



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT GENERAL SERVICE

1. What exactly is General Service?

The Twelve Traditions make clear the principle that A.A., as such, should never be organized, that there are no bosses and no government in A.A. Yet at the same time, the Traditions recognize the need for some kind of organization to carry the message in ways that are impossible for the local groups — such as publication of a uniform literature and public information resources, helping new groups get started, publishing an international magazine, and carrying the message in other languages into other countries. The U.S./Canada Conference structure is the framework in which these “general services” are carried out. — [The AA Service Manual](#) page S15, reprinted with permission of AA World Services

2. What is the difference between General Service, [Hospitals and Institutions](#), [NCCAA](#) and [Intergroups](#)? Aren't they all AA?

Yes, they are all AA. However, each entity serves a different function. General Service connects the local group to AA as whole; H & I committees take the message of AA to incarcerated members; NCCAA has held quarterly conferences in Northern California since 1948; Central Offices and Intergroups provide myriad services to local groups such as providing AA literature and answering telephone calls.

3. What is the General Service structure?

The General Service structure is the men and women who give freely of their own time to help the still-suffering alcoholic through a structured service entity. [The structure is an inverted triangle](#) - the groups are at the top, narrowing down to the districts that service the groups, narrowing down again to the areas that serve the districts and finally the General Service Office at the bottom.

4. What are these General Service positions? How can I get more information about them?

Members of Alcoholics Anonymous who wish to serve in the general service structure stand for election at the appropriate service meeting. The positions may involve serving at group level, at district level (covering one or more cities) or at area level (in [CNCA](#) from Monterey to the Oregon border). Some of these positions are listed below. More information can be found in the [AA Service Manual](#).

5. What is a [GSR](#)?

A GSR is the General Service Representative for the group. He/she is a vital link in the chain of communication between the home group and AA as a whole. The GSR is the ears, eyes, and voice for the group.

6. What is a [DCM](#)?

A DCM is a District Committee Member. They are conversant with AA literature, the 12 Traditions and almost always have been a GSR. Their purpose is to aid the GSRs in their district and be a link between the GSRs and the Area. Each DCM serves several groups.

7. What is a Delegate? What does the Delegate do?

Each area of AA in the U.S. and Canada has an elected delegate to represent that area. The Delegate votes on behalf of his/her area at the General Service Conference. At an area assembly prior to the conference, the delegate is given the group conscience of the whole area to take to New York.

8. What is the General Service Conference?

Once a year (in late April) the Delegates from the service areas of AA meet in New York. In CNCA there is a Pre-Conference Assembly held to discuss the conference agenda items. There is also a Post-Conference Assembly held when the area Delegate reports back from the conference.

9. What is [conference-approved literature](#)?

Conference-approved literature is usually books or pamphlets that have been approved by the delegates at a General Service Conference. It is published by AAWS.

10. Does all AA literature have to be conference-approved?

No. Most AA literature is conference-approved, however some materials which need to be updated frequently like [service related materials](#) are not. Obviously each issue of the [AA Grapevine magazine](#) cannot go through the conference-approval process, but it is recognized by the Conference as the international journal of Alcoholics Anonymous.

11. What is [GSO](#)?

GSO is the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is located in New York City and serves the US and Canada in matters relating to Alcoholics Anonymous.

12. What is [AAWS](#)?

AAWS stands for Alcoholics Anonymous World Services. This is essentially the business side of AA in that the printing and sale of AA publications falls under its purview.

13. What are districts, areas and regions?

The U.S. and Canada are split up into eight geographic regions. There are 93 Delegate areas. Areas are divided into districts which consist of several cities. District 90 Solano North is part of the [California Northern Coastal Area \(06\)](#) which is part of the Pacific Region.

14. What is the third legacy?

In AA we have three legacies - recovery, unity and service. Thus the third legacy is service.

15. What are service meetings?

There are several different types of service meetings. A group business meeting discusses the affairs of the home group. A district business meeting discusses the collective matters affecting all the groups within that district. The area meetings fall into three categories. At area committee meetings, the business of the area is discussed. The Pre-Conference Assembly is where groups who have discussed the items on the General Service Conference Agenda pass their group consciences to their Delegate via their GSRs. At the Post-Conference Assembly the Delegate reports back from New York. The Summer Assembly holds informative workshops. The Fall Assembly in odd years is an opportunity for the area to take its inventory and on even numbered years it is the voting assembly to elect the next rotation of area officers.

16. Who attends these service meetings?

Attendees are AAs serving in the General Service structure. Each type of service meeting applies to different levels of the structure. However, anybody is welcome to attend these meetings. In fact, interested AAs are encouraged to attend to see the third legacy at work. If there is voting, members not holding a service position do not have a vote.

17. Can I attend?

Of course! In fact, you are encouraged to attend. You will probably have a voice but not a vote unless you have been elected to hold an appropriate service position.

18. How do I get into general service work?

Volunteer at the local level to help a standing committee - e.g. volunteer to help man an information booth for the PI committee at a health fair. Attend a local GSR meeting as an interested AA and learn what needs are to be met in your local district.

19. I already have a sponsor. Why do I need a service sponsor?

A "regular" or recovery sponsor helps a member work the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous by passing on what they did and continue to do to stay sober. A service sponsor helps a member understand the 12 Traditions and the 12 Concepts and how these apply in service.

20. Where can I get more information?

Start by asking your home group GSR or read some AA literature on service work such as the AA Service Manual. There is a host of information on the [GSO website](#).