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Dear Secretary,

Congratulations on being chosen Secretary of your group. Your service as Secretary is important, and others will look to you for leadership. Your efforts are part of the activities of thousands of others who are in action for the welfare of A.A. as a whole. If we at Central Office can help, please call.

This handbook will provide answers to some of the questions that might arise. It is important that you and your group members become familiar with A.A. Conference approved literature that helps to fulfill the needs of our growing fellowship. We suggest you announce the availability of A.A. literature and display it for easy access. Literature may be purchased at Central Office-Monday thru Friday, between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm and Saturdays, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm.

You and your group members may receive the “Coordinator” newsletter from Central Office by email. Send an email to SDAACO@AOL.COM to request. It contains personal stories, news items, reports and financial statements. It is important that as much information as possible be directed to as many members as possible. Information expands the Group Conscience, one of the strengths that hold A.A. together.

Become knowledgeable about the different Service Committees that are the structure of Alcoholics Anonymous – Coordinating Council (Intergroup), the Area Assembly, Districts and Institutions Committee. Though sometimes called the “politics” of A.A., we think it is more appropriate to recognize these committees as service opportunities within A.A.

Central Office depends upon the groups for the necessary support to carry out its responsibilities. This support comes in the form of volunteer help from group members and financial contributions. All of us are reminded to “carry the message”, not just some of us. Our efficiency and the continuation of services offered are related to the level of support from the groups.

As Secretary, Central Office depends upon you to keep us informed with current information about your group such as changes in your meeting place or time. It is also important for your group to elect your group’s representatives to the Intergroup (Coordinating Council) and Area Assembly.

We started this with a reminder that your services as Secretary are important; let us end it with best wishes for your success and the continued success of your group.

Sincerely, Central Office Manager

Your Central Office is here to Serve You.

“A Central Office/Intergroup is an A.A. Service Office that involves a partnership among groups in a community - just as A.A. groups themselves are partnerships of individuals. It is established to carry out certain functions common to all groups.” GSO Guideline

What Does our Central Office Do?

- ◆ Receives an average of 1500 phone calls every month.
- ◆ Receives an average of 85,000 website hits every month.
- ◆ Approximately 200 of those calls and emails are for 12 Step. There is always a need for members to sign up on our 12 step phone and email lists.
- ◆ Central Office provides 50 daytime opportunities a week to be of service answering phones.
- ◆ Almost 200 opportunities on the after-hours phones as a Group.
- ◆ Daytime positions as a bookstore volunteer.
- ◆ Central Office carries all AAWS (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services) conference approved literature and Grapevine.
- ◆ Print updated Meeting Schedules
- ◆ Print our monthly newsletter, the *Coordinator*. Individuals or Groups can help fold and label each month.
- ◆ Provide information regarding other AA services.

GROUP INVENTORY

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

Groups interested in taking regular inventory will find a review of the Tenth Step helpful. The following questions, compiled from A.A. shared experience, may be useful in arriving at an informed group conscience. Groups will probably wish to add questions of their own:

1. What is the basic purpose of the group?
2. What more can the group do to carry the message?
3. Is the group attracting alcoholics from different backgrounds? Are we seeing a good cross-section of our community?
4. Do new members stick with us, or does turnover seem excessive? If so, why? What can we, as a group, do?
5. Do we emphasize the importance of sponsorship? How effectively? How can we do better?
6. Are we careful to preserve the anonymity of our group members and other A.A.’s outside the meeting rooms? Do we also leave the confidences they share at meetings behind?
7. Do we take the time to explain to all members the value to the group of keeping up with the kitchen/housekeeping chores and other essential services that are part-and-parcel of our Twelfth-Step efforts?
8. Are all members given the opportunity to speak at meetings and to participate in other group activities?
9. Mindful that holding office is a great responsibility not to be viewed as the outcome of a popularity contest, are we choosing our officers with care?
10. Are we doing all we can to provide an attractive meeting place?
11. Does the group do its fair share toward participating in the purpose of A.A.—as it relate to our Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service?
12. What has the group done lately to bring the A.A. message to the attention of professional in the community—the physicians, clergy, court officials, educators and others who are often the first to see alcoholics in need of help?
13. How is the group fulfilling its responsibilities to the Seventh Tradition?

“The AA Group” pamphlet pgs 35-36

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WHAT DO GROUP MEMBERS DO?

“I am responsible... when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that *I* am responsible.” “Responsibility Declaration”

When Newcomers walk into our meeting rooms, we want A.A. to be there for them as it was for us—something we can do continuously only if we function as a group. But, for a group to keep going, all kinds of tasks need to be done.

THE GROUP:

- ◆ Provides and maintains a meeting place.
- ◆ Schedules and holds meetings.
- ◆ Provides coffee.
- ◆ Carry’s the message of Alcoholics Anonymous.
- ◆ Adheres to the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous.
- ◆ Collects 7th tradition and properly allocates and spends monies.
- ◆ Stocks AA literature and schedules.
- ◆ Answers calls for help.
- ◆ Discusses and resolves group problems.
- ◆ Sustains continuing contact with the rest of A.A.—locally, through the Intergroup (Coordinating Council)/ Central Office, Group’s District and Area Assembly; and Nationally through the General Service Office in New York.

WHAT TRUSTED SERVANTS ARE NEEDED?

Well, that depends on the needs and size of the meeting. Some of the following are service positions common in our area.

COFFEE MAKER: Most groups have a separate position for coffee maker or the Secretary is responsible for making coffee.

- ◆ Start the Coffee pot early enough so that the coffee is ready 15 minutes before the meeting is to start.

GREETER: Welcomes everyone to meeting.

GROUP SECRETARY:

It is suggested that a group Secretary have at least six months of continuous sobriety; be free to attend meetings during the term of office.

Each group has its own procedures, however, the Secretary may perform some, if not all, of the following:

- ◆ May be responsible for opening the meeting facility and setting up for the meeting.
- ◆ Start and close all meetings on schedule.
- ◆ Welcome newcomers and visitors.
- ◆ Arrange for a leader, and select members to read “How It Works”, “Traditions” and other group approved readings.
- ◆ Make A.A. related announcements, request monthly reports from Treasurer, Coordinator and GSR representatives.
- ◆ Pass the 7th Tradition baskets and manage the contributions in the absence of a treasurer.
- ◆ Make sure the group’s information is current with the Central Office, Area Assembly and the General Service Office.
- ◆ Read the Coordinator newsletter and report to the group about A.A. activities and news.
- ◆ Advise the group of the needs at the Central Office, Area Assembly, H&I and all other service needs.
- ◆ Maintain the group’s telephone list.

STEERING COMMITTEE. Not all groups have Steering Committees. However, for those that do, the Steering Committee:

- ◆ Prepares slates of candidates for group offices.
- ◆ Hears questions relating to group practices.
- ◆ Insures that all issues are presented to the group conscience for decisions and/or implementation.

Group Conscience

We hear the phrase “Group Conscience” often in A.A. This concept is fundamental and vital to the operation and functioning of AA at all levels. It flows out of our 2nd Tradition, “but one ultimate authority”. An issue is brought before the Group. Prior notice is given and the topic under consideration announced. It is a practice in AA that we try to have substantial unanimity, but we also listen to the minority opinion. For small groups a committee of 4-5 members works well. For larger groups, 12 or more members provide a better cross section of group experience.

About those group problems...

Group problems are often evidence of a healthy, desirable diversity of opinion among the group members. They give us a chance, in the words of Step Twelve, to “practice these principles in all our affairs. Group problems may include such common A.A. questions as: What should the group do about “slippers”? How can we boost flagging attendance at meetings? How can we get more people to help with group chores? What can we do about one member’s anonymity break? Another’s romantic emphasis on “thirteenth-stepping”? How can we get out from under the “bleeding deacons,” those old-timers who insist they know what’s best for the group? And how can we get more of the old-timers to share their experience in resolving group dilemmas? Almost every group problem has a resolution, which usually can be reached through the mechanism of an informed group conscience. Importantly, a good sense of humor, cooling-off periods, patience, courtesy, willingness to listen and to wait—plus a sense of fairness and trust in a “Power greater than ourselves”—have been found far more effective than legalistic arguments or personal accusations.

These are just some of the basics your group needs to discuss.

What are the group’s needs?

What other positions may be needed?

AREA ASSEMBLY

Purpose

- ◆ To carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
- ◆ To support the General Service Conference and its members in its role as provider of A.A. world services, and as guardian of the Twelve Steps and Traditions.
- ◆ To elect and support a delegate to the General Service Conference.
- ◆ To provide communication and encourage unity within the area.
- ◆ To assist in the development and communication of an informed group conscience.

GSR: The group's General Service Representative (GSR) works via the District, Area Assembly and Area Committees. The GSR is the group's link to the General Service Office (GSO) in New York and with AA as a whole. Call Central Office for your group's district # and district meeting time and location. In addition, GSR's are the mail contact with the GSO and receive the Bulletin, Box 459 and other information from GSO to share with their group.

- ◆ Insures that the group and representatives are registered with the General Service Office.
- ◆ Represents the group at district and area assemblies.
- ◆ Keeps the group informed of all general service activities in the area.
- ◆ Receives and shares all mail from the GSO including the newsletter (Box 4-5-9)

GVR: The groups' Grapevine Representative (GVR) through awareness links the members of the group to the *Grapevine* monthly magazine by bringing copies to the meeting and encouraging subscriptions and submission of personal stories.

GROUP TREASURER: This may also be the responsibility of the Secretary or a group might have a treasurer. The treasurer should be familiar with the Seventh Tradition: Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

Self-supporting means the contributions should cover: rent, literature, coffee and supplies. Group conscience may decide that the group also pays for tokens and cakes for anniversary celebrations. After this self-supporting minimum, it is suggested that monies equal to cover one month of all costs be kept as a "Prudent Reserve." After operating expenses and prudent reserve are covered, groups generally distribute any surplus monies as contributions to support A.A. services.

- ◆ Keeps track of the group's Seventh Tradition contributions and expenses. (Forms are available at Central Office.)
- ◆ Knows how much money is required to meet the group's operating needs and prudent reserve.
- ◆ Makes monthly or quarterly reports on income and expenditures to the group depending on the group conscience.
- ◆ Informs the group of any shortfalls in monies to meet operating expenses or prudent reserve.
- ◆ Distributes the group's surpluses to Central Office, Area Assembly, Group's District, H&I, GSO and ASL Fund. You can find your group's Central Office Id #, Group Service # and District # on all receipts received from Central Office or you may call Central Office for this information.
- ◆ (See the green "How and where to send contributions" insert.)

LITERATURE PERSON: This function may also be incorporated into the Secretary position. The literature person acquires and maintains a stock of AA conference approved books and pamphlets. Also, meeting schedules, "Coordinator" newsletters and flyers for AA events.

"CONFERENCE-APPROVED LITERATURE" – WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU."

"The term 'Conference-approved' describes written or audiovisual material approved by the Conference for publication by G.S.O. This process assures that everything in such literature is in accord with A.A. principles. Conference-approved material always deals with the recovery program of Alcoholics Anonymous or with information about the A.A. Fellowship.

The term has no relation to material not published by G.S.O. It does not imply Conference disapproval of other material about A.A. Others publish a great deal of literature helpful to alcoholics, and A.A. does not try to tell any individual member what he or she may or not read.

Conference approval assures us that a piece of literature represents solid A.A. experience. Any conference-approved booklet or pamphlet goes through a lengthy and painstaking process, during which a variety of A.A.'s from all over the United States and Canada read and express opinions at every stage of production.

Central offices, Intergroups and Area Assemblies do write and distribute brochures or booklets that are not Conference-approved. If such pieces meet the needs of the local membership, they may be legitimately classified as "A.A. literature."

Excerpts from AA Service Piece #F29

"Conference-Approved Literature" – What It Means To You."

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COORDINATING COUNCIL

Definition

The Alcoholics Anonymous Groups are the ultimate authority over all A.A. Councils, Committees and Service Boards. At our local level, representatives from the A.A. Groups make up the Intergroup Association known as the Coordinating Council. Each Group is entitled to elect a representative to the Coordinating Council. Each Group is entitled to one (1) vote on all matters brought before the Council. The Coordinating Council and the Central Office are supported through the volunteer efforts and financial contributions of the A.A. Groups they serve. The Coordinating Council, in keeping with A.A. traditions, recognizes the autonomy of A.A. Groups in the area and does not claim to perform any governmental functions. The Coordinating Council pledges cooperation with the North County Intergroup, San Diego Imperial Area Assembly, and all other A.A. service entities.

Purpose

The Coordinating Council exists to aid the Groups in their common purpose of carrying the A.A. message to alcoholics. The Coordinating Council oversees the Standing Committees as described in the Council guidelines. The Council elects the members of these Standing Committees from the Council membership or from the Fellowship at large. The Coordinating Council, through the Business Committee, oversees the Central Office, which performs services more easily provided by Group cooperation.

COORDINATOR: (See "Being a Coordinator" pamphlet.)

- ◆ Attends Coordinating Council meetings.
- ◆ Reports on actions and plans of the Council to the group.
- ◆ Brings any group issues that effect A.A. as a whole to Council.
- ◆ Solicits and reports group conscience on issues before the Council.
- ◆ Any member of the fellowship is welcome to attend the Coordinating Council meeting.

TRADITION 4

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

(Long Form)

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

The 12 Traditions of A.A.

- 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 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 or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
- 7) Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
- 8) Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
- 9) A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
- 10) Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence, the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
- 11) Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.
- 12) Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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Group Name:
Central Office ID #
GSO Group #
District #

AA Group Secretary Handbook

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