

Southern Area Service Committee of Narcotics Anonymous
Aotearoa New Zealand Region

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Group Service Representatives (GSRs) Southern Area Service Committee Aotearoa New Zealand Region

Kia ora,

On behalf of SASC...Welcome aboard!

The Southern Area Service Committee (SASC) had its first meeting on the 10th December 1988. This occurred as a result of the Aotearoa New Zealand Fellowships autonomous shift toward becoming a region in its own right. The Aotearoa New Zealand Region is divided into four service areas and committees are established for each area. The four areas are the Northern, Midlands, Central, and Southern. Our Southern Area Service Committee (SASC) gets together every couple of months, i.e. Jan, Mar, May, Jul, Sept, Nov to do the business and generally have some fun in recovery.

The SASC's is the workhorse of NA services in the South Island. Historically we have had between 20 and 30 meetings in our area. The future of our meetings is closely connected to the attendance and participation of GSRs at SASCs. Thanks to you another meeting is being represented. The intent of this booklet is to provide educational information about us and to assist you in your new role. There is a **GSR Report Template** and **Guidelines** to having a **Group Conscience**. We look forward to working with you so that we can continue to carry the message to the addict that still suffers.

We sincerely hope your time with us is a journey of discovery and adventure. We acknowledge your willingness to serve and offer our kindest support in return. Keep coming back.

Yours in service,

SASC Chairperson
For Southern Area Service Committee 2004

Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA unity.
2. 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.
3. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every NA group ought to be fully self supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. NA, as such ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinions on outside issues; hence the NA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

THE AREA SERVICE COMMITTEE

INTRODUCTION

“Workhorse” of the service structure--maybe that’s the best way to describe the area service committee. Most of the hands-on work of delivering NA services to the groups and the community occurs at the area level.

NA groups support meetings where addicts can share their recovery with one another. Only minimal organization is necessary to hold those meetings. But there’s lots more than can be done to further the aims of Narcotics Anonymous:

- ❖ NA panel presentations at addiction treatment centers and correctional facilities can reach addicts particularly in need of what we have to offer.
- ❖ Public information presentations to schools and community groups, mailings to addiction treatment professionals, meeting notices in newspapers, and public service announcements on local radio and television stations can help direct people to NA.
- ❖ Directories showing where and when NA groups in the area hold their recovery meetings can help addicts and others find nearby meetings being conducted at times convenient to them.
- ❖ A phonline service can help addicts seeking recovery find a meeting in their area. It can also provide information about NA to interested community members.
- ❖ A ready supply of NA books and pamphlets can make it easier for groups to stock their literature tables.
- ❖ Social activities can help addicts feel more comfortable in their local NA community and increase unity and camaraderie among area members.

All of these services require a certain degree of organisation, the complexity of which could easily divert NA groups for the week-in, week-out task of conducting NA meetings for their members. Most of these services also require more money and manpower than any single group could possibly muster. How do groups stay focused on their primary purpose and still see that these other services are developed and maintained? In the words of NA’s Ninth Tradition, they “create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.” And the service committee closest to home, the committee best situated to provide the most direct service to the groups and the community, is the area service committee.

A newly formed area committee will not be able to provide the same level of service as a longer-established committee. That’s only natural. A new

area service committee should not expect to hit the ground running at full speed. The development of the full range of area services described in this chapter often takes a few years. Be patient and keep plugging: it's worth the effort.

Just as individual members of NA rely upon one another for support, so do area committees. New committees in particular can draw upon the experience of their neighbors in charting a course for local services, whether those neighbors be in the next county or the next country. New ASCs can also draw encouragement from their neighbors' assurance that, given time, effort and the application of principles, "it works." None of us has to do it alone, not in personal recovery and not in service, not anymore.

THE AREA COMMITTEE AND OTHER NA SERVICES

Area service committees are ultimately responsible to the groups they serve. Narcotics Anonymous groups send group service representatives (GSRs) to serve on the area committee. While still maintaining final responsibility and authority for area services, they invest enough delegated authority in their GSRs--and through them in the area committee--for the necessary work to get done.

NA groups also send money to the area committee, money needed to coordinate panels, maintain phonedlines, and conduct public information activities. Through their contributions of money and manpower, the groups exercise both their responsibility and their authority for NA services.

How does the area service committee relate in turn to NA's regional and world services? In much the same way as the group relates to the area committee: through carefully selected representatives who are delegated the authority necessary for effective service.

AREA COMMITTEE PARTICIPANTS

There are three groups of participants in most area service committees: GSRs and their alternatives, administrative officers, and subcommittee chairpersons. The Seventh Concept for NA Service says that "all members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body's decisions and should be allowed to fully participate in its decision-making processes." Group service representatives provide a "grass roots" perspective to the area decision-making process, helping ensure that the committee's feet are planted firmly on the ground. Administrative officers and subcommittee chairpersons also bear substantial responsibility for the fulfillment of area services. Their ongoing growth and experience in carrying out their duties is an invaluable resource to the area as it develops and expresses its group conscience. We ought never allow a base of valuable experience to be created without utilizing it to the fullest. Each area is responsible to create

its own decision-making plan. In doing so, area committees should carefully consider the Seventh Concept.

GROUP SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES (GSRs)

Group service representatives link their groups to the rest of Narcotics Anonymous. Most groups also elect an alternative GSR who can fill in for the group service representative when needed. GSRs serve a dual role. As our fellowship's Second Concept for Service indicates, GSRs take part on their groups' behalf in the area service committee and the regional assembly, conveying a sense of their groups' wishes to the service structure and bringing back information on what's happening in the larger world of NZ. Yet our Twelve Concepts also suggest that GSRs are delegated the authority to serve in their own right as ASC and regional assembly participants, exercising their own conscience and best judgment in the best interests of NA as a whole. Qualifications and terms of service for GSRs are determined by the groups which elect them.

Each group elects one group service representative; even those groups hosting more than one recovery meeting elect just one GSR. These GSRs form the foundation of our service structure. GSRs provide constant, active influence over the discussions being carried on within the service structure. They do this by participating in area service committee meetings, attending forums and assemblies at both the area and regional levels, and sometimes joining in the work of an ASC subcommittee. If we are vigilant in choosing stable, qualified leaders at this level of service, the remainder of the structure will almost certainly be sound. From this strong foundation, a service structure can be built that will nourish, inform, and support the groups in the same way that the groups nourish and support the structure.

Group service representatives bear great responsibility. While GSRs are elected by and are accountable to the group, they are not mere group messengers. They are selected by their groups to serve as active members of the area service committee. As such, they are responsible to act in the best interests of NA as a whole, not solely as advocates of their own groups' priorities.

As participants in the area committee, GSRs need to be as well informed as they can be concerning the affairs of the committee. They study the reports of the committee's officers and subcommittee chairpersons. They read the various handbooks published by the World Service Office on each area of service. After carefully considering their own conscience and what they know about how their group members feel, they take active, critical parts in the discussions which form the group conscience of the entire committee.

Group service representatives link their groups with the rest of the NA service structure, particularly through the information conveyed in their

reports to and from the area committee (suggested template included). At groups business meetings, the GSR report provides a summary of the area committee activities, often sparking discussions among group members that provide the GSR with a feel for how the area can better serve the group's needs. In group recovery meetings, GSRs make available fliers announcing area and regional activities.

At area committee meetings, GSR reports provide perspectives on group growth vital to the committee's work. If a group is having problems, its GSR can share those problems with the committee in his or her report. And if the group hasn't found solutions to those problems, the GSR can gather the experience others have had in similar situations. If any helpful solutions arise from the sharing session, the GSR can report those back to the group.

Alternative GSR

Groups also elect a second representative called an alternative GSR. Alternative GSRs attend all the area service committee meetings (as nonvoting participants) with their GSRs so that they can see for themselves how the committee works. If a GSR cannot attend an area committee meeting, that group's alternative GSR participates in the GSR's place.

Alternative GSRs, along with other members, may also serve on area subcommittees. Subcommittee experience gives alternative GSRs added perspective on how area services are actually delivered. That perspective helps make them more effective area committee participants if their groups later elect them to serve as GSRs.

ELECTIONS AND ROTATION

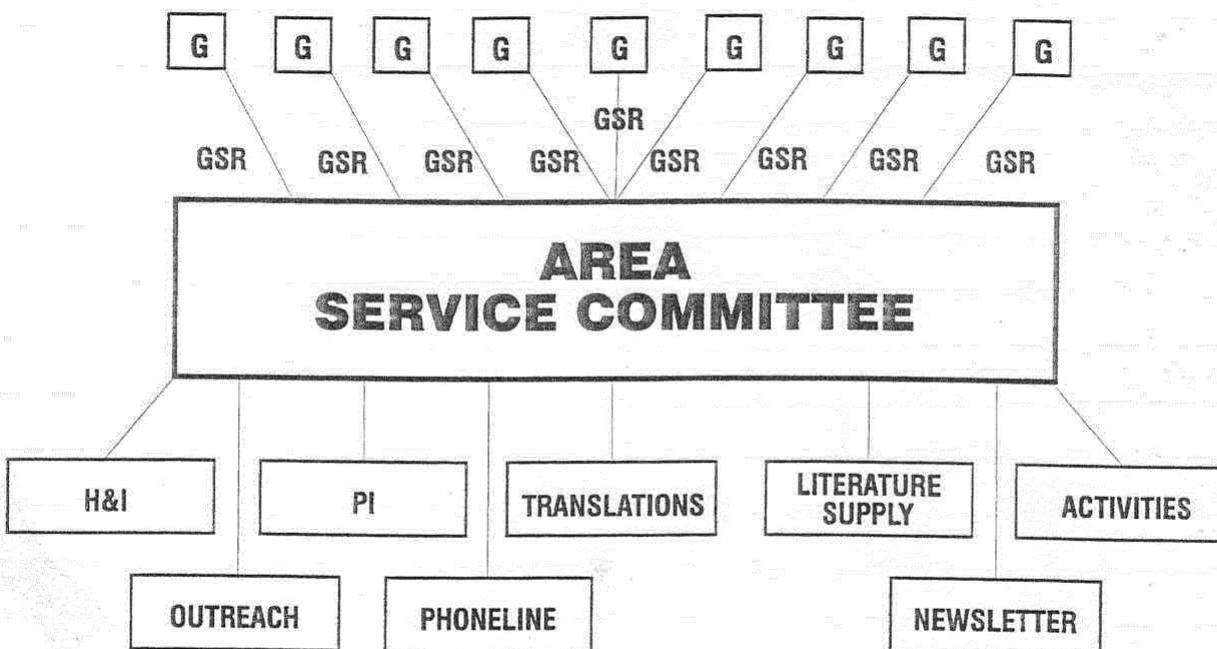
Some area committees hold elections for all their officers and subcommittee chairpersons at the same time each year; others stagger their elections, selecting members for different trusted-servant roles at different times of the year, so that their committees always have a mix of new and experienced leaders. Administrative officers and subcommittee chairpersons generally serve no more than two terms consecutively in the same position and, with the exception of RCMs, usually serve one year terms. This allows for the rotation of a variety of individuals through an area's trusted-servant positions, providing a diversity of viewpoints and talents and a freshness of perspective that would be lacking were these positions to be held year after year by the same individuals. The rotation of trusted servants at the area level helps the committee better reflect the full range of insight available among committee members, preventing the area committee from becoming a mere extension of an individual's personality. Rotation emphasizes that our efforts to help carry the message through service involvement is just one way of practicing our Twelfth Step, no more

or less special or praiseworthy than any other. The practice of rotation is founded on this fellowships belief that service is more important than the servant, an extension of our tradition of spiritual anonymity.

Area committees can foster continuity in their services by a number of means. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, some area committees stagger their elections of trusted servants, ensuring these committees always have a certain proportion of experienced leaders. Many area committees also encourage those who have completed terms as administrative officers and subcommittee chairs to remain active in the ASC either in another leadership position, as individual members of on of the areas subcommittees, or informally. By balancing the practice of rotation with the kind of experience available from past officers, an area committee can partake of the best of both worlds.

SUBCOMMITTEES

In some ways, the relationship between an ASC and its subcommittees is very similar to the relationship between NA groups and their ASC; in others, it is quite different. Just as groups create an area committee to help them fulfill their primary purpose, so the ASC creates subcommittees to do the actual work involved in delivering its direct services—H&I, PI, Phonlines, activities, and the rest. If area subcommittees are to serve effectively, the ASC must delegate them sufficient authority to exercise their best judgement in fulfilling their duties. However, because an area committee must account to the groups for the actions of its subcommittees, ASCs generally maintain a somewhat tighter rein on their subcommittees than groups do on the area committees.



The balance between accountability and delegation is a delicate one. If an area committee exerts too much control over its subcommittees, those subcommittees will not be able to serve well. If the ASC delegates too much authority to its subcommittees, on the other hand, the area committee will not be able to account fully for itself to the groups it serves.

An ASC should pay careful attention to the Twelve Concepts, especially Concept Five, when creating subcommittee, giving them sufficient liberty to serve freely while still maintaining their accountability.

The ASC is responsible not only to develop and maintain subcommittees in each field of service but to coordinate the work of each of those subcommittees with the work of the others. For these reasons, all area committee participants need to become as informed as they can possibly be about subcommittee activities. Handbooks are available from the World Service Office for most of the subcommittees. Specific directions for subcommittees in your area can be found in your log of policy actions and (if applicable) your area guidelines.

GROUP CONSCIENCE

Tradition Two reads: “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.”

A group conscience has been defined by the SASC as the process where NA members’ get together to discuss and decide on NA matters. Any member of a group can request a Group Conscience during the announcement section of that meeting.

The main points to remember about a group conscience process are:

- ◆ Tradition two protects us from ourselves
- ◆ We rely on a loving God as expressed in our group conscience, rather than on personal opinion or ego.
- ◆ There is often a vast difference between group conscience and group opinion as dictated by powerful personalities or popularity.
- ◆ True spiritual principles are never in conflict; they compliment each other.
- ◆ We have learned that for our fellowship, leadership by example and selfless service work works. Direction and manipulation fail.
- ◆ Narcotics Anonymous is a God given programme, and we can maintain our group in dignity only with group conscience and God’s love.

A suggested “Group Conscience” process for groups in the Southern Area follows.

GUIDELINES FOR A GROUP CONSCIENCE

These guidelines are intended to assist GSRs when holding a Group Conscience Meeting. It is only a *suggested* format.

1. Chaired by the GSR or Secretary
2. Open with the Serenity Prayer – “Us and We”.
3. Read 12 Traditions of NA (optional)
4. Determine number of voting members and observers present.
5. Draw up a short list of agenda items e.g.
 - i) Treasurers Report
 - ii) GSRs Report
 - iii) General Business
6. For each agenda item:
 - i) Whoever tabled the item speaks first.
 - ii) Open discussion
 - iii) Closed discussion
 - iv) Vote or come to consensus
7. For each election:
 - i) Read Service Position Description
 - ii) Open for nominations and seconders
 - iii) Check if the person accepts the nomination
 - iv) Close nominations
 - v) Ask nominees to qualify themselves, e.g. cleantime, sponsor etc.
 - vi) Open floor for comments or questions from others in attendance.
 - vii) Nominee leaves the room.
 - viii) Further discussion
 - ix) Close discussions
 - x) Vote taken and result announced.
8. Close with Serenity Prayer – “Us and We”.

Twelve Concepts for NA Service

1. To fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose, the NA groups have joined together to create a structure, which develops, coordinates, and maintains services on behalf of NA as a whole.
2. The final responsibility and authority for NA services rests with the NA groups.
3. The NA groups delegate to the service structure the authority necessary to fulfil the responsibilities assigned to it.
4. Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.
5. For each responsibility assigned to the service structure, a single point of decision and accountability should be clearly defined.
6. Group conscience is the spiritual means by which we invite a loving God to influence our decisions.
7. All members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body's decisions and should be allowed to fully participate in its decision-making processes.
8. Our service structure depends on the integrity and effectiveness of our communications.
9. All elements of our service structure have the responsibility to carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes.
10. Any member of a service body can petition that body for the redress of a personal grievance, without fear of reprisal.
11. NA funds are to be used to further our primary purpose, and must be managed responsibly.
12. In keeping with the spiritual nature of Narcotics Anonymous, our structure should always be one of service, never of government.