

Alcoholics Anonymous

Group Handbook For The Secretary

**Prepared by Napa Valley Intergroup
January 13, 1996**

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Prepared By
Napa Valley Intergroup
P.O. Box 10948
Napa, CA 94581-2948

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This Handbook Approved by Napa Valley Intergroup January 13, 1996

Welcome To The Secretary

Congratulations on being elected Secretary of your group. Through this valuable service, you will be experiencing A.A. in action!

This handbook is designed to answer questions you may have about your specific responsibilities as group Secretary and about A.A. in general. Never hesitate to ask for help from more experienced A.A. members, and remember Tradition 2, which reads:

"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."

Also remember Tradition 4, which states, "Each group should remain autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole." With this Tradition in mind remember that the guidelines in this book are suggested guidelines only.

When it's time to pass this work of love on to your successor, please make his/her transition into office easier by explaining the duties and responsibilities expected of them. Show them where things are, how to get materials (books, literature, etc.) and make yourself available for future questions.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO PASS THIS HANDBOOK

ALONG TO YOUR SUCCESSOR!

The Group Secretary - Responsibilities And Additional Information

1. The Secretary insures that the meeting is opened, conducted and concluded in accordance with the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. Other responsibilities may include:
 - a. Preparing the meeting place (and refreshments).
 - b. Arranging for and introducing the chairperson.
 - c. Welcoming visitors and newcomers.
 - d. Maintaining a meeting atmosphere.
 - e. Managing the contributions in the absence of the Treasurer.
 - f. Providing A.A. approved literature.
 - g. Attending Intergroup & General Service functions in the absence of an Intergroup Rep or GSR.

Since each group is autonomous, many of these responsibilities may be delegated to other members of the group (i.e. coffee maker, literature chairperson, greeter, General Service Rep and their alternates).

2. Start the meeting on time and close on time!! The Secretary advises the chairperson about the length of the meeting and the recommended time the chairpersons share their story with the group (usually 10-15 minutes).
3. In selecting a chairperson, it is advisable to make arrangements at least a week in advance. The recommended length of sobriety for a chairperson is at least six months. Each member of the group should have the opportunity to be the chairperson. Also, having A.A. members from outside your own group is vital for a fresh viewpoint.
4. Often prior to the meeting, a sign-in sheet is passed around for use by the chairperson to call on people to speak. (Some groups have the Secretary read such things as "share briefly"; "only once"; "raise your hand to be acknowledged"; etc., before introducing the speaker.)
5. The communications from Intergroup and District 11 and other A.A. announcements are important. Please allow time for these at each meeting. A Steering Committee or Business Meeting held monthly prior to the regularly scheduled meeting is very helpful (more about this later).
6. No individual, drunk or sober, should be permitted to interrupt repeatedly or otherwise disturb the meeting. Anyone who tends to monopolize the discussion should be tactfully discouraged, perhaps by interrupting gently and saying "Thank you - to allow everyone a chance to speak, does someone else also want to share?" or

"It sounds as if it would be beneficial if you stayed after the meeting to meet and talk with some of the men/women in our group", and going on to the next person. This also applies if someone, especially a newcomer, seems to be disclosing information that he/she may later regret having shared with the whole group. Part of our job is to protect the newcomer.

7. Have A.A. books and literature available. Conference approved A.A. books, pamphlets and literature are available from your local Intergroup.

Most Commonly Asked Questions

1. What is an A.A. Group?

(From the A.A. Group - Revised) The long form of Tradition Three 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."

2. What is the difference between open and closed meetings of A.A.?

(From the A.A. Group - Revised) 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. You do not have to identify yourself as an alcoholic at these meetings.

3. What is a Home Group?

Most members feel more at home in one particular group than in others, and consider it their Home Group; where they accept responsibilities and try to sustain friendships. They do not meddle in the business or policy of groups they visit and in which they would take no service assignment. It is in our Home Group that we vote on matters concerning A.A. as a whole. (Also see the Home Group on page 18 in the A.A. Group - Revised.)

4. What is a Steering Committee?

Questions about what a Group should do, and how it should be done sometimes arise. The Steering Committee may help solve these issues. An experienced cross-section of the Group's membership may comprise this Committee. The officers are the foundation of the Committee but any who wish to may attend. (Also see the Steering Committee on page 29 in the A.A. Group - Revised and the Steering Committee/Business Committee section of this Handbook.)

5. What are the Group Officers?

Some are listed below:

Group Coordinator/Chairman
Intergroup Representative
Secretary
Grapevine/Literature Representative
Treasurer
Greeter
General Service Representative
Coffee maker

6. What is an informed group conscience?

The results rest on more than arithmetic, a "yes" and "no" count. It is not just a vote. A.A. is a spiritual movement, and so the "ultimate authority" is the spiritual concept of the "group conscience". Its voice is heard when a well-informed group gathers to arrive at a decision. Minority ideas get thoughtful attention. A decision is made that most of the members can support. It is a process that may take many weeks or even longer. It is necessary that all members remember to ask their Higher Power for direction. (Also see Informed Group Conscience on page 34 of the A.A. Group – Revised and The Group Conscience section of this Handbook.)

7. How can an A.A. Group become registered with the Central Office in New York?

In Napa County, ask your GSR to get the forms from our District Registrar. Fill them out and have your GSR return them to the District Registrar who will send them to the Area Registrar, who sends them on to the Central Office in New York. (This may sound roundabout, but New York will send back to the Area for confirmation any requests for registration or changes). If you do not have a GSR, ask your DCM or the GSR from another group to help you out.

8. Where does the money go and how often should a financial report be given?

Group contributions first pay group expenses which can include: rent, A.A. literature, refreshments, equipment and supplies. After basic group needs are met, the remainder in excess of the prudent reserve (usually 3 months expenses) of the contributions go to help support A.A. as a whole through General Service, the Area, Intergroup and the District. Funds collected for H&I are always separate and never used to help pay for group expenses.

Treasurers maintain good, simple records to keep their group informed about how much is taken in and how it is spent. They should make brief monthly reports to the group and post financial statements quarterly. (Also see Treasurer on page 25 of the A.A. Group - Revised.)

9. What is an Intergroup Representative?

The Intergroup Representative represents his/her group in the responsibilities undertaken jointly with other groups in the community and tries to keep his/her group well informed of Intergroup activities (local area A.A. activities). (Also see the Intergroup Representative on page 27 of the A.A. Group - Revised.)

10. What is a General Service Representative?

The General Service Representative has the job of linking his/her group with A.A. as a whole. The GSR represents the voice of the group conscience, reporting the group's wishes to the District Committee Member and to the Delegate, who passes them on to the General Service Conference in New York. (Also see the General Service Representative on page 27 of the A.A. Group - Revised.)

11. What are the suggested terms of office and sobriety requirements? (These are suggestions only. Not all groups in the Napa conform to these suggestions.)

Position	Term	Requirement
Coffee Maker	6 months	1 month
Secretary	6 months	6 months
Treasurer	1 year	2 years
Intergroup Representative	1 year	1 year
General Service Rep	2 years	2 years
Literature Representative	6 month	1 month
Greeter	3-6 months	1 month

12. How do group problems get solved?

A GROUP CONSCIENCE, where a good sense of humor, cooling-off periods, patience, courtesy, willingness to listen and wait, a sense of fairness, and trust in a Power greater than ourselves has been found to be more useful than legalistic arguments or personal accusations.

In recent years, groups have found that they can apply in their group conscience some of the ideas in Bill W.'s "Twelve Concepts for World Service". For more information, refer to the A.A. World Services publication "The A.A. Service Manual combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service". Your GSR will be a good resource for this book. (Also see Group Problems on page 37 of the A.A. Group - Revised.)

The Group's Meeting Format

The Group Secretary's best friend is the Meeting Format, a guide for conducting that individual meeting. It is a set of directions on how to conduct the meeting that has been adopted by the group. Every group should have a written format for the Secretary to follow.

A group format is generally put together by the group Steering Committee and then presented to the group for its approval (or modification). There are no set rules on how a group should conduct its meetings (each group is autonomous). Group formats are as

individual and as different as the people who attend A.A. meetings. The format is simply a road map adopted by the group that describes how to begin and end the meeting, and what the group wishes to do between beginning and end.

Groups generally read "How It Works" from the Big Book and A.A.'s "Twelve Traditions". The format lets the secretary know at what point during the meeting this reading is to take place. Groups generally honor the seventh tradition by passing the basket. The format says when to do this. The format will generally announce whether the meeting is "open" or "closed"; will often ask people who wish to speak to confine their comments to issues related to alcoholism and recovery; will announce special or unusual group practices, such as giving your full name and sobriety date; will inform those present when and how court slips will be signed; may ask those present to speak only once until all have had a chance to speak; will provide a time for A.A. business reports (group treasurer's report, Intergroup Representative's report, etc.); usually will have a reminder to the Secretary to say thank you at the end of the meeting to the person who chaired that meeting, those who read, those who were greeters, made coffee, etc.

The group Steering Committee should review the format from time to time to ensure that it is up to date and continues to meet the group's needs. Via the group conscience, the format can be modified when necessary. Again, remember that there is no set A.A. rule or policy about the group format - it is simply a written procedure of how the group wishes for its trusted servant - the Secretary - to conduct the meeting.

On the following pages, you will find a copy of two different formats currently in use by two A.A. groups in the Napa area. These are offered as examples only. Again, each group should adopt a format that suits those who regularly attend that group.

Sample Group Meeting Format # 1

1. Good Morning! This is the regular meeting of the _____
Group of Alcoholics Anonymous.
2. My name is _____. I am an alcoholic and your Secretary. I had my last
drink on _____.
3. Are there any other alcoholics present? This is an open meeting of Alcoholics
Anonymous. We are glad you are all here - especially newcomers. In keeping with
our singleness of purpose and our Third Tradition which states that "The only
requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking," we ask that all who
participate confine their discussion to their problems with alcohol.
4. Let us open the meeting with a moment of silence to do with as you wish, followed
by the Serenity Prayer.

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change
the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.
5. Definition of Alcoholics Anonymous:

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 an honest 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 cause. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

6. Is there anyone present who is at his first A.A. meeting, or in his first 30 days of sobriety? If so, please introduce yourself. We ask this not to embarrass you but so that we may get to know you better.
7. Are there any visitors who are from outside the Napa area? If so, would you please introduce yourself.
8. _____ has volunteered to read "More About Alcoholism", from Chapter 3 of the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous.
9. _____ has volunteered to read "How It Works", from Chapter 5 of the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous.
10. _____ has volunteered to read the short form of the "Twelve Traditions" of Alcoholics Anonymous.
11. Court slips will be signed at the end of the meeting. Bring them to the Secretary.
12. If you consider this your home meeting or if you attend this meeting on a regular basis, please sign the Group Name & Phone Number Book. It is on the table in the back of the room. This information is used to make up a Group phone list.
13. Tradition No. 7 states "Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions." We will now pass the basket in honor of the 7th Tradition. The Pink cans are for the Hospital and Institutions, to be used to purchase literature for those who are unable to attend regular A.A. meetings.
14. Are there any A.A. announcements, business, or reports (such as Intergroup or GSR)?
15. A.A. books are available through this group's Intergroup Representative, who is _____. Various pamphlets about A.A. are available free on the rack at the front of the room. Meeting schedules are available here at the front table.
16. INTRODUCTION TO DISCUSSION: The older member knows that discussion of one's problems concerning this program is a basic necessity in our fellowship. In order to give all a chance to participate, we ask that you limit your comments to five (5) minutes, until all members have had a chance to be heard.

Therefore, your chairman of this meeting will not recognize anyone who has previously spoken until all members have had a chance to talk. This stage is for all alcoholics - new and old. New alcoholics are encouraged to ask questions and it is our group purpose to encourage questions, which is a sure fire way for the new alcoholic to become comfortable. To assist in this, it is the custom of this group to give our full name and the date we had our last drink. We are sure all of you will understand the purpose and the spirit of this procedure.

It is well for us to remember the words of our cofounder, Bill W.: "Sobriety, freedom from alcohol, is the sole purpose of any Alcoholics Anonymous Group."

Let's have just one meeting going at a time. When an individual is talking, let's all listen carefully and courteously. When it comes your time to talk, you'll be listened to the same way.

17. At this time, I would like to introduce _____, who will be our chairman for today's meeting.

(NOTE: Third Saturday of each month is Tradition Saturday. The AA Tradition that corresponds with the current month will be read by members present. Pass out the extra 12 x 12 books. The group secretary should read the first paragraph of the Tradition and then let others read a paragraph until the chapter is completed.)

18. Chairman conducts the discussion.
19. CLOSING: The Group Secretary thanks the Chairman as well as those members who participated in reading or giving reports.
20. Read any announcements left for Secretaries. Remind those at the meeting that books and literature are available.
21. Close the meeting with the Lord's Prayer.

Sample Group Meeting Format #2

Good evening and welcome to the regular Monday evening meeting of the _____ fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. My name is _____ and I am an alcoholic. I am also your group secretary.

We will open our meeting with a moment of silence, to do with as you please, followed by the serenity prayer:

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

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.

This evening, _____ has volunteered to read "how it works", a portion of chapter 5 from the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous.

This evening, _____ has volunteered to read "the twelve traditions," short form, from the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous.

As is the custom at this meeting, each week we ask for a volunteer to read a selection from the Big Book. This evening, _____ has volunteered to read.

It is also the custom at this meeting for everyone to introduce themselves. (ask the person setting next to you to start.)

Are there any A.A. announcements or reports? (such as Treasurers Report, Intergroup Report, GSR report)

Traditionally, this group has no chairman. Each week we ask if anyone has a topic he or she would like to discuss. We encourage all members present to get involved in this discussion. We believe that open and honest discussion of the problems of alcoholism is one sure route to continued sobriety.

(just before the meeting ends, read the following) A.A.'s tradition number seven states: every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions. We will now pass the basket in observance of the seventh tradition.

For those who would like to join me, we will now close the meeting with the lord's prayer.

Specific Meeting Topics

1. Acceptance
2. Amends
3. Anger
4. Anonymity
5. Attitude
6. Belief in a higher power
7. Dependence
8. Depression
9. Easy does it
10. Ego
11. Fear
12. First things first
13. Freedom through sobriety
14. God as I understand god
15. Gratitude
16. Group inventory
17. Growth in sobriety
18. Guilt or remorse
19. Honesty
20. Humility
21. Let go, let god
22. Living sober
23. Live & let live
24. Meditation
25. Open-mindedness
26. Participation
27. Powerlessness
28. Pride
29. Principles before personalities
30. Procrastination
31. Projection
32. Promises
33. Recovery
34. Resentments
35. Responsibility
36. Selfishness
37. Self-pity
38. Serenity
39. Service
40. Spiritual awakening
41. Spiritual progress
42. Sponsorship
43. Steps
44. Surrender
45. Tolerance
46. Traditions
47. Twelfth-stepping
48. Unity
49. Ways to carry the message
50. Willingness

Financial Information

It is suggested that the Treasurer of a Group keep records of the "7th Tradition" and of H&I contributions received, the Group expenses paid out and the support donations made to General Services, the Area, Intergroup and the District.

If your Group does not have a Treasurer, the Secretary will most likely handle the money.

These records do not have to be complicated and are helpful when reporting to your group about where the money goes. A brief summary should be given to your group at least once a month.

GROUP CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD A.A. SERVICES

To Support A.A.'s essential services, the General Service Conference suggests that individual groups adopt a specific plan that is suitable to their particular situation. (Also see the pamphlet "Self-Supporting Through our own Contributions".) Group contributions should be forwarded as follows:

NAPA VALLEY INTERGROUP OF A.A.
P.O. Box 10948
Napa, CA 94581-2948

To support 24 hour phone service for Twelfth Step calls and other inquiries; to provide groups with books, literature and meeting schedules; to be a communication center for local groups; to provide a monthly Birthday Meeting and other social activities; to provide any other local service that may be needed.

GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE (GSO)
P. O. BOX 459, GRAND CENTRAL STATION
NEW YORK, NY. 10163

To support group service throughout the U.S. and Canada and the General Service Conference; Lone Members and Groups; to carry the A.A. message worldwide.

CALIFORNIA NORTHERN COSTAL AREA (CNCA)
P. O. BOX 884222
SAN FRANCISCO, CA. 94188-4222

To support Area Assemblies, Delegates expenses, Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community and Contact Service.

DISTRICT 11
P. O. BOX 2996
YOUNTVILLE, CA. 94599

To support the District's work of communicating with Groups, support the local PI/CPC committee, provide District Group Conscience for the Assembly, and serve as a link between the Area Delegate and the GSRs.

HOSPITALS AND INSTITUTIONS (H&I)
P. O. BOX 192490
SAN FRANCISCO, CA. 94119-2490

To provide literature for those who would not otherwise have it (generally because they are institutionalized). All the money collected in the Pink Can goes to H&I, regardless of the group's other expenses or needs.

A.A. World Services publication F3, "Self-Supporting Through our own Contributions", outlines several suggested plans for group contributions toward all A.A. Services. Your group can get a copy of this pamphlet from your Intergroup Representative.

REMEMBER: It is the right of any group member to receive a regular report and a quarterly accounting of the donations through the group. A Treasurer is only human - and could be subject to temptation. It has happened before. If you do not hear a regular Treasurer's Report, ask for one.

On the following page you will find a sample/suggested Group Treasurer's Report Form. A form similar to the sample is currently in use by some groups in the Napa area.

Sample/Suggested Group Treasurer's Report

_____ GROUP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

TREASURERS REPORT

SECRETARY _____ TREASURER _____

REPORT FOR MEETING ON: _____

FINANCIAL REPORT

Balance on hand at start of meeting	\$
Collections this meeting:	\$
Total collection to account for, this week:	\$
Less expenses (coffee, sugar, rent, books, etc.):	\$
Balance on hand at end of week:	\$
Less prudent reserve, as established by Group:	\$
Balance in excess of prudent reserve:	\$
*Less contributions to Napa Intergroup (60% of excess):	\$
*Less contributions to General Service Office (30%):	\$
*Less contributions to Calif. No. Costal Area (5%):	\$
*Less contributions to District 11 (5%):	\$
Total disbursements	\$
Balance after distribution to Intergroup, General Services, CNCA and District 11 (the prudent reserve)	\$
*These percentages, adopted by way of Group Conscience, conform to suggestions contained in A.A. World Services approved publication F3, "Self-Supporting Through our own Contributions".	

Steering Committee/Business Committee

The Steering or Business Committee is the device for handling "Policy Questions" that may arise within a group. It does not represent management of a group, as no individual or committee can do that. The Steering Committee serves the group by providing a convenient, experienced cross section of group membership to whom problems of the group can be referred.

Generally, in our District, Steering or Business Committees are comprised of the General Service Representative, the Secretary, the Treasurer, the Intergroup Representative and any interested members of the group.

It is suggested that the Steering committee meet once a month or at least once a quarter. The Steering Committee can explore solutions for group problems or concerns. The ideas will be taken back to the group for final decisions. Announce Steering Committee meetings in advance and remind group members that any interested person is welcome to attend the meeting.

The Group Conscience

We know from reading the Twelve Traditions and Tradition Two that:

THE A.A. GROUP IS THE PRIMARY AUTHORITY IN ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS.

Why do we need a Group Conscience?

From time to time disagreements arise in groups, such as how the group's money should be spent, group policy on various issues and how to direct their Intergroup Representative and General Service Representative to vote. Group Secretaries and other officers are elected by Group Conscience.

How to arrive at an informed Group Conscience:

An informed Group Conscience, as opposed to a vote, is where both sides of an issue are presented, and all alternatives are thoroughly discussed.

All available information on a given subject should be presented to the group, so that everyone understands.

Every group member who wishes to do so should be given the opportunity to express an opinion. Sometimes gifted speakers can sway the majority; therefore, the minority voice must always be heard.

The Group Conscience should always express a comfortable majority opinion of the group.

To arrive at a decision satisfactory to everyone sometimes is difficult, if not impossible.

The greatest enemy of the Group Conscience is apathy. Often we tend to take the line of least resistance; the "peace at any price" attitude. This allows the members with the most dominating personalities and the loud voices to be our group's conscience. The group that listens to all its voices with an open mind and has a good understanding of the principles of A.A. is guided in its decision by principles and not personalities.

THE A.A. PHILOSOPHY IS TO BE ABLE TO DISAGREE WITHOUT BEING DISAGREEABLE!!

The Home Group Concept

The primary responsibility of a Home Group to its members is to be there, in addition to providing fellowship and association.

THE HOME GROUP IS WHERE IT ALL BEGINS. In the Home Group, people really get to know each other. They feel safe; they feel comfortable; they feel a sense of belonging. They share in each other's problems and willingly help each other by telling about THEIR own experiences and solutions to similar problems. For the member to the Group, it is a source of strength and stability. IT CAN BE COUNTED ON TO BE THERE!

When members are new, they are shown many different meetings filled with a blur of different faces. In the beginning, this is okay, but the point is reached where it is necessary to identify with one place on a regular basis, the Home Group. It's a safe place to feel comfortable with their new way of life. The faces are no longer a blur. They belong to real people. THIS IS WHERE THE HOME GROUP FIRST ENTERS INTO A MEMBER'S SOBRIETY!

Time passes, and before you know it, you find yourself at a business meeting. A member begins to experience the UNORGANIZED ORGANIZATION OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS. It becomes apparent that the Group Members are willing to be responsible for the happenings of that group. Almost immediately, members find themselves as coffee makers or greeters. IT HAPPENS SO FAST! It's at this moment that members realize that the group has put faith and trust in them and is willing to give them a chance. Members make commitments to the group and NOW ARE ABLE TO BEGIN TO REACH OUT TO HELP OTHERS.

The Home Group reinforces the fact that A.A. is not just "stop drinking" and attend meetings. It fosters sharing and identifies the needed steps and traditions. The Home Group introduces service and the service structure to its' members, which offer a new pathway to walk.

THE HOME GROUP IS ACTUALLY A SPIRITUAL ENTITY WHICH LIVES WITHOUT REGARD TO SPACE AND TIME. MEMBERS KNOW THAT THEY

NEED THE HOME GROUP AND THAT THEY MUST DO THEIR SHARE TO KEEP IT GOING.

Intergroup Representative

The Intergroup Representative has the job of linking his/her group with the other groups in the local area. The Intergroup Representative is the voice of the Group Conscience in matters affecting other groups, reporting the group's wishes to Intergroup as a whole. The Intergroup Representative also brings back to the group any information, questions or problems from Intergroup.

- Intergroup operates a twenty-four hour answering service for alcoholics seeking to speak to another alcoholic and for interested people to get information about A.A.
- Intergroup hosts a monthly birthday meeting and other social activities for members of the A.A. community.
- Intergroup provides free A.A. World Services literature for groups and books that groups may purchase.
- Intergroup updates and publishes meeting schedules for all of the Napa Valley.
- Intergroup acts as a communication center for local groups.
- Intergroup sponsors holiday "alkathons" at Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years.
- Intergroup is available to provide any other local services that may be needed to support meetings and groups within the Napa Valley.

General Service Representative

The General Service Representative links his/her group with A.A. as a whole. The GSR represents the voice of the Group Conscience, reporting the group's wishes to the District Committee Member (DCM) and the Delegate, who passes them on to the General Service Conference in New York. We realize whatever "authority" there is in A.A. resides in the Group Conscience. Because of this, a GSR can determine what a Group thinks about a situation, and can pass this information along to where it will be most useful in Policy-making. This is a two-way street, allowing the GSR to bring back to the Group the problems and remedies that affect A.A. unity, health and growth.

TO THE EXTENT THAT A GSR KEEPS THE GROUP INFORMED, THEN EXPRESSES THAT GROUP CONSCIENCE, ONLY TO THAT EXTENT CAN THE CONFERENCE FEEL IT IS ACTING FOR A.A. AS A WHOLE.

YOU AS A GSR CAN DO A NUMBER OF THINGS TO SERVE YOUR GROUP AND A.A.!

- GSRs are the mail contacts with the General Services Office in New York, and are listed in the A.A. Directories as contacts for individual groups. They receive

the G.S.O. Bulletin "Box 459" and keep their Group abreast of A.A. activities all over the world.

- They know what material is available from G.S.O. - Guidelines, Kits, Bulletins, Filmstrips, Videos, Tapes, Etc.
- While GSRs are no "Supreme Court" on traditions, they learn whatever they can about our vital traditions and customs. They will be able to help their Group's Secretary and other officers by becoming familiar with A.A. books and pamphlets, such as:
 - A.A. Tradition - How it Developed
 - The A.A. Group
 - Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions
 - A.A. Comes of Age.
- As part of the activities with their own Groups, they are equally interested in encouraging the Groups to support the Area and District Committees and the local Intergroup. They usually serve on the Group Steering Committee.
- They participate in District and Area Service Meetings, often helping with planning, advance registration and information for Area and District get-togethers and Assemblies. Following these affairs, they make reports to their Groups for the benefit of those who could not attend.

Experience shows the most successful GSRs are the A.A. members who have been active as Group Officers, Intergroup Representatives, or H&I or PI/CPC Committee members. From such work, they have already learned that A.A. offers "growth through service" and they become aware of the meaning of our traditions to A.A.'s future.

Information About Court Slips

It is the decision of the Group whether or not to sign court slips. It is also the decision of the Group what the policy will be for signing court slips. The Group Steering Committee should address this issue and bring it to the Group for a Group Conscience.

Whatever the policy is, it must be made clear to the Secretary. Write the policy down and add it to your secretary's handbook/notebook.

The Group can ask and answer some questions to help form their policy.

Do we want to sign court slips?

If no, then make it clear at the beginning of the meeting so that those who wish to can attend another meeting. (There should be a notation on the Meeting Schedule for meetings that do not sign court slips.),

If yes, the following questions apply:

1. When will the slips be signed - beginning or end of meeting?
2. Does the group wish for those with court slips to stay for the entire meeting? If so, please inform those concerned that their slips will not be returned until after the meeting. (We don't insist that regular members or visitors stay for the whole meeting.)
3. How will the slips be signed? You can use a rubber stamp or just sign your first name and last initial. Please do not under any circumstances use your entire name. Also, it is asked of us to sign only once for each meeting attended.

Our sole purpose is to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. Remember to be gentle with those who are forced to attend meetings. Many are angry, afraid and confused. A little love and caring may keep many of them coming back long after their legal obligation is fulfilled.

A.A. Preamble (Definition Of 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.

How It Works

(From Chapter 5, pages 58-60 of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous)

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it - then you are ready to take certain steps.

At some of the we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.

Remember that we deal with alcohol - cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power - that one is God. May you find Him now!

Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon.

Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:

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.

Many of us exclaimed, "What an order! I can't go through with it." Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

- a. That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.
- b. That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.
- c. That God could and would if He were sought.

The Twelve Steps Of Alcoholics Anonymous

(From pages 59-60 of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous)

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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 - Short Form

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 remain 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 Of Alcoholics Anonymous - 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, these 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, this 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 these services for which we might otherwise have to engage nonalcoholics. Such special services may be well recompensed. But our usual 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. Traditions 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 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 is 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 Promises

(From pages 83-84 of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous)

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook on life will change. Fear of people and economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us - sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

More About Alcoholism

(From Chapter Three of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous)

Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics. No person likes to think he is bodily and mentally different from his fellows. Therefore, it is not surprising that our drinking careers have been characterized by countless vain attempts to prove we could drink like other people. The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death.

We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step to recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed.

We alcoholics are men and women who have lost the ability to control our drinking. We know that no real alcoholic ever recovers control. All of us felt at times that we were regaining control, but such intervals - usually brief - were inevitably followed by still less control, which led in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization. We are convinced to a man that alcoholics of our type are in the grip of a progressive illness. Over any considerable period we get worse, never better.

We are like men who have lost their legs; they never grow new ones. Neither does there appear to be any kind of treatment which will make alcoholics of our kind like other men. We have tried every imaginable remedy. In some instances there has been brief recovery, followed always by a still worse relapse.

Physicians who are familiar with alcoholism agree there is no such thing as making a normal drinker out of an alcoholic. Science may one day accomplish this, but it hasn't done so yet.

Despite all we can say, many who are real alcoholics are not going to believe they are in that class. By every form of self-deception and experimentation, they will try to prove themselves exceptions to the rule, therefore nonalcoholic. If anyone who is showing inability to control his drinking can do the right about-face and drink like a gentleman, our hats are off to him. Heaven knows, we have tried hard enough and long enough to drink like other people!

Here are some of the methods we have tried: drinking beer only, limiting the number of drinks, never drinking alone, never drinking in the morning, drinking only at home, never having it in the house, never drinking during business hours, drinking only at parties, switching from scotch to brandy, drinking only natural wines, agreeing to resign if ever drunk on the job, taking a trip, not taking a trip, swearing off forever (with or without a solemn oath), taking more physical exercise, reading inspirational books, going to health farms and sanitariums, accepting voluntary commitment to asylums - we could increase the list ad infinitum.

Glossary Of Terms

For General Service Representatives - Prepared by District 11

ALTERNATE - A service worker who, at group, district or area level, assists, supports and participates in service responsibilities where feasible, depending on local autonomy and local needs.

AREA - a geographical division within a state or province. A Conference delegate comes from an AREA. 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 the state or province.

AREA COMMITTEE - A committee made up of district committee members, elected by the general service representatives (GSRs) in each district and the area committee officers. The area committee is a vital element of the general service structure.

AREA DELEGATE - Area representative to the General Service Conference.

AREA OFFICERS:

CHAIRPERSON - Conducts the Area Meeting

DELEGATE - Elected from District Committee Members by the General Service Representatives to represent the area at the General Service Conference.

ALTERNATE DELEGATE - Serves also as Area PI/CPC Chairman.

RECORDING SECRETARY - Takes minutes of area meetings and assemblies.

TREASURER - Maintains financial records. Pays all bills.

LITERATURE/GRAPEVINE CHAIR - Provides service literature and Grapevine information to the Area.

REGISTRAR - Maintains a list of groups and their officers.

ASSEMBLY COORDINATOR - Responsible for arranging Area Assemblies four time a year.

ASSEMBLY - A meeting of GSRs, Dams, Dams and committee members to discuss the affairs and biennially to elect a delegate and committee officers.

CALIFORNIA NORTHERN COASTAL AREA - CNCA - The entire local area from Monterey to the Oregon border; currently 19 Districts.

CENTRAL OFFICE - Depending on the locale, the same as Intergroup.

CONFERENCE - The General Service Conference. This can mean either the structure involving committees, GSRs and delegates in an area or the annual meeting of Conference delegates each April in New York.

CONFERENCE APPROVED LITERATURE - Pamphlets, books and films which the appropriate Conference committees have reviewed and reported favorably to the Conference meeting for its approval and which have been approved by the Conference.

CONTACT SERVICE - Assists the A.A. member newly released from prisons, institutions, detoxes, hospitals to get to a meeting in their home town or area. Contact Service is a sub-committee of CNCA.

DELEGATE - The man or woman elected at the electoral assembly every other year to represent the area at the annual meeting of the Conference in New York and to bring back to the area the results of the Conference meeting (See Chapter V of the Service Manual.)

DISTRICT - A division with an area to be represented by a committee member chair, often a county or two counties, but in more populous areas can be part of a county.

DISTRICT COMMITTEE MEMBER - DCM - sometimes called a committeeman or committeewoman. He or she is an experienced GSR elected by the other GSRs to represent the groups of their district in area committee meetings - and to coordinate service activities in the district (See Chapter iii).

DISTRICT COMMITTEE MEMBER CHAIR - DCMC - Chairperson to the District Committee. Chairs the District meetings, attends the Area Committee meetings and all area assemblies.

DISTRICT MEETINGS - The meetings of the district committee member and the GSRs of the groups within the district.

FILMSTRIPS - Presentations made up of slides-on-film, accompanied by recorded voices, showing work of the General Service Office (GSO), general service activities and A.A. history; available for area, group and intergroup meetings.

GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE - GSO - In New York, seat of public relations and custodians of the Twelve Traditions.

GENERAL SERVICES REPRESENTATIVE - GSR - the GSR is an A.A. member so elected by the group to voice the group's opinion in discussions at the area level. GSRs, in turn, vote for the district committee member and for the delegate and other area officers.

GRAPEVINE CHAIR - Provides Grapevine information for the district. The Grapevine is the official magazine (publication) of A.A.

HOSPITAL & INSTITUTIONS - H & I - A service structure, not a part of General Service, created to provide meetings and free literature to A.A.'s who are incarcerated in local institutions. H & I historically has been functioning in Northern California since before General Services. H & I in Northern California is unique in all of A.A. Usually this work is carried on as a part of General Service.

INTERGROUP - Service committee created to handle the local needs of groups.

LIAISON - Reports information to and from the District.

LITERATURE CHAIR - Provides A. A. approved literature for the district (primarily service related literature).

PRAASA - PACIFIC REGION ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS SERVICE

ASSEMBLY - The area includes Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, Hawaii, Arizona, and Nevada. An opportunity for A.A.'s service structure to meet and share with each other. The assembly is held annually.

PUBLIC INFORMATION/COOPERATION WITH THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY - PI/CPC - Generally a co-chair position. Helps direct our contact with the community at large. Helps inform the public and the professional community about A.A. as a whole and how we can be of service to them.

REGION - A grouping of several states or provinces from which a Regional Trustee comes to the Board of Trustees. There are six Regions in the United States and two in Canada.

REGISTRAR - Maintains records of names and addresses of GSRs and forwards the information to the Area Registrar and General Services Office.

SHARING SESSION - A kind of group, district, area or conference meeting where everyone is invited to contribute ideas and comments on A.A. matters.

SUB-DISTRICT - Smaller part or sub-division of a district. There are two sub-districts in Napa County: 1) Up-Valley (02) from Oakville north; and 2) Down-Valley (01) from Oakville south.

THIRD LEGACY - Recovery and Unity are A.A.'s first two Legacies. Our Third Legacy is Service, the sum total of all A.A. services, from a Twelfth Step call to A.A.'s coast-to-coast and worldwide service activities.

TRUSTEE - The usual term for a member of A.A.'s General Service Board. Some trustees are A.A.'s, some are non-alcoholic.

WORLD SERVICE OFFICE - Center for A.A. General Services, located at Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10163

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