



Southern Illinois Area 21

# GSR Workshop

Welcome to  
Alcoholics Anonymous General Service

**AAWS.** Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., one of two operating corporations of the General Service Board; oversees the operations of the General Service Office and serves as the publishing company for conference-approved and service literature.

**Area.** An area is a geographical division within a state or province. A Delegate to the General Service Conference is elected from an area assembly. Normally, there is one area to a state or province except in heavily A.A.-populated places where there may be two, three, or more areas in a state or province. Some areas include portions of more than one state or province. Illinois is comprised of two areas: Area 20 and Area 21.

**Conference-approved literature, videos, and films.** Pamphlets, books, videos, and films produced under the auspices of various Conference committees that have reviewed and recommended to the Conference for its approval and which may have been approved by the Conference.

**District Committee Member (DCM).** Also known as a District Chair. An experienced GSR elected by other GSRs to represent the groups of their district in CDM committee meetings and to coordinate service activities in the district.

**Delegate.** The man or woman elected every other year to represent the area at the annual Conference meeting in New York and to bring back the results of that meeting to the area.

**District.** A division within the Area represented by GSRs and District Committee Members. Chicago Area 19 in Northern Illinois has 20 districts. Northern Illinois Area 20 has 20 districts. Southern Area 21 has 17 districts.

**General Service Conference.** The annual meetings of Conference Delegates, Trustees, and General Service Office staff each April in New York. The General Service Conference is a method by which A.A.'s collective group conscience can be heard.

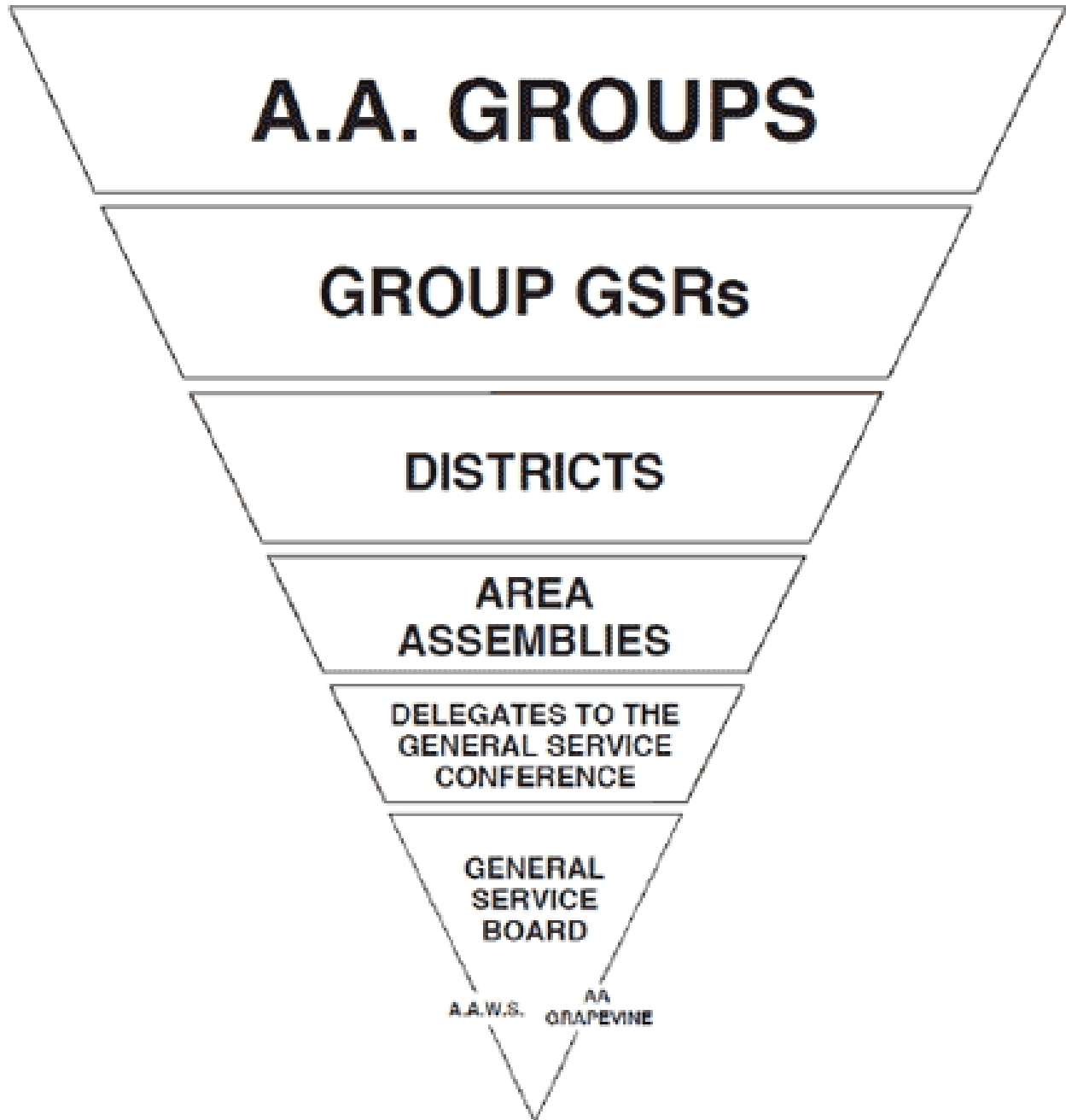
**Grapevine.** The *A.A. Grapevine* is the international monthly journal of Alcoholics Anonymous. The A.A. Grapevine, Inc. is one of two operating corporations of the General Service Board and is responsible for Grapevine operations and finances.

**General Service Office (GSO).** The entity which provides services to groups in the U.S. and Canada and publishes A.A. literature.

**Region.** A group of states from which a regional Trustee is chosen. Area 21 is in the East-Central Region. It consists of Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio.

**Trustee.** A member of the General Service Board. Of the 21 Trustees, 14 are alcoholic (Class B), and seven are non-alcoholic.

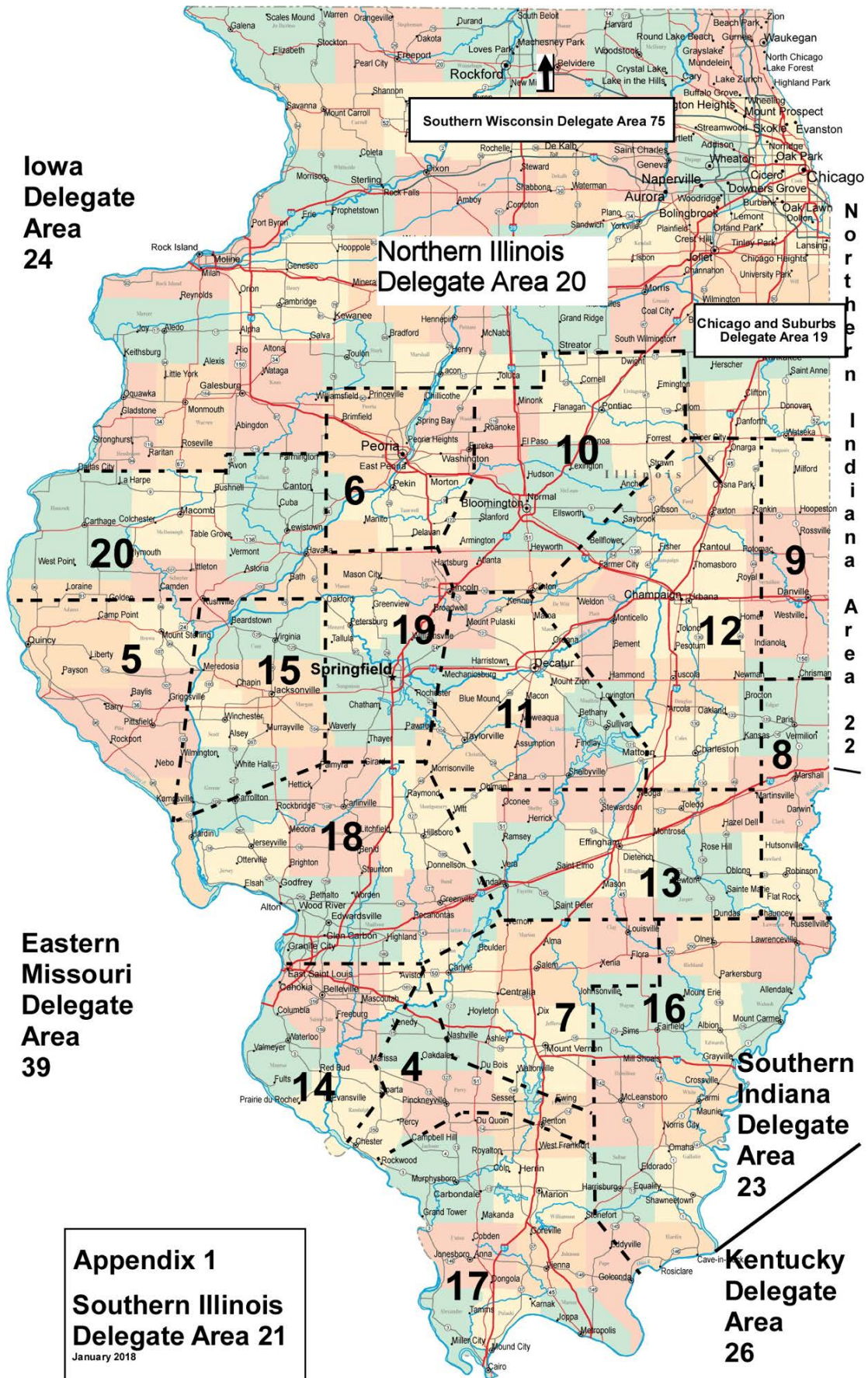
**STRUCTURE OF THE CONFERENCE  
(U.S. and Canada)**



Iowa  
Delegate  
Area  
24

Eastern  
Missouri  
Delegate  
Area  
39

Appendix 1  
Southern Illinois  
Delegate Area 21  
January 2018





## AA's 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 depends our lives,  
and the lives of those to come.

## GSR Workshop: Welcome to Alcoholics Anonymous General Service

### The GSR Preamble:

We are the General Service Representatives. We are the link in the chain of communication for our groups with the General Service Conference and the world of A.A. We realize the ultimate authority is a loving God as he may express Himself in our Group Conscience. As trusted servants, our job is to bring information to our groups in order that they can reach an informed group conscience. In passing along this group conscience, we are helping to maintain the unity and strength so vital to our fellowship. Let us, therefore, have the patience and tolerance to listen while others share, the courage to speak up when we have something to share, and the wisdom to do what is right for our group and A.A. as a whole.

# GSR Workshop: Welcome to Alcoholics Anonymous General Service

## **Purpose of Area 21 GSR School / Workshop**

In 1970 during the General Service Conference, it was recommended that Area Committees consider a symposium on services that would include an educational program for GSRs in the workings of their group and their relation to A.A.'s General Service Office.

The goal was (and is) to help the GSRs and all members interested in getting involved in service to better understand their role in the General Service structure of A.A. and to help them understand the procedures to which our meetings are conducted.

Assist GSRs to:

- Become comfortable and effective in service to your home group
- Share with others who have service experience and suggestions
- Have fun and learn how to:
  - keep your information up to date
  - give reports at your home group, district meetings, and area assemblies
  - participate at district meetings and area assemblies
  - contact others for answers to any service question
  - use the literature as an effective tool
  - share suggestions and concerns at your home group and service meetings

## **The Three Legacies of Alcoholics Anonymous:**

1. RECOVERY: Guidelines for the individual as outlined in the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous
2. UNITY: Guidelines for the group as outlined in the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.
3. SERVICE: Guidelines for General Service as outlined in the Twelve Concepts for World Service.
  - a. The term "Service" includes anything to help alcoholics (clean-up, make and pour coffee, door greeter, meeting monitor, twelfth step calls...)
  - b. The term "General Service" applies to all kinds of activities within the conference structure carried on by General Service Representatives, Districts, Area Committees and Assemblies, Delegates, Trustees, and GSO staff. In most instances, this type of service affects the fellowship as a whole.

## GSR Workshop: Welcome to Alcoholics Anonymous General Service

### **What is a General Service Representative and how this service position was created**

In 1954 during the General Service Conference, it was proposed that the “General Service Representative” plan be adopted by the Conference. That plan was, in part, that the group representative described in the Third Legacy Pamphlet be designated as the “General Service Representative.”

That the General Service Representative you now represent the voice of your A.A. group’s conscience to the A.A. General Service Conference held in New York each April.

Through your elected District Committee Member (DCM) and the Southern Illinois Area 21 Delegate, you will become the two-way link between your group, the General Service Office and the General Service Conference. You will become active in building a strong service structure.

In this sense, the conference can feel it is acting for A.A. as a whole only to the extent that the GSR keeps the groups informed and can gather and communicate the group’s conscience.

### **General duties of a GSR**

- Linking their group to A.A. as a whole.
- Acting as the voice of their group’s conscience.
- Reporting it to their DCM at District Meetings and their Delegates at Area Assemblies. Attendance at District Meetings and Area Assemblies is crucial in order for your group’s conscience to be passed on to the General Service Conference and the rest of A.A.
- Bringing Area and District suggestion and announcements back to their group.
- Registering with GSO as the GSR for your group. (Provided that your group is registered.)

### **Registering your group and yourself as the GSR of the group**

If you are representing a new group, you will need to fill out a **New Group** form. If your group is already established, then a **Group Change** form is all you need. These forms can be obtained from the General Service Office, the area registrar, or your DCM. GSO will send you a “GSR Kit” upon receipt of such information. This information can be given to the area registrar and they can enter it directly into the GSO database.

\*\*\* A brief period for any RELATED questions from the floor \*\*\*

## GSR Workshop: Welcome to Alcoholics Anonymous General Service

### Three Areas of Responsibility for the GSR

In general, there are three areas in which the GSRs have their major responsibilities; each one involves a *two-way relationship* with: The Group, The District, and The Area.

#### 1. The Group

Question: What is the difference between a group and a meeting?

#### Relationships and Reports

The relationship of the GSR with their group is probably the most important one and hopefully the most fluid and open one.

The best way to become an effective GSR is to attend the meetings of your home group on a regular basis. Only by attending group meetings regularly can we stay informed of the group's affairs.

This can give you the opportunity to get acquainted with the members of your group and their ideas. It will also give you more credibility when you make suggestions or reports. Giving regular reports to your groups on service-related activities and brief reports on important issues discussed at the District or Area meetings is a huge responsibility of every GSR.

#### The Group and its Traditions

"The unity of Alcoholics Anonymous is the most cherished quality our Society has. Our lives, the lives of all to come, depend squarely upon it. We stay whole, or A.A. dies. Without unity, the heart of A.A. would cease to beat; our world arteries would no longer carry the life-giving grace of God; His gift to use would be spent aimlessly. Back again in their caves, alcoholics would reproach us and say, "What a great thing A.A. might have been"" (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pg. 129).

Members involved in General Service, particularly the GSRs are generally known as *the guardians of our traditions*. Keeping with the belief that "You can't give away something you don't have," it is the responsibility of every GSR to have at least a basic knowledge of the Twelve Traditions and to know where they can find answers to the questions that will arise about them.

Simply because an idea seems to make sense does not necessarily mean that it is not in contradiction of one or more of our Traditions. Bill W. once said that "the good is sometimes the enemy of the best" (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pg. 138).

Just as a personal inventory helps us to identify those things that are blocking us personally from the Sunlight of the Spirit, so a *group inventory* can flag those areas that may indicate group behavior and decisions that may be contrary to the Twelve Traditions and to ensure that the group is fulfilling their primary purpose: to help alcoholics recover from a hopeless state of mind and body through the twelve suggested steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. A good starting format for this may be found in the pamphlet, "The A.A. Group."

## GSR Workshop: Welcome to Alcoholics Anonymous General Service

### The Group Conscience

As was discussed earlier, the GSR is the voice of the group's conscience. GSRs are responsible for reporting their group's conscience to District Meetings and Area Assemblies.

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.

Not always understood, group conscience as expressed in Tradition Two is a powerful spiritual concept that makes it possible for people of diverse backgrounds and temperament to rise above personal ambition and unite in a common purpose; to stay sober and extend the hand of A.A. to the alcoholic who still suffers (*Box 459* - Vol. 35, No. 1 February / March 1989).

There are two ways: The *competitive way* permits the person with the loudest voice to push his ideas across, take a vote, and come up with a 'majority' decision. This is not an informed group conscience. In the *cooperative way*, group members come together in mutual trust to arrive at a group decision, not one individual's personal triumph.

### So, what is an "informed 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 group members through 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 and mindful of dominant opinions. Its voice is heard when a well-informed group arrives at a decision.

The term "informed group conscience" implies that pertinent information has been studied and all views have been heard before the group votes.

Many groups recognize their GSR as the trusted servant chosen to facilitate an informed group conscience. If this is the case with your group, it is recommended that you remember to "ask God in."

\*\*\* A brief period for any RELATED questions from the floor \*\*\*

## GSR Workshop: Welcome to Alcoholics Anonymous General Service

### **Suggested Steps to Achieving an Informed Group Conscience**

- **GATHER KNOWLEDGE:** The GSR or other chairperson of the group informs himself/herself about the topic to be discussed. Then:
- **PRESENT TOPIC/ISSUE:** Present the information on the topic to the home group, giving enough background material so that all participants are informed on both sides of the topic. The chairperson should be as unbiased as possible on the topic.
- **SHARING:** Ask each member to share in turn, being sure to allow all to share once before anyone shares a second time. Remember, this is not a general discussion meeting. It is a method of arriving at unanimity on a specific subject. Remember to carefully listen to any minority opinions.
- **CONSENSUS:** Continue the process until substantial group unanimity is achieved. This is usually considered 2/3rds of the participants. More than one sharing session may be needed. Remember, you are striving for a group conscience, not a “popular vote.” Be patient and practice A.A. principles as the process continues.
- **RECAP:** Once a group conscience is achieved, present a summary of the conscience to the group as a whole including minority opinion. Pass the group conscience and any minority opinion to the appropriate person(s), be it the Delegate, Area Committee, or District.

### **Suggestions for GSR at Home Group Meeting**

- Guardian of the Traditions—know where to find answers.
- Give regular reports to the group regarding the District, the Area, and GSO.
- Share information from GSO, such as Box 459, literature price lists, etc.
- Explain issues to be voted on, and find out how the group wants you to vote on matters of importance to all A.A.
- Be the group contact for the area committee and GSO for A.A. directories, etc.
- Ensure your group is offering all the sobriety tools available—including conference-approved pamphlets and books.
- Seventh Tradition—work with your group treasurer to develop contribution plans.
- Be familiar with the A.A. Service Manual / Twelve Concepts for World Service 2018-2020 (BM-31), Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (B-2), Circles of Love and Service (P-45), The A.A. Group (P-16), and Inside A.A. (P-18).
- Write down questions and comments from group members and bring to District meetings and Area Assembly meetings.

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## 2. The District Meeting

You should make a commitment to attend all district meetings with your alternate. It is at the district level that you will communicate with other GSRs from your district, your DCM, and other officers of the district. Giving reports on your group, sharing problems and success with others, financial planning, and involvement in other district activities is vital to the process of keeping your group informed.

There are really very few completely new and original problems that develop in groups so our continuity of experience is extremely valuable. The GSRs can share with their fellow GSRs how *their group* dealt with such matters so that their experience might be helpful to another group.

Also, agenda items that may require action at the next Area Assembly can be discussed. These discussions make us better informed and able to take back to our group any business where a group conscience is needed. We can then take this back to the Area Assembly to make our voice heard.

### **Suggestions for GSRs at District Meetings:**

- Bring up for discussion issues or concerns from your group.
- Give a GSR Report for your home group.
- Give group contributions to district treasurer and get a receipt.
- Participate in planned district meetings.
- Host district meetings if your district uses meeting site rotation.
- Take information back to your group.
- Bring a notebook and a planning calendar.
- Bring a "Group Change" form.
- Know what your DCM's responsibilities are.
- Call your DCM to put items on agenda for district meeting.

\*\*\* A brief period for any RELATED questions from the floor \*\*\*

## GSR Workshop: Welcome to Alcoholics Anonymous General Service

### **3. The Area Assembly**

You should make a commitment to attend all area assemblies with your alternate. In Southern Illinois Area 21, we hold four assembly meetings a year. These are held on the first Saturday in March, June and December. The September assembly meeting is held on the second Saturday. These meetings rotate from district to district based on a bid system that the area holds one year in advance.

By attending Area Assemblies and area committee meetings, we become familiar with things happening in our own area and in the larger world of A.A. as a whole. This information comes in the form of reports from our Area Delegate, other Area Officers, Area Committee Chairpersons, District Committee Members, and GSRs.

It is quite likely that we will hear some good ideas that can be used to better our own districts or groups. It is a good idea to take a notepad or a notebook to these meetings and *use it*. The discipline involved in taking notes requires us to pay more attention to what is going on.

By taking adequate notes and paying attention to what is going on, you will be better equipped to compile more pertinent and accurate information to take back to your groups for reports and discussion.

\*\*\* A brief period for any RELATED questions from the floor \*\*\*

## GSR Workshop: Welcome to Alcoholics Anonymous General Service

### **The Committee System**

The Committee System is the device by which A.A. service manages to function. Many new GSRs going to their first business meeting expect that these affairs will be conducted in a manner that will duplicate the perfect model of democracy.

Some A.A. business meetings tend to choke up on talk and very little gets done. This is sometimes made worse by the alcoholic ego and emotional immaturity. An issue is presented; a motion is made, seconded, discussed and voted for. Then the discussion continues and continues, amendments are offered. Then arguments flourish and finally the motion is withdrawn. After two hours, they are back at square one. Sometimes a new GSR, shocked at the wrangling they find at their first business meeting, vow never to attend another.

One answer is the use of the "Committee System." A group of people are given a problem or task. This group or "committee" goes off to think and talk about the problem or task. Usually they reach a decision, hopefully by way of a mini-group conscience. Their decision is presented as a "report." One advantage is that a committee has its time. The time to fully gather information, evaluate that information, and allow heated emotions to cool. Most importantly, time to sense the conscience of the group-(Committee).

The committee's report is then presented to the entire voting body whether it is a home group service committee, a district meeting, an area assembly, or the General Service Conference. The recommendation of the committee is not binding on the voting body. They may reject or approve the action suggested by the committee's report. They are free to take a different action. However, in many cases, the action recommended by the committee can be voted on without a long discussion.

At the annual General Service Conference, a year's worth of business is transacted in five days. This would be impossible without the work of specialized Conference Committees.

This then is the committee system. It has served A.A. well. Like everything else, it has its flaws. There is nothing in the committee system that makes it immune to poor judgment, errors, or just being dead wrong. The system is a tool; an implement. Members of the fellowship of A.A. are, after all, human beings, and as such are prone to being human. It has been said that, "You can trust the fellowship, but you should not trust all the fellows on the ship."

\*\*\* A brief period for any RELATED questions from the floor \*\*\*

## GSR Workshop: Welcome to Alcoholics Anonymous General Service

### **Robert's Rules of Order** (Please refer to the chart on page 17)

The business portions of A.A. service meetings are conducted by an "informal" application of "Roberts Rules of Order." The object of rules of order is to assist any assembly to accomplish in the best possible manner the work for which it was designated. To do this, it is necessary to restrain the individual somewhat, as the right of an individual in any community to do what he pleases, is incompatible with the interests as a whole" (Brigadier-General Henry M. Robert, 1874).

During discussion of topics presented for consideration at area assemblies, it is generally recommended that all participants adhere to the following procedures. When recognized by the Area Chairperson:

Stand; state your name, your service title, and the name of the group you represent.

- Speak as clearly and as briefly as possible. Your remarks must be pertinent to the business at hand or items you wish to bring to the floor.
- The chairperson is not required to recognize a frivolous motion.

### **The Minority Opinion**

After a vote has been taken, it is customary for the Chair to ask, "Does anyone want to speak for the minority?" In Alcoholics Anonymous, once a vote has been taken on a motion, the minority party ALWAYS has the opportunity to speak from the floor. If any one person in the majority (the winning side) would like to change their vote after the minority opinion has spoken, it becomes a motion to reconsider what needs to have a second. It is then open to further discussion (if the original motion was open to discussion) before a new vote on the original motion is taken. It is not amendable and requires the same type of vote (majority or 2/3rds) as the original motion.

The legitimate rights of the minority are protected by the observance of the Fifth Concept in conducting our assemblies. A.A.'s nature is such that while the assembly participants have differing opinions on many issues, everyone wants to achieve an informed group conscience.

## GSR Workshop: Welcome to Alcoholics Anonymous General Service

You want to:	You say:	Second Required?	Debatable?	Vote
Adjourn	I move we adjourn	Yes	No	Majority
Table a matter	I move we table this matter	Yes	No	Majority
Have further study of a matter	I move we refer this to a committee	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend a motion	I move this motion be amended to read...	Yes	Yes	Majority
Introduce a matter of business	I move that...	Yes	Yes	Majority
Take up a matter previously tabled	I move we take from the table...	Yes	No	Majority
Reconsider an item already disposed of (Maker must have been on the prevailing side on the original motion)	I move we reconsider the vote on our action relative to...	Yes	Yes, if the original motion was debatable	Majority
Delay action indefinitely	I move to postpone indefinitely	Yes	Yes	Majority
Consider an item out of its scheduled order	I move we suspend the rules and consider...	Yes	No	2/3rds
End discussion or debate of a matter	I move the previous question	Yes	No	2/3rds
Register a complaint, Object to procedure	Point of privilege, Point of order	No	No	No vote – chair decides
Request information	Point of information	No	No	No vote

\*\*\* A brief period for any RELATED questions from the floor \*\*\*

## GSR Workshop: Welcome to Alcoholics Anonymous General Service

### Some Vital Aids

Some of the reading material seems tough at first, but study it, discuss it, see how it relates to other parts of the program and it will surprise you someday when it comes alive and becomes part of your and part of your message.

All A.A. literature is important, but the literature most directly related to service and general service includes, in part:

- A.A. Service Manual / Twelve Concepts for World Service 2018-2020 (BM-31)
- Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (Book, B-2)
- A.A. Comes of Age (Book, B-3)
- Our Great Responsibility (Book, B-17)
- The A.A. Group (Pamphlet, P-16)
- A.A. Tradition – How it Developed (Pamphlet, P-17)
- Inside A.A. (Pamphlet, P-18).
- Circles of Love and Service (Pamphlet, P-45)
- GSR May Be the Most Important Job in A.A. (Pamphlet, P-19)

### Closing Comments

Leadership starts with informed group members and GSRs who become DCMs, Area Committee Chairs, Area Officers, Delegates to the General Service Conference, and Trustees.

In order to fulfill the responsibility that our group has given us, we must become as knowledgeable as possible. If we are willing to learn and keep an open mind, we soon find that we are the ones who benefit.

As you grow in your GSR responsibility, your scope of the Fellowship will broaden, you will make many friends, and your sense of gratitude will deepen. While all this might be new and confusing, stay with us and give us the opportunity to help you understand. You might be surprised to find that you will enjoy general service and feel that you are truly part of a whole. It is an important and different kind of twelfth-step work.

## Responsibility Statement

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.