

Zonal Planning Sessions Summary

EXTERNAL FACTORS

Factor 1: Evolution of technology

Challenges:

- **Separation:** Many people who got clean on the screen don't want to go to in-person meetings and thus are not connected to the service structure. Conversely, a rejection of modern technology by oldtimers. Harder to meet experienced sponsors.
- **7th Tradition:** Hard to pass the basket virtually. No common platform (venmo, cash app), some apps charging taxes; gets cumbersome for the member.
- **Lack of awareness, training, knowledge** about virtual resources or virtual meeting protocol/etiquette. Those with no technology skills have less access to recovery and service. Hybrid meetings pose technical challenges. Lack of resources to manage large virtual groups.
- **Online anonymity/privacy** - carry the message using technology w/o breaching anonymity.
- Detachment from personal connection. No fellowshipping before or after.
- The convenience of serving virtually is a detriment to in-person commitments.
- Atmosphere of recovery is compromised in online meetings.
- Change from geographic base.
- Limited internet access in some regions.
- Concern about election security.

Local-level Solutions:

- Have technology 'experts' discuss, educate and weigh in on a zonal level.
- In-person groups could contact online groups and invite them into the structure. Create events to invite members to experience connection.
- Outreach to oldtimers as well as newcomers (rides, phone calls, etc.). Helpline capturing who needs support and who is missing. Educating oldtimers that the new technology does work and that we need them there to share their experience. Emphasize technology as a tool for development and fulfilling our primary purpose.
- Face-to-face virtual group events

NAWS-level Solutions:

- Workshops, learning days, and live training for chairing virtual meetings.
- Create training videos that encompass grassroots training of technology.
- Create a manual for using the technology responsibly containing information/guidelines on how to protect the anonymity of our members online. There are existing materials, but the idea is to make a guide aimed at service work.
- Create a service forum to share and learn best practices with technology in NA.
- Updating the Guide to Local Services and Internal Procedure Guides to strengthen and support virtual meetings by connecting them to the service structure.

- Guidance for how to increase atmosphere of recovery in zoom meetings and retain spiritual aspect of service online using traditions and concepts.
- Guidelines/guidance for combating lack of internet access in developing regions.
- Investing resources and equipment for online groups. Eg. Welcome packages for online groups. Emails/Dropbox.
- Develop a universal virtual platform for the 7th tradition that makes it as easy as possible to contribute.

Factor 2: Harm reduction models or approach

Challenges:

- **Members are told they are not clean and don't feel welcome.** Lack of communication and consensus about NA's stance on complete abstinence and how to be welcoming to all members. Judgmental comments and the sharing of individual opinions rather than experience can impede members from staying or feeling included.
- **Causes disunity in local service.** No common opinion about cleantime requirements and how members on DRT/MAT can be of service in NA. How to integrate members regardless of cleantime and finding ways for them to be able to participate as members.
- **Blurring of NA message and language in treatment.** NA message should be clear among professionals and it is not. Lingo from other fellowships or treatment.
- Fewer professionals referring members to NA. Collaborate with facilities and treatment centers, no room for implementing NA in local harm reduction services. Education and engagement lacking. MAT approach taken with no room for NA.
- Big pharma pushes agenda and NA message competes. In communities where government provides DRT/MAT, addicts don't feel a need for recovery because they are "good" with medication replacing their "self-medication."
- Stagnation of PR, H&I, and Fellowship Development efforts

Local-level Solutions

- PR and direct outreach using the literature we already have. What makes us different is that we offer a spiritual rather than medical solution. We need to communicate that our goal for the member on DRT/MAT is for them to find complete abstinence while being inclusive and nonjudgmental. Better communication about existing literature on topic. Educate our members to clarify: this is NA's approach, which doesn't mean other approaches are wrong.
- Informative pieces related to the clarity of message placed within the meeting space.
- Revise clarity statement to not exclude people or include in the group format suggestions that aim to preserve the atmosphere of recovery, inclusivity and open-mindedness.
- Encouraging clean members who got off DRT to share their experience, strength and hope.
- Newcomer parties/events (not called "workshops") with speakers to explain NA terminology
- Continue to show up and carry a clear message of total abstinence. Even if only one person gets clean off DRT, we've succeeded in carrying the message.
- Encourage members to live the Steps and Traditions in how we treat each other. Develop workshops on Steps, Traditions, Mentorship, Sponsorship, particularly in a service setting.
- More awareness of harm reduction (it's not just DRT/MAT) to prevent closed-mindedness.

NAWS-level Solutions

- An IP: “What is NA Clean?” – something simple and clear that already comes from our literature and articulates a firm stance of complete abstinence. Addresses who can share, who can serve, and who can celebrate clean time. Members’ personal stories of getting off MAT. Make our language more precise around abstinence.
- Create a public-facing clarification on what NA is and what it isn’t. Draw from existing literature.
- Consolidated but innovative, consistent, and ambitious PR campaigns. More conversations/presentations with professionals about what NA does. Posters, presentations, PSAs, roundtables with doctors and institutions.

INTERNAL FACTORS:

Factor 3: Sense of safety, welcomeness, and inclusion

Challenges:

- **Lack of established guidelines or training** on how specifically to deal with disruptive, inappropriate, or predatory behavior. Lack of knowledge of how groups approach these issues while adhering to principles and traditions.
- **Primary purpose is impeded** because people don’t feel welcome or safe. Female members experience safety issues and aren’t hearing the message. Abusive relations (financial/sexual). Judgmental behaviors (eg. with welcoming members on DRT/MAT - see Factor 2). Therapists looking for clients. Domination from some oldtimers. Challenges bringing in inner city addicts.
- **NA’s Reputation:** Inappropriate behavior interfering with our being a viable resource of recovery. Institutions and professionals may not recommend us based on perception.
- Lack of awareness of inappropriate behavior on the part of members
- Groups split due to resentments (eg. lies about NA literature, issues around finance, etc). Lack of unity affecting ability to do service.

Local-level Solutions:

- Include these topics in group inventories.
- More female-only meetings.
- More open mindedness – especially with medication and mental health. Ensuring someone is there to welcome everyone. Encourage sponsorship, stepwork, living by principle of equality.
- According to concepts, we can redress grievances and hold a business meeting or group conscience inventory to identify the root cause.

NAWS-level Solutions

- Workshops on “how to be an ally” so members became more self-conscious about their behavior. Discussions around the topic before something happens, understanding each member’s role in the decision to “remove” someone from NA—or the idea that we even have the right to remove someone. Training.
- Establish a mechanism for how members could report to a trusted servant if they are receiving any type of sexual insinuation or harassment from other members.
- “Welcome and inclusion” workshops for newer members or those referred from the courts. Also included in the workshop material how to welcome members on DRT/MAT.
- Creation of a direct statement that clarifies and addresses the drastic impact inappropriate behavior can have both within our fellowship and externally. Meetings could add this statement to the preamble or the format if they choose.
- More PR: Educate healthcare professionals – roundtable discussions, presentations in treatment, healthcare. Inform how NA is working on MAT issue and how we can collaborate.
- Incorporating a Group Support Forum to provide direct support to groups that need help on these issues. Permanent forums addressing common welfare (First Tradition)
- Develop new literature about abusive behaviors. Help create service materials and help disseminate information.
- Educate about our collective responsibility to create a protective environment. Focus more on conversation and less on publications.

Factor 4: Development and organization of trusted servants

Challenges:

- **Lack of trusted and accountable servants rotating throughout the service structure.** New members unwilling to get involved or lack the cleantime. Lack of carryover of previous experience in service positions. Groups electing members without qualifications because of lack of willing members. Lack of commitment and consistency. Drawing from the same pool that is already taxed. Members are already serving in other positions.
- **Lack of effective mentorship.** Lack of tools, resources, and willing members available to educate, mentor, recruit, and train other members. Very few resources to teach new people how to do service commitments. Lack of institutional memory, continuity from one trusted servant to the next. People are not sponsoring members into service. Lack of knowledge/guidance scares members away from service.
- **Lack of flexibility and open-mindedness in service.** Rigid approach creates barriers to service. Oldtimers who hang onto positions too long and are not open to new ideas.
- **Trusted servants are overworked,** overloaded, pressured and treated badly – when it’s not fun anymore, other members see that, creating lack of willingness to serve.
- Financial challenges can make it difficult for members to serve.

Local-level Solutions

- Effective communication -- it’s on delegates to facilitate communication between service bodies about what they do - and how they can help.
- Service “Festival” (like a job fair) versus a “Learning Day.” Make service fun. Recruit with food. Theatrical play about service experience – recovery rap? Movie nights, more parking-lot style fellowship to appeal to younger addicts’ common interests and attention span.

- Approaching members directly that you feel are good candidates.
- Update local guidelines to include VMB.
- With oldtimers, place principles before personalities. CBDM in action on all levels of service. Workshops that emphasize learning how to accept and work with others, recognizing that someone may have a better idea than one's own.
- Look to hold meetings outside typical venues; try public property like a park bench.
- Understanding and applying *Guiding Principles* book.

NAWS-level Solutions

- Use technology to make service efforts more effective. Presentations, videos, tutorials, interactive manuals that generate consistency in the information and that trusted servants can consult as support. Orientation videos for each service position.
- Trusted servant school. Teach to serve, train the server, and build the experience progressively. Bring awareness about how project-based is an alternative to committee-based service (compare it to ad-hoc type committees).
- Service exchanges with trusted servants from other regions or zones to mentor on specific topics or service positions.
- Workshops to create attraction and hype around service that are open and attractive to everybody. Be more passionate when communicating what we've gotten out of service positions. Transfer enthusiasm. Have as much fun as possible.
- Talent-to-task conversations on a widespread level. Include a skills list in guidelines that speaks to NA members.

Factor 5: Redundancy and lack of cohesion in the service system

Challenges:

- **Lack of willing participation in service.** (See Factor 4.)
- Lack of visibility and accessibility to the service structure. Excessively complicated procedures—keep it simple and updated. Lack of awareness and communication.
- **Lack of guidance, mentorship, and training.**
- Lack of creativity and collaboration.
- Redundancy – problems are diverse between smaller and larger regions.
- Group-level disunity: Trusted servants with very strong personalities take charge of the voice of the groups. Divisions are generated in groups due to personal disputes and not due to strategic planning. [See Factor 3]. Not wanting people to serve outside of homegroup.
- Territorial mindset vs collaboration/cooperation. Sometimes service bodies at different levels can feel competitive, territorial instead of collaboration. Lack of group trust toward the Regional Service Committee and trusted servants.

Local-level Solutions:

- Encourage participation in less glamorous service. Communicate that service is important to our personal recovery. Broaden rotation throughout types of service.

- Focus our service efforts on welcoming newcomers and compassionately welcoming relapsed members. Integrate them and bring them closer to service. Invite/include younger members in positions of responsibility.
- CBDM in action at all levels of service.
- Conduct a service inventory.
- Look to IDT: Atmosphere of Recovery in Service – those of us who have experience have a responsibility to bring our recovery into every service meeting. How do we bring flexibility to our meetings? Having a conversation calling us in rather than calling you out.
- Sharing information effectively and encouraging members to implement new ideas.
- Each region needs guidelines outlining structure, even in less developed places.

NAWS-level Solutions:

- Education on what NAWS really does and what happens at various levels of service.
- Simplify service positions – there is pressure on regions to form, fund, and staff zones when it's not needed. Eliminate redundancy and focus on local communities.
- Create discussion groups instead of “workshops.” Help people believe their voice matters.
- The GTLS needs to be updated to reflect what our service system has to look like. We're still trying to pop new things on an old format. The GTLS is very dated, esp after the PR Handbook etc. Many of us were raised on GTLS, but it might not reflect our current situation. Our newer project-based rather than subcommittee approach is still unfamiliar to many.
- Discuss our structure at length with the groups and get input evaluating current system.

Factor 6: Impact of the rise of virtual NA

Challenges:

- **In-person membership has decreased** due to migration to virtual meetings. Creates a comfort zone that may create isolation, disconnection from service, lack of accountability.
- **Virtual meetings lack energy and involvement.** Fellowshiping is much different or nonexistent. Emotional and spiritual connection diminishes. Business decisions and discussion happen more thoroughly in person versus virtually. Members are more easily distracted and more impatient virtually.
- Atmosphere of recovery suffers in hybrid meetings too – virtual problems can trickle down.
- Decreased contributions coupled with cost of equipment for hybrid meetings.
- Lack of information about events, service activities, and committees. Lack of knowledge about the traditions.
- Differences of opinions about virtual vs. in-person meetings in the fellowship = disunity
- **Need to capitalize on the many benefits! Eg. Loners, Additional Needs, PR & H&I**

Local-level Solutions:

- Having younger/newer members help with the technology, which exposes them to service. Having dedicated people to handle the online and in-person parts of the meeting. Always have a point person for troubleshooting.
- Educate attendees on expenses that a virtual meeting incurs to promote contributions, remind members of the 7th tradition.

- Learning the transition to digital currency.
- Creating more awareness around the social aspect of NA at virtual meetings

NAWS-level Solutions:

- FD offer tech support to those in need. More training.
- NA virtual tool other than Zoom that maybe NA can create as an app.
- Seating of virtual bodies