

## ❖ Chapter Two

### The Group and Its G.S.R.

For most A.A.s, membership in a home group is one of the keys to continuing sobriety. In a home group, they accept service responsibilities and learn to sustain friendships. The home group affords individual A.A.s the privilege of voting on issues that affect the Fellowship as a whole; it is the very basis of the service structure. While most A.A. members attend other groups regularly, the home group is where they participate in business meetings and cast their vote as part of the group conscience of the Fellowship as a whole. As with all group conscience matters, each member has one vote.

The Long Form of Tradition Three and a section of Warranty Six, Concept 12, aptly describe what an A.A. group is:

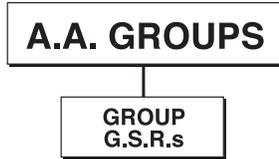
*Tradition Three:* “Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.”

*Warranty Six:* “...much attention has been drawn to the extraordinary liberties which the A.A. Traditions accord to the individual member and to his group: no penalties to be inflicted for nonconformity to A.A. principles; no fees or dues to be levied — voluntary contributions only; no member to be expelled from A.A. — membership always to be the choice of the individual; each A.A. group to conduct its internal affairs as it wishes — it being merely requested to abstain from acts that might injure A.A. as a whole; and finally that any group of alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group provided that, *as a group*, they have no other purpose or affiliation.”

Group service — from coffee maker to secretary, treasurer, or chairperson — is usually the way members first experience the joy and the growth that can be derived from A.A. service. (The pamphlet “The A.A. Group” provides extensive information on group organization and opportunities for service.)

## The General Service Representative (G.S.R.)

The general service representative has the job of linking his or her group with A.A. as a whole. The G.S.R. represents the voice of the group conscience, reporting the group's thoughts to the district committee member and to the delegate, who passes them on to the Conference. This communication is a two-way street, making the G.S.R. responsible for bringing back to the group Conference Actions that affect A.A. unity, health, and growth. Only when a G.S.R. keeps the group informed, and communicates the group conscience, can the Conference truly act for A.A. as a whole.



FINANCIAL SUPPORT: Current experience indicates that many groups provide financial support for their general service representatives to attend service functions.

## Qualifications

- Experience shows that the most effective G.S.R.s have been active in group, intergroup, or other service, where they have developed a desire to serve, and encountered situations in which the Twelve Traditions have been called upon to solve problems.
- Usually, prospective G.S.R.s have at least two years of continuous sobriety.
- They have time available for district meetings and area assemblies.
- They have the confidence of the group, and an ability to listen to all points of view.

## Duties

- G.S.R.s attend district meetings.
- They also attend area assemblies.
- G.S.R.s serve as the mail contact with the General Service Office, and they are listed in the A.A. directories as contacts for their groups. They receive the G.S.O. bulletin *Box 4-5-9*, and keep their groups abreast of A.A. activities all over the world.
- They serve as mail contact with their district committee member and with the area committee.
- G.S.R.s supply their D.C.M.s with up-to-date group information, which is relayed to G.S.O., either directly to the Records department or through the area registrar updating G.S.O.'s database, for inclusion in the directories and for G.S.O. mailings.
- They are knowledgeable about material available from G.S.O. — new literature, guidelines, bulletins, videos, tapes, kits, etc. — and they are responsible for passing such information on to the groups.
- They learn everything they can about the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts and are familiar with this manual, the books *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and *A.A. Comes of Age*, *Twelve Concepts for World Service*, and the pamphlets "The A.A. Group," "A.A. Tradition – How It Developed," "The Twelve Traditions Illustrated," and "The Twelve Concepts Illustrated."
- They usually serve on group steering committees.
- They work with group treasurers to develop practical plans for group support of G.S.O., such as the Regular Contribution Plan and the Birthday Plan. They encour-

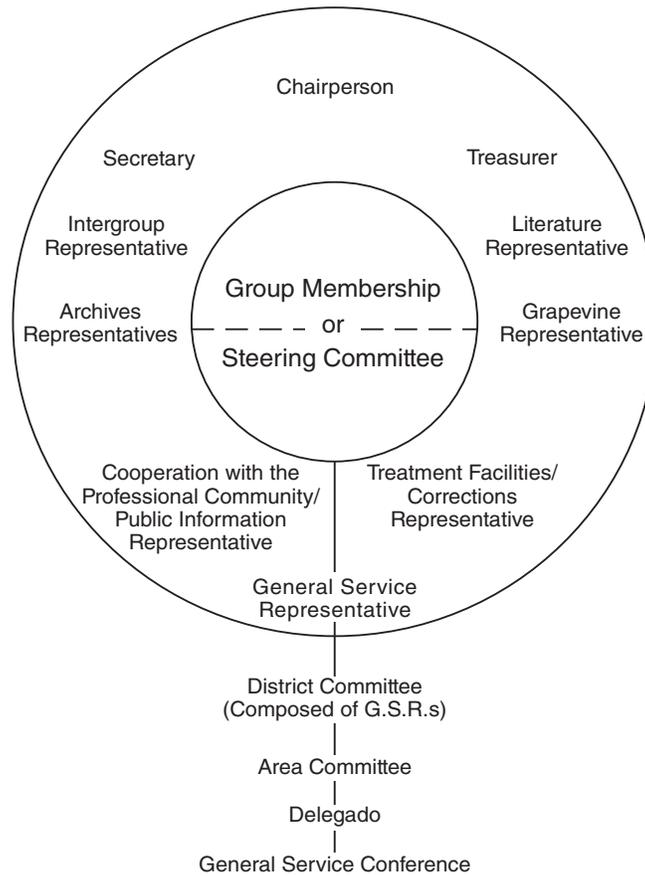
age the group to support the area and district committees and local central offices or intergroups, and they are familiar with the leaflet “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix.”

- They participate in district and area service meetings, and often help with planning for area get-togethers and conventions. Following these events, they make reports to their groups for the benefit of those who could not attend.

### Term and Method of Election

G.S.R.s serve for two years and the term frequently runs concurrently with those of committee members and the delegate. They represent their home group and are nominated and elected by group members.

### Service Structure Inside the A.A. Group



Some groups hold a special election for the G.S.R. To emphasize the need for selecting strong G.S.R.s, such a meeting can provide information on the role of G.S.R.s and their work in the district and area. (A basic resource is the pamphlet "G.S.R.: Your group's link to A.A. as a whole.") Nominations can be made by a steering committee or during a group business meeting. A plurality is generally sufficient for election.

NOTIFICATION: As soon as a G.S.R. is elected, the group should provide the district and area committees, the local intergroup/central office, and G.S.O. with the following information: 1) group name and service number, 2) the new G.S.R.'s name, address, and telephone number, and 3) the previous G.S.R.'s name (so it can be removed from the mailing list).

G.S.R. KIT: When G.S.O. has been notified, the new G.S.R. receives a kit containing a covering memo, *The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service*, useful pamphlets and leaflets, and a literature order form. This and all service kits are available on aa.org.

ALTERNATE G.S.R.: An alternate should be elected at the same time, in case the G.S.R. is unable to attend all district and area meetings. Alternates should be encouraged to assist, participate, and share in the responsibilities of the G.S.R., attending district and area meetings when feasible, depending on local needs.

## **Inactive General Service Representative**

A.A. relies on the autonomy of each group regarding the period of time and involvement that constitutes inactivity. While the group needs to establish its own practices or guidelines, it is generally suggested that a service worker be asked to resign if he or she is unable to carry out the responsibilities of the position.

## **Group Information**

It is important for the group to send information to each of the following entities: G.S.O., and the district, the area *and* to the local intergroup/central office. While local, area and national offices communicate regularly, they have different purposes and different mailing lists.

Two simplified forms (see following pages) have been developed to facilitate transmittal of information to G.S.O.: 1) *Alcoholics Anonymous New Group Form* is for one-time use only, when a new group is started; 2) the *Group Information Change Form* is to be filled in whenever a group changes its name or meeting address, elects a new G.S.R., reports a change of address and/or phone number, reports the designation of a new second contact, or reports a change of address or phone number for the second contact. The group information provided on these two forms is stored in G.S.O.'s database, which is accessible to the area registrar.

G.S.O. also uses this database to generate mailing lists for A.A. newsletters. Group information included in G.S.O.'s database may be used by areas and districts for various purposes: the delegate may use it to communicate with groups; some areas use it for their meeting locators or to generate mailing lists. To assure direct and regular communication between the group and G.S.O., each group is assigned a service number. It is helpful to refer to this number when writing to G.S.O. and when sending contributions.

If a group wishes to be listed in the appropriate U.S. or Canadian A.A. directory, this can be indicated in filling out the New Group Information Form.

U.S. and Canada

# ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS NEW GROUP FORM

"Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. Membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group they have no other affiliation." — Tradition Three (the long form)

"Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose — that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers." — Tradition Five (the long form)

"Unless there is approximate conformity to A.A.'s Twelve Traditions, the group... can deteriorate and die." — Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, page 174.

A.A.'s Traditions suggest that a group not be named after a facility or member (living or deceased), and that the name of a group not imply affiliation with any sect, religion, organization or institution.

GROUP NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ GROUP START DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

GROUP MEETING LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_ NUMBER OF MEMBERS: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/TOWN: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE/PROVINCE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

MEETING DAY	MON <input type="checkbox"/>	TUES <input type="checkbox"/>	WED <input type="checkbox"/>	THURS <input type="checkbox"/>	FRI <input type="checkbox"/>	SAT <input type="checkbox"/>	SUN <input type="checkbox"/>
MEETING TIMES	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
LANGUAGE (Please check one <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGLISH <input type="checkbox"/> SPANISH <input type="checkbox"/> FRENCH <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____ (Specify)							

### GENERAL SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ CITY/TOWN: \_\_\_\_\_

STATE/PROVINCE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE: \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

### ALTERNATE G.S.R. OR MAIL CONTACT ( Please check one )

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ CITY/TOWN: \_\_\_\_\_

STATE/PROVINCE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE: \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

Does your Group meet in a hospital, treatment center or detox center?  Yes  No  
If yes, is it open to A.A. members in the community as well as to patients in the center?  Yes  No

If the Group is to be listed in the Directory, please provide a telephone number and mailing address for the G.S.R., Alternate G.S.R., or Group contact. Listing in the Directory is for Twelfth Step referral and/or for meeting information. The G.S.R.'s (or other contact) name and telephone number will be included in the Directory with the group's name and service number.

OK TO LIST IN THE DIRECTORY?  Yes  No

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

### THREE WAYS TO RETURN THIS FORM G.S.O.:

Postal Mail to: A.A. World Services, Inc.  
Grand Central Station  
P.O. Box 459  
New York, NY 10163

By Fax: 212-870-3003 (Attn: Records)

E-mail: records@aa.org

Once complete information is entered into the database by GSO or by the Area Registrar your group will be subject to a 30 day pending period. Once the pending period expires a "New Group Handbook" will be mailed and should arrive within 7-14 business days. Handbook contents are available on the "Group Life" page at www.aa.org .

<b>FOR G.S.O. RECORDS DEPT. USE ONLY</b>		
DELEGATE AREA NUMBER:	DISTRICT NUMBER:	GROUP SERVICE NUMBER (ASSIGN BY G.S.O.)

**U.S. and Canada ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS GROUP INFORMATION CHANGE FORM**

**GROUP SERVICE No.** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DELEGATE AREA No.** \_\_\_\_\_ **DISTRICT No.** \_\_\_\_\_ **No. OF MEMBERS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**OLD INFORMATION**

**GROUP NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Group Meeting Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_  
 State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

**MEETING DAY**  
 MON  | TUES  | WED  | THUR  | FRI  | SAT  | SUN

**MEETING TIMES**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_

**NEW INFORMATION**

**GROUP NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Group Meeting Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_  
 State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

**MEETING DAY**  
 MON  | TUES  | WED  | THUR  | FRI  | SAT  | SUN

**MEETING TIMES**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_

**GENERAL SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE (G.S.R.)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_  
 State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone : \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**GENERAL SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE (G.S.R.)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_  
 State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone : \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**ALTERNATE G.S.R.**  **or MAIL CONTACT**  (Please check one ✓)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_  
 State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone : \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**ALTERNATE G.S.R.**  **or MAIL CONTACT**  (Please check one ✓)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_  
 State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone : \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

If the Group is to be listed in the Directory, please provide a telephone number and mailing address for the G.S.R., Alternate G.S.R., or Group contact. Listing in the Directory is for Twelfth Step referral and/or for meeting information. The G.S.R.'s (or other contact) name and telephone number will be included in the Directory with the group's name and service number.

**OK TO LIST IN THE DIRECTORY?**  Yes  No

**SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**THREE WAYS TO RETURN THIS FORM:**

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 Grand Central Station  
 P.O. Box 459  
 New York, NY 10163

**By Fax:** 212-870-3003 (Attn: Records)

**E-mail:** records@aa.org