

# DISTRICT 90 ORIENTATION GUIDE

*for*

## THE NEW GENERAL SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE (GSR)



Revised 2012

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## WELCOME NEW GSRS!

Welcome to General Service! You have just become the link between your group and the General Service Office (GSO) in New York. As a GSR, you now represent the voice of your AA group's conscience to the District, the Area, the Area Assembly and ultimately, to the General Service Conference held annually each April in New York.

Through your District Committee Member Chair (DCMC) \_\_\_\_\_ and your District Committee Member (DCM), \_\_\_\_\_, and your California Northern Coastal Area (CNCA) Delegate, \_\_\_\_\_, you will become the two-way link between your Group and the world of AA as a whole. You are also the reporter to your group about the discussions and changes within the fellowship.

The General Service Representative (GSR) is perhaps the most important job in the entire service structure. You and your fellow GSRs all over the world have become the key to the unity of AA. Your job will not only protect the right of the individual member to be heard and acknowledged, no matter how much of a minority opinion that represents, but it will ensure that any changes within AA as a whole come as a response to the needs of all members of AA, and not just the few. Therefore, your voice and your participation are vital so that your informed group's voice is heard.

You have also become involved in a new dimension of 12th Step Work. You can help to ensure that your group understands the meaning of "Conference Approved" AA literature and see that it is available to your group. You help to ensure that your group is listed with the General Service Office in New York by registering in your local District. Also, you help your group to understand the importance of contributions to AA as a whole, i.e. CNCA, GSO or any other local AA service entities deemed important to your group.

Most of all, you are now vitally involved in making sure that the doors of your meetings remain open, that the Twelve Traditions are being practiced and understood, that your group will be well-informed, and that your meeting is a safe haven for the suffering alcoholic.

## WHAT IS GENERAL SERVICE?

"Our Twelfth Step—carrying the message—is the basic service that the AA Fellowship gives: this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, AA is more than a set of principles; it is a society of alcoholics in action. We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die.

Hence, an AA service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer—ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to AA.'s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all of these is our Third Legacy of Service.

Services include meeting places, hospital cooperation, and Intergroup offices; they mean pamphlets, books, and good publicity of almost every description. They call for committees, delegates, trustees and conferences. And not to be forgotten, they need voluntary money contributions from within the Fellowship.

These services, whether performed by individuals, groups, areas or AA as a whole are utterly vital to our existence and growth...The most vital, yet least understood, group of services that AA has are those that enable us to function as a whole, namely; the General Service Office, AA World Services, Inc., The AA Grapevine, Inc., and our board of trustees, known legally as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous. Our worldwide unity and much of our growth since early times are directly traceable to this cluster of life-giving activities."

Bill W., 1951

*Reprinted from "The AA Service Manual" pp S1 & S2, with permission of AA World Services, Inc.*

## **GSR RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Attend the monthly District Meeting held at the North Solano Intergroup Office and report current activities of the group to District. Reports may include but are not limited to group concerns such as attendance, finances, meeting site, group issues, motions, discussions. Attend any other planned GSR meetings.
  
2. Take information from the District meeting to your group's business meeting. Examples of this may include upcoming events, District and/or CNCA Area 06 motions or other business where a group's conscience is needed.
  
3. Obtain informed group consciences on various topics as necessary and reports them to the District at the next District meeting.
  
4. Attend four Area Assemblies per year including the Pre-Conference Assembly, the Post-Conference Assembly, the Summer Assembly and the Fall Assembly (in even years, the Fall Assembly is the Election Assembly).
  
5. Attend Unity Days. You may participate on Unity Day planning committees. Announce upcoming Unity Days at your home group and all meetings attended.
  
6. Become familiar with the [District 90 Guidelines](#). (Available on the GSR Tools page of the District Web Site [www.aasolanonorth.org](http://www.aasolanonorth.org))
  
7. Attend, if possible, Regional functions ([PRAASA](#) and/or Regional Forums, and International Conventions.)

*Through the continued attendance at these meetings and the reading and study of the [AA Service Manual](#) and other literature, you will find that service can become very rewarding.*

## THE GROUP BUSINESS MEETING

Many groups have monthly Business Meetings, which conduct routine business and report back to the group as a whole. Traditionally, Business Meetings are reserved for issues pertaining to matters within the Group. These issues generally do not affect AA as a whole and can be solved within the confines of the individual Group.

When such issues arise, the GSR can often become a mediator (but is not required to) and may be asked about matters regarding the Traditions and their effect on the Group and its place within the fellowship of AA.

The pamphlet "[The AA Group... Where It All Begins](#)" is a resource all GSRs should be familiar with. Please read it for further information.

## 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 the group members through the 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 of dominant opinions. Its voice is heard when a well-informed group arrives at a decision. The result rests on more than a 'yes' or 'no' count--precisely because it is the spiritual expression of the group conscience. The term 'informed group conscience' implies that pertinent information has been studied and all views have been heard before the group votes." 5

*"The AA Group" pamphlet, pp 28 & 29 reprinted with permission of AA World Services, Inc.*

## **STEPS TO ACHIEVING AN INFORMED GROUP CONSCIENCE**

1. Research and gather information about any group, district, area, or Conference Agenda topic(s) to be discussed.
2. Present the information on the topic(s) to the Home Group. You should be as unbiased as possible on the topic(s).
3. 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, but a method of arriving at unanimity on a specific subject.
4. Ensure that minority opinions are heard.
5. Continue the process until substantial group unanimity is achieved. (This is usually considered 2/3 of the participants.) More than one session may be needed. Be patient and practice AA principles as the process continues.
6. Once an informed group conscience is achieved, summarize the results for the group including the minority opinion.
7. Report the informed group conscience and any minority opinion to the appropriate entity, be it the Area Assembly or District.

## REPORTING TO AN ASSEMBLY

There are four Area assemblies each year where a GSR may present a report of their group's informed group conscience at a microphone. When giving reports, it is best to be brief and to the point without omitting the essence of the group conscience. Reporting can be best accomplished if you follow these simple suggestions:

1. Write a concisely prepared statement including both majority and minority views. Limit your report to your informed group conscience and not your personal opinion. There may be an opportunity to give personal opinion at another time.
2. Practice reading it aloud to get used to hearing it. Reports must conform to a time limit. There is a light box viewable from the microphone which indicates how much time remains for your report. The green light means begin, the yellow light means 30 seconds remain and a red light means your time is up which will also be indicated by applause from the audience.
3. Step up to the microphone, identify yourself using your first and last name, your District name (90 Solano North), the name of your group and then make your report.
4. Listen to the prior speakers before you take your turn at the microphone. If you have already heard your group's conscience expressed, it is not necessary to make a report.
5. If you are unable to attend an assembly, you can give your written report to your alternate GSR, DCM, DCMC or another District Officer who is attending and request it be passed on to the Area Assembly. You can also pass your full report via mail, telephone, or email remembering that the ultimate goal is to have the informed group conscience of your group heard.
6. Help is always available from your service sponsor, DCM, the DCMC, other District officers, and experienced group members. Also, always remember Rule #62 which states: "Don't take yourself too damned seriously!"

## SERVICE SPONSORSHIP

Getting a Service Sponsor is highly recommended.

"A service sponsor is usually someone who is knowledgeable in A.A. history and has a strong background in the service structure. The A.A. member is introduced to a new language: G.S.R., D.C.M., area assembly, minority opinion. They will become familiar with the Traditions, Concepts and Warranties, as well as the A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service, Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age and other AA literature."—*“Questions and Answers on Sponsorship” pamphlet pp 25 & 26, reprinted with permission of AA World Services, Inc.*"

Individuals who might be considered to be a service sponsor include, but are not limited to, DCMs, past and present District and/or Area officers, and home group members with General Service experience.

## HELPFUL HINTS

Don't take yourself too damned seriously, but do take your job seriously.

Get a service sponsor and become informed.

Attend all General Service meetings.

Try out the DCM Sharing Session at the Area Committee Meetings.

Listen.

Say what you mean, mean what you say, don't say it mean.

Remember, you are a Trusted Servant, you *serve* your Group.

Don't be afraid to ask questions.

Current experience indicates that many groups provide financial support for their GSR to attend service functions. Invariably this pays off in increased activity, interest and group participation.

Be sure to ask your group what costs the group will support.

## **SUGGESTED RESOURCES**

### ***BOOKS***

AA COMES OF AGE

### **ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS**

DR. BOB & THE GOOD OLDTIMERS

LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

PASS IT ON

**THE AA SERVICE MANUAL combined with TWELVE CONCEPTS FOR WORLD SERVICE**

**TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS**

### ***PAMPHLETS***

**THE AA GROUP...WHERE IT ALL BEGINS**

[THE GENERAL SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE](#)

[YOUR AA GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE](#)

[SELF-SUPPORT: WHERE MONEY AND SPIRITUALITY MIX](#)

[THE TWELVE CONCEPTS FOR WORLD SERVICE ILLUSTRATED](#)

[THE TWELVE TRADITIONS ILLUSTRATED](#)

*SERVICE MATERIALS*

[THE TRADITIONS CHECKLIST](#)

[THE CONCEPTS CHECKLIST](#)

[AA GUIDELINES](#)

*VIDEOS*

YOUR AA GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE, THE GRAPEVINE, AND THE GENERAL SERVICE STRUCTURE

MARKINGS ON THE JOURNEY

***SUBSCRIPTIONS***

**[THE AA GRAPEVINE](#)**

**[MARKINGS ON THE JOURNEY](#)**

**[BOX 4-5-9](#)**

***ONLINE RESOURCES***

**[www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)**

**[www.cnca06.org](http://www.cnca06.org)**

**[www.aasolanonorth.org](http://www.aasolanonorth.org)**

**[www.aagrapevine.org](http://www.aagrapevine.org)**

**[www.praasa.org](http://www.praasa.org)**

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**AAWS** ---Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. The non-profit corporation that employs the General Service Office personnel, directs the General Service Office services, and is responsible for book and pamphlet publications.

**AGENDA TOPICS**—A list of items prepared annually for all the groups in the US and Canada to discuss and obtain informed group consciences regarding various ways that AA carries its message (Public Information, Corrections, Literature, Finance, etc.)

**ARCHIVES**-- A committee of CNCA that gathers and preserves material and historical data about A.A., emphasizing Northern California. Maintains and provides archive displays at the Archive Office at 193 Mayhew Way, Walnut Creek, California.

**AREA**--A geographical division. "An area may be part of a state or province, or all of it, or may include parts of more than one state or province, depending on the size and needs of the A.A. population." In California there are 5 Delegate Areas, California Northern Coastal Area, California Northern Interior Area, Southern California Area, Mid-Southern California Area, and San Diego Imperial Area. (See CNCA - California Northern Coastal Area.)

**AREA COMMITTEE**--The steering committee for California Northern Coastal Area. Comprised of the Area officers; Delegate, Alternate Delegate, Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Registrar, Literature/Grapevine Chairperson, Assembly Coordinator. The Area Committee also includes the District Committee Members and Chairs from each of the 23 Districts which comprise CNCA.

**AREA COMMITTEE MEETINGS (ACM)**--CNCA Area 06 holds monthly business meetings and is primarily attended by Area Officers, DCMCs, DCMs, past delegates and officers. GSRs are encouraged to attend. The meetings are held at the Petaluma Community Center on the fourth (4th) Saturday of each month, except in December, when it is held on the 3rd Saturday (so as not to conflict with the holidays). GSRs are encouraged to attend and participate, but are not voting members of the Area Committee Meeting.

**ASSEMBLY**--A periodic meeting of GSRs, DCMs, DCMCs, Area Officers, and the Delegate to discuss and vote on AA affairs of the Area. The Assembly is a basic unit of the General Service structure. The Area Assembly is the primary conduit for information to and from the AA General Service Conference. CNCA holds four (4) assemblies per year: Pre-Conference, Post-Conference, Summer and Fall.

**BOX 4-5-9**-- Box 4-5-9 is a quarterly bulletin from the U.S./Canada General Service Office. This newsletter includes information about A.A. service, literature, events, sharing from groups, service committees and individual U.S./Canada A.A. members.

**BTG - BRIDGING THE GAP**--A committee of CNCA. BTG provides a temporary contact to help bridge the gap between an individual being released from a jail, prison or treatment program, etc., and their first A.A. meeting.

**CNCA**-- California Northern Coastal Area --one of the five geographical area divisions in the State of California. CNCA consists of 23 districts: Humboldt-Del Norte, Mendocino, Lake, Sonoma, Napa, Marin, Solano North and South, Contra Costa, Alameda North and South, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara North and South, Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, Spanish South South, Spanish North, Spanish South, Spanish Central and Spanish East.

**CONFERENCE-APPROVED LITERATURE**--The term, Conference-approved literature describes written or audio-visual material approved by the General Service Conference. This material will have the statement, "This is A.A. General Service Conference-approved literature."

**DCM - DISTRICT COMMITTEE MEMBER**--The DCM has usually served as a GSR and is elected by the District. The DCM is an essential link between the Group GSR and Area Delegate to the General Service Conference. The DCM serves a two-year term concurrent with the District and Area Panels.

**DCMC - DISTRICT COMMITTEE MEMBER CHAIRPERSON**--The DCMC is elected by the District and serves a two-year term concurrent with the District and Area Panels. The DCMC chairs the monthly District committee meeting, Officers' meeting and serves as a link between the District and the Area.

**DELEGATE**--The person elected at the CNCA election assembly every other year to represent the Area at the annual meeting of the General Service Conference in New York and brings back to the Area the results of the General Service Conference.

**DISTRICT**--CNCA is divided up into 23 geographical or linguistic divisions. See CNCA for listings.

**DISTRICT MEETINGS**--The purpose of these meetings is for the DCMs and GSRs to gather to discuss and vote on matters of importance to the District, the Area, and AA as a whole. North Solano District 90 Meetings are held once a month, on the first Wednesday.

**GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE**-- The General Service Conference is the time when the collective group conscience of U.S./Canada A.A. comes together to take actions that will guide

the Groups in the years to come. It is held in April each year in New York. Our Delegate represents CNCA at the Conference.

**GRAPEVINE - THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS**--Written, edited, illustrated and read by AA members and others interested in the AA program of recovery from alcoholism. "The Grapevine" is a lifeline linking one suffering alcoholic to another. Widely known as our "meeting in print", the AA Grapevine reflects a broad spectrum of current AA experience with recovery, unity and service.

**GSO - GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE**--"GSO serves as a clearing house and exchange point for the wealth of A.A. experience accumulated over the years, coordinates a wide array of activities and services, and oversees the publication, all translations of, and distribution of A.A. Conference-approved literature and Service Materials." AA Service Manual page S73. General Service Office is located at 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115

**GSR - GENERAL SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE**--The General Service Representative (GSR) has the job of linking his or her group with A.A. as a whole. The GSR represents the voice of the group conscience, reporting the group's thoughts to the DCM and to the delegate who passes them on to the Conference. This communication is a two-way street, making the GSR responsible for bringing back to the group Conference Actions that affect A.A. unity, health, and growth.

**H&I - HOSPITALS & INSTITUTIONS**-- The only purpose of the Hospital and Institution Committee of Northern California Council of Alcoholics Anonymous is to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to the alcoholic who is confined. The activities of the committee are based on, and governed by, the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. While we cooperate with the H&I Committee, they are not a part of General Service.

**NCCAA - NORTHERN CALIFORNIA COUNCIL OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS**--Organized in the 1940's to provide the linkage between Groups in Northern California. Helped organize the Northern California Hospital and Institutions Committee. While we cooperate with NCCAA, they are not a part of General Service.

**PACIFIC REGION**--There are six regions in the United States and two in Canada. The Pacific Region is made up of the following states: California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Utah, Arizona, Nevada, Hawaii, and Alaska.

**PANEL** --In any year, about half of all Area Assemblies elect qualified Delegates to the annual General Service Conference, depending on whether they are an even or odd numbered Panel. The Conference started in 1951 (an odd year). CNCA elected its delegate to serve starting in 1951. The Conference two-year cycle applies to GSRs, committee officers, DCMs and DCMCs.

**PI/CPC - PUBLIC INFORMATION/ COOPERATION WITH THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY--**

"Public Information (PI) committees in Alcoholics Anonymous are responsible for carrying the message of recovery to the still-suffering alcoholic by informing the general public about the A.A. program. Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC) committees provide information about AA to those who have contact with alcoholics through their respective professions."

**PRAASA - PACIFIC REGION ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS SERVICE ASSEMBLY--**A regional service meeting held every March to discuss Agenda Topics and other AA business. They are hosted by one of the thirteen (13) areas in the Pacific Region.

**REGIONAL FORUM--**A General Service meeting open to all AA members and hosted by the General Service Office. The main purpose of the Regional Forum is to bring the General Service Office to you. The Forum acquaints the GSRs and other service interested members in the region with the activities, accomplishments and plans of the service personnel associated with the General Service Conference.

**RIGHT OF DECISION - CONCEPT III--**The essence of "The Right Of Decision" is that trusted servants at every level of service has the right to decide on which problems the individual will dispose of themselves and upon which matters they will report, consult, or ask specific directions.

**SERVICE SPONSOR--**An individual who has served AA in various service capacities and has knowledge of the service responsibilities of the positions you have been elected to. An individual who can act as a guide for your service related questions and concerns.

**SUB-DISTRICT--** A method of splitting districts into a serviceable size. Sub-districts are made up of a certain number of GSRs and are served by a DCM. They meet and discuss issues in depth at GSR Sharing Sessions.

**THIRD LEGACY--**A special type of electoral procedure for the election of delegates and other representatives of General Service. See below.

**TRUSTEE--**The usual term for a member of AA's General Service Board.

**UNITY DAY--**Unity Days are informative and fun events which expose members of North Solano to General Service. Unity Days are held two to four times a year. They promote understanding of various AA topics pertaining to General Service. Unity Days are often organized and executed by GSRs.