THE GROUP BOOKLET

The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him.*
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him,* praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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The NA Group

Introduction

Narcotics Anonymous groups are self-governing (the Twelve Traditions use the word *autonomous).* The group may conduct its own affairs in whatever way seems fit to its members, provided the group's actions do not adversely affect other groups or the entire NA Fellowship. So what we offer here is not a "rule book" but the shared experience of how many of our groups have met with success in conducting meetings and tending to business. Newer members may find this booklet helps them understand who does what to keep the group going and how to help. For more experienced members, it may lend some perspective to their group involvement. But no matter how much information we pack into this booklet, you're still going to find that the best source of guidance for your group is in your group itself.

There are many ways of doing things in Narcotics Anonymous. And just as all of us have our own individual personalities, so will your group develop its own identity, its own way of doing things, and its own special knack for carrying the NA message. That's the way it should be. In NA we encourage unity, not uniformity.

This booklet does not even attempt to say everything that could be said about operating an NA group. What you'll find here are some brief answers to a few very basic questions: What is an NA group? How does the work get done? What kinds of meetings can a group have? When problems arise, how are they solved? We hope this booklet proves useful as your group seeks to fulfill its primary purpose: to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

What is an NA group?

When two or more addicts come together to help each other stay clean, they may form a Narcotics Anonymous group. Here are six points[1] based on our traditions which describe an NA group:

1. All members of a group are drug addicts, and all drug addicts are eligible for membership.
2. As a group, they are self-supporting.
3. As a group, their single goal is to help drug addicts recover through application of the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous.
4. As a group, they have no affiliation outside Narcotics Anonymous.
5. As a group, they express no opinion on outside issues.
6. As a group, their public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion.

In stating the six points that differentiate an NA group from other kinds of groups, we place greater emphasis on *drug* addiction than almost anywhere else in our service literature. This is because Narcotics Anonymous groups cannot be all things to all people and still provide the initial identification drug addicts need to find their way to recovery. By clarifying our groups' sole membership requirement and primary purpose in this way, once and for all, we free ourselves to focus on freedom from the disease of addiction in the bulk of our service literature, certain that our groups are providing adequate grounds for identification to those seeking recovery.

NA groups are formed by addicts who wish to support one another in recovery, in carrying the message directly to other addicts, and in participating in the activities and services of NA as a whole. One of the primary means an NA group uses to fulfill these ends is to conduct NA meetings where addicts can share their recovery experience, thus supporting one another and at the same time carrying the message to others. Some groups host a single weekly meeting; others host a number of meetings each week. The quality of an NA meeting is directly dependent on the strength and solidarity of the NA group which sponsors it.

[1] The six points describing a group have been adapted from "The AA Group," published by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Reprinted by permission.

NA groups—not NA meetings—are the foundation of the NA service structure. Together, the NA groups are responsible for making service decisions that directly affect them and what they do in their meetings as well as those that fundamentally affect the identity of Narcotics Anonymous. For instance, new NA literature is approved by regional delegates at the World Service Conference only after they have received direction from the groups they represent. Likewise, "proposals to change NA's Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, name, nature, or purpose should be approved directly by the groups" before they can become effective, in accordance with our Second Concept.

Groups maintain contact with the rest of Narcotics Anonymous through representatives selected to participate on the groups' behalf in the NA service structure. Mailings from the World Service Office, including the quarterly *NA Way Magazine,*[2] keep NA groups informed on issues affecting the fellowship worldwide. If your group is not receiving *The NA Way Magazine,* ask your secretary to contact the World Service Office.

The primary purpose of an NA group is to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. The group provides each member with the opportunity to share and to hear the experience of other addicts who are learning to live a better way of life without the use of drugs. The group is the primary vehicle by which our message is carried. It provides a setting in which a newcomer can identify with recovering addicts and find an atmosphere of recovery.

Sometimes specialized NA groups form to provide additional identification for addicts with particular needs in common. For example, many men's, women's, gay, and lesbian groups exist today. But the focus of any NA meeting—even if it's conducted by a specialized group—is on recovery from addiction, and any addict is welcome to attend.

NA meetings are events at which addicts share with one another their experience in recovery and in the application of the Twelve Steps. While many—if not most—NA meetings are in fact hosted by an NA group, other NA meetings occur all the time: informally among friends, at large area or regional speaker meetings, at conventions, in schools, institutions, and so forth. The NA group is an entity; the NA meeting is an event; and NA meetings may be held without the sponsorship of an NA group.

[2] *The NA Way Magazine* is not currently being distributed.

What is a "home group"?

In some NA communities, it has become customary for members of the fellowship to make a personal commitment to support one particular group—their "home group." Though this custom is not universal, many believe its practice can benefit the individual member as well as the group. For the individual member, it can provide a stable recovery base, a place to call "home," a place to know and be known by other recovering addicts. For the group, it ensures the support of a core of regular, committed members. A strong home group can also foster a spirit of camaraderie among its members that makes the group more attractive to and more supportive of newcomers.

The home group provides many opportunities for us to involve ourselves in the NA Fellowship, making it a great place for us to start giving back what Narcotics Anonymous has so freely given us. In committing to our home group, we make a personal commitment to NA unity. That commitment not only enhances our own recovery, it helps ensure recovery is available for others. Our home group also gives us a place in which to participate in NA's decision-making processes.

While the home group concept is the accepted norm in some NA communities, it's unknown in others. There are many, many ways of talking and thinking about the bond established among addicts in their groups. Do what seems most suitable in your own NA community.

Who can be a member?

If an addict wants to be a member of Narcotics Anonymous, all that addict needs is a desire to stop using. Our Third Tradition ensures that. Whether an individual NA member chooses to be a member of a particular group as well is entirely up to that individual. Access to the meetings of some NA groups is restricted by factors beyond the control of these groups—national border-crossing laws, for instance, or prison security regulations. However, these groups themselves do not bar any NA member from joining them.

What are "open" and "closed" meetings?

"Closed" NA meetings are only for addicts or those who think they might have a drug problem. Closed meetings provide an atmosphere in which addicts can feel more certain that those attending will be able to identify with them. Newcomers may feel more comfortable at a closed meeting for the same reason. At the beginning of a closed meeting, the leader or chairperson often reads a statement explaining why the meeting is closed and offering to direct nonaddicts who may be attending to an open meeting.

"Open" NA meetings are just that—open to anyone who wants to attend. Some groups have open meetings once a month to allow nonaddict friends and relatives of NA members to celebrate recovery anniversaries with them. Groups that have open meetings may structure their format in such a way that opportunities for participation by nonaddicts are limited only to short birthday or anniversary presentations. Such a format allows the meeting to retain its focus on recovery shared one addict to another. It should be made clear during the meeting that NA groups do not accept monetary contributions from nonaddicts.

Some groups use carefully planned open meetings, particularly open speaker meetings, as an opportunity to let members of the community-at-large see for themselves what Narcotics Anonymous is all about and ask questions. At such public meetings, a statement regarding our tradition of anonymity is often read, asking visitors not to use full-face photographs, last names, or personal details when they describe the meeting to others. For more information on public meetings, see *Public Relations Handbook,* available through your group service representative or by writing the World Service Office.

Where can we hold NA meetings?[3]

NA meetings can be held almost anywhere. Groups usually want to find an easily accessible public place where they can hold their meetings on a weekly basis. Facilities run by public agencies and religious and civic organizations often have rooms for rent at moderate rates that will meet a group's needs. Others in your NA community may already be aware of appropriate space available for your meeting; speak with them.

[3] Virtual NA meetings that meet regularly can choose to be an NA group if they meet the criteria described in this booklet. *Virtual Meeting Basics* may be a useful resource for virtual meetings. It is posted on www.na.org/basics.

Most meeting facilities will be very cooperative and generous. Even though such facilities may want to donate meeting space to us, our Seventh Tradition encourages our groups to be self-supporting by paying all our own expenses, including our rent. Some facilities may prefer their rent to be paid in literature or other services.

Before securing a location, it may be well to consider whether or not the room will be accessible to addicts with physical limitations. Does the building have ramps, elevators with wide doors, and bathroom facilities able to accommodate someone in a wheelchair? Is adequate parking and unloading space available? There are other similar considerations your group may wish to make itself aware of. For more information on reaching out and serving addicts with additional needs, write to the World Service Office.

It's generally recommended that group meetings not be held in members' homes. Most groups find it desirable to hold their meetings in public facilities for a variety of reasons. Stable meetings held in public places tend to enhance NA's credibility in the community. Because of varying work and vacation schedules, it is often difficult to maintain consistent times for meetings held in individuals' homes. Holding a meeting in an individual's home may affect the willingness of some members to attend. Although some groups may hold their first few meetings in a member's home, it's generally recommended that they relocate their meetings to public facilities as soon as possible.

Holding regular NA group meetings in some types of facilities—addiction treatment centers, clubhouses, or political party headquarters, for instance—can compromise the independent identity of the group. Before deciding to locate your meeting in such a facility, your group may wish to consider a few questions: Is the facility open to any addict wishing to attend the meeting? Does the facility administration place any restrictions on your use of the room that could challenge any of our traditions? Is it clear to all concerned that your NA group, not the facility, is sponsoring the meeting? Do you have a clear rental agreement with the facility management, and is the rent you're being charged moderate enough to allow your group to contribute funds to the rest of the NA service structure? Are so many of your community's NA meetings already located in this particular facility that, if it were to fold, your NA community as a whole would be crippled? These are some of the questions a group should carefully consider before deciding where to hold an NA meeting.

What kind of meeting format can we use?

Groups use a variety of formats to enhance the atmosphere of recovery in their meetings. Most meetings last an hour or an hour and a half. Some groups have a single format for their meetings. Other groups have a schedule of rotating formats: one week a step study, the next week a speaker meeting, and so forth. Still others divide their large meetings into several sessions after the meeting has opened, each with its own format. Here are a few basic descriptions of some of the meeting formats that, with variations, seem to be among the most common. For reference, we've also included a sample meeting format at the end of this booklet.

Participation meetings

The leader opens the meeting up for members to share on any subject related to recovery.

Topic discussion meetings

The leader selects a particular recovery-related topic for discussion or asks someone else to provide a topic.

Study meetings

There are a number of different types of study meetings. Some read a portion of an NA-approved book or pamphlet each week and discuss it—for example, a Basic Text study. Others have discussions focusing on the Twelve Steps or the Twelve Traditions.

Speaker meetings

Some meetings ask a single speaker to share his or her recovery story or experience in a particular aspect of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. Others ask two or three speakers to talk for shorter periods of time. Still others use a combination format with a speaker sharing first and a topic discussion afterward.

Newcomer meetings

These meetings are often conducted by two or three of the group's more experienced members. These members share their experience with addiction and with recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. If time allows, the meeting is then opened for questions from the newer members.

Newcomer meetings are sometimes held a half hour before or after the group's regular meeting. Other groups conduct them as smaller sections of a large meeting. Still others hold a newcomer meeting one day of the week, their regular meeting another. Whatever the format, newcomer meetings provide a means for your group to give addicts new to NA an introduction to the basics of recovery.

Question-and-answer meetings

At Q&A meetings, people are asked to think of questions related to recovery and the fellowship, write those questions down, and place them in "the ask-it basket." The leader of the meeting pulls a slip of paper from the basket, reads the question, and asks for someone to share their experience related to it. After one or two members have shared, the leader selects another question from the basket, and so forth, until the meeting is over.

Developing your format

These are basic descriptions of just a few of the many different types of formats used in NA meetings; the variations on even these few format types can be endless. Feel free to innovate. Vary the format in whatever way seems to best suit the "personality" of your group and the needs of addicts in your community.

Often, a meeting will grow far larger than the group originally anticipated. A meeting format that worked well for a small meeting may not work as well for a larger one. When one of your group's meetings experiences that kind of growth, you may want to consider making some adjustments in your format, perhaps even replacing it altogether. Some groups experiencing such growth break their larger meetings down into a number of small meetings held simultaneously in different rooms. Doing this gives each member a better chance to participate in whatever meeting he or she attends. Many groups use a different type of format in each of these smaller meetings.

What kinds of literature should we use?

NA World Services produces a number of different kinds of publications. However, only NA-approved literature is appropriate for reading in Narcotics Anonymous meetings. Selections from NA-approved books and pamphlets are usually read at the beginning of an NA meeting, and some meetings use them as the core of their format. NA-approved literature represents the widest range of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous.

Groups often make other kinds of NA publications available on the literature tables at their meetings: various NA service bulletins and handbooks, *The NA Way Magazine,* and local NA newsletters. However, literature of any sort produced by other twelve-step fellowships or other organizations outside NA is inappropriate for display on our literature tables or reading at our meetings. To do either implies an endorsement of an outside enterprise, directly contradicting NA's Sixth Tradition.

What is a group business meeting?

The purpose of the group business meeting is fairly self-explanatory: to conduct the business of the group in such a way that the group remains effective in carrying the recovery message. Some groups hold business meetings on a regular basis; others only call them when something specific comes up that needs the group's attention. Some of the questions a typical group business meeting addresses are:

- Is the group effective in carrying the NA message?
- Are newcomers and visitors being made welcome?
- Do solutions for problems at recent meetings need to be sought?
- Is the meeting format providing sufficient direction?
- Is attendance steady or growing?
- Are there good relations between the group and the facility in which the meeting is held? Between the group and the community?
- Are the group's funds being used wisely?
- Is there enough money being donated at meetings to meet the group's needs and also provide for contributions to the rest of the service structure?

- Are literature and refreshment supplies holding up?
- Is there a service vacancy in the group?
- Has the area, the region, or world services asked the group for advice, support, or direction?

Group business meetings are usually held before or after a regular recovery meeting so that the recovery meeting remains focused on its primary purpose. Group members are encouraged to attend, raise questions, and participate in discussions related to the group's work. The group selects someone to lead the business meeting. Group officers give reports on their areas of responsibility, and subjects of importance to the group are raised for discussion.

The group, as the foundation of the NA service structure, is guided by both the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts for NA Service. A good understanding of both will help a group business meeting stay on course. NA's step and tradition book, *It Works: How and Why,* provides a wealth of information about the Twelve Traditions. Interested members can read essays on the Twelve Concepts in *A Guide to Local Services*.

How does the work get done?

Setting up chairs, buying literature, arranging for speakers, cleaning up after the meeting, paying the bills, preparing refreshments—most of the things an NA group does to host its meetings are pretty simple. But if one person had to do them all, those simple things would quickly become overwhelming. That's why a group elects officers (or, in the language of the Second Tradition, *trusted servants):* to help divide the work among the group's members.

Electing officers is one way the group practices NA's tradition of self-support: "Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting..." Sometimes it seems that groups run all by themselves, but the fact is that someone has to do the work needed to support the group. By dividing the work, the group ensures that the group as a whole is self-supporting and that the group's burdens don't settle unevenly on the shoulders of just one or two individuals.

Electing officers provides the group with an opportunity to strengthen its members' recovery. When group members agree to serve as secretary or treasurer or tea- or coffee-maker, that acceptance of responsibility often helps advance their personal growth. It also gives them a chance to help enhance the group's ability to carry the recovery message.

You don't have to be a group officer to be of service to the group. Every week, there's work to be done: helping set up the meeting, greeting newcomers, cleaning up, bringing refreshments, and other things of that sort. Asking new members to help with these kinds of jobs can make them feel a part of the group more quickly.

How do we choose group officers?

When a vacancy occurs in a group office, the group holds a business meeting to consider how to fill it. Groups should arrange their elections in such a way that they don't have all their trusted servants leaving office at the same time.

There are a couple of things to think about when looking for a group officer. One is maturity in recovery. When those new in recovery are elected to a position, they may find themselves deprived of time and energy they need for their early recovery. Group members with a year or two clean are probably already well-established in their personal recovery. They are also more likely than new members to be familiar with NA's traditions and service concepts as well as group procedures.

A second thing to consider is consistent participation in your group. Do the nominees attend your group's recovery meetings regularly? Do they take an active part in your group's business meetings? Have they lived up to previous service commitments they've made? Further questions may occur to you as you read the essay in *A Guide to Local Services* on NA's Fourth Concept for Service, which squarely addresses the importance of NA leadership and the qualities to consider in selecting trusted servants.

Finally, we encourage you to remember that you're selecting group officers, first, to benefit the common welfare of your group. While service commitments often benefit those who accept them, that should not be the primary reason for selecting one individual or another to serve as an officer of your group. As the First Tradition says, in part, "Our common welfare should come first."

What officers does a group need?

In different areas the work is divided differently, and the particular jobs are sometimes called by different names. What's important is not who does the job or what the job is called, but that the job gets done. What follows are general descriptions of some of the most common sorts of jobs NA groups have. For each of these positions, your group should establish realistic terms of service and clean-time requirements.

Secretary

The secretary (sometimes called the chairperson) arranges the affairs of the group, often by asking other group members to help out. One of the first jobs for a new secretary is registering the group's current mailing address and meeting information with the area service committee secretary and the World Service Office. When a new group secretary or GSR takes office or there is a change in the group's mailing address or the time or location of a group meeting, both the area committee and World Service Office should be informed. Other things a group secretary is responsible for may include:

- Opening the meeting room well before the meeting is scheduled to begin, setting up chairs and tables (if necessary), and cleaning and locking the room after the meeting is over.
- Arranging a table with NA books and pamphlets, local meeting lists, NA activity fliers, service bulletins, *The NA Way Magazine,* and NA newsletters.
- Making tea or coffee.
- Buying refreshments and other supplies.
- Selecting meeting leaders and speakers.
- Keeping a list of group members' recovery anniversaries, if the group wishes.
- Organizing group business meetings.
- And doing whatever else needs to be done.

Many groups break all these jobs down separately: someone to open and close the room, another person responsible for refreshments, a third to take care of the literature table, and so forth. Groups that host more than one meeting will often have a different person responsible for all these jobs at each of their meetings.

Treasurer

All groups, even those that host more than one meeting, elect one group treasurer. When the group consolidates responsibility for all its funds under a single treasurer, the group makes it easier to account for the contributions it receives and expenses it pays than if it gives a number of individuals responsibility for its money. Groups that host two or more weekly meetings should make arrangements for contributions to be passed to the group treasurer shortly after each meeting.

Because of the added responsibility of handling money associated with service as a group treasurer, it's important that groups look carefully at those they elect as treasurers. If the group elects someone who is not capable of handling the responsibilities of the job, then the group is at least partly responsible if money is stolen, supplies aren't purchased, or funds aren't properly accounted for. It's recommended that groups elect treasurers who are financially secure and are good at managing their personal finances. Because of the need to keep consistent records, it's also strongly recommended that groups elect treasurers to serve for a full year.

What do group treasurers do? They count the money that members have contributed at each meeting, always asking another member to confirm their count. They take special care not to confuse the group's money with their own personal funds. They pay expenses, keep good, simple records, and regularly provide financial reports to their groups. The group treasurer's job requires close attention to details. To help the treasurer in managing those details, a *Treasurer's Handbook* is available from your area committee or from the World Service Office.

Group service representative (GSR)

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 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. At group business meetings, the GSR report provides a summary of 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 reports. And if the group hasn't found solutions to those problems, the area chairperson will open a slot on the committee's "sharing session"[4] agenda so that 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.

Alternate GSR

Groups also elect a second representative called an alternate GSR. Alternate 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 alternate GSR participates in the GSR's place.

Alternate GSRs, along with other members, may also serve on area subcommittees. Subcommittee experience gives alternate 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.

[4] In *A Guide to Local Services'* chapter on the area service committee, see the section titled "The Sharing Session."

Rotation and continuity

Rotation is the practice many groups have of electing new people to service positions at set intervals rather than having the same person serve in the same position year after year. Rotation offers very definite benefits for the groups who practice it. By providing diversity in leadership, it helps a group stay fresh and energetic. It provides assurance that no one individual exercises so much influence that the group becomes a mere extension of his or her personality. The practice of rotation also reinforces the NA emphasis on service rather than the servant, consistent with our belief in the value of spiritual anonymity—what's important is the job being done, not the particular person doing it.

Some groups allow their members to serve more than one term in any given position so that the group can take advantage of its trusted servants' experience. Once group officers have completed their terms, rotation allows them to step aside for a time or accept responsibilities elsewhere in the NA service structure, giving other members the chance to serve the group.

The impact of rotation on the stability of the group is balanced by the continuing presence of its long-term group members. Those who have served in the past as group officers and continue to maintain an active role in the life of the group can provide much-needed continuity and maturity of perspective to a growing group's discussions. They can serve as the group's memory, ensuring that the group never has to "reinvent the wheel." They can also lend a hand to new officers and temporarily pitch in to relieve overloaded trusted servants.

What responsibilities does an NA group have?

The first and most important responsibility of any NA group—its "primary purpose," according to the Fifth Tradition—is "to carry the message to the addict who still suffers." And the single most important thing a group can do to fulfill that primary purpose is to conduct meetings that provide a welcoming atmosphere in which NA recovery can be effectively shared between addicts. Groups conduct the details of their meetings in very different ways, but all of them seek the same end: to make recovery from addiction available to any addict in the community who seeks it.

As the foundation of the worldwide NA service structure, groups have another responsibility: to help their members develop an understanding of the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts for NA Service. By doing so, groups take part in the continuing evolution of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous as well as providing for themselves an understanding of how the highest ideals of our fellowship can be applied in their activities.

How can our group support other NA services?

The Second Concept for NA Service says that the NA groups bear the final responsibility and authority for all the services of the extended NA Fellowship. Each group should send stable, active GSRs to participate in the work of the service structure on the group's behalf. And each group should consider how best to provide the funds the NA service structure needs to do its work.

After paying the bills, most groups set a small amount of money aside to use in case an emergency arises. But, oddly enough, groups usually find that too much money in the till causes far more trouble than too little money. For this reason, we encourage your group never to hold large sums of money in reserve.

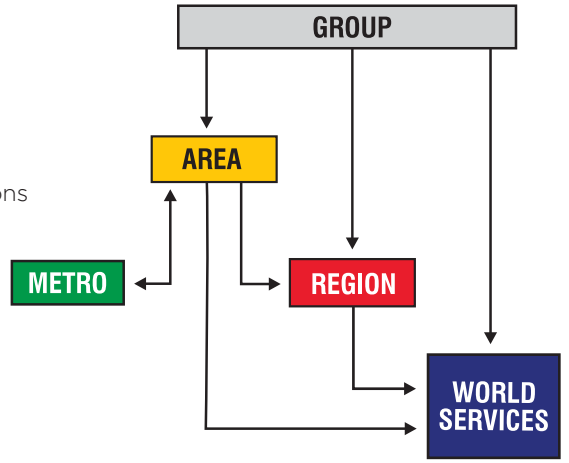
At least once a year, the group service representative attends the regional assembly. Each group is encouraged, if at all possible, to take the necessary steps to cover the expenses associated with its GSR's attendance at the regional assembly. Some groups will choose to set aside money each month toward this expense.

After paying expenses and setting aside a small emergency reserve, most groups contribute their surplus funds directly to the area committee, the regional committee, and NA World Services. For more discussion of the principles underlying group contributions to the rest of the service structure, see the essay on our fellowship's Eleventh Concept for NA Service in *A Guide to Local Services*. For assis-

tance in managing the details of direct contributions, see the *Treasurer's Handbook,* available from your area committee or by writing our World Service Office.

Fund Flow

1. Groups donate directly to each level except metro.
2. Areas serve as funnels for all group contributions for metro services; MSCs return excess funds to areas.
3. Areas may donate excess funds to region or world.
4. Region may donate excess funds to world.



How can our group better serve our community?

By its very existence, the group is already providing a substantial service to the community. It's providing the support addicts in the community need to reenter the mainstream of society. But how can a group become more effective in reaching out to addicts who've not yet found NA? There are two general ways in which a group can better serve its community: through the area service committee and through activities coordinated by the group itself.

Most NA groups are served by an area committee.[5] Area service committees coordinate efforts to carry the NA message on behalf of all the groups they serve. Community public information services, telephone contact lines, and panel presentations to addicts in treatment centers and jails are three ways in which most area committees carry the message either directly to the addict who still suffers or to those who may refer an addict to an NA meeting. Your group service representative can tell you more about how you and your group can more effectively join in the work of your area service committee. For further information, see *A Guide to Local Services'* chapters on the Area Service Committee, pages 45 to 77.

Some NA groups reach out to their communities themselves, coordinating their activities with those of other groups either through their ASCs or through local cooperative councils (see the "Area Committees in Rural Communities" section toward the end of the *Guide's* chapter on the Area Service Committee). This is particularly the case in small communities and in areas where Narcotics Anonymous is very new. An NA group in a rural town obviously does not have as many people or as much money available as an area service committee in a large city, but opportunities exist nonetheless for carrying the recovery message effectively to others who may be seeking the solution we've found. If your group needs help in reaching out to the community, write to the World Service Office.

How can our group solve its problems?

NA groups encounter a wide variety of problems: meetings are disrupted; treatment centers bus in large numbers of clients when the group is ill-prepared to receive them; the format goes stale; the clarity of our message becomes an issue; the coffee tastes like industrial-strength cleanser; the readings at the beginning of the meeting go on, and on, and on. These are just a few of the problems the average NA group must deal with from time to time. This guide doesn't "lay down the law" on how to deal with these problems. It does point out some effective tools group members can use in solving their own problems.

The best source of solutions for the group's problems, in most cases, is the group itself. "Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps," our Twelfth Step says, "we tried... to practice these principles in all our affairs." When we collectively apply the insight received from that spiritual awakening to our group's problems, we call that *group conscience*. Common sense, open minds, calm discussion, accurate information, mutual respect, and healthy personal recovery enable a group to deal effectively with almost anything that comes its way.

[5] If you don't know how to contact the nearest area service committee, contact the World Service Office. They'll be happy to put you in touch.

There are a number of printed resources the group may choose to use in gathering the information it needs to reach sound decisions. The Basic Text and our step and tradition book, *It Works: How and Why,* both provide a great deal of information about how NA's Twelve Traditions can be applied to given situations. The chapter in *A Guide to Local Services* on the Twelve Concepts for NA Service gives in-depth explanations of the essential ideals underlying service activities in Narcotics Anonymous. *The NA Way Magazine* often has articles addressing problems the group might face. And bulletins available from the World Service Office deal in detail with a variety of subjects relating to the group's work.

Another source of information the group might tap is the experience of other groups in its area or region. If the group has a problem and can't come up with its own solution, it might want to ask its group service representative to share that problem at the next area service committee meeting. Area committees set aside a portion of every meeting for exactly that purpose. And while the area committee can't tell a group what to do, it does provide a forum in which groups can share with one another what's worked for them. Workshops conducted by the regional service committee provide the same kind of opportunity on a larger scale. For details on how the area or regional committee can help with group problems, see the chapters on those committees in *A Guide to Local Services*.

Sample meeting format

This sample meeting format is just that—a sample. It's designed so that, if your group chooses, you can use it exactly as it is. However, you're encouraged to change it and rearrange it according to the needs of your group.

LEADER:

Welcome members to the meeting and introduce yourself.

Hello, my name is_____, and I am an addict. Welcome to this meeting of the_____ Group of Narcotics Anonymous. I'd like to open this meeting with a moment of silence *(15 to 20 seconds)* for the addict who still suffers, followed by the Serenity Prayer.

We like to extend a special welcome to newcomers. If anyone here is attending their first NA meeting, would you care to introduce yourself? We ask this not to embarrass you, but to get to know you better.

- Is anyone here in their first thirty days of recovery? *Introductions.*
- Do we have any out-of-town visitors? *Introductions.*
- Is there anyone attending this meeting for the first time? *Introductions.*

If this is a closed meeting:

This is a "closed" Narcotics Anonymous meeting. Closed NA meetings are only for addicts or those who think they might have a drug problem. If there are any nonaddicts visiting, we'd like to thank you for your interest in Narcotics Anonymous. Our local NA meeting list on the literature table will direct you to an NA meeting in our community that is open to nonaddicts.

If this is an open meeting:

This is an "open" Narcotics Anonymous meeting. We'd like to welcome any nonaddict visitors and thank you for your interest in Narcotics Anonymous. We ask that you respect the primary purpose of this meeting, which is to provide a place where addicts can share their recovery with one another.

LEADER:

For the protection of our group as well as the meeting facility, we ask that you have no drugs or paraphernalia on your person at the meeting. If you have any now, please leave, dispose of them, and return as quickly as possible.

LEADER:

Recognize those with various periods of clean time—thirty, sixty, ninety days, six months, nine months, one year, eighteen months, and multiple years. Keytags, chips, or medallions may be given out.

LEADER:

Select people before the meeting to read one or more of the following short pieces. These readings can be found in our White Booklet, the Basic Text, IP No. 1, or the group reading cards.

a) *Who Is an Addict?*
b) *What Is the NA Program?*
c) *Why Are We Here?*
d) *How it Works*
e) *The Twelve Traditions*
f) *Just for Today*
g) *We Do Recover*

LEADER:

Announce the type of meeting (participation, topic discussion, step study, speaker, etc.). Ask for topic or step and open the meeting for discussion, or introduce the speaker.

LEADER:

About ten minutes before the meeting is scheduled to close, announce:
That's all the time we have. I'd like to thank you for attending.

LEADER:

Begin passing the basket around, announcing:
The basket being passed around is one way of practicing our Seventh Tradition, which says, "Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions." The money we collect pays for rent, literature, and refreshments. Through contributions from this group to various NA service committees, it also helps carry the NA message of recovery in our area and around the world.

If this is an "open" meeting:
I'd like once again to thank our nonaddict guests for the interest they've shown in Narcotics Anonymous. Because of NA's tradition of self-support, this group asks that you not contribute any money when the basket passes your way.

LEADER:

Do we have any NA-related announcements?
(The GSR will make announcements of upcoming group activities and NA events in the area.)

LEADER:

After the basket has come back around:
Again, thanks for coming tonight. Would all those who care to, join in a circle to close?

Various groups close in different ways: with prayers, brief recitations from NA literature, etc. When closing their meetings, some groups ask those attending to respect the anonymity of others they've seen and heard there.
Keep coming back. It works!

Starting a new group—A checklist

So, you're starting a new group? This checklist, derived from the collective experience of NA groups, contains matters to address when starting a new group.

☐ **Get in touch with the nearest service committee.** An area service committee meeting is the ideal place for announcing your intention to start a new group. There, you can gather experience from representatives of other groups in the area, and learn of the services available to your group when you need them.

☐ **Obtain a meeting place.** Here are some details to know when opening a new meeting:

Where? _____

When? Day, time, and duration of the meeting.

_____

How much? What is the facility charging for rent?

_____

- Is that realistic, keeping in mind the number of people you can expect to attend the meeting? _____
- When is the rent due? _____

What does the facility require? No smoking? *Absolutely* no litter? Sweep, mop after the meeting? Close windows, lock doors?

_____

_____

Would you rather have your group's mail sent to a group trusted servant or your Area Service Committee? Or, would you like your group's mail sent to the facility address? Will they set up a box where you can pick up newsletters and announcements mailed to your group?

_____

_____

☐ **Name your group.** A few things you may want to consider are: Is the name recovery oriented? Does the name create the impression that the group is affiliated with the facility in which it holds its meetings? _____

_____

☐ **What group trusted servants are needed? What does the group expect those people to do?** This booklet gives descriptions of various group officer positions. Make sure all group members agree on what they want *their* officers to do.

☐ **What kind of meeting format will you use?** This booklet describes a number of format variations commonly used in our fellowship. Which format—or combination of formats—does your group want to use?

_____

☐ **Will this be a "closed" NA meeting? Or an "open" meeting?**

_____

☐ **What kinds of NA literature does your group want to stock?**

_____

_____

☐ **What kinds of refreshments should be purchased?**

_____

☐ **Have you registered your group with the World Service Office and with the secretary of your area service committee?** You can obtain a group registration form from the World Service Office at the address listed below or on our website **www.na.org**. By filling it out directly online or mailing it in, you'll ensure that your group's meeting information is available via the NAWS website, www.na.org.

Also available from WSO:

Narcotics Anonymous, the Basic Text of Recovery

A Guide to Local Services in NA

Public Relations Handbook

PR Basics

Hospitals and Institutions Handbook

H&I Basics

Handbook for NA Literature Committees

Treasurer's Handbook, Revised

Group Treasurer's Workbook, Revised

Money Matters: Self-Support in NA and *Funding NA Services,* two pamphlets on NA's tradition of self-support.

For more information contact:

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Fax: (818) 700-0700
Website: www.na.org

The 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 a 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 opinion 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.

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