

Local Services as Described in the Third Draft Service System Proposals

The proposed group support unit (GSU) and local service unit (LSU) divide the responsibilities of our current ASCs. *Each unit has one main focus: The GSU is devoted to group support and the LSU to providing local services.* In the language of our foundational principles, these are purpose-driven bodies, and having a better defined purpose increases the chance of each successfully fulfilling its responsibilities.

GSU

The GSU is intended to help groups better carry the message within their meetings by separating out the group support function from the “business” of NA. The GSU gives groups the opportunity to share problems they may be encountering and to seek solutions from each other, while avoiding the distraction of discussions about complex services provided outside the group. By functioning as a discussion-based gathering of the local NA community, the GSU will offer an attractive alternative that complements the other more business-oriented service meetings.

The GSU is intended to be like a community or neighborhood gathering not another level of service. Some of the kinds of things that happen at GSU meetings include

- Informal training and mentoring
- Discussion of group issues, group sharing— no business
- Welcoming and outreach to new groups and members
- Orientation and introduction to service (recovery literature & service literature, traditions, concepts, etc.)
- Informal information sharing (e.g., upcoming events, LSU activities, new literature items, NAWS issues topics)
- Sending a delegate to the annual planning assembly
- In some instances or circumstances, GSUs may be asked to be involved in some service delivery (e.g., putting up PI flyers in the community).

Size and Attendance

GSU attendance is open: Groups send a delegate and any interested member can come as well. In some cases, a community may decide to send a liaison from the LSU or to make a special effort to invite “veteran” service members or members with expertise in a particular area. Those kinds of invitations are at the discretion of a local community; what is consistent regardless, is that groups send a trusted servant and that anyone who wants to attend is welcome. The GSU is intended to be a “neighborhood” sized body firmly rooted in its local recovery community. Typically a number of GSUs will be found within the geographic area of the LSU.

The LSU on the other hand has the focus of delivering services, and therefore is, where possible and practical, sized to conform with recognized boundaries such as counties, townships, and so on. The GSU has a less formal atmosphere than found in many current service meetings. Structure and procedures should also be as informal as possible. The GSU meeting will not only assist groups, but will also serve to introduce new members to the basic principles of service. Our hope is that an improved atmosphere will

encourage more members, both experienced and new, to attend and prepare them to serve at other service bodies.

Administration of the GSU

There are a number of different options for administering a GSU. Recovery groups could take turns hosting the group support unit, or the LSU could play some part in administering or hosting the GSU, or there could be some sort of administrative component within the GSU itself. The key is to keep it simple, informal, and focused on group support rather than its own administration. There should be a format for the meeting but not much structure. In essence, it doesn't have to be much more or less formal than a recovery meeting. There should be a facilitator that can rotate or be a consistent person, whatever makes the most sense for the GSU and provides the least amount of administrative distraction.

Options for the GSU: Linear, Two-track, and Variations

In our first draft proposals we outlined two possible options for the relationship between the GSU and LSU: the two-track option and the linear option. These allow for groups to either send a delegate from their GSU to the LSU (the linear option), or send a delegate to both the GSU meeting and the LSU (the two-track option). Each community has different needs, and our thinking was that the linear model may fit one community better, but the two-track model might work better for another community, while some adaptation of the two may work best for a third. The more we have discussed how local services might function, however, particularly the idea of a quarterly LSU meeting with an annual planning assembly attended by all groups, the more the two-track model seems to make the most sense to us. For one thing it will keep the focus in the GSU exclusively on group needs rather than the need to communicate ideas and decisions to and from the local service body. For another thing, with the LSU meeting quarterly it doesn't seem too burdensome for groups to send a delegate to both the GSU and LSU. In some cases as well, the GSU might meet every other month, in which case, groups would need to send a delegate to ten total meetings. Four LSU meetings and six GSU meetings is fewer than a monthly ASC which is the norm in many places now.

Linear Option: The linear option makes the GSU a part of the "delegation stream" between the group and the rest of the NA service structure. The GSU would have the responsibility of selecting a delegate to attend the LSU. We call it the "delegation stream" because delegation (selecting a trusted servant to attend on behalf of the group or GSU) is what connects the group to the LSU, the LSU to the state/nation/province service body, and the state/nation/province body to the global level of NA. This is how the group's voice is heard and how it impacts the decision-making process. Resources and information flow back and forth across the delegation stream, and careful delegation allows for services to be accountable to groups.

The advantages to the linear model are that a group need only send a trusted servant to one body, the GSU. It's also possible that the GSU might function better as a kind of training ground or orientation to the sort of service provided at the LSU if it's within the delegation stream. This close connection to the LSU, however, is one of the disadvantages as well. It's more likely that the focus of the GSU would shift if the GSU were responsible to select a delegate and carry information back and forth from the LSU. Depending on how the LSU is set up and how communication functions in the community, it's also

possible that the linear option may make the groups feel more distant from the LSU, the body that provides services on their behalf.

Two-track Option: In the two-track option, the group sends a delegate to both the GSU and the LSU. Perhaps the biggest advantage to this option is that the GSU would be able to focus solely on discussing group issues and would not need to send a delegate to the LSU. This would preserve the simplicity of the GSU meeting. The disadvantage, however, is that groups would also have to find a delegate to attend the LSU meeting, or ask the same person to attend both the GSU and the LSU. As we've already mentioned, however, if the LSU meeting is a planning conference that happens three or four times a year as outlined below, rather than a monthly or bimonthly meeting, that may make it less daunting for groups to send a trusted servant to both the LSU and GSU. Certainly the decision whether to opt for a two-track or linear option should be made in relation to the whole system of service.

Variations: Some communities may decide to have GSU meetings less often (every other month instead of every month) to ease the strain on human resources. In most places, there will be several GSUs for each LSU, but in the rare case of small or rural communities, the populations may be roughly the same. In a rural part of a state where there are, for instance, eight meetings in a given county, those same eight meetings may gather to coordinate county-wide services and to discuss group needs. In these cases, communities may even decide to alternate GSU meetings and LSU meetings, or to devote the first half of a service meeting to the GSU and the second half to the LSU. It's important to note that this would be exceptional.

The Local Service Unit – Effective Service Delivery

The LSU is the “workhorse” of the service system with the responsibility of carrying the message outside of NA meetings. The greatest number of NA members is involved in services at this level. The LSU will have the responsibility to deliver the bulk of local services, and groups will remain responsible for funding services through contributions to the LSU.

The LSU would utilize a strategic planning process, and services would be delivered through a mix of project-based workgroups and ongoing or routine services (see below for some examples); as throughout the system, form should follow function. Wherever possible, decisions at the LSU will be made using a consensus-based process instead of motions, ideally making it a more inclusive and attractive service body. (For a list of LSU functions, see Appendix 1.)

A planning process allows for more effective use of our most precious resource—people. For one thing, utilizing a planning process and organizing service bodies according to geographic boundaries should reduce the amount of service duplication. Better planning would allow us to provide the same amount of services with less labor (fewer human-hours). For another thing, resource pools of experienced, qualified, and available members can be organized to provide the necessary human resources for projects and ongoing services. In this way we can retain the skills our members acquire through their service experience and continue to make them available for NA service. A service project with a short life span may be more attractive to members who are currently unable or unwilling to commit to attending a subcommittee meeting every month for a year or more, but who may still have vital and useful experience to offer.

Size and Attendance

Wherever possible and practical, the LSU will conform to a recognized geographic boundary such as a county, town, or borough. In this way, the LSU will be best equipped to provide services within its community by connecting easily with professional and government bodies that interact most frequently with addicts. These sorts of established boundaries will, crucially, make it easier for addicts to find our meetings. The borders of each LSU will be discussed and decided on through a collaborative process involving neighboring service bodies and the state/nation/province level. This will ensure the most rational boundaries within the state/nation/province as a whole and that all parts of the state/nation/province are served by the LSU.

Ideally, the LSU will consist of members whose experience in service might better prepare them to deal with the sometimes complex issues encountered at this level. Attendance will be open to all, but the LSU is intended to be an efficient service body with a focus on planning and service provision. The LSU will also serve as a communication and delegation link between the groups and the rest of the fellowship by sending a delegate to the state/national/province service body. Services will be delivered by a mixture of ongoing work and projects, each of which will have a coordinator who is a member of the LSU and reports to it. The LSU will also consist of quarterly or triannual planning conferences attended by delegates from the group or GSU, and of an administrative board with the responsibility to organize and facilitate the LSU meeting. The planning conferences may be attended by any interested members, with the level of participation being determined by the LSU itself using the principles in the traditions and concepts as guidance. The annual assembly should try to draw from as wide a range of experience as possible.

LSU Composition

The local service unit is comprised of a local service board and a regular (three to four times a year) planning conference, including an annual planning assembly event.

Local Service Board (LSB):

- Includes chair, vice chair, treasurer, secretary, delegate(s), and service coordinators for essential services
- Meets monthly or as needed
- Oversees workgroups and routine services; coordinates the planning assemblies; develops budget and strategic plan to be reviewed, input, and approved by the planning conference; helps ensure established priorities are carried out; maintains external relationships; sends a delegate to the next level of service. (For a more complete list of LSU functions, see Appendix 1.)

Examples of routine services overseen by the board and/or coordinated by a committee:

- H&I panels
- Phonelines
- Literature supply
- Meeting lists

Examples of project-based services that would be formed as part of strategic planning process.

- PR work such as having a booth at a professional event
- Fellowship activities like picnics and unity days
- Conventions
- Communications improvements like creating report templates or improving use of technology

Planning Conference

- Consists of group and/or GSU delegates, LSB members, project coordinators, and interested members
- Meets three to four times a year
- Starts with an annual assembly (see below) to gather input and set planning goals. Planning conferences follow the stages of the planning cycle. They are used to prioritize, approve workgroups and a budget created by the LSB, monitor and report, change direction as necessary, evaluate service delivery, and elect the board.
- There may also be training sessions and a session for interfacing with the intermediate, state/national, and world services levels (like a *CAR* workshop).
- As throughout the system, decisions will be made by consensus where possible.

Annual Assembly

- The annual assembly is a planning event that gathers input from everyone to set service priorities (like our environmental scan on a world service level).
- It consists of everyone who attends the quarterly/triannual planning conference. All interested members are encouraged to attend.