



GENERAL SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE (GSR) REFERENCE GUIDE

“The strength of our whole A.A. service structure starts with the group and with the general service representative (G.S.R.) the group elects. I cannot emphasize too strongly the G.S.R.’s importance.”

-Bill W. on General Service and the G.S.R.

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WELCOME TO ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS GENERAL SERVICE!

As an elected General Service Representative (GSR) we now represent the voice of our AA group’s conscience to the A.A. General Service Conference held in New York usually each April. Through your elected District Committee Member (DCM) and the Area 15 Delegate, we will become the two-way link between our group and the world of A.A. as a whole. As such, we and our fellow GSRs worldwide have become the key to the unity of A.A.

There is a saying in A.A. that you might be the only copy of the Big Book that someone sees. As a GSR, we might be the only Service Manual someone sees. The GSR is the link for the group and the group conscience to General Service. We can also be the link for a newer member coming into General Service.

One ingredient for a healthy group is making sure the group members understand what happens beyond the group level. For example, invite or bring a few members to a district meeting, area committee meeting, or any sort of service gathering. Let them have some exposure and explain more about General Service.

Having a well-informed and experienced group will generate better future GSRs, stronger groups and can only benefit A.A. as a whole. As we grow in A.A. service, as we learn and see more, what we come to understand is what a gift it is to have the opportunity to repay A.A. for our new lives, and like most gifts in A.A., it is one to be given away in order that we may keep it!

In order to strengthen the two-way link between our group and the General Service Office (GSO) and the Conference, we (the GSR’s) will become active in building and keeping a strong service structure.

GSO provides useful ideas and information relayed in service material such as the Guidelines, tapes, films, the Group Handbook, and Box 4-5-9, the quarterly bulletin, and A. A. Directories.

We will learn more about General Service, which is based on:

THE THREE LEGACIES

1. **RECOVERY**, as outlined in the Twelve Steps
2. **UNITY**, as outlined in the Twelve Traditions
3. **SERVICE**, as outlined in the all-important A.A. Service Manual and the Twelve Concepts for World Service. Service includes anything to help alcoholics – clean up, pour coffee, serve Home Group, 12th Step calls. “General Service” applies

to all kinds of activities within the Conference structure, carried on by Area Committees, Assemblies, Delegates, Trustees and GSO Staff. Usually the service affects the fellowship as a whole.

We will have to protect the rights of individual A.A.'s to have their opinions acknowledged and heard no matter how much in the minority those opinions may be.

As GSR, we could have our name listed in the South Eastern United States AA Directory as the official contact for our group.

We will have the opportunity to give back to A.A. a little of what we have so gratefully received; not only our daily sobriety, but also a new way of living life and the new circle of friends.

By our active presence in General Service, we will be helping ensure that A.A. will still be here for the future generations that need A.A.

ABOUT THIS REFERENCE GUIDE

Here we will cover four aspects of General Service:

- The geographic division of the United States and Canada into General Service Regions, Areas, and the District Structure in Area 15.
- The broad structure of General Service
- What is expected of you as a General Service Representative.
- Some ideas of how to perform the duties as a General Service Representative more effectively.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS WORLDWIDE

Alcoholics Anonymous is a worldwide organization. There are General Service Offices in many countries, each of which is autonomous. The New York office is available to share experience, strength and hope with offices in other countries. Every two years a World Service Conference is held. This conference serves as the way that Alcoholics Anonymous establishes and maintains its worldwide communication links. An A.A. group may contact the General Service Office if a problem arises that cannot be answered by the District Committee Member (DCM) or Delegate.

THE REGIONS

The Service Manual shows the United States and Canada divided into eight Regions:

Two in Canada – Eastern Canada & Western Canada

Six in the United States

Northeast

Southeast (including the Bahamas, U.S. Virgin Islands, British Virgin Islands, Antigua, St. Martin & Cayman Islands)

East Central

West Central

Southwest

Pacific (including Alaska & Hawaii)



THE AREAS

Most General Service Areas follow the broad geographical divisions of a State or Province. Area 15 encompasses South Florida, Bahamas, U.S. Virgin Islands, British Virgin Islands, Antigua, St. Maarten & Cayman Islands.

THE AREA DELEGATE

Each General Service Area elects a delegate to represent it at the annual General Service Conference in New York where policy issues of A.A. as a whole are addressed. There are a total of 93 delegates throughout the United States and Canada. They are elected for a two-year term, with about half elected each year to provide both continuity and rotation as with the Trustees (see Service Manual for the election schedule for Delegates). Remember that the General Service Conference deals only in issues affecting A.A. in the United States and Canada.

Area 15 Assemblies are held four times a year to conduct such business as may affect the entire Area, including:

- Elect Delegate in even numbered years
- Inform the Delegate of the sense of the Area
- Receive from the Delegate the Advisory Actions of the Conference
- Conduct workshops dealing with the various aspects of carrying the service message.

THE DISTRICTS

The Area Assemblies usually have preset agendas and are too large to address specific group problems efficiently. So the Area is further sub-divided into Districts. Our Area 15 is currently divided into 19 Districts.

The organizational structure may seem complicated and too structured at first. It is really in accord with our

principle of least possible organization. It has been tested over time as providing the most balanced way to arrive at the only recognized authority in A.A. expressed in an informed group conscience that must be communicated to others when they deal with issues affecting A.A. as a whole. Perhaps this will become a bit clearer if we start at the top of the A.A. structure.

SUMMARY OF STRUCTURE

THE GROUPS

The fundamental unit in Alcoholics Anonymous is the Group. We will work our way down from there. Hopefully, internal matters within any group are resolved at the business meetings of that group according to Tradition Two:

- Involving as many members of the group as possible.
- Expressing the widest range of points of view on the subject.
- Allowing enough time for the members to take all of the information into consideration before any final decision is made on an issue.

One way or another, all healthy groups seem to have learned that this is the best way to arrive at an informed group conscience.

The pamphlet, "The A.A. Group...where it all begins," is designed as a handy information tool and suggested guide for an A.A. group. It serves as a compliment to The A.A. Service Manual, the A.A. Group Handbook and other literature, which cover specific group matters in greater depth.

THE DISTRICT MEETINGS

As has been mentioned, a District is composed of A.A. groups and is represented by a District meeting that is usually held once a month.

The format is decided autonomously by the District and might include:

- Reports from Officers
- Reports from Committee Chairs
- Discussion of the business of the previous or upcoming Assembly
- Elections
- Motions

Serving on different committees at all levels of A.A. will teach us a great deal more about the workings of A.A. All phases of A.A. are based on experience, which is our best teacher.

DISTRICT 9 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

District 9 elects a District Committee Member (DCM) or Alternate (ADCM) for each Sub district in the District. District 9 elects a District Chairperson who conducts District Meetings and represents the conscience of the District as a voting member

of the Area Committee (see below). When a GSR is elected to the position of ADCM, that GSR's home group will need to elect a new GSR who has usually served two years as an Alternate GSR.

The primary purpose of the DCM is to encourage as many groups as possible to be an active part of A.A. as a whole through representation and participation.

AREA BUSINESS

All A.A. members are encouraged to attend and become familiar with the issues discussed at the Area Assemblies.

The Area Standing Chairs, Area Officers, DCMs and GSRs meet in the Area Committee. Only Area Standing Chairs, Area Officers, DCMs and GSRs are voting members here. The committee:

- Discusses problems arising in a district that might affect the Area.
- Contributes to the planning of the Assembly by discussing items which should be brought before the Assembly for action at the area level.
- Takes care of the routine interim affairs of the Area.

By attending Area Assemblies and Area Committee Meetings we become familiar with things happening in the larger world of A.A. through the reports given by Officers of our Area and various Districts. It is quite likely that we will hear some ideas that can be used to better our own Group or District.

AREA 15 ELECTION ASSEMBLY

At the Fall Assembly in each even-numbered year, an election assembly is held to choose the trusted servants for the Area who serve a two-year term starting January 1, of the next odd year.

The following officers are elected at this time on a rotating basis:

Delegate, whose duties are defined in the current edition of the A.A. Service Manual and as suggested by the Area Assembly.

Alternate Delegate, whose duties are defined in the current edition of the A.A. Service Manual.

Chairperson, whose responsibility is to schedule the agenda for the assembly and area committee meetings and to conduct these meetings.

Recording Secretary, whose job it is to record the minutes of both the assembly and the area committee meetings and see that they are distributed to all interested parties.

Treasurer, who records and reports all group contributions and other sources of revenue as well as disbursement of funds.

Registrar, who maintains a current mailing list and phone numbers of all members of the Area Assembly, and coordinates with GSO, the Delegate and DCMs to maintain current group information.

Area Standing Committee Chairs are also elected at this time. Area 15 has the following Standing Committee Chairs:

Accessibilities, Archives, Corrections, Current Practice, Finance, Grapevine, Intergroup, Literature, Public Information/ Cooperation with the Professional Community (PI/CPC), Remote Communities, State Convention, Treatment and Website.

GSR'S VOICE AND VOTE AT AREA MEETINGS

At the Assembly, the GSRs are both voting members and collectively form a majority of voting members and, as such, should make every effort to attend the Assembly. All matter that affects the Area's finances or have a direct impact on all the groups, whether raised on the floor of an Assembly or coming out of the Area Committee process, are presented and ratified, rejected, or revised by the Assembly.

We become informed about what is going on by attending these meetings. In this way, the Assembly meets its purpose of strengthening A.A. as a whole in carrying our message in the best way possible for our Area. Again, participation by the GSR is the key link in the vital chain necessary in the two way communication between the members of his/her group and the larger structure of A.A.

THE GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

The culmination of much of this activity usually occurs each April when our elected Delegate representing our Area attends the week-long General Service Conference in New York. The voting members of the Conference are:

- 93 Area Delegates (who form a voting majority)
- 21 Trustees of the General Service Board
- 11 to 13 staff members of the General Service Office and the Grapevine.
- 4 Directors of A.A. World Services, Inc.
- 5 Directors of the A.A. Grapevine.

The Guidelines of A.A. are decided at this meeting. The Delegates take to the Conference the consensus of the groups in their Areas as expressed (at the Assemblies) by the GSRs' responses to the policies and issues to be discussed and acted upon.

DUTIES OF THE GSR

Now let's focus on the duties of the GSR in a bit more detail. The GSRs have the job of linking their groups with A.A. as a whole by voting at District and Area levels whereby representing the voice of their Group's conscience.

1. Relaying the Area and District suggestions and the Conference actions back to their groups.
2. Becoming an educated and informed part of the service structure by reading/knowing the Service Manual and Area Guidelines.
3. People in General Service – particularly the GSRs- are generally known as the guardians of our Traditions.

QUALIFICATIONS OF A GSR

- Have time available for District and Area Meetings.
- It is suggested that GSRs have two years of continuous sobriety.
- The GSR should be a Home Group member of the group he/she represents.
- Have capabilities and time for possible future assignments (Service Manual chapter II).

In general, there are three areas in which the GSRs have their major responsibilities, each of which involves a two-way relationship: the Group, the District, and the General Service Area.

YOUR HOME GROUP

The relationship of the GSRs with their groups is probably the most important and hopefully the most fluid and open one. The best way to become effective is to attend the meetings of your home group regularly, which gets you acquainted with the members of the group and their ideas. **It gives you some credibility when you make suggestions or give reports.**

The group conscience is the collective conscience of the group membership and thus represents substantial unanimity on an issue before definitive action is taken. This is achieved by the group members through the sharing of full information, individual points of view, and the practice of A.A. principles. To be fully informed requires a willingness to listen to minority opinions with an open mind.

On sensitive issues, the group works slowly, discouraging formal motions until a clear sense of its collective view emerges. Its voice is heard when a well-informed group arrives at a decision. The result rests on more than a yes/no count – precisely because it is the spiritual expression of the group conscience. The term “informed group conscience” implies that pertinent information has been studied and all views have been heard before the group votes. The difference between a group conscience and a majority vote, or group opinion, is that one or more of the elements described above is missing.

Just as a personal inventory helps us maintain a healthy sobriety by revealing our strengths and weaknesses, so an annual Group inventory can flag areas that may need some focused group attention. A starting format for this may be found in the pamphlet “The A.A. Group”. Many districts and groups elect to do an inventory every other December.

The General Service Office has a publication, Box 4-5-9, which is produced bi-monthly and contains many articles of general interest to the entire fellowship. Since the GSR is the listed mail contact for the Group at GSO, he/she automatically receives a copy that should be read and shared with his/her group.

YOUR HOME GROUP NUMBER

If your group is registered with the General Service Office, your home group was issued a number. Your group should include that number on all contributions to your District,

Intergroup, Area and GSO.

INVOLVEMENT IN GENERAL SERVICE

Regarding the relationship of the GSR to General Service, the Service Manual states: ...General Services grew to fill a need beyond the reach of the individual, Group and Intergroup. Today, the term general service is applied to all kinds of activities within the Conference structure, carried on by Area Committees, Delegates, Trustees, and GSO staff. Usually, the services affect the fellowship as a whole. Almost always, they are part of A.A.'s distinctive unity, which allows the movement to function so well. In this sense, the Conference can feel it is acting for A.A. as a whole only to the extent that the GSR keeps the group informed and can gather and communicate the Group conscience.

Since rotation is an essential part of service, it is important to have an alternate GSR to learn something about the job before he/she assumes the responsibility that goes with it. Having someone in the wings who is prepared will give you the freedom to go into and experience other levels of service without feeling your job is unfinished because there is no one to take your place. Again, participation is the key which enables us to:

- Become a part of instead of apart from.
- Learn more and feel better about ourselves.
- Take on a job and do it to the best of our ability.
- Become responsible and reliable, which is a large part of what recovery is about.

THE ELECTION ASSEMBLY

In October of each even numbered year, we hold an election Assembly to choose our Trusted Servants in Area 15 who serve a two year term starting the following January. This is possibly one of the most important things that you will participate in as a GSR, and one of the reasons to take your own two-year commitment very seriously.

If you have been actively participating during your term, you will develop some perspective to enable you to make decisions about whom, of those standing for a given office, would best serve the Area in this capacity, who has shown that they do what they say they will do regularly and, by doing their best, set examples for you.

Our Area uses the basic format of the **Third Legacy Procedure**.

All current and past members of the Area Committee are eligible for Delegate. The Chairperson asks whether any are unable to serve, and withdraws those names.

Remaining names are posted. (In rare cases, the meeting, by a majority vote, agrees to accept additional nominations.) All GSRs and Committee members of the Area who are present cast written ballots, one choice to a ballot. The tally for each candidate is posted.

The first candidate to receive TWO-THIRDS of the total vote is elected.

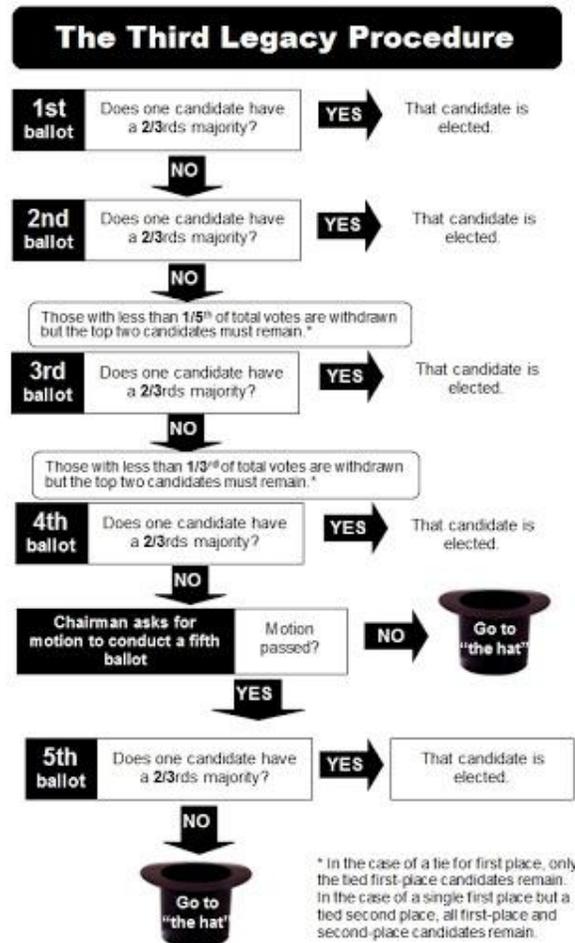
After the second ballot (assuming no candidate receives the necessary two-thirds on the first ballot), any candidate having less than one fifth of the total vote will be withdrawn automatically, except the TWO TOP CANDIDATES remain. (In case there are ties for second place, the top candidate and tied second-place candidates remain.)

After the third ballot, candidates with less than one-third of the total vote will be withdrawn automatically, except the TWO TOP CANDIDATES must remain. (In case there are ties for second place, the top candidate and second-place candidates remain).

A fourth ballot is conducted. After the fourth ballot, if no candidate has two-thirds of the total vote, the Chairperson asks for a Motion, Second and Majority of hands on conducting a fifth and final ballot. (If this motion is defeated, balloting is over and we go to the "hat" immediately. In case there are ties for second place, the top candidate and tied second-place candidates remain. If not, the candidate with the smallest total is dropped. If the Motion carries, a fifth and final ballot will be conducted.)

If no election occurs by this time, the Chairperson announces the choice will be made by lot (from the hat). At this point, balloting usually involves only the top two or three candidates.

Lots are then drawn by a non-voting member, and the first one "out of the hat" becomes the Delegate.



GROUP REPORTS

Things to keep in mind when making a report to your group are:

- Give a brief report on things you think the Group can relate to or is interested or involved in.
- Whenever there is an issue coming up which will require your vote, try to explain it as simply, fully and fairly as possible so that the Group can arrive at an informed Group conscience.
- Probably the most important thing that we can do as GSRs is to become informed. This serves both us personally and A.A. as a whole.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Our Seventh Tradition encourages us to be FULLY self-supporting through our own contributions, AT ALL LEVELS. Your Group's funds are to be disbursed after basic expenses for your group are paid. These Group expenses include rent, literature, coffee, prudent reserves, GSR expenses, etc.

Most groups contribute on a monthly basis, but it depends on the Group conscience, the Group's meeting schedule, and the amount of money collected. The pamphlet "Seventh Tradition – Where Money and Spirituality Mix" suggests several options for distributing Group contributions for A.A. services. Your Group conscience will decide how your Group wants to do this, and the appropriate percentages selected by the Group to be used for the split.

See "Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix" pamphlet for samples of Group Contribution to A.A. Service Entities.



Contact the DCM or any Area Officer for names and addresses of the specific entity to send your Group contributions. It is very important that every Group contribute what it can on a regular basis.

INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES

All the literature is important, and here are some suggestions:

- The A.A. Service Manual and Twelve Concepts for World Service (booklet)
- The A.A. Group (pamphlet)
- A.A. Comes of Age (book)
- District 9 Guidelines
- The GSR May Be The Most Important Job In A.A. (pamphlet)
- A.A. Tradition – How it Developed (pamphlet)
- Supporting the A.A. Support System (pamphlet)
- Circles of Love and Service (pamphlet)
- Inside A.A. (pamphlet)

Also, here are some important websites to help you become as knowledgeable as possible.

www.district9aa.org
www.area15aa.org
www.aa.org
www.aabroward.org
www.bcic-aa.com

Using these tools, will give you both a good overview of the service picture and enough detail to deal in specifics.