

**Idaho Area 18  
GSR Manual**

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## **Welcome to Alcoholics Anonymous General Service!**

As an elected General Service Representative (**GSR**), you now represent the voice of your AA group's conscience to the AA General Service Conference held in New York City each April. Through your elected District Committee Member (**DCM**) and the Idaho Area 18 Delegate, you will become the link between your group and the world of AA as a whole. As such, you and your fellow GSRs all over the world have become **the key to the unity of AA**.

To more fully forge the link between your group, the General Service Office (**GSO**) and the Conference, you will need to become active in building a strong service structure.

- ◆ You will learn that general service is based on:

### **THE THREE LEGACIES**

1. **Recovery**, as outlined in the *Twelve Steps*

2. **Unity**, as outlined in the *Twelve Traditions*
  3. **Service**, as outlined in the *A.A. Service Manual* and *Twelve Concepts For World Service*. **Service includes anything to help alcoholics – clean up, pour coffee, serve your home group, Twelfth Step calls, etc.** “General service” applies to activities within the conference structure, carried on by area committees, assemblies, delegates, trustees and G.S.O. staff. Usually, general service affects the fellowship as a whole.
- ◆ You will take care to protect the rights of individual AAs to have their opinions acknowledged and heard no matter how much in the minority those opinions may be.
  - ◆ You will have your name listed in the Western United States A.A. Directory as the official contact for your group.
  - ◆ You will have the opportunity to give back to AA a little of what you have so gratefully received from AA.
  - ◆ By your active presence in general service you will help ensure that AA will be here for future generations of suffering alcoholics praying for a way out. **You are now engaged in Twelfth Step work in one of its very best meanings.**

### **About This Manual**

Here, we will cover four aspects of general service.

- ◆ The **Geographic Division** of the U.S. and Canada into Service Regions
- ◆ The Broad **Structure of General Service**
- ◆ **What Is Expected of You** as a General Service Representative
- ◆ Some ideas on how to more effectively carry out **the duties of a General Service Representative**

## **A.A. WORLDWIDE**

Alcoholics Anonymous is a worldwide organization. There are general service offices in many countries, each of which is autonomous. No attempt is made to have the General Service Office (USA and Canada) in New York be the “world capitol” of AA. Rather, the New York office is available to share experience, strength and hope with offices in other countries, mainly because it has been in existence much longer. Every two years a World Service Conference is held with two delegates from the United States and Canada attending. This conference is the way that Alcoholics Anonymous establishes and maintains its worldwide communications links.

## **THE REGIONS**

The map on page \_\_ shows the U.S. and Canada divided into **eight (8)** regions:

### **Two In Canada**

- ◆ Eastern Canada
- ◆ Western Canada

### **And Six In The United States**

- ◆ Northeast
- ◆ Southeast (including Puerto Rico, the Bahamas, Bermuda and the Virgin Islands)
- ◆ East Central
- ◆ West Central
- ◆ Southwest
- ◆ Pacific (including Alaska and Hawaii)

**Idaho Area 18 is part of the Pacific Region.**

## **REGIONAL TRUSTEE**

Each region nominates a slate of qualified candidates from which a regional trustee is elected (see *Service Manual*) who serves a four-year term on the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous. Thus, the Pacific Region (covering nine western states) has a single trustee. The terms of the trustees are staggered and balanced geographically so that two trustees are elected each year, providing both continuity and a smooth flow of rotation (see *Service Manual* for the rotation schedule).

## **THE AREAS**

Most General Service areas follow the broad geographical division of a state or province. Some states, due to their size and population, may have more than one area within their boundaries. **Idaho Area 18** covers the portion of the state below the panhandle and crosses over into Nevada, Wyoming and Oregon.

## **THE AREA DELEGATE**

Each General Service area elects a **delegate** to represent them at the annual General Service conference in New York City, where the broad issues of A.A. as a whole are addressed. There are 93 delegates (areas) throughout the United States and Canada. They are elected for a two-year term with about half elected each year to provide both continuity and rotation, as with the trustees (see *Service Manual* for the election schedule for delegates). Remember that the General Service Conference deals *only* in issues affecting A.A. in the United States and Canada.

## **AREA STRUCTURE**

Each area acts as a unit at **area assemblies**, held periodically throughout the year to conduct business that may affect the entire area, including:

- ◆ To inform the delegate of the sense of the area.
- ◆ To receive from the delegate the advisory actions of the conference.
- ◆ To conduct workshops dealing with various aspects of carrying the service message.

## **THE DISTRICTS**

The area gatherings are usually large and have pre-set agendas. Specific group problems cannot usually be addressed efficiently at these gatherings. That is why the area is further divided into **districts**, ideally comprised of anywhere from six to twenty (20) groups. **Idaho Area 18 currently is divided into ten (10) districts.**

This organizational structure may seem complicated and overly structured at first. It is really in accord with our principle of least possible organization. It has been tested over time as providing the most balanced way to arrive at the only recognized authority in A.A., expressed in an ***informed group conscience***, which must be communicated to others when they deal with issues affecting A.A. as a whole. Perhaps this will become clearer if we begin at the top of the A.A. structure:

## **THE GROUP**

The fundamental unit in Alcoholics Anonymous is the **group**. We will work our way down from there (see the chart of the structure on page 14). Hopefully, internal matters within any group are resolved at the business meeting of the group in accordance with Tradition Two:

- ◆ Involving as many members of the group as possible.
- ◆ Expressing the widest range of points of view on the subject.
- ◆ Allowing enough time for the members to take all the information into consideration before any final decision is made on an issue (an informed group conscience).

One way or another, all healthy groups seem to have learned that this is the best way in the long run.

## **SUMMARY OF THE STRUCTURE**

Therefore, the structure from the top down is:

- ◆ The Group
  - ◆ The District
    - ◆ The Area (Idaho Area 18)
      - ◆ The Region (Pacific)
        - ◆ The General Service Conference

## **OTHER ENTITIES SERVING A.A.**

This is fine as far as it goes but *no group can really exist in total isolation in their communities* (try though they might). They usually have some sort of contact with the larger surrounding A.A. community, contributing to the overall maintenance of their group.

This cooperation may be with the local **intergroup** or **central office**, if only as a source of literature, or other service entities, such as the **Hospitals and Institutions Committee**, as well as the **General Service Office**. For the latter, a **GSR** is needed to carry the group's conscience to the larger structure and likewise to take issues back to the group such as those pending before the upcoming General Service Conference.

## **THE DISTRICT MEETINGS**

As has been mentioned, a **district** is usually composed of six to twenty A.A. groups. A district meeting of all the GSRs in the district usually takes place once a month, although some districts may meet less frequently due to large geographic size. A typical meeting includes:

- ◆ Reports to the GSRs from the District Committee Member (DCM)
- ◆ Reports from the groups via the GSR
- ◆ Discussion of the business of the previous or upcoming Area Assembly
- ◆ Discussions of special events such as workshops the district may be organizing for the general fellowship
- ◆ A presentation on some aspect of service

### **THE DISTRICT COMMITTEE MEMBER**

Each district elects a District Committee Member (**DCM**) who conducts the district meetings and, in Area 18, represents the conscience of the district as a voting member of the Area Committee.

The **primary purpose** of the DCM is to stimulate as many groups as possible to be active in A.A. as a whole through representation and participation.

## **AREA BUSINESS, AN OVERVIEW**

Idaho Area 18 holds two **area assemblies** and three **area business meetings**. All A.A. members are encouraged to attend and become familiar with the issues discussed at the area business meetings and area assemblies. Only the GSRs, DCMs, area trusted servants and area special committee chairs are voting members at the area assemblies. The voting members, with the exception of the GSRs, are the same at area business meetings. As has been mentioned, the main activities at the assemblies center around the Delegate, the General Service Conference and workshops. In fact, the main purpose of the assembly is to conduct the area's business affairs

The Idaho Area 18 **Spring Assembly** is typically the **first weekend in May** and the **Fall Assembly** is typically the **first weekend in October** (See **Area Guidelines**).

The Idaho Area 18 area committee meets three times a year for **business meetings**. They are:

- ◆ **The 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in January**
  - Purpose
    - To establish a working relationship with committee members
    - Conduct old business
    - Delegate to present agenda topics for General Service Conference to DCMs
- ◆ **The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in March**
  - Purpose
    - DCMs to present feedback from districts to delegate on agenda topics for General Service Conference
    - Set agenda for Spring Assembly
- ◆ **The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in August**
  - Purpose
    - To do area business
    - Set agenda for Fall Assembly

## ELECTION OF TRUSTED SERVANTS

At the Fall Assembly in the odd-numbered year, elections are held to choose the Area trusted servants who will serve a two-year term starting the following January. The following trusted servants are elected at this time, with their duties briefly described:

- ◆ **Delegate and Alternate Delegate:** Mainly concerned with maintaining the two-way communication between the Area and GSO, as well as duties such as participating in workshops
- ◆ **Chairperson:** Administrative officer of the Area; schedules the agendas for the Area assemblies and business meetings and conducts these meetings.
- ◆ **Secretary:** Records the minutes of the Area assemblies and business meetings and distributes to all interested parties.
- ◆ **Treasurer:** Records and reports all group contributions and other sources of revenue and disbursement of funds, participates in the preparation of the annual area budget.
- ◆ **Standing committee chairs:** Appointed by Area Chair. These Grapevine, Hospitals and Institutions East and West, Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community East and West, Newsletter Editor and Area Archivist. All except the Newsletter Editor and the Archivist are voting members of the Area Committee.

### THE GSRs' VOICE AND VOTE AT AREA ASSEMBLIES

The GSRs are voting members and collectively form the majority of voting members at the Area Assemblies. As such, GSRs should make every effort to attend the Assemblies. All Idaho Area 18 matters that have either an effect on the area's finances or a direct impact on all the groups, whether raised on the floor of an assembly or coming out of the area committee process, are presented and ratified, rejected or revised by the Assembly. We become informed about what is going on by attending these meetings and discussing issues with others who have experience and information to share

on most issues. In this way the Assemblies meet their purpose of strengthening A.A. as a whole in carrying our message in the best way possible for our area. Participation by the GSR is the key link in the vital chain of two-way communication between group members and the larger structure of A.A.

At the area business meetings, only the DCMs and area trusted servants have a vote but GSRs are always welcome to attend and are strongly encouraged to do so.

## THE GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

The culmination of much of this activity occurs in April of each year when the Delegate we elect to represent our Area attends the week-long General Service Conference in New York.

The voting members of the Conference are:

- ◆ The 93 Area Delegates who form a voting majority
- ◆ The 21 Trustees of the General Service Board
- ◆ The staff of the General Service Office and Grapevine
- ◆ The directors of A.A. World Services, Inc.
- ◆ The directors of the A.A. Grapevine, Inc.

The policy of A.A. is decided at this meeting. The Delegates take to the Conference the consensus of the groups in their Area as expressed at the assemblies.

This should help clarify the nature and relationships among the structural entities of General Service in Idaho Area 18.

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## DUTIES OF THE GSR

Now let's focus on the duties of the GSRs:

- ◆ **Linking** their groups with A.A. as a whole
- ◆ **Acting** as the voice of their group's conscience
- ◆ **Reporting** their group's conscience to the DCM and the Delegate, who pass this on to the Conference and the rest of A.A.
- ◆ **Bringing** the area, district and Conference actions and suggestions back to their group.

The Conference can feel it is acting for A.A. as a whole only to the extent that the GSRs keep the groups informed and gather and communicate the groups' consciences.

In general, there are three areas in which the GSRs have major responsibilities, each of which involves a two-way relationship with:

- ◆ The Group
- ◆ The District
- ◆ General Service Area

## **THE HOME GROUP**

The relationship of the GSR with their home group is probably the most important and hopefully the most fluid and open one. The best way to become effective is to **attend the meetings of your home group on a regular basis**, becoming acquainted with the members of the group and their ideas and giving yourself credibility when you make suggestions or reports.

People in General Service, particularly the GSRs, are generally known as **the Guardians of our Traditions**.

If your group has a **steering committee**, the GSR should be an active part of it, giving regular reports to your group on service activities and brief reports on important issues discussed at the district or area meetings.

Just as a personal inventory helps to maintain a healthy sobriety by revealing our strengths and weaknesses, so an annual **group inventory** can flag areas that may need some focused group attention. A good starting format for this may be found in the pamphlet, "The A.A. Group."

The General Service Office has a publication, **Box 4-5-9**, which is produced bimonthly and contains many articles of general interest to the entire fellowship. Since the GSR is the listed mail contact for the group at GSO, the GSR automatically receives a copy, which should be read and shared with your group. For the nominal cost of \$6 per year, a group may receive 10 copies of each issue. Often just a simple exposure to the availability of this "newfound hidden source" is enough to get a group

interested in subscribing and can be a valuable resource for discussion and tied into the GSR's report.

Another area in which the GSR can be of service to the group is **group finances**. It is suggested that a group retain a prudent reserve of money to cover potential extraordinary expenses that may be incurred. This reserve is retained after the group's expenses have been paid, which may include supporting the GSR in his/her expenses directly related to the position.

### **DISTRICT MEETINGS**

There are really very few completely new and original problems that develop in groups so our continuity of experience is extremely valuable.

The **GSRs** can share with their fellow GSRs at the **district meetings** how they dealt with such matters and with what success, so their experience may be helpful to another group.

Also, at the district meetings, agenda items that require action at the next Area Assembly can be discussed. This is a middle ground where such discussion makes us better informed and able to take back to our group any business where a group conscience is needed. We can then take this back to the Assembly to make our voice heard.

### **AREA MEETINGS**

By attending Area Assemblies and Area business meetings we become familiar with things happening in the larger world of A.A. and in our area through the reports given by our area officers and the various districts. It is quite likely that we will hear some ideas that can be used to better our own district or group.

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## **GLOSSARY OF COMMON AA TERMS**

- ◆ **Alternate:** A General Service worker who, according to local autonomy and needs, is elected at the group, district or area levels to participate with, assist in and, in appropriate circumstances, assume the duties of a principal office holder, i.e. Alternate GSR, Alternate Delegate.
- ◆ **Archives:** A collection of A.A. memorabilia, usually maintained by a committee whose functions might include collection, indexing, storing and exhibiting original and reproduced national, international and local A.A. material such as newspaper and magazine articles, tape recordings of important A.A. functions, oral histories of older members, group and district histories, etc.
- ◆ **Area:** A geographical division within a state or province. Normally, there is one area for each state or province except when there may be a highly populated state or province where there may be more than one area.
- ◆ **Area Committee:** A committee within an area that is made up of one or more district committee members (DCMs) from each District within the Area. The Area Committee is a vital A.A. service link that functions as a research, study and advisory group to the Area Assembly.
- ◆ **Area Assembly:** A periodic meeting of the General Service Representatives (GSRs), the District Committee Members (DCMs), and Area trusted servants. From the members of the Assembly are elected Area trusted servants and the Area Delegate to the General Service Conference in New York. The Assembly is a basic unit of the General Service structure and conducts or helps coordinate most of the A.A. business for the Area.
- ◆ **Box 4-5-9:** A bi-monthly publication of the General Service Office, the title of which is also the New York mailing address of GSO (P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163). The masthead of this informative mini-magazine often consists of the words, “News and Notes

from the General Service Office of A.A.” It includes such items of interest as a calendar of local, national and international events; questions and problems about A.A.; committee reports from Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, Treatment, Institutions, Finance, etc.; vignettes and anecdotes from A.A. people, history and events, as well as other information of interest to members. Fruitful ideas for GSR reports to the group can be derived from *Box 4-5-9*.

- ◆ **Conference:** The meeting held each April in New York of the elected Area Delegates, the Board of Trustees, and the GSO staff. This meeting keeps the individual A.A. member and GSO in close, supportive contact with each other through the general service chain made up of the Trustees’ committees working closely with the comparable Delegate committees (such as PI, CPC, Treatment, Finance); the Delegate from and to the Area; the GSR from and to the Area; the individual A.A. member through the GSR. In the Conference, each Area has one representative Delegate, who confers with 92 other Delegates, 21 Trustees (14 alcoholic and 7 non-alcoholic), 19 GSO staff members and representatives from the two corporations: A.A. World Services and the A.A. Grapevine, Inc.
  
- ◆ **Delegate:** An A.A. member of the Area Assembly elected by the GSRs, DCMs, and Area trusted servants to represent the Area at the Conference. It is through the Delegate that the A.A. group passes along its informed group conscience to the Conference and receives back the results of the Conference. Each area is designated as either an “even” panel or an “odd” panel. The delegates from an “even” panel take office in January of an even-numbered year, while those from an “odd” panel start in an odd-numbered year. This way, A.A. is assured of continuity at the Conference, while providing for the necessary rotation. Idaho Area 18 is an “even” numbered panel.

- ◆ **District:** A geographic subdivision within an area; created to come closer to the individual A.A. group. It is here that each group in the District sends its elected General Service Representative (GSR) to carry the group’s conscience through the chain to the Conference and to receive back important information from A.A. as a whole.
  
- ◆ **District Committee Member (DCM):** A General Service Representative elected by the other GSRs within a District to represent them on the Area Committee. The DCM is also responsible for coordinating and assisting the efforts of the GSRs in the District.
  
- ◆ **General Service Representative (GSR):** An A.A. member elected by the members of a group to represent the group’s opinion in discussions at the District and Area levels. S/he keeps the group fully informed of decisions, discussions and events in A.A. at the District, Area, regional, national and international levels. The GSR is responsible to see that the best possible A.A. representatives are chosen to serve the whole fellowship by voting for DCMs, Area trusted servants and the Delegate.
  
- ◆ **Region:** A grouping of several states or provinces from which a regional trustee is elected to the Board of Trustees. There are eight regions in the Conference – six in the United States and two in Canada.
  
- ◆ **Third Legacy:** Recovery and unity are our first two legacies handed down to us from the founders of A.A. Our Third Legacy is Service, the sum total of all A.A. services, from the twelfth step call to A.A.’s coast-to-coast and worldwide activities.
  
- ◆ **Third Legacy Procedure:** A voting procedure unique to A.A. designed to help reduce some of the negative aspects of elections – such as personality clashes, ego battles, dissatisfied minorities. See “What Is The Conference?” in the *Service Manual*.

- ◆ **Trustee:** The usual term for a member of A.A.’s General Service Board of Trustees. Currently, the board is made up of 21 trustees, including the Regional Trustees. Seven are “Class A” Trustees (non-alcoholic) and 14 are “Class B” (alcoholic).
  
- ◆ **Twelve Concepts:** As the Twelve Steps are to personal recovery and the Twelve Traditions are to the preservation and unity of Alcoholics Anonymous, so are the Twelve Concepts to General Service. They are a set of principles and practices intended to preserve service to A.A. and the still suffering alcoholic. They also protect the structure by which such service is made possible (See *The Twelve Concepts For World Service* in the back portion of the *Service Manual* introduced by the following statement:

“The Concepts carefully delineate those important traditions, customs, relationships and legal arrangements that weld the General Service Board into a working harmony with the primary committees and with its corporate arms of active service – A.A. World Services, Inc., and the A.A. Grapevine, Inc. This is the substance of the structural framework that governs the internal working situation of A.A.’s world headquarters.”

#### **OFTEN USED ACRONYMS IN AA**

- ◆ **GSO** The General Service Office in New York
  
- ◆ **GSR** The General Service Representative for an A.A. group
  
- ◆ **GSB** The General Service Board of A.A.
  
- ◆ **AAWS** Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. – the corporation that employs GSO personnel, directs GSO services and publishes books and pamphlets

- ◆ **H & I** Hospitals and Institutions
- ◆ **PI** Public Information
- ◆ **CPC** Cooperation With The Professional Community
- ◆ **DCM** District Committee Member
- ◆ **GVR** Grapevine representative for a group or district
- ◆ **PRAASA** Pacific Region A.A. Service Assembly (annual meeting of the 15 areas in the nine Western states of the Pacific Region)

### **THE GSR PREAMBLE**

**We are the General Service Representatives. We are the link in the chain of communication for our groups with the General Service Conference and the world of A.A.**

**We realize the ultimate authority in A.A. is a loving God as he may express himself in our group conscience. As trusted servants, our job is to bring information to our groups in order that they can reach an informed group conscience. In passing along this group conscience, we are helping to maintain the unity and strength so vital to our fellowship.**

**Let us, therefore, have the patience and tolerance to listen while others share, the courage to speak up when we have something to share, and the wisdom to do what is right for our groups and A.A. as a whole.**