NA World Services Webinar Report
"Virtual Meetings – Connecting to the Service System"

13 March 2021

Virtual Meetings and Carrying the Message Effectively and Virtually is the primary focus for the Local Service Toolbox Project this Conference cycle. This project will continue through at least 2021, and we invite all members to help shape this important work for the Fellowship. Information about the project is posted at www.na.org/toolbox. Please check back regularly for updates.

The fifth open web meeting about virtual meetings was held on 13 March 2021. It was the third since the project was approved at WSC 2020. These open web meetings are an opportunity to continue informing members about the work of the project, and provide a chance for members involved in virtual service efforts around the world to share their experience. The focus for this meeting was *Connecting to the Service System*. We will continue to post reports like this one after each webinar on the Virtual NA Meetings page: www.na.org/virtual, along with the PowerPoint and other related materials. We hope you find helpful information and experience.

A maximum number of 351 people attended the webinar at any one time, and 472 members were able to connect for 15 minutes or more. Translation services were provided in French, Farsi, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. The platform was set up so that all attendees' microphones and the chat function were disabled. Attendees were invited to ask questions by typing them into a Q&A box. Due to technical difficulties, this webinar was not live-streamed on YouTube.

The webinar offered some updates about the Local Service Toolbox Project. A draft outline of a service tool focused on best practices for virtual meetings has been created and posted at www.na.org/toolbox, and input is being sought. A second survey in multiple languages and a report to the Fellowship are also available on the webpage.

The session continued with general remarks on the fluid state that many NA communities find themselves in today. The shift to holding meetings online a year ago in response to the widespread closure of in-person meetings has been both a blessing and a challenge. NA members responded quickly to establish many new online meetings and new ways were found to deliver NA services, but some service bodies struggled to adapt or ceased to meet altogether.

Our current situation is new territory for much of NA, and the landscape may change again as restrictions ease and in-person meetings begin to reopen. Many of the virtual meetings that began a year ago intend to keep meeting virtually, and are beginning to discuss how they fit with the rest of NA and participate in NA services. We have systems of service delivery that are largely organized by geography, which presents us with a challenge: How do virtual meetings that might have members from all over the world participate in a locally based service body? We want to continue the discussion of this question by sharing what we are seeing and hearing, and by listening to what is happening in NA communities around the world. In that spirit, we asked members from five groups and two service meetings to share a range of experience during the two-hour webinar:

- The No Matter What group shared some of their history of creating an online meeting when the in person venue closed. Early challenges included navigating the online platform and educating other members to use it. Tutorial videos were created and posted on YouTube and widely

shared through social media via a Facebook group called Quarantined NA Philadelphia. Tens of thousands of members are a part of these groups, which have allowed information to be widely shared and special events to be held.

- The Virtual Support Forum grew from discussions after meetings. Questions were asked about how virtual groups could be served by the service structure. After posing this question during a session at the Western Service Learning Days event last year, several groups responded by organizing a virtual support forum that began meeting in January, 2021. The role of the VSF is to provide an opportunity to connect, share experience, and discuss solutions to challenges. Form following function is a core principle of the VSF meetings. More detailed information about the VSF, including contact information, can be found in the PowerPoint posted along with this report.

- Two members from the Saturday Night Virtual Speaker Meeting based in Washington State shared about the treatment centers and recovery houses that regularly attend the meeting. The group has international attendance and is part of the local area service committee where they participate fully. The logical decision for this group was to join the area where many of its members reside.
  The group approaches the Seventh Tradition with the belief that services need to be provided and that members are responsible for this. The group encourages monthly contributions to NAWS, and has discussed best practices for setting up bank accounts and PayPal accounts. The group also provides access to its Zoom account for the area. Chips are mailed to new members, and the group tries to listen to what new members need, rather than telling them. The intention is for the group to continue once in-person meeting restrictions are lifted and to involve itself with NA services, especially H&I.

- The next panelist shared about the effort to connect Arabic-speaking virtual meetings and provide support for each other. Delegates from six groups met to discuss how to share experience and are creating guidelines for support meetings and are planning workshops focused on carrying a clear NA message. New members are guided to literature resources on na.org.
  This service effort is trying to transcend national borders to connect Arabic-speaking members worldwide, including those who are incarcerated. The local community does not yet recognize this service body as it is made up of members from outside of the country as well as inside it, but these members are hopeful that it will continue to grow and help new NA communities to develop.

- Next the Quarantined NA San Diego (QNASD) group shared some of its history and experience of carrying the message. The group hosts 32 meetings per week with 120 service positions, and is attended by ten to 20 newcomers per day who receive welcome keytags and white books in the mail. ASL interpretation is provided for the deaf community. The support of Quarantined NA Seattle in establishing the group was acknowledged. QNASD meetings are listed on the regional site and virtual-na.org. The latter is where most newcomers seem to find information about the meeting. Service opportunities are provided for newcomers, even if they don't have much cleantime, and all are encouraged to find sponsors. Three-quarters of service commitments are fulfilled by members with less than a year clean.

The group initially discussed joining an existing group in the San Diego/Imperial Region but decided not to at this time, although it passes on any surplus funds to that region. Virtual groups may have different needs and are only limited by languages and time zones.

- The Stay at Home NA Group started about five years ago to help a member with a terminal illness who could not attend meetings. The meeting continued after that member passed, and has been using Zoom since 2018. Attendance grew from ten to 15 members at one meeting a week to hundreds at seven meetings per week when in-person meetings closed their doors. The group's trusted servants are primarily based in Alabama, but members attend from different states and countries. PayPal is used for the Seventh Tradition, and keytags and medallions are mailed to the members who want them. The group tries hard to connect newcomers with established members in their local areas.
  The group is part of a new area that intends to meet in person when it is possible, but will also be a hybrid service meeting so that all virtual groups can attend. The approach to problems that arise in this new world is, "we haven't solved all the problems, but we will solve them as they come up." The new area is focusing on providing H&I services to underserved local institutions.
- The final share was from the Internationally Known Recovery (IKR) group that meets seven nights a week. The group started in response to the pandemic and has been meeting for a year. The group initially connected with the Eastern New York Region as the local area had no online presence at that time, but now attends the ASC each month in Queens, New York. Meeting information can be found on both those service body's websites.
  Seventh Tradition funds are distributed to the home areas of the group's chairpersons. There are 63 service positions at the group, including keeping the group secure from disruption, which are modeled on the structure found locally in brick-and-mortar meetings. Some commitments have cleantime requirements, depending on the responsibilities.

Questions and Answers

Please know that the entire World Board has seen each question asked during the webinar, and the questions themselves are input to the project.

Questions were asked related to the Seventh Tradition. The material in **IP #24: Money Matters: Self-Support in NA** was offered as a resource, and the importance of group conscience was stressed when determining what is an appropriate practice.

Questions about specific apps used for contributions were also asked. Within the US, a tax ID number can be obtained to help set that up.

In response to a question about virtual areas, it was suggested that these could offer us a way to potentially deliver services in new ways. The example of carrying the message into multiple facilities at the same time was given.

It was asked whether it is a problem to use a member's personal Zoom account. The Stay at Home group shared that they created an email address for the group and then used it to create a Zoom account. Payment for Zoom can be managed in a number of ways, including from a member's account. It was pointed out that at in-person groups and service bodies, we trust the trusted servants to take cash to the bank and not to mishandle it, and that virtual funds are handled in the same way.

Several questions were asked about recognizing virtual meetings as groups, and attendees were reminded that the survey on the Toolbox Project webpage (www.na.org/toolbox) asks this question.

We would like to remind everyone that we are pleased to provide what is described as an "interpretation feed" in Zoom for any language communities that need it and that can provide a translator. Please email toolbox@na.org or wb@na.org well in advance of any webinar, and we will work with you to make this happen. We also want to remind everyone that we do not share video recordings of our webinars, or any videos shown during them, in order to protect members' anonymity, but we are posting audio recordings of the meetings.

The webinar closed with reminders about the next Fellowship webinar scheduled for March 20th focused on providing information about NA World Services, and the web meeting scheduled for Service Day on May 1st that will focus on Fellowship development efforts worldwide. Information about all NAWS-hosted web meetings is posted on the NAWS web meeting page at www.na.org/webinar as it becomes available.

Thank you for participating!

The World Board