



SECRETARY HANDBOOK

VENTURA COUNTY CENTRAL SERVICE OFFICE

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NOTES:

A.A.'s Single Purpose

Tradition Five:

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

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

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

A.A. cofounder Bill W., 1955

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- A.A.W.S** A.A. World Services, Inc. - Responsible for publishing and distributing A.A. literature
- Area 93** Central California Area 93 reaches as far south as Glendale, North to Independence and east to Ridgecrest. Area 93 is comprised of 29 Districts of which 7 are Spanish speaking. There are 91 General Service areas in the US and Canada.
- Area Committee** General Service Committee is comprised of one Area Delegate and seven Area Officers elected at the General Service Fall Assembly to serve a 2-year term. Officer positions include alternate delegate, chairperson, Secretary, treasurer, recording Secretary, literature and assembly coordinator. DCMCs and DCMs comprise the Area Committee.
- Assembly** A meeting of the General Service Area Committees. In Area 93, we have 4 per year and a Pre-Conference workshop
- Box 459** A quarterly publication of news and notes from the General Service Office in New York.
- Conference** General Service Conference - Held in New York each April. It is the guardian of world services and the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions of A.A.. (See A.A. Service Manual for more information.)
- DCM** District Committee Member - Elected at District for 2 years to serve GSRs in a particular General Service sub-district
- Delegate** A representative of Area Committee and Area 93 representative to the Conference.
- District 13** Meiners Oaks, Ojai, Ventura
- District 24** Simi Valley
- District 28** Agoura, Agoura Hills, Newbury Park, Thousand Oaks, Westlake Village
- Gold Coast (District 9 & 12)** Camarillo, Fillmore, Santa Paula, Moorpark, Oxnard, Port Hueneme
- PRAASA** Pacific Region of Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly
- Regional General Service meeting held in March for the 13 Pacific Region Areas



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Your group is the ultimate authority of A.A. Through its intergroup representative, your group (or meeting) is responsible for maintaining, supervising and supporting the Ventura County Central Service Office and the Administrative Board of the Intergroup—the conduit for making your meeting’s wishes known to all other groups of our Area 93. Intergroup also coordinates those efforts and, thus, is more effective in “Carrying the Message.”

TO THE GROUP SECRETARY:

Congratulations on being elected or selected as Secretary of your A.A. Group. It will be a wonderful and rewarding experience for you. Action is the magic word to ensure sobriety. Your responsibilities can be large or small and may vary from opening the meeting room to making coffee, paying rent to cleaning up after the meeting. Most importantly, you are instrumental in symbolizing A.A. to the newcomer. Make them feel welcome. You may be responsible for inviting newcomers to join your group as a Home Group member.

Whatever responsibilities come with the new position at your group, remember the “Four Points of Service” that Dr. Bob said, “I spend a great deal of time passing on what I learned to others who want and need it badly. I do it for four reasons:

- 1) Sense of duty.
- 2) It is a pleasure.
- 3) Because in doing so, I am paying my debt to the man who took time to pass it on to me.
- 4) Because every time I do it I take out a little more insurance for myself against a possible slip.”

The handbook is designed to answer some of your questions about specific duties and responsibilities as Secretary of your group and about A.A. in general. You may want to add information on page 11’s “notes” for future Secretaries about your specific meeting regarding keys, opening the doors, setting up and closing up. Always remember Tradition Two which states: “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.”

What is a General Service Representative (GSR)?

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 22 of “The A.A. Group” pamphlet.)

How do group problems get resolved?

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. (Also see Informed Group Conscience on page 28 of “The A.A. Group” pamphlet).

We hear the phrase “group conscience” often in A.A. This concept is fundamental and vital to the operation and functioning of A.A. at all levels. It flows out of our Tradition Two, “but one ultimate authority.” In order to have a group conscience, it is best to have three essential elements:

THE SUBJECT MUST BE APPROPRIATE AND IMPORTANT TIMING IS APPROPRIATE.

Prior notice is given (usually two weeks) and the topic under consideration announced. The more important the topic, the less rush to judgement may be indicated. A group may present the topic at one meeting and give it careful consideration over time in multiple meetings.

SUBSTANTIAL UNANIMITY TARGETED.

“Warranty Four” (“That all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and, wherever possible, by substantial unanimity.”) may be helpful here. Although it is directed at the General Service Conference structure, it goes on to say: “Here, on the one hand, we erect a safeguard against any hasty or overbearing authority of a simple majority; and, on the other hand, we take notice of the rights and the frequent wisdom of the minorities, however small. This principle further guarantees that all matters of importance, time permitting, will be extensively debated, and that such debates will continue until a really heavy majority can support every critical decision that we are called upon to make. ...” (“A.A. Service Manual” combined with “The Twelve Concepts for World Service.”)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (continued)

What are some commitments that a meeting can offer?

- Treasurer
- Greeter
- Coffee Maker
- Literature
- Grapevine Representative
- Intergroup Representative (IGR)
- General Service Representative (GSR)

Where does the Tradition Seven go and how often should a financial report be given?

Usually, group contributions first pay meeting expenses which may include rent, A.A. literature, refreshments, equipment and supplies. After basic group needs are met, the remainder in excess of the prudent reserve (normally one to three months' operating expenses) can support A.A. as a whole by contributing to Central Office, the local District (9, 12, 13, 24 or 28) and World Services (General Service Office in New York). Funds collected for H&I are always separate and never used to help pay for group expenses.

Treasurers maintain 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 21 of "The A.A. Group" pamphlet.)

What is an Intergroup Rep (IGR)?

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). The local Intergroup meets once a month at Central Office. (Also see the Intergroup Representative on page 22 of "The A.A. Group" pamphlet.)

MEETING SECRETARY SUGGESTED REQUIREMENTS/DUTIES

Requirements for a group Secretary are set by the group conscience and vary from one group to another. The sobriety requirement is also ultimately decided by group conscience. However, it is recommended that the group Secretary be a regular member of the group and is able to attend all regular business or special meetings in order to be most effective during his / her term of service.

One of the most important aspects regarding the role of Secretary is being prepared to facilitate the meeting. There should be no doubt in members' or newcomers' minds that the Secretary is on top of the meeting.

The Secretary ensures that the meeting is opened, conducted and concluded in accordance with the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Other responsibilities may include:

- Preparing the meeting place and refreshments.
- Arranging for a leader.
- Welcoming visitors and newcomers.
- Maintaining a meeting etiquette.
- Manage the contributions in the absence of a treasurer.
- Contact the Ventura County Central Service Office with any meeting changes.

The Secretary should arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the meeting to the room ready and to select a leader.

Start the meeting on time and close on time. The Secretary should advise the leader about the length of the meeting and the recommended time the leader share their story with the group.

A leader may be selected in advance as well as just prior to the start of the meeting. Each member of the group should have the opportunity to be the leader. Also, having AA members from outside your group lead the meeting may provide a fresh viewpoint.

MEETING SECRETARY SUGGESTED REQUIREMENTS/ DUTIES (continued)

The meeting format for your group may vary from other meetings, but when called upon for a Secretary's report you will normally read current announcements which may include:

- Upcoming events obtained from the Central Office and often inserted in the Secretary's complimentary copy of the Central Office Newsletter "The Traditions."
- Ask for reports from the group Intergroup Representative (IGR).
- Ask for reports from the group General Service Representative (GSR). (If your meeting does not have one, elect one, but know that you are not entitled to a GSR unless your group is registered with the AA General Service Office. Forms for this purpose may be obtained from the Central Office or your local district.) (See General Service Representative in the AA Service Manual p. S26)

No individual, drunk or sober should be permitted to repeatedly interrupt or otherwise disturb the meeting. However, these situations can be teaching opportunities, as they oblige us to cultivate patience, tolerance and humility. Though it is traditional that our fellowship may not coerce anyone, we may tactfully encourage the individual to continue with a one-to-one meeting with another member of the group in order that the meeting can continue.

Have AA books and literature available. Conference AA books and pamphlets are available from the Central Service Office, 321 North Aviator Street, Suite 115, Camarillo, California 93010. Telephone (805) 389-1444.

Central Office is open:

M-F 9:30 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Sat 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Closed Sundays and major holidays.

The AA hotline (805) 389-1444 is available 24/7.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is an A.A. Group?

As 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." (From "The A.A. Group" pamphlet.)

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

"Closed meetings are for A.A. members only, or for those who have a drinking problem and 'have a desire to stop drinking.' Open meetings are available to anyone interested in Alcoholics Anonymous' program of recovery from alcoholism. Nonalcoholics may attend as observers." (From "The A.A. Group" pamphlet.)

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 15 in "The A.A. Group" pamphlet.)

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 23 in the A.A. Group pamphlet.)