

Southwest Area of Narcotics Anonymous



Group Service Representative Handbook

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Group Service Representative

What is a GSR? (Group Service Representative)

A GSR is the link between the Group and rest of the NA fellowship. The GSR is the voice of the Group at the Area level of the service structure.

Who is a GSR?

A GSR can be any member of the fellowship elected by the Group to represent them. Because it is a money-handling position, it is suggested that a GSR have not only the willingness to serve in that capacity but also one year of continuous clean time.

What does the GSR do?

The GSR acts as a liaison for the Group, carrying the Group's conscience for input to discussions and suggestions to other levels of the service structure. The GSR is the voice of the Group in accordance to our 1st Concept for NA service.

By sending a GSR to the Area Service Committee (ASC) A Group has a voice in the decision-making process of the Area. The GSR takes notes of relevant matters during ASC Meetings and informs the Group of happenings around the fellowship in the form of a GSR report.

Why is it important for a Group to have a GSR and a GSR-Alternate?

Without representation at the ASC (Area Service Committee), the Group can be cut off from the rest of the service structure. Groups that have no GSR are usually uninformed regarding Area and Regional activities and business. In the event that the GSR is unable to attend the ASC Meeting, the GSR-Alternate represents the Group in his absence. The GSR-Alt position also serves as a learning experience for the next potential GSR. It is suggested that a GSR-Alternate have at least 6 months of continuous clean time.

What are the GSR's responsibilities?

- Collect pertinent information, including flyers, handouts, and reports
- Purchase literature for the Group.
- Fund flow donations through the service structure.
- Serve as liaison for the Group by carrying the Group's conscience
- Vote on behalf of the Group.
- Make a GSR report to the Group.

Area Service Committee

What is the ASC?

The ASC is a body of people who meet for the purpose of conducting Area Business. This is the part of service that is in between the Groups and the Region, thus making this body the receiving end of the Group's input and suggestion.

What does the ASC do?

The ASC handles all of the Area's business / problems. It is here that all the donations above and beyond what the Group uses are collected. A working budget is maintained so that the Area and Area Sub-committees are fully self-supported. Monies above and beyond the Budget are, in turn, fund-flowed to the Region / World levels of the service structure as per Area Guidelines.

What makes up the ASC?

There are four types of people at most ASC meetings. The first and most important are the GSRs, without whom there would not be an Area Service Committee. Second, there are the elected officers (the executive body), elected annually by the ASC and given specific duties and responsibilities pertaining to the ASC. Third are Chairs of Area Subcommittees such as the Public Information, Hospitals and Institutions, etc.. Fourth are the spectators: members of the fellowship with a desire to attend and witness the business of the Area Service Conference.

Why is it important that a GSR or GSR-Alt attend the ASC?

The most important aspect of the ASC is that in itself it is the avenue in which Groups may participate in the decision-making process in matters that will directly affect them. It is the vessel in which Groups are encouraged to give input towards an Area's Conscience in all business matters, thus it is of vital importance that all Groups within the Area have representation.

What is the responsibility of the ASC?

- To Facilitate service in accordance with the 1st concept for NA service.
- To provide suitable and reliable environment for which the Groups can conduct business.
- To build and maintain UNITY throughout the NA fellowship as related the Area.

Group Representation

Whether the GSR or the GSR-Alternate is giving the report from the ASC meeting, both should attend every meeting of the Group they represent if at all possible. It is suggested they arrive early and greet people as well as stay afterwards to answer any questions and/or socialize as the liaison for the Group. Other suggestions include fellowshiping with other members and sharing the love -- not only the NA program - but the love for the Group and its importance to personal recovery.

As the GSR or GSR-Alternate, you are the connection the Group has with the rest of the fellowship. Through you, the group has the ability to find plausible solutions to problems at hand, coordinate efforts of service and promote recovery in the spirit of unity.

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 to be known by other recovering addicts, a place to participate in the service structure for the fellowship. For the group, it insures 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 both attractive and more supportive to Newcomers. Home Group members can enhance their own recovery as well as ensure that the same opportunity exists for others.

While the “Home Group” concept is the accepted norm in some NA communities, it is unheard of in others. There are many, many ways of talking and thinking about the bond established among addicts and their Groups. Do what seems most suitable in your own NA community.

The Group Business (Steering Committee) Meeting

Group business meetings - sometimes called steering committee meetings - are held before or after a regular recovery meeting, so that the recovery meetings remain focused on carrying the message to the addict who still suffers. The Group selects someone to lead the business meeting, usually the secretary. Group officers give reports on their areas of responsibility and subjects of importance to the Group for discussion. Some Groups hold business meetings on a regular basis; others only call them when something specific comes up that needs the Group's attention. All Group members are welcome - even encouraged - to attend, raise questions related to the Group's work and take part in discussion.

Who: Members of Narcotics Anonymous

What: The process of members gathering together to discuss and decide on Narcotics Anonymous business as it pertains to the Group.

When:

- Anytime as long as it is NOT during a regularly scheduled NA recovery meeting. Preferably before the opening prayer or after the closing prayer.
- Some Groups confirm a "Group Conscience" at a business meeting just prior to the ASC (Area Service Conference).

How: The following is offered as suggestion:

- Chaired by group secretary or chairperson
- Begin by reading the 12 Traditions of NA (Optional)
- Determine number of voting members and observers present.
- Secretary reports on literature and chip supplies.
- Treasurer reports on funds available.
- GSR brings up topics from ASC requiring group input towards "Area Conscience".
- Members report on any other business necessary.
- For each topic: Discussion; decide to vote or table
 - o Discussion: 2 pros and 2 cons
 - o Restate motion: VOTE
- For each election:
 - o Read service position description.
 - o Nomination:

- o 3-minute statement with nominee giving clean time, other current and or previous service obligations held.
- o Group votes to elect into service position.
- The Group Conscience ends when a motion to close the business meeting is passed.

What is a “Group Inventory Meeting”?

The purpose of the group business meeting - is fairly self-explanatory: to evaluate how effectively the group carries the recovery message. Some of the questions a typical inventory meeting addresses are:

1. Is the group effective in carrying the NA message?
2. Are newcomers being made welcome?
3. Do solutions for problems at recent meetings need to be sought?
4. Is attendance steady or growing?
5. Are there good relations between the group and the facility in which the meeting is held?
6. Are the group's funds being used wisely?
7. 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?
8. Are literature and refreshment supplies holding up?
9. Is there a service vacancy in the group?
10. Has the Area, the Region, or the World Service Conference asked the groups for advice or support?

Super Group Service Representative

The following are suggestions based on our own experience. Although these ideas are only suggestion, we believe that they will make your service obligation as a GSR more enjoyable.

1. The GSR Report

- a. Be Enthusiastic! Do not moan or mumble your way through a report. Speak loudly enough, have fun with it, get angry if it's called for.
- b. Be Informed. Have copies of reports given at the ASC. Possess a current copy of the Area Guidelines, know the phone numbers to Area Sub-Committees as well as know their meeting schedule, and whether or not they are in need of support.
- c. Be Brief. Announce functions or committee meetings scheduled within the next coming weeks (except for annual events such as Conventions / Campouts and such). Select one or two groups in need of support and get people enthusiastic about them.
- d. Be aware of the interests of the Group. Ask questions; remember you are an extension of the group.

2. Participation

- a. You are to represent your Group and to participate in the seeking of "God's will". Remind yourself of that.
 - b. Familiarize yourself with Guidelines and service protocols.
 - c. Get involved with Area Sub-Committees; find your passion within the service structure, such as Activities, Public Information, Hospitals & Institutions.
 - d. Attend functions and make yourself available.
3. **At an Area level** and in accordance to principles found within our Concepts for NA Service, it is the responsibility of the Groups to support the Area by providing the funds as well as the service members necessary to facilitate service. It is suggested therefore that a GSR participate as a member of an Area Sub-committee, attend ad-hoc meetings, and or become part of a network of members willing to be of service in that capacity. It has been our shared experience that the rewards of being of service far outweigh the cost of participation.

Building Support for the Meeting

NA Groups need various kinds of support. When meetings are just starting out or are very small, they need all kinds of support. Meetings sometimes have strong support in numbers from residents of local treatment facilities but are not able to donate monies or have only limited experience, strength, and hope to share during the meeting. Other meetings while having strong support for the “Old-Timers” often have difficulty attracting the Newcomer. Some Groups have strong attendance as well as 7th Tradition funds, yet lack interested members willing to be of service to the Group itself as trusted servants.

The following are suggestions for building general support:

- Let it begin with you; take a look at your own behaviour. As a trusted servant are you arriving on time? Staying for the whole meeting? Attending regularly? Giving your undivided attention to those who share? Refraining from cross-talking?
- Structure the meeting format to create and maintain an atmosphere of recovery. Encourage people to share not just about the problem, but how they found solution here in the fellowship.
- Take an inventory of the meeting (during the steering committee) to see what works and what does not.
- Greet people who attend the meeting by introducing yourself as well as other Group members.
- Invite members to come lead or read at the Groups’ meeting who have a reputation for being articulate (well spoken).
- Invite members from outside the Area who have not been heard before.
- Generate flyers announcing your groups’ meeting and distribute them.
- Change the meeting time or location so it does not conflict with other popular events or meetings.
- Announce what the 7th Tradition money is used for as part of the meeting format.
- If the meeting is short on funds, cut expenses (i.e. No chips, no refreshments, or perhaps less literature).

Literature Display

Create an inviting literature display and information corner that will attract the eye of the newcomer and of the old-timer alike with information pamphlets (IP's), fliers of upcoming events, directories, and perhaps the local phone list.

Area Support

Like sponsorship, service is a two-way street; “we can only keep what we have by giving it away.” As a GSR, attend the ASC in the spirit of Unity not only expecting support, but offering it as well. Announcing that your Groups’ meeting needs support at the ASC meeting is sometimes ineffective. Instead, announce the location of great meeting that has had a fall-off in attendance, or with plenty of room for expansion, or with members who are looking to share their experience, strength and hope.

Although we all need support of one kind or another, the attitude of always wanting more is characteristic of our disease. It is important not to deplete the Area’s time and resources by asking for support when the Group and or its’ meeting is fully self-supporting. If a Groups’ meeting is generating sufficient funds to cover monthly expenses, are making regular donations to the ASC (fund-flow), and addicts are attending, the Group does not need support. In fact, having the attitude of always needing support may lead others to feel that there is something wrong with the meeting.

The Public Image Statement

The following is a reprint of the statement addressing our behaviour in public as it was first presented by Public Information. If you have not yet done so, we strongly urge each Group to call upon its Group Conscience to determine whether this statement can be incorporated into the meeting format.

Keep in mind that our behaviour outside this meeting place has a direct impact on the image of our Fellowship and the Program in the eyes of the surrounding community. It is of vital importance therefore, that each of us makes every effort to conduct ourselves in such a manner when in public that will adequately reflect our growing sense of responsibility, respectability, and respect. Your cooperation in this manner is greatly appreciated.

12 Concepts for NA Service

1. To fulfil our fellowship's primary purpose, the NA groups have joined together to create a structure which develops, coordinates, and maintains services on behalf of NA as a whole.
2. The final responsibility and authority for NA services rests with the NA groups.
3. The NA groups delegate to the service structure the authority necessary to fulfil the responsibilities assigned to it.
4. Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.
5. For each responsibility assigned to the service structure, a single point of decision and accountability should be clearly defined.
6. Group conscience is the spiritual means by which we invite a loving God to influence our decision-making processes.
7. All members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body's decisions and should be allowed to fully participate in its decision-making processes.
8. Our services structure depends on the integrity and effectiveness of our communications.
9. All elements of our service structure have the responsibility to carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes.
10. Any member of a service body can petition that body for the redress of a personal grievance, without fear of reprisal.
11. NA funds are to be used to further our primary purpose and must be managed responsibly.
12. In keeping with the spiritual nature of Narcotics Anonymous, our structure should always be one of service, never of government.

12 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 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 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.



Compiled for the Southwest Area Group Service Representatives
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