

Orientation to the Ottawa Area Service Committee of Narcotics Anonymous

The following information was put together as an orientation package for new members attending the ASC. The purpose of this outline is to simplify the terminology used, draw out the order of N.A. service structure and present a brief description of how this particular business meeting is conducted.

The Ottawa ASC was formed in January, 1986. Basically, it is the business meeting of all N.A. groups in and around the Ottawa Area and, is our method of communicating from the group through to the World Service Committee level.

The Area meeting takes place on the first Sunday of each month, except on long weekends that fall on the first Sunday of the month; on these occasions, ASC will meet on the second Sunday of the month. Punctuality is appreciated so that a timetable can be followed.

There is no such thing as a stupid question here except the one you don't ask! The other members of the committee would be happy to answer any questions or direct you to the appropriate person when asked.

If you are here representing a group, the first thing you should do is approach the table at the front of the room and grab the name tag that identifies which group or committee you will be representing. Other information papers will be on that table as well, which you will be responsible for picking up and looking over. The most applicable will be *this month's agenda, the last Area Service Committee Meeting Minutes and, the Administrative Steering Committee Report*. There may also be announcements which detail upcoming events such as dances, conventions etc., both from our region and from other regions.

Group Service Representatives (GSRs)

GSRs are the link that binds the different groups together and in turn, N.A. as a whole helping to fulfill our primary purpose. It is their responsibility to keep their groups informed of events at Area, Regional and World levels; to express their group's conscience at Area level and to keep the Area informed about activities, strengths and concerns of their group. (For a more detailed description see the separate handout with this orientation package)

If you are a new GSR, the following information will be required from you at this meeting:

GSR Report

- . DON'T PANIC! It is very informal. Ask the secretary for a blank form and fill it out to the best of your ability. During the meeting you will be required to verbally report the items listed in the report. We all want to hear how your group is doing.
- . After you make your verbal report, hold on to your written report until the first recess. At this time you may give it to the ASC Secretary so that they may place the information in the minutes. This is the only way your group will get noted. If the report is not handed in, it will not be included in the minutes. Keep it simple if possible; ie. Is the support good? Is it weak? Is attendance up down or steady?
- . FINANCIAL STATUS of the GROUP. Indicate your group's ASC donation if applicable.
- . ANNIVERSARIES or SPECIAL EVENTS
- . This verbal report should only take 1 or 2 minutes unless your group has some special concerns or matters it wants you to share.
- . Motions that were discussed at your group's business meeting should also be written on this form but not mentioned until the "OLD & NEW" Business part of the meeting takes place. If your group wishes them put into "new business", the procedure is outlined in the "PROCEDURE" section which follows.

Literature Orders

- . The ASC meeting is where you place literature order for your group to be picked up at the following ASC meeting. The Literature Committee will have representation to assist you. Payment must be in advance. Order forms are available; take a couple to have handy for your group's business meeting.

The purpose of the ASC is "to help carry the message to the addict who still suffers"; to be supportive of its member groups and to foster the growth and unity of the Fellowship as a whole. See Policies and Guidelines (P&Gs) Section 4.1.

ASC Members

- . GSRs, Alternate GSRs, Standing Committee Chairpersons, Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, ASR (Area Service Representative), Alternate ASR. (See Policies and Guidelines Section 3 and for Officers, Section 10.)

Standing Committees

- **HOSPITALS and INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE** This committee helps carry the message of recovery to people in those places where they can't get to an N.A. meeting on their own. (For more detail see P&Gs, Section 8.3.1.)
- **PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE:** This committee also carries the message. They schedule public speaking engagements to educate people and answer publicly any questions about N.A. as a whole. (For more detail see P&Gs, Section 8.3.2.)
- **ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE:** A great deal of energy is needed to be on this committee! This committee organizes and coordinates dances, fundraisers and N.A. events in the Ottawa Area. (For more detail see P&Gs, Section 8.3.3.)
- **NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE:** This committee is responsible for the preparation and distribution of our Area's Newsletter. (For more detail see P&Gs, Section 8.3.4.)
- **LITERATURE COMMITTEE:** This committee is responsible for providing N.A. literature to the Ottawa Area Groups. (For more detail see P&Gs, Section 8.3.5.)
- **ANNUAL AREA ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION COMMITTEE** This committee oversees and organizes an annual anniversary celebration for the Ottawa Area. (For more detail see P&Gs, Section 8.3.6.)
- **ADMINISTRATIVE STEERING COMMITTEE** This committee meets once a month to set the Agenda for the coming Area Service Committee Meeting. (For more detail see P&Gs, Section 8.1.)

Procedure

Upon arrival, please bring any new business to the attention of the Chairperson so that it may be added to the Agenda. **Motions must be submitted in writing on the forms provided with the name of the person making the motion and the name of the person seconding the motion.** It is advisable to add the intent of the motion to hasten the debate.

Pick up your copy of the Agenda, Minutes from the last Area and Administrative Steering Meetings. Have a quick look at the minutes pertaining to your group's report and note any errors or omissions as you will be asked to accept the minutes early in the meeting.

The agenda is easy to follow and will lead you step by step through the meeting. Certain practices may seem unusual or unnecessary but be sure, the procedures practiced here have evolved and are still evolving yet it is safe to say that given a chance, most bear up under almost all circumstances.

Area Service Committee

An Area Service Committee (ASC) is a committee made up of representatives (GSRs) from groups within a designated area, which meets monthly for the express purpose of serving the specific needs of its member groups.

There are certain facilities which are necessary to the service provided by an ASC. In the beginning these may be simply a permanent mailing address (usually a post office box), a bank account, and a place to hold meetings.

As the membership and number of groups within an area increase, or when an area decides that it needs a broader spectrum of services, more facilities may be needed. These might include a telephone answering referral service, typewriter, adding machine, a place to store literature among other things. As an area grows still more, the members may decide to consolidate and improve these facilities by opening and staffing a local office.

Most ASCs have found that a subcommittee often does the actual work to implement ASC directives. The subcommittees normally deal with a single service such as public information, hospitals and institutions, or entertainment, and may meet to do the work as needed between regular ASC meetings.

The most important service which an ASC provides is that of group support. Whenever a group has a specific situation or need which it has not been able to handle on its own, it can come to its area service committee for help. These situations are almost limitless in scope; however, we have learned that we can get much accomplished when we work together.

In order to provide these services, an ASC needs the active participation of its GSRs. A group supports its area service committee both financially and emotionally. It takes money to provide the services we have described. It is the group's responsibility to offer this support. When an ASC is first formed, this need for funds may be minimal, just enough to pay for a post office box and a meeting place. However, as an area grows, the financial needs of the committee also grow. In order to provide a full line of services it requires a steady, reliable flow of money. Some areas provide these funds through activities. These alternate sources of financial support are helpful, but the bulk of the responsibility still falls on the members of a group.

The active participation of each group representative is essential for a successful ASC. Each GSR must keep his or her own group informed, and must represent that group's conscience in all committee decisions. Where possible, an agenda for an ASC should be sent to the groups ten days before the committee meets. Representatives should evaluate each vote in terms of the needs of those they serve or take it back to the group. In addition to this, a GSR participates in helping carry out the ASC's other specific functions. The attracting of new members, the planning and implementation of activities, and the aid given to groups with special situations are services which require much more effort than a monthly meeting.

Group Service Representatives (GSRs) and GSR Alternates

A group service representative (GSR) is first in the line of communication between a group and Narcotics Anonymous as a whole. They are the links that bind the groups together in the performance of our primary purpose. It is their responsibility to keep a group informed and to express a group's conscience in all matters. In other words, they are in fact the voice of the group. Electing GSRs who will take an active part in the business of N.A. is probably the most important thing we can do to improve the unity of the fellowship. Active representation more than any other thing, can strengthen the ties that bind us together and promote our common welfare.

The GSRs speak for their groups at area service committee meetings. They take part in planning and implementation of any functions which affect the members of their groups. As a result of their participation they can keep their groups informed about what is happening in N.A. Members of a group should always be able to go to their representative and find out about activities, other groups, how our N.A. service structure works, the Twelve Traditions, and how they can become more involved.

A GSR normally serves for a period of two (2) years. The first year is spent as a GSR alternate, working closely with an existing GSR, learning the duties of the office and taking over in case the GSR is ill, or cannot for any reason continue to serve. Also, if the GSR cannot attend one of the monthly meetings, the GSR alternate has the responsibility to vote in the GSR's absence. It is also suggested that a GSR share some of the responsibilities with the GSR alternate. The second year the alternate becomes the group's GSR, taking over the full responsibilities and functions of the office, and in turn is helped by a newly elected GSR alternate. The "apprentice" system serves two purposes: First of All, it helps to provide a continuity of service which never leaves a group unrepresented and, secondly, the year spent as an alternate provides the training for an effective GSR. As you can see, the role of a GSR is neither a simple one nor, one to be taken lightly. The election of effective GSRs and GSR alternates is probably the most important thing that you as an individual member, can do for the unity of N.A. In choosing your representatives, remember that they are your voice and your ears in N.A. If you wish to be well represented and well informed, it is your responsibility to elect the best possible nominee. For this reason we suggest that candidates for GSR should have:

1. The willingness and desire to serve;
2. We suggest a minimum of one (1) year of continuous abstinence from all drugs;
3. An active participation in the group they serve;
4. Knowledge of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions; and
5. An understanding of the N.A. service structure and the responsibilities of a GSR.

The requirements for the office of GSR alternate are the same as those for GSR except that there is a minimum of six (6) months of continuous abstinence from all drugs. These qualifications of course are not hard and fast rules. They are however, some of the things you should consider in the selection of your representatives. The group service representatives, as we have described them, are your link to the rest of N.A. They are also

the ties that bind the personal service you and your group perform to the next type of service which is offered by N.A. area and regional service.

It is our suggestion that when holding elections for group officers, the description of each officers' job and the suggested qualifications for nominees be read, so that members of the group fully appreciate the responsibilities and ramifications of each office.

In order to coordinate its services, each ASC elects officers yearly. These officers include a chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, assistant secretary, treasurer, assistant treasurer, area service representative ASR (the Guide to Local Service suggests the election to two Regional Committee Members (RCMs) which will replace ASRs), alternate ASR. Leadership and the ability to organize and give committee direction and incentive must come from its officers. Upon election the officers must resign as GSRs and their groups then elect new representatives, thus ensuring all groups equality of representation.