

District 14 GSR Orientation

AGENDA

1. Introductions

Name

Sobriety date

Group representing

One question for the group

2. Handout review & discussion

3. Questions & Answers

4. Going forward

Discussion

Schedule next orientation

Tradition Five:

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

The AA Group

“There are those who predict that AA 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 AA 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 AA, and if we commenced to behave accordingly.

Bill W, 1955 (The AA Group Pamphlet)

- 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 AA 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 main difference between meetings and groups is that AA groups generally continue to exist outside the prescribed meeting hours, ready to provide Twelfth Step help when needed.

General Service Representative (GSR)

“By choosing its most qualified man or woman as GSR, a group helps secure its own future—and the future of A.A. as a whole.”

Working via the district and area committees, the GSR is the group’s link with the General Service Conference, through which US and Canadian groups share their experience and voice AA’s collective conscience. Sometimes called “the guardians of the Traditions,” GSR’s become familiar with AA’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 GSO’s primary tool for communicating with the Fellowship.
- GSR’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 GSO.
- An alternate GSR is elected at the same time in the event that the GSR may be unable to attend all district and area meetings. Alternate GSR’s should be encouraged to share the responsibilities of the GSR at the group, district and area levels.

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.

GSR General Services

1. At district meetings, you join with GSR’s from other groups where groups band together to help alcoholics in your region of Western Colorado including Eagle, Garfield and Pitkin counties. Your district is one part of a general service area. With your fellow GSR’s, you elect a district committee member, and all the DCM’s make up the area committee.
2. You attend area assemblies four times a year. At the electoral assembly (held every two years), along with the other GSR’s and the DCM’s from the whole area, you elect committee officers—and your area’s Conference delegate.
3. It’s up to you to keep two-way communication going between your group and the Conference.

4. As GSR, 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 your district records chair, who sends it to the secretary of your area committee, who sends it to GSO. (Be sure to include, as well, the name of the GSR 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 AA Directory.
5. In return, GSO sends you the G.S.R. Kit and the bimonthly bulletin Box 4-5-9. You use these and share them with the other members of your group.
6. With the information you now have, 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 AA experience.
7. Tradition Seven particularly, you work with the group treasurer to remind your group of its part in keeping all of AA self-supporting.
8. You stay in touch with AA throughout your area. You can bring to your group the news of upcoming local conventions. As GSR, you share with your fellow members the joy of widening AA horizons.

Information you’ll need

9. On the general service structure:
The AA Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service, Inside AA, and Circles of Love and Service—all in the GSR Kit; the Final Conference Report.
10. On the Traditions:
A.A. Tradition—How It Developed; Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, AA Comes of Age, The Twelve Traditions Illustrated.
11. On group affairs:
The AA Group and Self-Support, Where Money and Spirituality Mix, the AA Guidelines listing of titles and prices in the literature catalog, which suggest ways your group can work with other groups and with agencies outside AA
12. Financial Support:
Current experience indicates that many groups provide financial support for their general service representatives to attend service functions.

When your group elects a GSR

1. The two-year terms of an area’s GSR’s coincide with those of its DCM’s and Conference delegate. So a group usually elects its GSR before the assembly meeting at which the delegate is elected.
2. An informed group enjoys a special election meeting, where a member with a solid background in service work explains the function of the GSR.
3. Procedures for electing a GSR 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.
4. Prompt notification about your choice of GSR is essential. If your district or area committee and GSO do not have your new GSR’s name and address, communication breaks down.
5. At the same election meeting, it is important also to elect an alternate GSR. The two will work together closely, so that the alternate can be a knowledgeable replacement if the GSR is unable to attend a district or area meeting.
6. What happens if your group’s GSR is elected committee member for your district? Then the alternate automatically becomes your GSR—an extra reason for care in filling both offices.

The makings of a good GSR

7. Two or three years’ sobriety is generally the required minimum. Active membership in a home group—yours—is also important, and your GSR should hold no other offices in any group.
8. Prior AA service experience provides a long head start for a GSR’s success. Consider former group officers and members who have shouldered responsibility at your intergroup or central office or on special committees.
9. Does your group include people who already have a keen interest in the Twelve Traditions and the service structure?
10. Look for the same character qualities that mark a good trusted servant of any sort: patience, understanding, and a firm determination to place principles before personalities.

11. Most future Conference delegates will come from the ranks of today's GSR'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 AA

Bill W on General Services and the GSR

“... an AA 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 AA's General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service.”



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.

Twelve Concepts for World Service (Short Form)

1. Final Responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole fellowship.
2. 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.
3. 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".

4. At all reasonable levels, we ought to maintain traditional "Right of Participation", allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.
5. Throughout our structure, a traditional "Right of Appeal" ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.
11. 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.
12. 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.