendees to “leave any confidences you hear in these rooms behind when you go.” (Wallet cards and a display placard on the subject, as well as the pamphlet “Understanding Anonymity” are available from G.S.O.)

Many meetings close with members joining in a moment of silence followed by a prayer, or perhaps by reciting the Responsibility Declaration or other A.A. text.

### The A.A. Home Group

Traditionally, most A.A. members through the years have found it important to belong to one group that they call their “home group.” This is the group where they accept service responsibilities and try to sustain friendships. And although all A.A. members are usually welcome at all groups and feel at home at any of these meetings, the concept of the
home group has still remained the strongest bond between the A.A. member and the Fellowship.

With membership comes the right to vote on issues that might affect the group and might also affect A.A. as a whole — a process that forms the very cornerstone of A.A.’s service structure. As with all group-conscience matters, each A.A. member has one vote; and this, ideally, is voiced through the home group.

Over the years, the very essence of A.A. strength has remained with our home group, which, for many members, becomes our extended family. Once isolated by our drinking, we find in the home group a solid, continuing support system, friends and, very often, a sponsor. We also learn firsthand, through the group’s workings, how to place “principles before personalities” in the interest of carrying the A.A. message.

Talking about her own group, a member says: “Part of my commitment is to show up at my home group meetings, greet newcomers at the door, and be available to them — not only for them but for me. My fellow group members are the people who know me, listen to me, and steer me straight when I am off in left field. They give me their experience, strength and A.A. love, enabling me to ‘pass it on’ to the alcoholic who still suffers.”

**Self-support: The Seventh Tradition**

There are no dues or fees for membership in A.A., but we do have expenses such as rent, refreshments, A.A. Conference-approved literature, meeting lists and contributions to services provided by the local intergroup (central office), district and area, and the General Service Office of A.A. In keeping with the Seventh Tradition a group may “pass the basket” for contributions, and members are encouraged to participate.

**Coffee, Tea and Fellowship**

Many A.A. members report that their circle of A.A. friends has widened greatly as the result of coffee and conversation before and after meetings.

Most groups depend upon their members to prepare for each meeting, serve the refreshments, and clean up afterward. You often hear A.A. members say that they first “felt like members” when they began making coffee, helping with the chairs, or cleaning the coffee pot. Some newcomers find that such activity relieves their shyness and makes it easier to meet and talk to other members.
How an A.A. Group Functions

Tradition Four: Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.

How to Start a New A.A. Group

Reasons for starting a new group vary, but the ways to go about it are basically the same.

Important to establishing an A.A. group is the need for one as expressed by at least two or three alcoholics; the cooperation of other A.A. members; a meeting place; a coffee pot; A.A. literature and meeting lists; and other supplies.

Once the group is off to a good start, it would be helpful to announce its presence to neighboring groups; your local intergroup (central) office, if there is one; your district and area committees; and the General Service Office. These sources can provide much support.

Contact G.S.O. for copies of the New Group Form, which should be completed and returned for the new group to be listed. Each new group receives a complimentary handbook and a small supply of literature at no charge when it is listed with G.S.O. (one of the many services made possible by the regular support of other A.A. groups and individual members). The New Group Form can be downloaded from our website (aa.org), or requested by mail at G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

Naming an A.A. Group

No matter how noble the activity or institution, experience has taught A.A. groups to carefully avoid any affiliation with or endorsement of any enterprise outside A.A.

Tradition Six: An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

Even the appearance of being linked to any organization, club, or political or religious institution needs to be avoided.

Therefore, an A.A. group that meets in a correctional or treatment facility or a church should take
care not to use the institution’s name, but to call itself something quite different. This makes it clear that the A.A. group is not affiliated with the hospital, church, prison, treatment facility, or whatever, but simply rents space there for meetings.

Our A.A. group conscience, as voiced by the General Service Conference, has recommended that “family” meetings, “double trouble” and “alcohol and pill” meetings not be listed in our A.A. directories. The use of the word “family” might also invite confusion with Al-Anon Family Groups, a fellowship entirely separate from A.A.

The primary purpose of any A.A. group is to carry the A.A. message to *alcoholics*. Experience with alcohol is one thing all A.A. members have in common. It is misleading to hint or give the impression that A.A. solves other problems or knows what to do about drug addiction.

There has also been a recommendation by the A.A. General Service Conference suggesting that no A.A. group be named after any actual person, living or dead, A.A. or non-A.A. That is one way we can “place principles before personalities.”

**What Do A.A. Group Members Do?**

“I am responsible … when anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that I am responsible.” In short, when newcomers walk into our meeting rooms, we want A.A. to be there for them as it was for us — something we can do continuously only if we function as a group.

But, for a group to keep going, all kinds of service must be done. It is through the combined efforts and ongoing commitment of group members that:

- A meeting place is provided and maintained.
- Programs are arranged for the meetings.
- Seventh Tradition contributions are collected, and properly allocated and spent.
- A.A. Conference-approved literature is on hand.
- A.A. Grapevine and La Viña literature and lists of local group meetings are available.
- Refreshments are available.
- Assistance in finding A.A. meetings is given to alcoholics in the area.
- Calls for help are answered.
- Group problems are aired and resolved.
- Continuing contact is sustained with the rest of A.A. — locally, through the intergroup (central office), district and area’s general service
structure; and nationally and internationally, through the General Service Office in New York.

**What Trusted Servants (Officers) Do We Need?**

It takes member participation to ensure that group service work is done. Most of us agree that A.A. ought 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 on page 19 shows possibilities for service at the group level.

Some groups have positions that do not appear on this chart, such as greeter, archivist, accessibility 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 $5,000 annually. Bequests of not more than $10,000 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 $5,000 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 page 33).

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.)

Financial Support: Current experience indicates that many groups provide financial support for their general service representatives to attend service functions.

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’ experi-
ence 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, A.A. Grapevine, and its bimonthly 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: Grapevine, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115, or email gvrc@aagrapevine.org, 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 provide contact information online at the Grapevine website: aagrapevine.org. Magazine subscription checks should be made out 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 know 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 Committee Liaison

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

Members of the treatment 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), treatment committee members also may act as contacts when alcoholic patients are discharged.

The pamphlet “A.A. in Treatment Settings” and the Treatment Workbook can be of help to A.A.s in treatment service work.

**Public Information Committee Liaison**

Group public information (P.I.) representatives 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 alcohol-
ics. They keep their home groups informed of area C.P.C. activities and, when appropriate, arrange for group volunteers to join together in carrying the A.A. message at professional meetings, seminars, and more. (In some groups, the functions of the C.P.C. and public information representatives are combined.)

The C.P.C. Workbook and the pamphlets “If You Are a Professional, Alcoholics Anonymous Wants to Work with You,” “Members of the Clergy Ask About A.A.” and other pertinent literature can be of assistance to C.P.C. representatives in reaching out to professionals.

**Accessibilities Committee Liaison**

The accessibilities representative may coordinate any needed assistance to those alcoholics who face additional personal barriers to accessing the A.A. message within their home group. Many accessibilities representatives find it beneficial to communicate with their intergroup (central office) when trying to reach those facing such challenges. Some areas or districts have accessibilities committees, as well.

For some A.A. members, a six-inch step can be an insurmountable obstacle. A locked access door, a blocked ramp or parking problem can make it impossible to get to a meeting. Some members are ill, homebound or living in retirement or convalescent homes, others have hearing or vision loss, learning, reading or information-processing challenges, and still others are elderly, use wheelchairs or canes, or have other mobility concerns. Literature may be hard to understand. Childcare issues may make it impossible to attend regular meetings. Remote geography or cultural differences may hinder contact with other members.

Accessibility issues apply to all alcoholics who have difficulties participating in Alcoholics Anonymous, whether those difficulties are mental, physical, geographic, cultural, ethnic, spiritual or emotional.

A wide variety of accessibilities material is available that can help in this effort, including literature in braille, American Sign Language (ASL), and easy-to-read pamphlets in English, as well as in other languages, in regular and large print. The service piece “Serving All Alcoholics” and the A.A. Guidelines “Accessibility for All Alcoholics” and “Sharing the A.A. Message with the Alcoholic Who Is Deaf” can provide direction and guidance for those interested in making the Alcoholics Anonymous message and participation in our program of recovery available to everyone who reaches out for it.
Principles Before Personalities

Tradition Two: 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.

The Principle of Rotation

Traditionally, rotation ensures that group tasks, like nearly everything else in A.A., are passed around for all to share. Many groups have alternates to each trusted servant who can step into the service positions if needed.

To step out of an A.A. office you love can be hard. If you have been doing a good job, if you honestly don’t see anyone else around willing, qualified, or with the time to do it, and if your friends agree, it’s especially tough. But it can be a real step forward in growth — a step into the humility that is, for some people, the spiritual essence of anonymity.

Among other things, anonymity in the Fellowship means that we forgo personal prestige for any A.A. work we do to help alcoholics. And, in the spirit of Tradition Twelve, it ever reminds us “to place principles before personalities.”

Many outgoing service position holders find it rewarding to take time to share their experience with the incoming person. Rotation helps to bring us spiritual rewards far more enduring than any fame. With no A.A. “status” at stake, we needn’t compete for titles or praise — we have complete freedom to serve as we are needed.

What Is an Informed A.A. Group Conscience?

The group conscience is the collective conscience of the group membership and thus represents substantial unanimity on an issue before definitive action is taken. This is achieved by the group members through the sharing of full information, individual points of view, and the practice of A.A. principles. To be fully informed requires a willingness to listen to minority opinions with an open mind.

On sensitive issues, the group works slowly — discouraging formal motions until a clear sense of its collective view emerges. Placing principles before
personalities, the membership is wary of dominant opinions. Its voice is heard when a well-informed group arrives at a decision. The result rests on more than a “yes” or “no” count — precisely because it is the spiritual expression of the group conscience. The term “informed group conscience” implies that pertinent information has been studied and all views have been heard before the group votes.

A.A. Group Inventory

Many groups periodically hold a “group inventory meeting” to evaluate how well they are fulfilling their primary purpose: to help alcoholics recover through A.A.’s suggested Twelve Steps of recovery. Some groups take inventory by examining our Twelve Traditions, one at a time, to determine how well they are living up to these principles.

The following questions, compiled from A.A. shared experience, may be useful in arriving at an informed group conscience. Groups will probably wish to add questions of their own:

1. What is the basic purpose of our group?
2. What more can our group do to carry the message?
3. Is our group attracting alcoholics from different backgrounds? Are we seeing a good cross-section of our community, including those with accessibility issues?
4. Do new members stick with us, or does the turnover seem excessive? If so, why? What can we as a group do to retain members?
5. Do we emphasize the importance of sponsorship? How effectively? How can we do it better?
6. Are we careful to preserve the anonymity of our group members and other A.A.s outside the meeting rooms? Do we also leave what they share at meetings behind?
7. Does our group emphasize to all members the value of keeping up with the kitchen, set-up, clean-up and other housekeeping chores that are essential for our Twelfth Step efforts?
8. Are all members given the opportunity to speak at meetings and to participate in other group activities?
9. Mindful that holding office is a great responsibility not to be viewed as the outcome of a popularity contest, are we choosing our officers with care?
10. Are we doing all we can to provide a safe, attractive and accessible meeting place?
11. Does our group do its fair share toward parti-
icipating in the purpose of A.A. — as it relates to our Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service?

12. What has our group done lately to bring the A.A. message to the attention of professionals in the community — the physicians, clergy, court officials, educators and others who are often the first to see alcoholics in need of help?

13. How is our group fulfilling its responsibility to the Seventh Tradition?

**A.A. Business Meetings**

In most groups, the chairperson or another officer calls the business meeting, which ordinarily is held on a monthly or quarterly basis.

While some groups may occasionally permit non-members to attend, the group may request that only home group members participate or vote. The order of business may include: electing new officers; scheduling meetings; receiving and discussing the treasurer’s periodic financial reports; hearing progress reports from the general service representative and other group servants; and apportioning excess funds among the local intergroup, G.S.O. and the area and district treasuries.

Before a vote is taken, it is essential that the members be given all facts relevant to the subject at hand. In many cases, a few members may be asked to look into the pros and cons of the issue and present them at the meeting. Arriving at an informed group conscience in big matters or small is a process that may take some time. But it is important that minority, or dissenting, views be heard along with those of the majority. In some instances, they may even turn the tide.

Business meetings generally are scheduled before or after the group’s regular meeting. They tend to be informal, but custom varies from group to group. Some groups have tried observing Robert’s Rules of Order, a parliamentary procedure for running smooth meetings, only to find that many members are inexperienced in the procedures and feel too intimidated to speak up. Besides, there is the spiritual nature of our Fellowship, embodied in our Traditions and Concepts, which give ample guidance.

**About Those A.A. Group Problems...**

Group problems are often evidence of a healthy, desirable diversity of opinion among the group members. They give us a chance, in the words of Step Twelve, to “practice these principles in all our affairs.”
Group problems may include such common A.A. questions as: What should the group do about members who return to drinking? How can we boost lagging attendance at meetings? How can we get more people to help with group chores? What can we do about one member’s anonymity break, or another’s attempts to attract the romantic interest of newcomers? How can we get out from under those oldtimers who insist they know what’s best for the group? And how can we get more of the oldtimers to share their experience in resolving group dilemmas?

Almost every group problem can be solved through the process of an informed group conscience, A.A. principles, and our Twelve Traditions. Some groups find that their G.S.R. or D.C.M. can be helpful. For all involved, a good sense of humor, cooling-off periods, patience, courtesy, willingness to listen and to wait — plus a sense of fairness and trust in a “Power greater than ourselves” — have been found far more effective than legalistic arguments or personal accusations.

Safety and A.A.: Suggestions to Consider
Safety is an important issue within A.A. — one that all groups and members can address to develop workable solutions and help keep our meetings safe based on the fundamental principles of the Fellowship.

“Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.” (Tradition One, Long Form)

A.A. groups are spiritual entities made up of alcoholics who gather for the sole purpose of staying sober and helping other alcoholics to achieve sobriety. Yet, we are not immune to the difficulties that affect the rest of humanity.

Alcoholics Anonymous is a microcosm of the larger society within which we exist. Problems found in the outside world can also make their way into the rooms of A.A. As we strive to share in a spirit of trust, both at meetings and individually with sponsors and friends, it is reasonable for each member to expect a meaningful level of safety. Those attending A.A. meetings derive a benefit by providing a safe environment in which alcoholics can focus on gaining and maintaining sobriety. The group can then fulfill its primary purpose — to carry the A.A. message to the alcoholic who still suffers. For this reason, groups and members discuss the topic of safety.

For more information see “Safety and A.A.: Our Common Welfare” (SMF-209) aa.org.
How the A.A. Group Relates To A.A. as a Whole

Tradition One: Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.

What is the General Service Office?
The General Service Office is a repository for A.A.’s shared experience. It fulfills our primary purpose by: (1) providing service, information and experience to groups worldwide; (2) publishing literature; (3) supporting the activities of the General Service Board of A.A.; and (4) carrying forward recommendations of the General Service Conference.

G.S.O.’s history dates back to 1938, when the about-to-be-published book, Alcoholics Anonymous, provided a name for the small society known only as the Alcoholic Foundation. The Foundation’s rapidly expanding office soon served as the focal point for questions about A.A. from around the world, and in time became the General Service Office as we know it today.

The former Alcoholic Foundation is now called the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.

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The former Alcoholic Foundation is now called the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.
Its trustees, alcoholic and nonalcoholic alike, and directors are entrusted with the supervision of the two service agencies — Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. and A.A. Grapevine, Inc. — and are the custodians of funds contributed by the groups.

What Gets Done at Your General Service Office?

Working closely with committees of A.A.’s General Service Board, your General Service Office has broad responsibilities to its member groups. They include the following:

1. Collect, organize and pass along to A.A. groups and members throughout the U.S. and Canada the shared experiences on group challenges and solutions, when asked.
2. Work with alcoholics overseas, as well as Loners (A.A.s living in areas with no meetings); Homers (housebound or disabled members); Internationalists (seagoing A.A.s); A.A.s in the armed forces; and A.A.s in treatment and correctional facilities.
3. Answer numerous letters requesting information about A.A. and the help it provides for alcoholics.
4. Publish the A.A. newsletter, Box 4-5-9, and other bulletins.
5. Distribute A.A. books and pamphlets approved by the General Service Conference and published by A.A. World Services (see list on inside back cover).
6. Provide complimentary literature and a Group Handbook to each new group that is listed with G.S.O.
7. Coordinate and support the work of our General Service Conference committees.
8. Publish group directories to help A.A. groups and individuals with Twelfth Step work.
9. Disseminate public information at the national and international levels for A.A. as a whole — cooperating with the print and electronic media as well as with organizations concerned with the treatment of alcoholism.
10. Produce and distribute audiovisual materials.
11. Maintain A.A. Archives.
12. Maintain the General Service Office website.

Who Is in Charge at G.S.O.?

No one person or group of persons is “in charge,” although the general manager carries out primary responsibility for day-to-day operations and is assisted
by other administrative officers and the General Service Office staff. Staff members at each service desk are themselves recovering alcoholics. Other employees may or may not be recovering alcoholics.

Who Is in Charge at A.A. Grapevine?
At Grapevine, the executive editor oversees the publication of the magazine, circulation, customer service and the day-to-day operation of the office.

How Decisions Affecting A.A. Are Made
The trustees of the General Service Board (14 alcoholics and seven nonalcoholics) are responsible to A.A. groups through the General Service Conference. Annually, groups from the U.S. and Canada elect delegates (serving two-year terms) from their areas to the yearly meeting of the Conference in New York — to hear the reports of the board’s committees, G.S.O. and Grapevine staffs, and to recommend future directions, mainly in the form of Advisory Actions. It is the responsibility of the Conference to work toward a consensus, or informed group conscience, on matters vital to A.A. as a whole. The Conference delegates report back to the groups in their areas.

Each area committee is responsible to — and is chosen by — an assembly of the groups’ general service representatives (G.S.R.s — see page 22).

Essential links between G.S.R.s and area delegates to the General Service Conference are the district committee members (D.C.M.s) and their alternates, who are generally elected at the same time. As trusted servants of the district committees, composed of all the G.S.R.s in that district, the D.C.M.s are exposed to the entire group conscience of their districts. As members of the area committees, they are able to share this group conscience with the area delegate and committees.

Were it not for the link provided by D.C.M.s in communicating with new groups as A.A. expands, the General Service Conference might soon become unwieldy. As the number of A.A. groups climbs, more districts may be added. For more information, see The A.A. Service Manual.

How Are A.A. World Services Supported?
Like the expenses of other A.A. activities, those of the General Service Office are met generally by group and individual contributions. Since these contributions do not completely cover the cost of A.A.’s
world services, publishing income is used to help offset the deficit.

For ways your group can give support, read the suggestions below.

How Can A.A. Groups Help G.S.O.?
The final responsibility for, and the benefits of, what gets done by G.S.O. depends very much on each and every group.

If groups want A.A. to be available to the newcomer today and in the future, their participation in the work of G.S.O. is needed. Here are a few of the things groups can do to help:

1. Stay informed about what goes on at G.S.O., because your group may be affected. And ask
questions. The more you know about A.A., the more useful you can be in carrying the message.

2. Choose a qualified general service representative. The G.S.R. acts as the important liaison between the group and A.A. as a whole — carrying the group's voice to the general service structure, and reporting news of the greater Fellowship back to the home group.

3. It is important to inform G.S.O. of any group changes — such as information concerning a new G.S.R. or a change in address or group name. This is the only way to keep information coming to your group without interruption.

Once your group service number has been assigned by G.S.O., it should be used on all communications from your group to G.S.O. to ensure faster processing and greater accuracy.

G.S.O. furnishes a form specifically for the purpose of recording changes in existing group information “For Use in Changing Group Information” (not to be confused with the “New Group Form” for startup groups, see page 17). You can request the form by mail at: Group Services, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; or download the form from our website at aa.org.

What Is Available from Your G.S.O.?
The General Service Office makes available a storehouse of service material to assist groups with nearly every phase of A.A. life.

Unlike A.A. Conference-approved books, pamphlets and audiovisual materials, which are produced as the result of General Service Conference Advisory Actions, service material is created in response to members’ expressed needs for clear, concise, experiential information on subjects ranging from the A.A. Birthday Plan and shared experience on self-support to a map of A.A. regions in the U.S. and Canada.

Other service pieces provide information on such frequently asked questions as: What is the origin of the Serenity Prayer? What is an A.A. group? How is the Fellowship structured? How is a sharing session conducted? Why is sponsorship important? Included in each piece are some suggested topics for discussion meetings.

G.S.O. also offers suggested A.A. Guidelines, sharing experience on many topics of concern to members, groups and committees. Some topics these Guidelines cover include:
• Sharing the A.A. Message with the Alcoholic Who Is Deaf.
• Accessibility for All Alcoholics.
• Central or Intergroup Offices.
• A.A. Answering Services.
• Relationship Between A.A. and Clubs.
• Relationship Between A.A. and Al-Anon.
• Cooperating with Court, D.W.I., and Similar Programs.
• Literature Committees.
• Corrections Committees.
• Treatment Committees.
• Public Information Committees.
• Cooperation with the Professional Community Committees.

Some of the more frequently requested service pieces have been printed in large type to accommodate the visually impaired. Others, including a number of the Guidelines, are available in French and Spanish.

For a listing of all service pieces available, write: the General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; or find the listing on the website at aa.org.

What Is an Intergroup (Central Office)?
How Does It Function?

Your intergroup, or central office, is often where the still-suffering alcoholic first calls or shows up for A.A. help.

Although local intergroups operate independently of A.A.’s worldwide service structure, they are a vital part of the Fellowship. In most areas, any group that so wishes can belong to the local intergroup, which is supported by contributions from its member groups. These contributions are purely voluntary.

In areas where it may not be practical to open a service office as such, groups sometimes set up joint committees for their Twelfth Step efforts and activities, and use a carefully briefed central telephone answering service to take calls. Due to workload, a local service system of this type seems to work better if it is handled separately from the work of the area general service committee.

Most intergroups function with only one or two paid workers (some have none) and so rely heavily on A.A. volunteers for help. Many A.A.s have found
that serving at intergroup — answering calls from alcoholics and doing what else needs to be done — greatly enriches their sobriety and broadens their circle of friends.

What Does an Intergroup (Central Office) Do?

An intergroup or central office is a vital A.A. service office that represents a partnership among groups in a community — just as A.A. groups themselves are a partnership of individuals. These offices are established to carry out common functions that are best handled by a centralized office, and it is usually maintained, supervised and supported by these groups for their common interest. The office exists to aid the groups in carrying the A.A. message to the alcoholic who still suffers. Methods and goals vary from one area to another, but generally the intergroup or central office responsibility is to:

1. Respond to phone or walk-in requests for help from alcoholics and, when appropriate, arrange for A.A. volunteers (listed with the office) to meet with and accompany them to an A.A. meeting.
2. Maintain A.A. listings in local phone directories, handle phone and mail inquiries, and route them to local groups, thus distributing Twelfth Step work on a geographical basis so that newcomers are assured of help.
3. Distribute up-to-date meeting lists.
4. Stock and sell A.A. literature.
5. Serve as a communications center for participating groups — often issuing regular newsletters or bulletins to keep groups informed about one another.
6. Arrange systems for groups to exchange speakers.
7. Coordinate the efforts of intergroup committees.
8. Sometimes provide information on treatment facilities, hospitals and halfway houses.
10. Cooperate with local, district and area committees. (Some intergroups elect members to serve as area liaisons and welcome their participation in intergroup meetings.)
11. Maintain communication and cooperation — but not affiliation — with the community and helping professionals in the field of alcoholism.
What A.A. Does Not Do

Tradition Ten: *Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.*

1. Recruit members or furnish initial motivation for alcoholics to recover.
2. Keep membership records or case histories.
3. Follow up or try to control its members.
4. Make medical or psychological diagnoses or prognoses.
5. Provide hospitalization, drugs, or medical or psychiatric treatment.
6. Provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money or other such services.
7. Provide domestic or vocational counseling.
8. Engage in or sponsor research.
9. Affiliate with social agencies (though many members and service offices do cooperate with them).
10. Offer religious services.
11. Engage in any controversy about alcohol or other matters.
12. Accept money for its services or contributions from non-A.A. sources.
13. Provide letters of reference to parole boards, attorneys, court officials, schools, businesses, social agencies, or any other organization or institution.

A.A. and Alcoholism

Tradition Six: *An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.*

Cooperation but not Affiliation

Alcoholics Anonymous is a worldwide fellowship of alcoholics who help each other to stay sober and who offer to share their recovery experience freely with others who may have a drinking problem. A.A. members are distinctive in their acceptance of a suggested program of Twelve Steps designed for personal recovery from alcoholism.
The Fellowship functions through more than 66,000 local groups in the U.S. and Canada and there is A.A. activity in more than 180 countries. It is estimated that there are now more than 2 million members.

A.A. is concerned solely with the personal recovery and continuing sobriety of individual alcoholics who turn to the Fellowship for help. A.A. does not engage in the field of alcoholism research, medical or psychiatric treatment, education or propaganda in any form, although members may participate in such activities as individuals.

A.A. has adopted a policy of cooperation but not affiliation with other organizations concerned with the treatment of alcoholism.

Traditionally, Alcoholics Anonymous does not accept nor seek financial support from outside sources, and members preserve personal anonymity at the level of press, television, radio, the Internet and films.

**A.A. and Other Organizations**

A.A. is not affiliated with any other organization or institution. Our Traditions encourage cooperation but not affiliation.

**More Questions and Answers About A.A.**

**What Are the Three Legacies of A.A.?**

Recovery, Unity and Service. These are derived from the accumulated experience of A.A.’s earliest members that has been passed on and shared with us: the suggestions for Recovery are the Twelve Steps; the suggestions for achieving Unity are the Twelve Traditions; and A.A. Service is described in *The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service*, and *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*.

**Who Runs Clubhouses for A.A.s?**

Owning and managing real estate are not a part of the functions of an A.A. group or of combined groups. So, technically, there is no such thing as an “A.A. club.”

However, some members — acting as private individuals, not as A.A. members — have formed nonprofit corporations — entirely separate and apart from their A.A. groups — to maintain clubs for
A.A. members and groups, who usually pay rent to the club.

To avoid problems of money, property and prestige, most groups have learned to stick to their primary purpose and leave club-running to separate corporations outside A.A. itself. For that reason, the General Service Office does not accept contributions from clubs. Of course, G.S.O. does accept contributions directly from groups that rent meeting space in clubs. (For more information, see “A.A. Guidelines on Clubs.”)

Who Runs Halfway Houses and Other Treatment Settings?

A.A. does not provide medical and social services. As a Fellowship, we are not qualified to render such aid.

However, many A.A. members serve as valuable employees in hospitals and treatment settings. There is no such thing as an “A.A. hospital” or an “A.A. halfway house” — although A.A. meetings and fellowship, sponsored by A.A. members, are available at many of these facilities.

In accordance with Tradition Six, A.A. members and groups make certain that neither the name of the institution nor its promotional literature or letterheads bear the A.A. name. Neither should any other name (such as “Twelfth Step House”) be used that erroneously implies endorsement by A.A.

What Types of A.A. Meetings Are Held in Treatment Settings?

Regular A.A. Group Meetings: Some A.A. groups rent space in treatment settings. These meetings have the advantage of making the meeting more accessible to clients in the facility.

Treatment Setting A.A. meetings: Attendance is primarily limited to clients in the facility and A.A.s on a treatment committee who chair the meeting and arrange for outside A.A. speakers.
THE TWELVE STEPS
OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.

2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11. 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 the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.
THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.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 A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.

5. Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.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.
The Twelve Traditions
(The Long Form)

Our A.A. experience has taught us that:

1. Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.

2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.

3. Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.

4. With respect to its own affairs, each A.A. group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect A.A. as a whole without conferring with the trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.

5. Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity **having but one primary purpose** — that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

6. Problems of money, property, and authority may easily divert us from our primary spiritual aim. We think, therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to A.A. should be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual. An A.A. group, as such, should never go into business. Secondary aids to A.A., such as clubs or hospitals which require much property or administration, ought to be incorporated and so set apart that, if necessary, they can be freely discarded by the groups. Hence such facilities ought not to use the A.A. name. Their management should be the sole responsibility of those people who financially support them. For clubs, A.A. managers are usually preferred. But hospitals, as well as other places of recuperation, ought to be well outside A.A.—and medically supervised. While an A.A.
group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never to go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied. An A.A. group can bind itself to no one.

7. The A.A. groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members. We think that each group should soon achieve this ideal; that any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous is highly dangerous, whether by groups, clubs, hospitals, or other outside agencies; that acceptance of large gifts from any source, or of contributions carrying any obligations whatever, is unwise. Then, too, we view with much concern those A.A. treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated A.A. purpose. Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.

8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional. We define professionalism as the occupation of counseling alcoholics for fees or hire. But we may employ alcoholics where they are going to perform those services for which we might otherwise have to engage nonalcoholics. Such special services may be well recompensed. But our usual A.A. Twelfth Step work is never to be paid for.

9. Each A.A. group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the best. The small group may elect its secretary, the large group its rotating committee, and the groups of a large metropolitan area their central or intergroup committee, which often employs a full-time secretary. The trustees of the General Service Board are, in effect, our A.A. General Service Committee. They are the custodians of our A.A. Tradition and the receivers of voluntary A.A. contributions by which we maintain our A.A. General Service Office at New York. They are authorized by the groups to handle our overall public relations and they guarantee the integrity of our principal newspaper, the A.A. Grapevine. All such representatives are to be guided in the spirit of service, for true leaders in A.A. are but trusted and experienced servants of the whole. They derive no real authority from their titles; they do not govern. Universal respect is the key to their usefulness.

10. No A.A. group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate A.A., express any opinion on outside controversial issues — particularly those
of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever.

11. Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. We think A.A. ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and pictures as A.A. members ought not be broadcast, filmed, or publicly printed. Our public relations should be guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.

12. And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.
THE TWELVE CONCEPTS FOR WORLD SERVICE

1. The final responsibility and the ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

2. When, in 1955, the A.A. groups confirmed the permanent charter for their General Service Conference, they thereby delegated to the Conference complete authority for the active maintenance of our world services and thereby made the Conference — excepting for any change in the Twelve Traditions or in Article 12 of the Conference Charter — the actual voice and the effective conscience for our whole Society.

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

4. Throughout our Conference structure, we ought to maintain at all responsible levels a traditional “Right of Participation,” taking care that each classification or group of our world servants shall be allowed a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

5. Throughout our world service structure, a traditional “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail, thus assuring us that minority opinion will be heard and that petitions for the redress of personal grievances will be carefully considered.

6. On behalf of A.A. as a whole, our General Service Conference has the principal responsibility for the maintenance of our world services, and it traditionally has the final decision respecting large matters of general policy and finance. But the Conference also recognizes that the chief initiative and the active responsibility in most of these matters should be exercised primarily by the trustee members of the Conference when they act among themselves as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.

7. The Conference recognizes that the Charter and the Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments: that the trustees are thereby fully empowered to manage and conduct all of the world service affairs of Alcoholics
Anonymous. It is further understood that the Conference Charter itself is not a legal document: that it relies instead upon the force of tradition and the power of the A.A. purse for its final effectiveness.

8. The trustees of the General Service Board act in two primary capacities: (a) With respect to the larger matters of overall policy and finance, they are the principal planners and administrators. They and their primary committees directly manage these affairs. (b) But with respect to our separately incorporated and constantly active services, the relation of the trustees is mainly that of full stock ownership and of custodial oversight which they exercise through their ability to elect all directors of these entities.

9. Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are at all levels indispensable for our future functioning and safety. The primary world service leadership once exercised by the founders of A.A. must necessarily be assumed by the trustees of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.

10. Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority — the scope of such authority to be always well defined whether by tradition, by resolution, by specific job description, or by appropriate charters and bylaws.

11. While the trustees hold final responsibility for A.A.’s world service administration, they should always have the assistance of the best possible standing committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Therefore, the composition of these underlying committees and service boards, the personal qualifications of their members, the manner of their induction into service, the systems of their rotation, the way in which they are related to each other, the special rights and duties of our executives, staffs, and consultants, together with a proper basis for the financial compensation of these special workers, will always be matters for serious care and concern.

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

Note: The A.A. General Service Conference has recommended that the "long form" of the Concepts be studied in detail. Twelve Concepts for World Service, in which A.A. co-founder Bill W. closely examines all these principles of A.A. service, may be ordered from G.S.O.
Below is a partial listing of A.A. publications. Complete order forms are available from the General Service Office of ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163. Telephone: (212) 870-3400. Website: aa.org

**BOOKS**
- ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
- TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS
- DAILY REFLECTIONS
- ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS COMES OF AGE
- AS BILL SEES IT
- DR. BOB AND THE GOOD OLDTIMERS
- ’PASS IT ON’

**BOOKLETS**
- LIVING SOBER
- CAME TO BELIEVE
- A.A. IN PRISON: INMATE TO INMATE

**PAMPHLETS**
- Experience, Strength and Hope: WOMEN IN A.A.
- A.A. FOR THE BLACK AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN ALCOHOLIC
- A.A. FOR THE NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN
- YOUNG PEOPLE AND A.A.
- A.A. FOR THE OLDER ALCOHOLIC — NEVER TOO LATE
- LGBTQ ALCOHOLICS IN A.A.
- THE “GOD” WORD: AGNOSTIC AND ATHEIST MEMBERS IN A.A.
- A.A. FOR ALCOHOLICS WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES — AND THEIR SPONSORS
- ACCESS TO A.A.: MEMBERS SHARE ON OVERCOMING BARRIERS
- A.A. AND THE ARMED SERVICES
- DO YOU THINK YOU’RE DIFFERENT?
- MANY PATHS TO SPIRITUALITY
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- IT SURE BEATS SITTING IN A CELL
  *(An illustrated pamphlet for inmates)*

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- FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT A.A.
- IS A.A. FOR ME?
- IS A.A. FOR YOU?
- A NEWCOMER ASKS
- IS THERE AN ALCOHOLIC IN YOUR LIFE?
- THIS IS A.A.
- QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON SPONSORSHIP
- THE A.A. GROUP
- PROBLEMS OTHER THAN ALCOHOL
- THE A.A. MEMBER—MEDICATIONS AND OTHER DRUGS
- SELF-SUPPORT: WHERE MONEY AND SPIRITUALITY MIX
- THE TWELVE STEPS ILLUSTRATED
- THE TWELVE TRADITIONS ILLUSTRATED
- THE TWELVE CONCEPTS ILLUSTRATED
- HOW A.A. MEMBERS COOPERATE WITH PROFESSIONALS
- A.A. IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES
- A.A. IN TREATMENT SETTINGS
- BRIDGING THE GAP
- A.A. TRADITION—HOW IT DEVELOPED
- LET’S BE FRIENDLY WITH OUR FRIENDS
- UNDERSTANDING ANONYMITY

**For Professionals:**
- A.A. IN YOUR COMMUNITY
- A BRIEF GUIDE TO A.A.
- IF YOU ARE A PROFESSIONAL
- ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AS A RESOURCE
- FOR THE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL
- A MESSAGE TO CORRECTIONS PROFESSIONALS
- IS THERE A PROBLEM DRINKER IN THE WORKPLACE?
- MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY ASK ABOUT A.A.
- A.A. MEMBERSHIP SURVEY
- A MEMBER’S-EYE VIEW OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

**VIDEOS** *(available on aa.org)*
- A.A. VIDEOS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
- HOPE: ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
- A NEW FREEDOM
- CARRYING THE MESSAGE BEHIND THESE WALLS

**For Professionals:**
- A.A. VIDEO FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS
- A.A. VIDEO FOR LEGAL AND CORRECTIONS PROFESSIONALS
- A.A. VIDEO FOR EMPLOYMENT/HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS

**PERIODICALS**
- AA GRAPEVINE *(monthly)*
- LA VIÑA *(bimonthly, in Spanish)*
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A DECLARATION OF UNITY
This we owe to A.A.’s future: To place our common welfare first; to keep our fellowship united. For on A.A. unity depend our lives and the lives of those to come.

I am responsible…
When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there.

And for that: I am responsible.
HANDLING A.A. SERVICES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Central/Intergroup offices provide vital local services and Twelfth Step opportunities. All areas function independently and handle local A.A. services in the manner best suited to local needs. While G.S.R.s, D.C.M.s, area committees, area assemblies, and the General Service Conference are concerned with matters affecting A.A. as a whole, Central/Intergroup offices and answering services fill a different need. They handle local services only—such as coordinating local Twelfth Step calls, providing meeting lists, and in some places furnishing public information speakers for non-A.A. groups and for A.A. meetings in institutions.

Central offices and general service area committees are complementary, rather than competitive, A.A. operations. They exist to help insure A.A. unity and to fulfill A.A.'s primary purpose of carrying the A.A. message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

In 1990 the General Service Conference stressed the importance of communication and recommended that delegates establish and maintain contact with offices in their areas to share Conference information and assure that Central/Intergroup offices have a voice in the Fellowship through their existing service structure.

IN ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, WE ALL WORK TOGETHER

“To those now in its fold, Alcoholics Anonymous has made the difference between misery and sobriety, and often the difference between life and death. A.A. can, of course, mean just as much to uncounted alcoholics not yet reached.

“Therefore, no society of men and women ever had a more urgent need for continuous effectiveness and permanent unity. We alcoholics see that we must work together and hang together, else most of us will finally die alone.”

—Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 561

This leaflet is based on The A.A. Service Manual, A.A. Comes of Age, and the pamphlet “G.S.R. — Your group’s link to A.A. as a whole.” For further information, contact your group’s G.S.R., or write P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

www.aa.org
“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.” — Tradition Two

**The AA Groups**

Each group has a say in worldwide A.A. through its general service representative...

**District Meeting**

...who carries the group’s thinking on various A.A. issues to the district for consideration...

**Area Assembly**

...along with the area committee, made up of its officers and district committee members

**General Service Conference**

- General Service Board
  - Delegates
  - AAWS & Grapevine Directors and Staff

- The G.S.R. represents the voice of the group conscience and links his or her group with A.A. as a whole.

- G.S.R.s and D.C.M.s attend district committee meetings and also go to the area assembly where matters affecting the entire area are discussed.

- Each assembly considers a variety of issues relative to carrying the A.A. message and elects its delegate to the General Service Conference.

- From the Conference, the shared experience of all groups goes back to the assembly, where each delegate reports on the Conference.

All parts of our Fellowship — group meetings, committees, offices, Conferences, and group jobs — share one common purpose: to help the alcoholic who still suffers.

A.A. is made up of interconnected circles of people within the Fellowship, who work together to carry A.A.’s message of hope. But in order for A.A. to run itself without bosses or rules, in accordance with our Twelve Traditions, we need a system of communication for finding out how A.A. as a whole feels about its world affairs, and how it wants to operate.

For A.A. to run its own affairs, each A.A. group needs to make its voice heard on overall A.A. policies. This starts with a group’s general service representative (G.S.R.), who represents the voice of the group conscience and has the job of linking his or her group with A.A. as a whole. G.S.R.s make sure their groups receive services from the U.S. and Canada General Service Office (G.S.O) and help groups stay informed about worldwide A.A.

For every district of about ten groups or so, the G.S.R.s elect a district committee member, or D.C.M., to communicate the districts’ conscience to the area assembly, which elects an area delegate to attend the annual A.A. General Service Conference for the U.S. and Canada (other countries have their own separate structure).

Every group in an area is encouraged to send its G.S.R. to its area assembly. The D.C.M.s help to make up the area committee — a sort of steering committee for the assembly.

Each group sends its own ideas or problems to the assembly, where other groups can share their experience and provide help and support. From the assembly, each G.S.R. can take back to his or her group the shared experience of the rest of the assembly.

Every area elects a delegate to the General Service Conference, held each spring in New York. Delegates serve a two-year term only and, like G.S.R.s, D.C.M.s, and trustees, Conference delegates are never paid for A.A. service.

The General Service Conference serves as the group conscience for A.A. in the U.S. and Canada. The Conference meets for six days a year, yet the 135 or so Conference members are active in Conference affairs throughout the year. Every A.A. group shares its experience with other groups through its area delegate to the Conference.

**DELEGATE:** The 93 elected area delegates make up over two-thirds of the Conference, but there are others at the annual Conference session.

**GENERAL SERVICE BOARD:** The 21 trustees of A.A.’s General Service Board (U.S. and Canada) are part of the Conference. Fourteen trustees are alcoholics (Class Bs); seven are nonalcoholics (Class As).

**A.A. WORLD SERVICES:** The directors of A.A. World Services, Inc. (the legal entity responsible for the business of the General Service Office), and the A.A. staff members at G.S.O. are Conference members.

**AA GRAPEVINE:** Directors of AA Grapevine, Inc., and its A.A. staff, are members of the annual Conference.
A DECLARATION OF UNITY

This we owe to A.A.'s future: To place our common welfare first; to keep our fellowship united. For on A.A. unity depend our lives and the lives of those to come.

I am responsible…

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there.

And for that:

I am responsible.

This is A.A. General Service Conference-approved literature.
“By choosing its most qualified member as G.S.R., a group helps secure its own future — and the future of A.A. as a whole.”

When you’re a general service representative (G.S.R.)

You are linking your home group with the whole of A.A. In 1950, a new type of trusted servant, “group representative,” was suggested to help in the selection of delegates to the newly formed General Service Conference. By 1953, the job of group representative was also seen as a good means of exchanging up-to-date information between individual groups and “Headquarters” (now the General Service Office). That’s still an important side of your work. But now, as general service representative, you have an even bigger responsibility: You transmit ideas and opinions, as well as facts; through you, the group conscience becomes a part of “the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship,” as expressed in the General Service Conference. Like everything else in A.A., it works through a series of simple steps. (For the complete picture in detail, read The A.A. Service Manual.)
General services

1 At district meetings, you join with G.S.R.s from other groups. Perhaps you’ve already worked with an intergroup or central office, where groups band together to help alcoholics just in your locality. But your general service district is the second link in an entirely different chain, which extends much farther. Your district is one part of a general service area. With your fellow G.S.R.s, you elect a district committee member, and all the D.C.M.s make up the area committee. Now, do you just sit back and let your D.C.M. take it from there? No! G.S.R.s stay very much in action in each of the 93 areas in the U.S. and Canada.

2 You attend area assemblies four times a year (in most areas). At the electoral assembly (held every two years), along with the other G.S.R.s and the D.C.M.s from the whole area, you elect committee officers — and your area’s Conference delegate.

3 Just as you rely on your group for help in your personal recovery, so the A.A. groups of Canada and the U.S. rely on the General Service Conference in maintaining the unity and strength of our Fellowship — our obligation to all the alcoholics of today and tomorrow. It’s up to you to keep two-way communication going between your group and the Conference. Via your D.C.M. and your delegate, you can see to it that your group’s conscience on matters of importance to all A.A. becomes a part of the consensus when these matters are discussed at the annual Conference meeting in April. In return, you can enable your group to benefit from the meeting’s sharing of experience among area delegates and the other Conference members. Your D.C.M. may want to present your delegate’s report at a special group meeting. The D.C.M. receives a copy of the Conference Final Report, a full account of proceedings. Copies of the report are available to groups upon request.
Group services

4 As G.S.R., you are “group contact” in the original sense, too. Upon your election, your name and address are sent (by you or your group secretary) to the secretary of your area committee, or your district or area registrar and to G.S.O. (Be sure to include, as well, the name of the G.S.R. you are replacing, so the records won’t be confused.) You will be listed as contact for your group in the next printing of the appropriate A.A. Directory.

5 In return, G.S.O. sends you the G.S.R. Kit (see the section below, or check G.S.O.’s website, aa.org, for some of its contents), and the quarterly bulletin Box 4-5-9. You use these — and share them with the other members of your group. Are some pamphlets marked “new” on the Literature Order Form? Check the literature rack to make sure your group is offering all the sobriety tools available. Does Box 4-5-9 carry news of a future International Convention? Spread the happy word.

6 Because you’ve made a special point of studying the information listed below, you can help when your group faces a problem involving one of the Traditions. You don’t have to know all the answers — no one member possibly could — but you learn where to look for good suggestions, drawn from broad A.A. experience.

7 Thinking of Tradition Seven particularly, you work with the group treasurer to remind your group of its part in keeping all of A.A. self-supporting. You explain the importance of financial support of your intergroup/central office, G.S.O., district and area committee, and the Birthday Plan for individual contributions. Contributions can also be made online through aa.org as recurring monthly, quarterly or annual contributions.

8 Since you’re in touch with A.A. throughout your area, you can bring to your group the news of upcoming local conventions. As G.S.R., you share with your fellow members the joy of widening A.A. horizons.

Information you’ll need

9 On the general service structure: The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service, “Inside A.A.” and “Circles of Love and Service” — all in the G.S.R. Kit; in addition, the Conference Final Report, and the video “Your
A.A. General Service Office, the Grapevine, and the General Service Structure” (DV-07).

10 On the Traditions: “A.A. Tradition — How It Developed” (kit); also Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, A.A. Comes of Age, and “The Twelve Traditions Illustrated.”

11 On group affairs: “The A.A. Group” and “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix” (both in the kit); the A.A. Guidelines (listing of titles and prices in the Literature Catalog), which suggest ways your group can work with other groups and with agencies outside A.A.

12 Financial Support: Current experience indicates that many groups provide financial support for their general service representatives to attend service functions.

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**When your group elects a G.S.R.**

You remember, as the cover of this leaflet says, that “the G.S.R. is your group’s link to A.A. as a whole.” The G.S.R.s of the U.S. and Canada are the very foundation of our general service structure. Through your G.S.R., you can make your group’s voice heard at district meetings, at area assemblies, and eventually at the General Service Conference. Through your G.S.R., your group is strengthened by the shared experience of the other U.S. and Canadian groups, just as your own sobriety is strengthened by the shared experience of other A.A. members.

**When and how**

1 The two-year terms of an area’s G.S.R.s coincide with those of its D.C.M.s and Conference delegate. So a group usually elects its G.S.R. before the assembly meeting at which the delegate is elected. September is a good month, since that gives the new G.S.R. time to study the responsibilities of the job before taking office — most often on January 1, along with the new D.C.M.s and the new delegate.

2 An informed group enjoys a special election meeting, where a member with a solid background in service work explains the function of the G.S.R., and a G.S.O. DVD may be shown.
Procedures for electing a G.S.R. are the same as for any other group officer. There should be time for nominations from the floor, then for written ballots. A plurality is usually enough for election.

Prompt notification about your choice of G.S.R. is essential. If your district or area committee and G.S.O. do not have your new G.S.R.’s name and address, communication breaks down.

At the same election meeting, it is important also to elect an alternate G.S.R. (by the same voting procedure). The two will work together closely, so that the alternate can be a knowledgeable replacement if the G.S.R. is unable to attend a district or area meeting.

What happens if your group’s G.S.R. is elected committee member for your district? Then the alternate automatically becomes your G.S.R. — an extra reason for care in filling both offices.

The makings of a good G.S.R.

Two or three years’ sobriety is generally the required minimum. Active membership in a home group — yours — is also important, and your G.S.R. should hold no other offices in any group.

Prior A.A. service experience provides a long head start for a G.S.R.’s success. Consider former group officers and members who have shouldered responsibility at your intergroup or central office or on special committees.

Does your group include people who already have a keen interest in the Twelve Traditions and the service structure? If so, you’re in luck!

Look for the same character qualities that mark a good trusted servant of any sort (and a good A.A.): patience, understanding and a firm determination “to place principles before personalities.”

Most future Conference delegates will come from the ranks of today’s G.S.R.s. So your choice now can help to insure good representation for your whole area in years to come and continuing vitality for our General Service Conference — the heart of our co-founders’ Third Legacy to all of A.A.
Bill W. on General Services and the G.S.R.

“...an A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us reach a fellow sufferer — ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.’s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service.” (A.A. Service Manual, page S1)

Whether performed by individuals or groups or areas or A.A. as a whole, these activities are vital to our existence and growth. Nor can we make A.A. more simple by abolishing such services. To do so would only be asking for complication and confusion.

Among the most vital, yet probably least understood, group of services are those that help us function as a whole — the work of the General Service Office (G.S.O.) and the General Service Board (the trustees). Our worldwide unity and much of our growth since early times are directly traceable to them.

To get the benefit of direct guidance from A.A. as a whole, the General Service Conference was formed — a body of about 93 delegates from the United States and Canada. These delegates sit yearly with our trustees, directors, and the staffs of G.S.O., Grapevine and La Viña. The Conference has proved itself an immense success. Over the years, its record of achievement has been completely convincing.

The strength of our whole A.A. service structure starts with the group and with the general service representative (G.S.R.) the group elects. We cannot emphasize too strongly the G.S.R.’s importance.
A DECLARATION OF UNITY

This we owe to A.A.’s future: To place our common welfare first; to keep our fellowship united. For on A.A. unity depend our lives and the lives of those to come.

I am responsible…

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there.

And for that: I am responsible.
What is a D.C.M.?
The heart of A.A. is the group, which elects a general service representative (G.S.R.). The G.S.R. attends district meetings that are made up of the groups in that district. The G.S.R.s elect a district committee member (D.C.M.). Thus, the D.C.M. is the vital link between the group’s G.S.R., and the area service structure, including the area’s delegate to the General Service Conference.

Where does the D.C.M. come from?
G.S.R.s in each district usually elect their D.C.M.s. The qualifications for a good district committee member are not complicated: background in A.A. service work that
goes with the G.S.R. job, and perhaps some central office/intergroup service; enough sobriety (say four to five years) to be eligible for election to area office; and the time and energy to serve the groups and district well.

**When is the D.C.M. elected?**

D.C.M.s are usually elected before the area assembly meeting at which the delegate is elected. Some areas, however, rotate half their committee members each year.

**How long does the D.C.M. serve?**

Most D.C.M.s serve for a two-year period.

**What does the D.C.M. do?**

The D.C.M. carries the collective group conscience of the A.A. groups in the district to the area committee. Among the two-way communication responsibilities of the D.C.M. are:

- Holding regular meetings of all G.S.R.s in the district.
- Assisting the delegate in obtaining group information in time to meet the deadline for appropriate A.A. directories.
- Keeping G.S.R.s informed about Conference activities.
- Acquainting G.S.R.s with *The A.A. Service Manual, Box 4-5-9,* and other A.A. literature.
- Holding workshops on carrying the message of the Seventh Tradition to nonsupporting A.A. groups.
- Holding sharing sessions on just about any service subject.
- And, of course, making a regular practice of talking to groups (new and old) on the responsibilities of general service work.

**Are there growing responsibilities for the D.C.M.?**

Continuing growth of the Fellowship brings new opportunities for service to the D.C.M. As the numbers of groups in an area increase, the maintenance of a vital active link between the groups and the Fellowship as a whole becomes a challenge to the D.C.M.s. By maintaining active contact, both with the groups in the district and with the area delegate, the D.C.M. is a key link in ensuring that all the A.A. groups are aware of the importance of their total participation in local, district, area and world services.
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How G.S.O. Began

In the late 1930s, a small office in Newark, N.J., staffed by co-founder Bill W. and a secretary, was enough to maintain contact among the first 100 A.A. members. Soon, the fast-spreading Fellowship needed a real world service office, and “headquarters” was shifted to New York City, with moves from Vesey Street to Lexington Avenue to East 44th Street and to East 45th as membership grew into the hundreds of thousands. From 1970 to 1992 G.S.O. was located at 468 Park Avenue South.

G.S.O. Today

In 1992, G.S.O. moved to 475 Riverside Drive, where both A.A. World Services and Grapevine personnel are now housed on the same floor. For the present membership of over two million, an all-A.A. staff offers the services outlined in this pamphlet. A.A. and non-A.A. employees handle finances; prepare letters and bulletins; note group records, literature orders and contributions; ship material your way; and file incoming letters to add to the rich storehouse of A.A. experience at your G.S.O.

Archives

“When did A.A. start in my area?” “Why was the word ‘honest’ dropped from the Preamble?” Such questions are answered daily by the staff of the A.A. archives, a G.S.O. service born in 1973. Its projects include: digitizing long-accumulated records; retaping valuable tapes; collecting oral history tapes from early members; gathering local material from individuals and groups; and helping researchers inside and outside A.A.

Literature

Where does the Big Book come from? The other A.A. books? The pamphlets in your group’s literature rack? The work of A.A. World Services, Inc., the Fellowship’s publishing company, goes on at G.S.O. Translations of A.A. literature are also available here.

Loners and Internationals

No meetings nearby? An A.A. in that situation may ask to be listed at G.S.O. as a Lone Member. Letters arrive from fellow Loners and other A.A.s (often listed as Loner Sponsors). If the A.A. is a seafarer, the A.A. Internationals extend a welcome via G.S.O. Loners-Internationals Meeting, an A.A. meeting by mail or email for those who cannot attend regular meetings. It is prepared by G.S.O. and mailed bimonthly to participants. Housebound A.A.s, known as Homers, are also members of the LIM Group.

Public Information

If you find the A.A. message being carried on TV, radio or Internet or in a national publication, chances are that G.S.O. helped to supply information. The staff member on the P.I. desk provides A.A. facts for the media, answers thousands of inquiries yearly from the general public, and is in touch with local P.I. committees and contacts. From G.S.O., they can order aids like the P.I. Kit and Workbook, Guidelines and PSAs.

Cooperation with the Professional Community

These days, more and more professionals, agencies, industrial programs, and professional associations are interested in helping the alcoholic. To make sure they’re aware of the long-range help offered by A.A., G.S.O. prepares information (such as the newsletter for professionals, About A.A.) and on request sends the Professional Exhibits to their national conferences. This G.S.O. desk is also an information exchange point for the increasing number of local C.P.C. committees.

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This assignment extends the hand of A.A. to those in correctional settings who are unable to call a sponsor
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**Treatment Facilities**
The aim of this assignment is to assist the work of A.A. members on local treatment facilities committees who carry the A.A. message to alcoholics in treatment facilities and to convey means and methods of bridging the gap for prospective A.A. members from treatment to A.A. groups.

**International Conventions**
Beginning at Cleveland in 1950, when A.A. was 15 years old, these Conventions have since brought members from around the world together at five-year intervals in joyful celebration of A.A.’s anniversaries. Close to the time of each Convention, information is relayed to the Fellowship through Box 4-5-9 articles.

**General Correspondence and Service Material**
“Let’s write to G.S.O.” Queries are answered with A.A. shared experience. All staff members handle general correspondence from specific regions — rotating to others regularly, just as they do in their service assignments (which also involve correspondence). Letters are answered in the language they are received.

**Group Services**
Useful ideas and information are relayed in service material such as the A.A. Directories, the Guidelines, tapes, films, the Group Handbook, and Box 4-5-9, the quarterly bulletin in English, French and Spanish. The A.A. Group Handbook, Box 4-5-9 and pamphlets are sent to new groups free of charge. Most service material is translated into French and Spanish.

**International and World Service Meeting**
As Bill W. foresaw, G.S.O. has become “the senior service center” among many in worldwide A.A. This office maintains contact with other general service offices and literature distribution centers, no matter where or in what language. The World Service Meeting (WSM), started in 1969 and now biennial, is held alternately in New York and an overseas country. The staff member handles correspondence with members and groups in countries without a structure, works with the Publishing Department on translations of A.A. literature, coordinates the WSM and is responsible for the *World Service Meeting Report*.

**General Service Conference**
Months before each annual Conference, the staff member assigned to the Conference begins sending information and questionnaires to the delegates, who send back answers, queries, and agenda suggestions. G.S.O. arranges the meeting site, delegates’ housing, record-keeping and other details; sums up proceedings in Box 4-5-9; and covers them fully in the *Final Conference Report*. Delegates and area committee members also receive the *Quarterly Report*, on activities of the General Service Board. All year, G.S.O. is the communications center for the U.S.-Canada service structure.

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Started in 1975, Regional Forums are weekend A.A. events held four times a year — each in a region of the U.S. or Canada that has extended an invitation. Representatives of the General Service Board and G.S.O. and GV staffs participate in each Forum with A.A. mem-
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Accessibilities/Remote Communities
The focus of this assignment is on reaching the alcoholic who may experience barriers to accessing the A.A. message, whether those be mental, physical, geographic, cultural, or other factors. The staff member on this assignment aims to ensure the availability of A.A. literature in braille, large-print and American Sign Language (ASL) video formats, as well as to provide resources for members carrying the message to remote communities, elder-care facilities and homebound A.A.s.

G.S.O.’s A.A. Website
With over 14 million visitors a year, G.S.O.’s A.A. website offers vital information in English, French and Spanish. The site is designed to focus on providing information and help to people concerned about a drinking problem; people looking for an A.A. meeting; and people looking for information about A.A., including the public, professionals dealing with alcoholic clients or patients, and members of the media. Visitors can view A.A. literature online; books, pamphlets and service material from G.S.O. are available to read for no charge online. There are also links to the A.A.W.S. online store to purchase literature and to online resources to purchase e-books.

AA Grapevine, Inc.
AA Grapevine, the international journal of Alcoholics Anonymous, includes magazines, a website and other published items. Articles, art and photographs, which reflect the growth of A.A. over the years, are not paid for, but contributed by members in free sharing of experience and thought, as in an A.A. meeting. You do not have to be a professional writer or artist to contribute to AA Grapevine and La Viña, A.A.’s Spanish-language magazine. All submissions are welcomed and acknowledged.

Manuscripts are always read by A.A. members on the editorial staff. Published material is protected by copyright, held by AA Grapevine, Inc. — a corporation entirely separate from A.A. World Services, Inc.

For editorial submissions or to subscribe to the magazines, please contact AA Grapevine, Inc., 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115; or visit the website at www.aagrapevine.org.

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1. Share your experience with G.S.O. Your letters on the challenges that groups and members face today can help other A.A.s carry our message.

2. Keep G.S.O. informed. Only you can make sure that directories and files contain up-to-date information on groups, meetings, committees, intergroups and central offices.

3. Remember Tradition Seven. All of A.A. — G.S.O. as well as your group — is committed to self-support. Popular plans for contributions to G.S.O. are: Birthday Plan (on an A.A.’s anniversary, $1.00 for each year); monthly or quarterly contributions by groups; and recurring contributions that can be made online. Most to be desired is participation by every group — no matter what the amount.

4. Let newcomers know about their General Service Office.

5. Come to see G.S.O. You’ll be warmly welcomed, given a full tour, and introduced to staff members, department heads, and G.S.O.’s office neighbors, the Grapevine folks. Staff trips and correspondence keep G.S.O. forever close to hometown A.A. — but it’s a special delight to meet you here at your General Service Office. Tours are also given in Spanish and French.


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“A Checklist of Secretarial Duties” pamphlet (in this packet of info) suggests how to start a group and how various groups may function. It does not tell anyone what to do. But for new members, new officers and any other interested A.A.’s, it describes many of the good, proven-by-experience ways that other members have used in their groups to “stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.”

Each group is different. Most groups require at least 6 months of continuous sobriety for their secretary as many groups give the secretary a high level of responsibility. It helps if the secretary has held other jobs within the group such as coffee maker or greeter and has taken a turn on the setup and/or clean-up detail. In that way, the secretary will be familiar with the chores needed to set up and to close a meeting. If the secretary has attended a group conscience/business meeting, he or she will have had the opportunity to learn of past group decisions.

Almost never is a secretary responsible for all the items covered in the suggestions that follow, but it is helpful if the secretary knows who in the group is responsible.

**SUGGESTIONS**

- To receive the monthly bulletin, contact Baltimore Intergroup at 410-663-1922 or Fax to 410-663-7465 to notify the office that you are the new secretary of your group. Feel free to stop by the office at 8635 Loch Raven Boulevard, Suite 4, 2nd floor and introduce yourself. The monthly bulletin is sent, usually to the secretary, either via U.S. Postal Service or email.

- You can take the bulletin to the meeting, post it, read it aloud or make it available, whichever is the practice of the group. Also, the secretary distributes materials in the bulletin to other “trusted servants” to whom that material is directed.

- Learn what needs to be done to open and secure the building and the meeting room. Know who to contact if there is a problem with the facility.

- Often it is the secretary who welcomes newcomers to the meeting. When a new person or out-of-towner calls the Intergroup Office, they are told of the meeting location, day and time and it may be suggested that they introduce themselves to the secretary. The secretary would then arrange for a group member or members to speak to the newcomer.

- If your group conscience has established a meeting format and has assigned responsibilities as to who finds the speakers, follow that format and the assignment of responsibility. The secretary may have the responsibility in the case of “Discussion” meetings where a member of another group is invited to “chair” the meeting, share and introduce a topic.

- Let the speaker know of the meeting format and encourage him or her to be brief so that more may share

- If a meeting is a “Speakers” meeting, a “Speakers Committee” may be responsible for finding a speaker. Whenever the speaker is expected to speak for the hour, let the speaker know in advance. In either format, it appears to be best to have a variety of speakers, reflecting different backgrounds, lengths of sobriety and experiences “before and after.” To find someone outside the group and outside of the nearby area, the search person or committee usually is expected to visit outside meetings.

- “Each group has but one primary purpose, to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.” Remember that the reason for the meeting is to carry out the group’s primary purpose.

- Almost everywhere, the secretary opens and closes the meetings.
• Make newcomers feel welcome. Some groups have “greeters” at the door, others have a system of assigning a temporary sponsor for the newcomer. Whatever your group’s system, it is important to learn how it works and let the newcomer know how it works. Let the newcomers know about other meetings. Freely share your experience, strength and hope. Remember that no one speaks for AA, not even the group secretary. If you do not know the answer to a question, it is alright to admit it and find someone who can answer the question.

• If necessary, the secretary handles any disruptions which may occur during the meeting or an experienced group member will speak up or assist as necessary. If you must take action, pray for guidance and act in a spirit of helping the group. It is not necessary to be hasty since many people run out of wind or steam on their own. (A calm suggestion to the person to give others a chance to speak is usually enough.)

• The secretary sees to it that the collection is turned over to the treasurer. The secretary may count the collection and record the amount in the meeting log, if there is one. Usually, the treasurer has the one duty of depositing the money and paying the bills. In any case, learn where the collection goes (how much for rent, refreshments, literature, etc.). Of the amount remaining, after expenses have been paid, how much goes to Intergroup, to Maryland General Service, to General Service in New York and the Institution Committee if the groups wish to support that committee but does not use the “Pink Can.”

• Every month, the Intergroup Bulletin includes a list of anniversaries for the upcoming month. It is best to fax, call in, email or mail the anniversaries to Intergroup by the 15th of the month prior to the month of celebration (i.e., an anniversary for March 23 should be called in by February 15th). Find out who has the responsibility for contacting the Intergroup re: Anniversaries, the Group “Birthday,” etc.

• If the group has a membership roster, the secretary may be responsible for maintaining it. The group may circulate a list of active group members with telephone numbers of its group members. Learn whether your group has such a practice and what your responsibility is.

• Most groups elect a member to pick up AA literature. If they do not, find out if the secretary has that responsibility. In most groups, there is a charge for books but not for pamphlets and directories. Find out what your group does.

• You may see things about the group you believe could be improved. You may get ideas from other meetings that you what your group to adopt or group members or others may suggest how you should run or conduct the meeting. Remember that the secretary does not “run” the group or meeting and that your group may have previously examined and rejected the changes that you are considering. By our second tradition, the ultimate authority is our higher power as expressed in our group conscience. Even so, some groups allow the secretary more room for personal style than others. Know your group.

• Know your other group members and who does other jobs for the group. Who is the Intergroup Rep, the Institutional Rep, and the GSR? What are their responsibilities in those positions? Who in your group can you turn to for answers to the many and varied questions that you or others may certainly have about your group or any matter concerning AA?

Note: These suggests were generated by a workshop on “Secretarial Duties.” The workshop looked to the pamphlet “The AA Group” (P-16), and the experiences that the many local AA members brought to the workshop.
The A.A. Group Treasurer

Choosing a Treasurer
Passing the Basket
Safeguarding the Group's Money
Disbursement of a Group's Funds
Treasurer Reports
Prudent Reserve
Opening a Bank Account
Tax ID/Tax-Exempt
Insurance
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The group treasurer is usually the person responsible for paying the group’s routine bills and for keeping accurate records of the group’s funds. The treasurer needs to be well informed about how the group’s money is spent and should have addresses and mailing information for all A.A. service entities that the group contributes to.

After the group’s basic needs are met, such as providing for rent, literature, refreshments, and insurance, the group can participate in the financial support of the Fellowship as a whole by sending money to various A.A. service entities:
1. their local intergroup or central office;
2. their area and district; and
3. the General Service Office. Many groups provide financial support for their G.S.R.s attending service functions.

These entities use contributions in a number of ways, always with the aim of carrying the A.A. message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Online and recurring contributions: Contributions to the General Service Office can be made online, either by credit card or E-Check. An E-Check is a form of payment in which funds are electronically transferred from the contributor’s checking account to the General Service Board. Additionally, members or groups can set up recurring contributions that will automatically charge their credit card either monthly, quarterly or annually.

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Most groups request a treasurer’s report and all relevant documentation at monthly or regularly scheduled business meetings. This way, all group members can stay informed about the financial health of the group and make group conscience decisions about how the funds should be spent.

Prudent Reserve
Most groups try to hold a certain amount of money in reserve. There is no predetermined amount for such a reserve, but most groups try to put aside enough money to cover at least one to three months’ operating expenses. The group itself usually determines the actual size and scope of the prudent reserve. Our experience shows that an accumulation of A.A. funds for unspecified purposes beyond a prudent level may divert a group’s attention from carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. Groups with excess funds are encouraged to support other service entities.

Opening a Bank Account/Tax ID

Some groups keep their funds in a bank account, for which a tax ID number is required — even for non-interest-bearing accounts. The first step in obtaining a Federal ID Number is by filing form SS-4, which can be obtained at any Internal Revenue Service office or at the IRS website at www.irs.gov. Each A.A. group must get its own individual number; there is no one number that applies to Alcohols Anonymous as a whole. Depending on how much your group will keep on deposit at a bank and what its fees are, you may want to file for tax-exempt status. For information, see IRS publication 557, “Tax-Exempt Status for Your Organization.” It may be worthwhile to consult an accountant to learn more about these subjects. (Applies to U.S. only.)

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Additional Resources for Group Treasurers
For more information consult the pamphlet, “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix,” or the A.A. Guidelines on Finance. “The A.A. Group” pamphlet discusses the role and qualifications of treasurers and how they fit into the A.A. service structure. These items may be obtained by contacting the General Service Office in New York or going on the G.S.O. website at www.aa.org.


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Spirituality and Money
While the work of the group treasurer often involves many details, it is important to remember that the money the treasurer oversees serves a spiritual purpose: it enables each group to fulfill its primary purpose of carrying the A.A. message to the alcoholic who still suffers. This is the fundamental work of A.A., and to continue it the group must keep its doors open. The group treasurer is an important part of this Twelfth Step work.

Choosing a Treasurer
The position of group treasurer is one of the most responsible positions in any A.A. group. While there is no standard length of sobriety necessary for a member to take on the position of group treasurer, many groups suggest that the treasurer should have a reasonable period of sobriety (at least six months to a year or more). It is also suggested that group treasurers be well grounded in the Twelve Traditions and be familiar with the principles and practices of the group itself.

Passing the Basket
The traditional means of assuring that the group is self-supporting is to pass the basket. Since there are no dues or fees for A.A. membership, those members attending the meeting are asked to make a voluntary contribution to help cover the group’s expenses and to support local services, and the services of your General Service Office. Typically, after the basket is passed, the group treasurer takes charge of the money collected.

A number of groups have utilized digital payment platforms to provide opportunities for members to make cashless contributions. There are different payment platforms to facilitate this service and it is up to the group to determine which one to use. Experience suggests that the treasurer is a likely choice to handle digital contributions, though some groups add more than one trusted servant to share the responsibilities or create a new service position to inform the group about digital payment options and assist other group members who are interested in contributing this way.

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Q. Where should I send group contributions?
A. For contributions to A.A. service entities, contact your district committee, area committee, and local intergroup/central office.

DISTRICT
____________________________________
____________________________________
____________________________________

AREA
____________________________________
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INTERGROUP/CENTRAL OFFICE
____________________________________
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____________________________________

OTHER
____________________________________
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G.S.O.

• Contribution payments may be made by check or credit card, using the contribution envelope. Make checks payable to the General Service Board and send to:

  General Service Office
  P.O. Box 459
  Grand Central Station
  New York, NY 10163

  (Please write your group number on the check)

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This is service material prepared by the General Service Office.
Updated July 2019.

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Contributing According to the Traditions:
To Support AA’s essential services, the General Service Conference suggests individual groups adopt a specific contribution plan. First, take care of basic group expenses such as rent, literature, and a prudent emergency fund; the remaining funds may be divided according to whatever division suits your local needs. The pamphlet *Self-Support: Where Money & Spirituality Mix* (F-S) suggests the following (A) 50% - Local Intergroup, 30% - GSO, 10% - Area Committee, 10% - district; (B) 60/30/10/as recommended below; and (C) 60/25/10/5. Refer to the pamphlet for more explanation (Reprinted with AAWS permission).

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<th>Contribution Record—Group Copy</th>
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<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Amount:</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>60%</strong> (or ___% contribution)</td>
<td>$_____... to Baltimore Intergroup Council 8635 Loch Raven Blvd. Suite 4 Baltimore, MD 21286</td>
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<td>To: Baltimore Intergroup Council 8635 Loch Raven Blvd. Suite 4 Baltimore, MD 21286</td>
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<td><strong>30%</strong> (or ___% contribution)</td>
<td>$_____... to General Service Office Box 459, Grand Central Station New York, NY 10163</td>
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<td>To: General Service Office Box 459, Grand Central Station New York, NY 10164</td>
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<td>Date:</td>
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<td><strong>10%</strong> (or ___% contribution)</td>
<td>$_____... to MD General Service P.O. Box 8043 Elkridge, MD 21075</td>
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<td>$_____... to _______________ Group #: ___________________</td>
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<td>To: District #___ Your District’s Mailing address OR Other AA Entity: ___________</td>
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In accordance with Tradition 7, AA accepts no outside contributions at any level; likewise, in accordance with Tradition 6, AA makes no contributions to any outside organization or cause, no matter how worthy. The traditions as they pertain to contributions are further explained in their long forms in the book, *12 Steps and 12 Traditions*, and throughout AA conference approved literature.
Celebrate your Anniversary and help carry the message! Please participate in the:

ANNIVERSARY & BIRTHDAY PLAN

Please complete this form -- call or email the office by the 15th of the preceding month for anniversaries to be printed in the bulletin. Or, mail them by the 10th to allow time for delivery.

Please list the name and phone # of the person to contact if the Intergroup office has any questions:

Name: ___________________ Group: ___________________________ Phone #: ______________________

For over the past 45 years, many anniversary celebrants have donated $1.00 per year of sobriety to the **Birthday Plan**. Your donations help us CARRY the MESSAGE to the still suffering alcoholic.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>1st Name &amp; Last Initial</th>
<th>Celebration Day/Date (NOT Anniv. Date)</th>
<th># Years</th>
<th><strong>Birthday Plan Contribution Amount</strong></th>
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** Individual members may contribute up to $5,000 in any year of sobriety; $5,000 posthumously. As always, this is only a suggestion and may vary as an individual desires. **

Please Keep In Mind

- List the date the individual will celebrate; NOT the actual anniversary date.
- List first names and last initial.
- List group name as it appears in the directory.
- Call the Intergroup Office or email to intergroup@baltimoreaa.org
- If mailing, please post before the 10th of the month, to allow time for delivery.
- Make checks payable to: Baltimore Intergroup
**What is the “Birthday Plan”?**

😊 Some members, on their A.A. Anniversaries, voluntarily make an extra gift to the Baltimore Intergroup Office to show gratitude for services provided. The suggestion in our area is one dollar for each year of sobriety. As always, this is only a suggestion and may vary as an individual desires. Many members find this is a satisfying way to celebrate their anniversary and at the same time help Intergroup do its important work of “carrying our wonderful message” of hope.

**What is an Individual Contribution?**

😊 In accordance with A.A.W.S. guidelines for individuals, contributions of up to $5,000 may be made in any year. All individual contributions are tax deductible.

Baltimore Intergroup Office
8635 Loch Raven Blvd.
Suite 4, 2nd Floor
Baltimore, Maryland 21286
(410) 663-1922
Fax: (410)663-7465
Faithful Fivers are A.A. members who **pledge to make monthly contributions of $5 or more** (up to $416 each month) or **yearly contributions of $60 or more** (up to $5,000 per member per year). These monthly or yearly gifts are made beyond what’s contributed to the basket at meetings and go directly to support the Intergroup Office. As a thank you, you will receive a free subscription to our monthly bulletin.

The idea of Faithful Fivers in A.A. was born when we remembered that we wasted much more than $5 each month during our drinking days! Because A.A. is fully self-supporting in keeping with the Seventh Tradition, the money necessary for A.A.’s survival and day-to-day operations can only come from individual A.A. members and A.A. groups. Your generosity keeps the Intergroup office open and running smoothly so that A.A. can be available to carry the message to suffering alcoholics in the Baltimore metropolitan area.

_I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible._

_BALTIMORE INTERGROUP COUNCIL_  
8635 LOCH RAVEN BLVD., # 4 BALTIMORE, MD 21286  
410-663-1922 • intergroup@baltimoreaa.org • www.baltimoreaa.org
YES! PLEASE ENROLL ME AS A FAITHFUL FIVER!

NAME:______________________________________________________
ADDRESS:_____________________________________________________________________
CITY:___________________STATE:______________ZIP:________________
PHONE NUMBER:_____________________________________________
EMAIL:______________________________________________________
MONTHLY PLEDGE AMOUNT:
$5
$10
$25
$50
Other_____________
OR YEARLY PLEDGE AMOUNT:
$60
Other_____________
PREFERRED PAYMENT METHOD:
MONTHLY AUTOMATIC CHARGE: Call the Intergroup Office at 410-663-1922 and we’ll set it up. Or visit: www.baltimoreaa.org Select ‘Contribute Online’ and follow the prompts for Faithful Fiver

My check is enclosed!

Please make checks payable to:
Baltimore Intergroup
8635 Loch Raven Blvd., Suite 4
Baltimore, MD 21286

PLEASE SEND MY FREE BULLETIN VIA: δ Email  δ P.O.  δ No, thank you

Baltimore Intergroup Council of Alcoholics Anonymous is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and contributions are tax-deductible.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT!
TRADITIONS CHECKLIST FROM THE AA GRAPEVINE

These questions were originally published in the AA Grapevine in conjunction with a series on the Twelve Traditions that began in November 1969 and ran through September 1971. While they were originally intended primarily for individual use, many AA groups have since used them as a basis for wider discussion.

Practice These Principles....

Tradition One: Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.

1. Am I in my group a healing, mending, integrating person, or am I divisive? What about gossip and taking other members’ inventories?

2. Am I a peacemaker? Or do I, with pious preludes such as “just for the sake of discussion,” plunge into argument?

3. Am I gentle with those who rub me the wrong way, or am I abrasive?

4. Do I make competitive AA remarks, such as comparing one group with another or contrasting AA in one place with AA in another?

5. Do I put down some AA activities as if I were superior for not participating in this or that aspect of AA?

6. Am I informed about AA as a whole? Do I support, in every way I can, AA as a whole, or just the parts I understand and approve of?

7. Am I as considerate of AA members as I want them to be of me?

8. Do I spout platitudes about love while indulging in and secretly justifying behavior that bristles with hostility?

9. Do I go to enough AA meetings or read enough AA literature to really keep in touch?

10. Do I share with AA all of me, the bad and the good, accepting as well as giving the help of fellowship?

Tradition Two: 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.

1. Do I criticize or do I trust and support my group officers, AA committees, and office workers? Newcomers? Old-timers?

2. Am I absolutely trustworthy, even in secret, with AA Twelfth Step jobs or other AA responsibility?
3. Do I look for credit in my AA jobs? Praise for my AA ideas?
4. Do I have to save face in group discussion, or can I yield in good spirit to the group conscience and work cheerfully along with it?
5. Although I have been sober a few years, am I still willing to serve my turn at AA chores?
6. In group discussions, do I sound off about matters on which I have no experience and little knowledge?

Tradition Three: The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.

1. In my mind, do I prejudge some new AA members as losers?
2. Is there some kind of alcoholic whom I privately do not want in my AA group?
3. Do I set myself up as a judge of whether a newcomer is sincere or phony?
4. Do I let language, religion (or lack of it), race, education, age, or other such things interfere with my carrying the message?
5. Am I overimpressed by a celebrity? By a doctor, a clergyman, an ex-convict? Or can I just treat this new member simply and naturally as one more sick human, like the rest of us?
6. When someone turns up at AA needing information or help (even if he can’t ask for it aloud), does it really matter to me what he does for a living? Where he lives? What his domestic arrangements are? Whether he had been to AA before? What his other problems are?

Tradition Four: Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.

1. Do I insist that there are only a few right ways of doing things in AA?
2. Does my group always consider the welfare of the rest of AA? Of nearby groups? Of Loners in Alaska? Of Internationalists miles from port? Of a group in Rome or El Salvador?
3. Do I put down other members’ behavior when it is different from mine, or do I learn from it?
4. Do I always bear in mind that, to those outsiders who know I am in AA, I may to some extent represent our entire beloved Fellowship?
5. Am I willing to help a newcomer go to any lengths—his lengths, not mine—to stay sober?
6. Do I share my knowledge of AA tools with other members who may not have heard of them?
Tradition Five: Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

1. Do I ever cop out by saying, “I’m not a group, so this or that Tradition doesn’t apply to me”?
2. Am I willing to explain firmly to a newcomer the limitations of AA help, even if he gets mad at me for not giving him a loan?
3. Have I today imposed on any AA member for a special favor or consideration simply because I am a fellow alcoholic?
4. Am I willing to twelfth-step the next newcomer without regard to who or what is in it for me?
5. Do I help my group in every way I can to fulfill our primary purpose?
6. Do I remember that AA old-timers, too, can be alcoholics who still suffer? Do I try both to help them and to learn from them?

Tradition Six: An AA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

1. Should my fellow group members and I go out and raise money to endow several AA beds in our local hospital?
2. Is it good for a group to lease a small building?
3. Are all the officers and members of our local club for AAs familiar with “Guidelines on Clubs” (which is available free from GSO)?
4. Should the secretary of our group serve on the mayor’s advisory committee on alcoholism?
5. Some alcoholics will stay around AA only if we have a TV and card room. If this is what is required to carry the message to them, should we have these facilities?

Tradition Seven: Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

1. Honestly now, do I do all I can to help AA (my group, my central office, my GSO) remain self-supporting? Could I put a little more into the basket on behalf of the new guy who can’t afford it yet? How generous was I when tanked in a barroom?
2. Should the Grapevine sell advertising space to book publishers and drug companies, so it could make a big profit and become a bigger magazine, in full color, at a cheaper price per copy?
3. If GSO runs short of funds some year, wouldn’t it be okay to let the government subsidize AA groups in hospitals and prisons?
4. Is it more important to get a big AA collection from a few people, or a smaller collection in which more members participate?
5. Is a group treasurer’s report unimportant AA business? How does the treasurer feel about it?

6. How important in my recovery is the feeling of self-respect, rather than the feeling of being always under obligation for charity received?

**Tradition Eight: Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.**

1. Is my own behavior accurately described by the Traditions? If not, what needs changing?
2. When I chafe about any particular Tradition, do I realize how it affects others?
3. Do I sometimes try to get *some* reward—even if not money—for my personal AA efforts?
5. Do I make an effort to understand what AA employees do? What workers in other alcoholism agencies do? Can I distinguish clearly among them?
6. In my own AA life, have I any experiences which illustrate the wisdom of this Tradition?
7. Have I paid enough attention to the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*? To the pamphlet *AA Tradition—How It Developed*?

**Tradition Nine: AA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.**

1. Do I still try to boss things in AA?
2. Do I resist formal aspects of AA because I fear them as authoritative?
3. Am I mature enough to understand and use all elements of the AA program—even if no one makes me do so—with a sense of personal responsibility?
4. Do I exercise patience and humility in any AA job I take?
5. Am I aware of all those to whom I am responsible in any AA job?
6. Why doesn’t every AA group need a constitution and bylaws?
7. Have I learned to step out of an AA job gracefully—and profit thereby—when the time comes?
8. What has rotation to do with anonymity? With humility?

**Tradition Ten: Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.**

2. Can I honestly share my own personal experience concerning any of those without giving the impression I am stating the “AA opinion”?

3. What in AA history gave rise to our Tenth Tradition?

4. Have I had a similar experience in my own AA life?

5. What would AA be without this Tradition? Where would I be?

6. Do I breach this or any of its supporting Traditions in subtle, perhaps unconscious, ways?

7. How can I manifest the spirit of this Tradition in my personal life outside AA? Inside AA?

**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.

1. Do I sometimes promote AA so fanatically that I make it seem unattractive?

2. Am I always careful to keep the confidences reposed in me as an AA member?

3. Am I careful about throwing AA names around—even within the Fellowship?

4. Am I ashamed of being a recovered, or recovering, alcoholic?

5. What would AA be like if we were not guided by the ideas in Tradition Eleven? Where would I be?

6. Is my AA sobriety attractive enough that a sick drunk would want such a quality for himself?

**Tradition Twelve:** Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

1. Why is it a good idea for me to place the common welfare of all AA members before individual welfare? What would happen to me if AA as a whole disappeared?

2. When I do not trust AA’s current servants, who do I wish had the authority to straighten them out?

3. In my opinions of and remarks about other AAs, am I implying membership requirements other than a desire to stay sober?

4. Do I ever try to get a certain AA group to conform to my standards, not its own?

5. Have I a personal responsibility in helping an AA group fulfill its primary purpose? What is my part?

6. Does my personal behavior reflect the Sixth Tradition—or belie it?

7. Do I do all I can do to support AA financially? When is the last time I anonymously gave away a Grapevine subscription?

8. Do I complain about certain AAs’ behavior—especially if they are paid to work for AA? Who made me so smart?
9. Do I fulfill all AA responsibilities in such a way as to please privately even my own conscience? Really?

10. Do my utterances always reflect the Tenth Tradition, or do I give AA critics real ammunition?

11. Should I keep my AA membership a secret, or reveal it in private conversation when that may help another alcoholic (and therefore me)? Is my brand of AA so attractive that other drunks want it?

12. What is the real importance of me among more than a million AAs?

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CONCEPTS CHECKLIST

A service piece for home groups, districts, areas

Some of these discussion points were originally developed by an A.A. group and further developed by the trustees’ Literature Committee to be distributed by the General Service Office. While this checklist is intended as a starting point for discussion by groups, districts or areas, individual A.A. members may find it useful along with our co-founder Bill W.’s writings, a service sponsor if you have one and reflection on your own service experience. Additional information about the Concepts can be found in The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service and “The Twelve Concepts Illustrated” - pamphlet. (The Concepts stated here are in the short form.)

Concept I: Final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

- Does our group have a general service representative (G.S.R.)? Do we feel that our home group is part of A.A. as a whole and do our group’s decisions and actions reflect that?
- Do we hold regular group conscience meetings encouraging everyone to participate? Do we pass that conscience on to the district, area, or the local intergroup meetings?
- Is the “collective conscience” of Alcoholics Anonymous at work in my home group? In my area?
- Where do we fit in the upside-down triangle of A.A.?
- Are we willing to do what it takes to insure that our democracy of world service will work under all conditions?

Concept II: The General Service Conference of A.A. has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society in its world affairs.

- Do we have an understanding of the history of the General Service Conference (the “Conference”)?
- What is a Conference Advisory Action? Does our home group’s G.S.R., D.C.M., area delegate report back to the group on the highlights of the Conference and Conference Advisory Actions?
- Is our group meeting its wider Seventh Tradition responsibilities?
Concept III: To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of A.A. —the Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees, and executives—with a traditional “Right of Decision.”

- Do we understand what is meant by the “Right of Decision”? Do we grant it at all levels of service or do we “instruct”?
- Do we trust our trusted servants — G.S.R., D.C.M., area delegate, the Conference itself?

Concept IV: At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional “Right of Participation,” allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

- Do we understand the spiritual principles underlying the “Right of Participation”?
- What does “in reasonable proportion” mean? Do we understand when it is appropriate for A.A. paid staff to have a vote at the General Service Conference or in our local service structure?
- Do we expect that, because we are A.A. members, we should be allowed to vote at any group, even if we are not active members of that group?

Concept V: Throughout our structure, a traditional “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.

- Do we encourage the minority opinion, the “Right of Appeal,” to be heard at our home group, district committee meetings, area assemblies and the Conference?
- What does our group accept as “substantial unanimity”?
- Has our group experienced the “tyranny of the majority” or the “tyranny of the minority”?
- Does our group understand the importance of all points of view being heard before a vote is taken?

Concept VI: The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the General Service Board.

- Are we familiar with how our General Service Board (G.S.B.) Class A and Class B trustees serve A.A.? Are we familiar with how our other trusted servants serve A.A.?
- Are we clear about the terms, “chief initiative” and “active responsibility”? Can we see a direct link to our home group?
Concept VII: The Charter and Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the A.A. purse for final effectiveness.

- Do we act responsibly regarding the “power of the purse”?
- Do we realize that the practical and spiritual power of the Conference will nearly always be superior to the legal power of the G.S.B.?

Concept VIII: The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.

- Do we understand the relationship between the two corporate service entities (A.A. World Services, Inc., the A.A. Grapevine) and the General Service Board?
- How can the business term “custodial oversight” apply to the trustees’ relationship to the two corporate service entities?
- Does my home group subscribe to G.S.O.’s bimonthly newsletter *Box 4-5-9*? A.A. Grapevine? Do I?

Concept IX: Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.

- Do we discuss how we can best strengthen the composition and leadership of our future trusted servants?
- Do we recognize the need for group officers? What is our criteria for election? Do we sometimes give a position to someone “because it would be good for them”?
- Do I set a positive leadership example?

Concept X: Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.

- Do we understand “authority” and “responsibility” as they relate to group conscience decisions by G.S.R.s, D.C.M.s and our area delegates?
- Why is delegation of “authority” so important to the overall effectiveness of A.A.? Do we use this concept to define the scope of “authority”?
Concept XI: The trustees should always have the best possible committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction procedures, and rights and duties will always be matters of serious concern.

- Do we understand how the roles of nontrustee directors and nontrustee appointed committee members help serve and strengthen the committee system?
- How do we encourage our special paid workers to exercise their traditional “Right of Participation”?
- Do we practice rotation in all our service positions?

Concept XII: The Conference shall observe the spirit of A.A. tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government, and that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

- How do we guard against becoming a “seat of perilous wealth or power”?
- How do we practice prudent use of our Seventh Tradition contributions and literature revenue?
- Do we insure the spiritual liberties of all A.A. members by not placing any member in the position of absolute authority over others?
- Do we try to reach important decisions by thorough discussion, vote and, where possible, substantial unanimity?
- As guardians of A.A.’s traditions, are we ever justified in being personally punitive?
- Are we careful to avoid public controversy?
- Do we always try to treat each other with mutual respect and love?