

HAWAII AREA 17

General Service Representative (G.S.R.) Orientation Informational Handbook

The G.S.R. Preamble

(Reprinted from *Box 459* v.35, no. 4 – Aug./Sept. 1989)

We are the General Service Representatives. We are a link in the chain of communication for our groups with the General Service Conference and the World of A.A.

We realize the ultimate authority in A.A. is a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. As trusted servants, our job is to bring information to our groups in order that they can reach an informed group conscience. In passing along the group conscience, we are helping to maintain the unity and strength so vital to our fellowship.

Let us, therefore, have the patience and tolerance
to listen while others share,
the courage to speak up when we have something to share,
and the wisdom to do what is right
for our group and A.A. as a whole.

HAWAII AREA ASSEMBLY AREA 17 G.S.R. HANDBOOK

Aloha and Welcome New G.S.R.,

Your participation in the Hawai`i Area 17 is vital to the health of Alcoholics Anonymous and we are delighted that you have volunteered for this tremendously important service position. We encourage that you read, or at least scan, this informational handbook because it explains the purpose, procedures and participants of area service.

This informational handbook will tell you how to report a group conscience, pre-register at an assembly, and give you a general idea of the way business is conducted in the district and area levels.

This handbook is not a substitute for our A.A. approved literature nor does it supersede the *Hawai`i Area 17 Structure and Guidelines* and *The Service Manual*. Rather, this handbook has been published as a tool, we hope, that would enable G.S.R.s to feel comfortable as they participate in Hawai`i Area 17 business.

A.A.'s Legacy of Service, by Bill W.

“Our Twelfth Step – carrying the message – is the basic service that the A.A. Fellowship gives; this is our principle aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, A.A. is more than a set of principles; it is a society of alcoholics in action. We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven’t been given the truth may die.

Hence, A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer – ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.’s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service.

Services include meeting places, hospital cooperation, and intergroup office; they mean pamphlets, books, and good publicity of almost every description. They call for committees, delegates, trustees, and conferences. And, not to be forgotten, they need voluntary money contributions from within the Fellowship (*A.A. Service Manual*, S1).”

“General Service applies to all kinds of activities within the A.A. General Service Conference structure . . . (*A.A. Service Manual*, S25).” These services affect the Fellowship of A.A., as a whole. By your active presence in General Service you will be helping insure that A.A. will still be here for the future generations of suffering alcoholics asking for a way out. As a G.S.R. you will learn to take care to protect the rights of individual A.A.s, to have their opinions acknowledged and heard no matter how much in the minority their opinions may be.

(Note: Bill wrote these words in 1951, therefore his words reflect the time period in their details.)

LITERATURE LIST

The following Conference-approved literatures will help the G.S.R. in his or her service position:

- **G.S.R. pamphlet**

On General Service Structure:

- 1) **The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service**
- 2) **Inside A.A.**
- 3) **Circles of Love and Service**
- 4) **The Twelve Concepts Illustrated**
- 5) **The service Manual**

On the Traditions:

- 1) **A.A. Tradition – How It Developed**
- 2) **Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions**
- 3) **A.A. Comes of Age**
- 4) **The Twelve Traditions Illustrated**

On group affairs:

- 1) **The A.A. Group pamphlet**
- 2) **Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix**

Read these books and pamphlets to gain first-hand information about A.A.'s 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts. Once again, this informational booklet, by all means, is no replacement for the A.A. Conference-approved literature, nor is it meant to supersede the Hawai'i Area 17 Structure and Guidelines.

CHAPTER 1: PREPARING FOR WHAT'S AHEAD

A. Developing a Service Attitude

These statements have been helpful in guiding many trusted servants during the term of their service:

“The joy of living is the theme of A.A.'s Twelfth Step, and action is the key word.”
(*12x12, 106*)

“Here we experience the kind of giving that asks no rewards.”(*12x12, 106.*

“When the Twelfth Step is seen in its full implication, it is really talking about the kind of love that has no price tag on it.” (*12x12, 106*)

“Feely ye have received: freely give . . . is the core of this part of Step Twelve.” (*12x12, 110*)

B. Lots of Meetings

Prior to becoming a G.S.R., most A.A.s have been a voting member at one level of the A.A. service structure – usually the homegroup level. However, G.S.R.s have a vote at three levels of the service structure – the homegroup, the district, and the area. Because of this, G.S.R.s are expected to attend a lot of meetings. Over a typical two-year term, G.S.R.s, usually, attend 24 homegroup business meetings, 24 district meetings and 6-8 Hawai'i Area 17 - Assemblies. The purpose of this informational handbook is to present

the similarities and differences of these three meetings. Aside from the homegroup, district, and area meetings, G.S.R.s are, usually, asked to participate in workshops and other events, however their vote is not required at these types of meetings. It may seem like A.A. is asking more than what seems possible from the G.S.R.s, but experience has shown that the best approach is to focus on one meeting at a time!

When G.S.R.s start attending these meetings, especially at the district and the area levels, many of the people there may be unfamiliar to them, just as some of the topics of discussion may be unfamiliar to them. Perhaps, the new G.S.R. may experience the same anxieties and feelings that they had when they first walked through the doors of A.A. It would be helpful to remember this fact of A.A. General Service – everyone there was once a General Service newcomer. We know how the new G.S.R.s are feeling and many of the questions they bring with them.

A good solution to quieting those nerves and “getting with the program” is by talking with people. Introduce yourself to the District Committee Member (D.C.M.) and don’t be afraid because the D.C.M.s are there to help the G.S.R.s get familiar with their new position. G.S.R.s should ask questions and keep asking them, not only until they feel their questions have been answered, but also until the G.S.R. understands the answer. Soon, the G.S.R. will find that the A.A. members involved in General Service are a friendly bunch who are eager to share and explain this part of recovery to all who ask. Remember, a member in service is a member who is willing to help other alcoholics enjoy the A.A. way of life.

CHAPTER 2: IT BEGINS AT THE HOMEGROUP

The relationship between the G.S.R. and the Homegroup is probably the most important group service position. Most homegroups in Hawai`i hold regular homegroup business meetings.

These meetings are usually relaxed and mildly structured, if it is structured at all. The best way to be effective for your group is to attend the meetings of your homegroup **on a regular basis**. A practical advantage of doing this is that the G.S.R. will get acquainted with the homegroup members and their ideas and visa versa. A spiritual advantage is that the G.S.R. demonstrates that he/she is trustworthy.

During the homegroup business meetings listen to the reports and discussions and **take notes**. How many people attended the business meeting? What was discussed? What was the outcome? Is the group solvent? Taking notes will make it easier to give a report at the monthly district meeting.

Most homegroup business meetings ask the G.S.R. to give a brief report. Have a report ready. Some homegroups appropriate money for written reports, some don’t. Either way, have a note pad ready with the topics and the points you want to touch on. When reporting to the group, try to keep it brief. If you have a lengthy report, let the group

know that your report is long and how long you expect to keep them at the meeting. If it is *really* lengthy, consider a second homegroup business meeting during that month. For this you may need a group conscience.

Once your fellow members know how long your report will be, you may begin presenting the issues. One dilemma that many G.S.R.s have is what should they report. Sometimes, it will feel as though you are flooded with information, and whether or not all of it should be reported back to the homegroup. Narrow it down a bit. Most members are concerned with what's happening within their own homegroups. Re-locating the meeting, court and the treatment center referrals, boosting group attendance or membership, how to increaseth Tradition contributions and getting more people into service or planning a homegroup inventory are some of the problems that homegroups have had. Whenever these issues are discussed, it is always good to report them to the homegroup. Don't forget to report the outcome. Upcoming events and other highlights of the district or area meeting should also be reported (area meetings are discussed in Chapter 4).

Sometimes, you will be required to seek a group conscience from your homegroup. Practice presenting the issue simply, fully, and as fairly as possible, so that the group can arrive at an *informed* group conscience. When seeking a vote from your homegroup members, you will need ample time for discussion. If time permits, inform them of the issues and engage in a brief discussion, then allow time for fact-finding. Another more informed discussion and a vote can be done at a second scheduled meeting.

Other ways of informing the homegroup are 1) brief announcements before or after the regular A.A. meeting or 2) incorporating it into your sharing during the regular A.A. meeting.

CHAPTER 3: ABOUT DISTRICT MEETINGS

In Hawai`i, district business meetings are held once a month. There are 14 districts in Hawai`i. G.S.R.s and district committee officers meet to discuss matters of importance to their particular district, Hawai`i Area 17, and A.A., as a whole. Although most groups join the district in which their meeting is located, this is not mandatory. Some groups join districts that they are attracted to.

Hawai`i Area 17 has 14 districts and is still growing statewide. Who attends these district meetings can be found in the *A.A. Service Manual*, S51-57. Ideally, each registered A.A. group should have a G.S.R. attending district meetings, but sadly, sometimes and for a variety of reasons, this is not the case.

Here is a listing of the districts in Hawai`i Area 17:

- District #1 – Diamond Head
- District #2 – Honolulu
- District #3 – Leeward

District #4 – Windward
District #5 – Maui No Ka `Ohi
District #6 – Kauai
District #7 – Hilo-Hamakua
District #8 – West Hawai`i
District #9 – Central North Shore
District #10 – Waikiki
District #11 – Kihei
District #12 –Puna
District # 13 – Tri-Island
District #17 – Waianae

The tone of a district meeting is probably one of being more structured than a homegroup business meeting, but less formal than an area assembly. Few districts have “official” guidelines and by-laws that they adhere to. Many of the districts loosely follow the Robert’s Rule of Order, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 8, however, the presence of a structure is evident in that a G.S.R. will receive written Minutes and Treasurer reports, rather than a verbal one. Motions are made and seconded to accept these reports by participants eligible to vote at that particular meeting.

After the Minutes and the Treasurer’s reports have been accepted, G.S.R.s are given time to give a homegroup report. Time restraints do not allow lengthy reports, so a well-prepared G.S.R. is an asset to the district meeting. Here’s a tip: Bring the notes you took at the homegroup business meeting. Once again, it will help you stay on track with your report and make sure all the relevant information and important points are given to your district.

Following the G.S.R. reports is the D.C.M. report. He or She has a lot to say; so keen listening skills would be a plus. Sometimes, a D.C.M. will invite a guest speaker to the district meeting. For instance, the Hawai`i Area 17 Corrections Committee Chair. Take notes – whether the information comes from your fellow G.S.R.s, the D.C.M. the district officers or visiting guest speakers – do not rely on your memory. Take notes.

Get a 3-ring binder and separators to keep your paperwork organized. This will help reduce the clutter and keep you from becoming discombobulated. As mentioned earlier, you will be given written Minutes and Treasurer reports. Likewise, the D.C.M. will distribute a lot of paperwork for you to go over. Then, you’ll get more paperwork at the area assemblies. Organizing your paperwork means lessening the odds of it getting lost, because to replace missing paperwork can be costly and lead to duplicating expenditures.

So being ready for the district meeting means, not only showing up, but bringing your folder and your homegroup business meeting notes, as well. Don’t forget a pen or two, you never know when you’ll run out of ink and will need a replacement.

Briefly, just as all the G.S.R.s in a district meet to discuss A.A. issues, so do all the D.C.M.s in Hawai`i Area 17 meet to discuss those same vital issues. This is one of the

ways that our delegate receives information of how Hawai`i's Groups are doing. The D.C.M., in return, learns about what's happening in A.A., nationally and internationally, and passes this message onto the G.S.R.s at the next district meeting.

CHAPTER 4: ABOUT AREA ASSEMBLIES

STRUCTURE & GUIDELINES

The Hawai`i Area 17 Structure & Guidelines (from now on identified as *S&G*) is a document by which the Hawai`i Area 17 Assembly governs itself. Another term for it is "by-laws." This document describes precisely how we are organized (structured) and how our various parts function (guidelines).

When a new G.S.R. assumes his or her position, he or she is, usually, given the most recent copy of the *S&G* from the vacating G.S.R. If, however, a G.S.R. needs a copy of the *S&G*, the G.S.R. can obtain one from his/her D.C.M. or Hawai`i Area 17 Alternate Delegate. Service material for G.S.R.s is also found on the Hawai`i Area 17 website www.aa17aa.org

WHO ATTENDS AN AREA ASSEMBLY?

Area assemblies are open A.A. (business) meetings and all A.A. members are welcomed. However, most of those in attendance are there for a special reason – that reason is to carry the message of their perspective groups and cast a vote on their behalf. Those who can vote are the Hawai`i Area 17 Officers, D.C.M.s, Standing Committee Chairs, Intergroup Chairs, and, of course, the G.S.R.s.

HOW OFTEN ARE ASSEMBLIES HELD?

Currently, Hawai`i Area 17 holds 3 assemblies on **odd years** and 4 assemblies on **even years**. A fourth assembly may be scheduled on the odd year, if required to finish any area business. These assemblies are earmarked for specific purposes, however each agenda is subject to change.

Odd-Year Assemblies

Orientation Assembly - This is the first assembly of the new term for the incoming G.S.R.s. The purpose of this assembly is to familiarize the G.S.R.s with their duties and how Hawai`i Area 17 functions. At this assembly, they will become acquainted with other members who will be working with them during their two-year term. To achieve this purpose, G.S.R.s participate in sharing sessions, also known as, Roundtables. The orientation facilitator is the incoming alternate delegate. G.S.R. responsibilities, introduction to the function of the Hawai`i Area, the roles that the 12 Traditions and the 12 Concepts play in area decision-making are a few of the topics that may be discussed in the G.S.R. Roundtables.

Regular area business items like various reports from service workers other than the G.S.R.s are, also on the agenda. So, the new G.S.R. would benefit best by listening first, then asking questions about issues that are still unclear to him/her. The pace is usually

medium to fast. If a G.S.R. finds himself “lost,” hang in there. Just as you were confused in the beginning of your sobriety when you first got here, chances are you will feel that way again. Do not be discouraged, because like your beginning, you’ll catch on and everything will fall into place, if you continuously attend your district meetings and area assemblies. Also, feel free to ask for help.

Inform-the-Delegate Assembly – About two months before this assembly is held, G.S.R.s will receive a questionnaire from their D.C.M.s. What’s important to keep in mind is that every registered A.A. meeting in the U.S., its territories, and Canada will be discussing these very same questions. Simply put, these questions focus on how A.A. is doing in the areas of Recovery, Unity, and Service. Once a G.S.R. gets this questionnaire, the G.S.R. should present it to the homegroup for discussion – taking care to write down the group’s response(s) to each question asked.

The purpose of the Inform-the-Delegate assembly is to share the group’s response(s) with the area, especially, the delegate. The sum of all this sharing is often called the collective group conscience, and it is the collective group conscience which the delegate receives from the area and takes with him/her to New York, where the process is repeated once again, this time with other delegates. This process has enabled A.A. to grow, harmoniously, worldwide.

Budget Assembly – The Budget Assembly is probably the most challenging of all the assemblies and for the obvious reason – money. However, discussing and agreeing on a budget is unavoidable and must be done if the area is to run effectively. For this assembly you may want to employ the help of past G.S.R.s, old-timers, and even your sponsor. Another helpful resource is to seek information from the *S&G*, particularly the Priority of Spending, p. ____th. The Priority of Spending indicates the important areas for the distribution of the 7th Tradition contributions.

First, every G.S.R. will receive a *proposed* budget, prepared by the Hawai’i Area 17 Finance Committee, from his/her D.C.M. The budget ought to be taken to the homegroup. See if the homegroup would like copies of the budget made and if they would absorb the printing cost. Perhaps, your group is not in the position to do so. Some G.S.R.s have absorbed the xeroxing costs, however, this is an individual, as well as voluntary decision, and not, at all, required of the G.S.R.s.

Next, find out whether or not your homegroup wants to accept the *proposed* budget. Ask your members what would they like to keep and if there are any line items they would like to see changed. When possible get their reasons for these changes. Remember to jot down their feedback for your notes.

The next step is a discussion at the district level. A Finance Committee (FC) member is often the best person to answer any questions concerning the proposed budget, therefore your D.C.M. will often times invite a FC member to a district meeting with the purpose of explaining how the budget was prepared and to answer all questions asked by the G.S.R.s. The FC has been known to make amendments after meeting with the G.S.R.s,

and the D.C.M. will keep the G.S.R.s informed as the process develops.

Finally, the Budget Assembly arrives. G.S.R.s will be asked to vote on the *final proposed* budget. Any suggestions should have been given when the FC member visited the individual districts. Basically, what the area wants to know is, by a show of hands, how many voting members accept the budget and how many voting members do not accept the *final proposed* budget? This is the question for the assembly to answer. **It must be mentioned here that no line item discussions will be entertained. The motion will ask the assembly, if the assembly wants to accept the *final proposed* budget, as written – yes or no.** More details of the voting process will be discussed in Chapter 8. If the *final proposed* budget is accepted, the “budget business” is concluded. *If the final proposed* budget is not accepted, then the FC will have to meet and present a budget the area can accept.

Hawai`i Area 17 has financial expenses. Without appropriating funds to the various committees and line items, vital services will cease to function or at best function, ineffectively.

Assembly #4

Optional – if needed.

Even-Year Assemblies

Inventory Assembly – The purpose of the inventory assembly is to take stock of the strengths and weaknesses within Hawai`i Area 17.

Inform-the-Delegate Assembly – The purpose and process is a repeat of the previous year with one exception – G.S.R.s will be given a new set of questions to discuss with their homegroups.

Budget Assembly – The purpose and process is a repeat of the previous year.

Election Assembly – This assembly signifies that the service term is coming to a close, which brings some relief to, not only the G.S.R.s, but other area assembly members, as well. The purpose of the election assembly is to choose the area assembly officers who wish to serve for the next two years. A complete outline of A.A.’s electoral procedures, also known as “**The Third Legacy**” is in the A.A. Service Manual, p. _____.

WHO DECIDES WHAT DISTRICT WILL HOST WHAT ASSEMBLY?

This decision is done by lottery. The names of each district is put into a “hat” voluntarily and drawn for each assembly (the same procedure applies for Hawai`i Area 17, Committee Meetings). When the names are exhausted, the process is repeated. So, in the spirit of what it means by “going to the hat” the answer to that question is . . . Higher Power.

DOES THE G.S.R. HAVE TO ABSORB THE COST OF ATTENDING AN ASSEMBLY?

Ideally, groups pay the airfare and registration expenses of their G.S.R.s. This is the proper use of the 7th Tradition. Some districts in Hawai`i render full aid to G.S.R.s whose groups cannot afford to fund their G.S.R.s. Some districts afford half the cost of the expenses and the group must shoulder the other half. Some districts have no means of supporting their G.S.R.s at all. Sometimes, partial help may be available from the area, however, this is usually if funds are available and done on a first-come, first-served basis.

CHAPTER 5: PREPARING FOR AN ASSEMBLY

As a non-hosting district G.S.R.

You will receive a registration flyer from the hosting district. It would be best for you to send in your registration as soon as possible, so that the hosting district can make the necessary arrangements needed to accommodate your visit.

Some of the information you will need to provide to the hosting district is:

- Meal preference (vegetarian or meataterian)?
- Lodging needs – home stay or not?
- Transportation – to and from airport, if you’re off island. (note: if your plans include leaving early or before the close of the assembly, the hosting district **has the option to** accommodate your transportation needs or not.)

Non-hosting districts are guests of the hosting district. Common courtesies like cleaning up after yourselves should be a given.

Before booking your travel plans, if you are traveling by air to assemblies, please go to “Area 17 Tools” and check out the information provided in “Air Travel Info.”

Before the assembly, please visit the area website, (www.area17aa.org). Please review and makes copies of the agenda, proposals and reports that are on the website and bring them with you to the assembly. There will be limited copies available at the assembly and they are intended for folks without the ability to print their own copies.

It is also helpful to bring your Service Manual, the Hawai`i Area 17 Structure and Guidelines and the GSR Handbook with you to assemblies.

CHAPTER 6: WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU GET TO AN ASSEMBLY

Imagine a 100+ G.S.R.s arriving at a new assembly. They are excited to be part of the Hawai`i Area 17 Assembly – a place where they meet their fellow service buddies and catch up on the news. Somehow, the first thing that ought to be done is often the last thing for the G.S.R.s do – and that’s registering with the area registrar.

Those who were once G.S.R.s recommend that these things get done before fellowshipping with your fellow A.A.s:

1. First, and most important, **register with the area registrar!**

2. Pick up all copies of things to be discussed. You'll find this on a designated literature table. Some of the papers you will need would be the Minutes of the previous assembly, an up-dated Treasurer's Report, any proposals for discussion, and special events flyers.

CHAPTER 7: THE AGENDA

The agenda is designed by the Hawai'i Area 17 Chair. Each G.S.R. receives an agenda, either at their most recent district meeting or at the area assembly. If you did not receive the agenda at the district meeting, prior to this assembly, please check on our Area 17 Website (www.area17aa.org). It is best to be flexible, because the agenda is subject to change at any time and at the discretion of the area chair.

A **typical agenda** for an assembly may include, but is not limited to, these items:

Day One Meeting called to order by the area chair.

- Meeting opens, usually, with a prayer.
- Announcements by hosting district.
- Extend greeting, recognize new members, birthdays (optional)
- Selected readings done
- Head count of eligible voters is taken and a 2/3 majority is calculated.
- Agreement to the use of Rules of Debate (Simple majority vote needed. More details about simple majority votes given in Chapter 8).
- Minutes of previous meeting distributed and/or read by secretary.
 - Any amendments, corrections or changes?
 - Acceptance of Minutes, either as is or with amendments done. (Motion & second needed)
- Treasurer's Report
 - Questions relating to finances are asked at this time.
 - Any amendments, corrections or changes?
 - Acceptance of Treasurer's Report, either as is or with amendments done. (Motion & second needed.)
- Various Area Committee Reports
- Area officers, Standing Committee Chairs, D.C.M.s, Intergroup Chairs
- Special purpose motions/discussions addressed. Example: Orientation, Inform-the-Delegate, questions, etc. . . .

Day Two Finish Various Committee Reports

- Ad-hoc Committee reports, if any.
- Old Business: unfinished business leftover from the previous assembly, usually "tabled" items.

- New Business: ideas and topics never brought to the presiding assembly.
- Presentations of New Business.
- What's On Your Mind? Or Open Mike.
- Announcements by hosting district.
- ADJOURNMENT (Motion and seconded needed)

Once again, lunch is usually served. Many districts defray the cost of attending an assembly by factoring breakfast and lunch costs for both Saturday and Sunday into the registration fee.

CHAPTER 8: UNDERSTANDING ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

(The following procedures are accepted practices of the General Service Conference that are also part of the way Hawai'i Area 17 conducts business. Some of the terms and phrases have been changed to suit the needs of the area.)

The purpose of any A.A. business debate, whether in the homegroup, district, area or GSC, is to reach a group conscience. **There are no winners or losers.** Generally speaking, the area follows the **Robert's Rules of Order**, and proceeds on, as informal a basis as possible, consistent with the rights of all concerned. However, over the years the districts, Hawai'i Area 17, and the General Service Conference have adopted some exceptions to Robert's Rules, which helps it to proceed more closely in accordance with the 12 Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous.

It is important to remember that the purpose of the rules of order is to make it easier for the assembly to conduct its business. Rules exist to allow the assembly to do what it needs to do to carry out the will of the Fellowship by reaching an *informed group conscience*.

Here is how we operate:

Assembly Quorum: A quorum in Hawai'i Area 17 is 50% + 1 of all registered voting members.

Presenting A Proposal For Assembly Consideration:

Anyone may present a proposal to the assembly at any time, but this process of presenting a proposal for discussion at the assembly floor is recommended:

1. The author presents the proposal at his/her homegroup. ("I make a motion to present this proposal to the assembly." Second. Discussion. Acceptance.)
2. The G.S.R. carries the proposal to the district, making the same motion and the district goes through the same procedure as the homegroup did.
3. The D.C.M. carries the proposal to the assembly, making the same motion and the area goes through the same procedure as the district did.

If the proposal has to do with area business, then an acceptance of the proposal means incorporating the newly suggested action into the area business. If the proposal has to do with a GSC action, the delegate will carry the proposal to New York and give it to the committee there.

General Rules of Debate: (These rule are always agreed to at the beginning of each assembly):

- People who wish to speak, line up at the microphone and are called on in order.
- Each person may speak for two (2) minutes.
- No one may speak a second time on a topic *until* all who wish to have spoken for the first time.
- Voting is done, by a show of hands, for or against the motion.

Calling the Question: Calling the question brings the debate to a halt, and the assembly proceeds immediately to vote on it. A motion to call the question:

- Must be made in order at the microphone.
- Requires a second.
- Is not debatable.
- Requires two-thirds vote. If not passed, the debate continues.

Substantial Unanimity:

All matters of policy require substantial unanimity, that is, a two-thirds majority vote. Any actions, including amendments, require a two-thirds majority vote.

Because the number of members present in the assembly during the weekend varies from time to time, the phrase “two-thirds” is taken to mean two-thirds of the assembly members voting, as long as the total vote constitutes an assembly quorum.

Reconsideration:

A motion for Reconsideration must be made by someone who has voted with the winning side and now, after debate, wishes to change their vote:

- Only a simple majority is required.
- If the majority votes to reconsider, **full debate**, pro and con, is resumed.
(Assembly members are urged to limit discussion to *new* consideration of the question under debate.

Tabling a Motion:

Tabling a motion (postponing discussion to a later time, either during the same or future assembly):

- Requires a motion and a second.
- Is not debatable.
- Needs only a simply majority to pass.

Who Can Make a Motion?

- Any member of a group can bring motions to the floor.
- At the homegroup level, any member of that homegroup can bring motions to the floor.
- At the district level, G.S.R.s, D.C.M.s, and district officers can bring motions to the floor.
- At the area level, the list expands to include standing committee, intergroup chairs, and area officers.

At assemblies, as a courtesy, please notify the chair in advance, and to ensure accuracy, please provide 2 written copies of the motion: one (1) for the recording secretary and one (1) for the area chair.

Simple Majority or Two-Thirds (2/3) Majority Votes

Simple Majority – A few of the floor actions that need a simple majority are: acceptance of the Minutes or Treasurer’s reports, relatively minor decisions such as: where a particular assembly should be held, and a motion to reconsider.

Two-Thirds (2/3) Majority, a.k.a. “Substantial Unanimity” – A few of the floor actions that need a “substantial unanimity” are: the acceptance of a proposed budget and important policy matters. Our goal in A.A., however, is “substantial unanimity” on all actions taken, whenever possible.

Minority Opinion – It’s A Spiritual Thing

In the spirit of unity, minority opinion is one of our most treasured traditions. Every member has the right, indeed the duty, to express an opinion different than that of the majority, if the member considers the action taken is not to be in the best interest of the Group or A.A., as a whole.

After the minority opinion is expressed, any member who voted in the majority and wishes to change their vote, can make a Motion to Reconsider, if he/she heard something during the expression of the minority opinion that changed his/her mind enough to think the group might be well served by re-opening the debate and re-voting on the issue.

It should be mentioned here, that the minority expressing their opinion at the microphone is only half of this spiritual concept. The other half is giving a “careful” hearing to those sharing their opinions. Without a “careful” hearing from the majority, this process, then, becomes routine-like.

Procedure: A vote is taken on a particular motion. The area chair asks, “Does anyone who voted in the minority wants to speak?”

- If no, then the motion stands.

- If yes, all who voted in the minority have a chance to speak.

After all have spoken, the chair will ask, “Does anyone in the majority wish to change their vote?”

- If no, then the motion stands.
- If yes, then the assembly votes on whether or not to reconsider (re-open debate). This requires only a simple majority vote.
- If the Motion to Reconsider is defeated, the original motion stands.
- If the Motion to Reconsider passes, the issue is re-opened and both sides continue the debate until ready to vote again.

Point Of Order A question concerning a breach of the rules.

A point of order is raised when there is a violation of the rules of order or by-laws, or when a member is not speaking on the motion before the group. A point of order can interrupt a speaker to ensure orderly procedure.

Words of Caution:

Full discussion of a motion should take place **before** the vote. Premature action (For instance: amending motions early in the discussion or hastily calling the question) can divert attention from the subject at hand, thus confusing and/or delaying assembly business.

Everyone is entitled to, and should, express his or her opinion. However, if someone else has already stated your perspective, it is not necessary to go to the microphone and say it again.

Remember, too, that saving a “**minority opinion**” for after the vote, when there is no rebuttal, is another time-waster, for it can force the assembly body to reconsider a question that might well have been decided the first time around, if it has been thoroughly examined from all sides.

CHAPTER 9: THE GROUP CONSCIENCE

A Group Conscience Is . . .

We hear the phrase “Group Conscience” often in A.A., but what does it *really* mean?

Whenever we ask for a vote on an issue in our Group, should this be called a Group Conscience vote? *It can be* – if it meets certain criteria. Some things to consider before calling it a Group Conscience are as follows:

- Is the Group well informed?
- Have both sides been heard and the issues thoroughly discussed? Many feel that A.A. should not engage in *any* controversy, but our Tenth Tradition only talks about *public* controversy. A.A. was built on a great deal of controversy.

- Has respectful attention to the minority's point of view been given?
- If it is an important decision, has there been ample time for members not present to voice their opinions? Or is some eager beaver trying to push through a quick vote before the Group becomes well informed? In A.A., we tend to be very slow in making changes. Except in rare cases, there should be no rush.
- Has the vote been carried by a substantial majority? (If we have all members present, and the vote is 16 to 15, then resentments may walk out the door after the meeting. In the Warranties of the **Twelve Concepts** [*The A.A. Service Manual*] states "All decisions should be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, substantial unanimity.")

Sometimes, the G.S.R. may not personally agree with his or her group's conscience concerning a particular issues. What is important to remember is that if the G.S.R. has utilized all available resources to inform the group, let the group engage in open and thorough discussion, and then followed up with a vote, then the G.S.R. can take comfort in a job well done.

Reporting Your Group Conscience At An Area Assembly:

The story is told of – the guest of honor at a banquet, where many long and tiring speeches were given. Since he was to be the last speaker, it was some time before he was called upon. It was getting late and he was very tired. "I have been asked to give an address," he said, when his turn finally came, " and I shall be happy to give my own. It is 1450 Aala Street. And if there are no further objections, I will go there at once."

The guest of honor was able to set aside any personal desire for attention and recognition, in order to serve the common good. He was willing to make a sacrifice and he knew how to condense, simplify and clarify.

Sharing the *informed group conscience* at an assembly requires the same spirit of sacrifice – if not the same brevity – as the guest of honor. Sharing a group conscience requires four things:

First – a concisely prepared statement.

Second – clarity in presentation of majority and minority viewpoints and explanation of WHY the group feels the way it does (quite often, the WHY is more important than a yes or no.)

Third – concentration and attention.

Forth – constant editing to suit the situation.

Let us consider, for a moment, these four requirements. When a group conscience has been reached, write it out, both majority and minority opinions, and the reasons behind them. Read it out loud to get used to hearing your phrases, until your report is three minutes or less. This is difficult to do. Go for it!

For example, use your sponsor, D.C.M. or anyone that you respect, that has been or still is in General Service (they all need something to do and, after all, this is a “We” program.) Tell this willing helper, all about the topic and how you got your group conscience. When you talk it out, you clear it out. Spare the assembly all the gory details, please.

Clarity in presentation is founded on three simple declarative sentences or less, per item. Neither the delegate nor the assembly needs to hear, in detail, who said what about which! In sharing a group conscience, condense and be clear.

CHAPTER 10: STANDING COMMITTEES AND CONFERENCES

These Standing Committees are recognized as part of Hawaii Area 17:

1. Archives
2. Convention Steering
3. Cooperation with the Elder Community
4. Cooperation with the Professional Community
5. Corrections
6. Finance
7. Grapevine
8. Mynah Bird
9. Public Information
10. Treatment
11. Website

Service Meeting:

During your term as a G.S.R., you will be attending a number of workshops, district and area meetings. Attending these service meetings is as important to the life of A.A., as attending the Homegroup is to your sober life and recovery.

PRAASA:

The **Pacific Region Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly** is a Pacific Region-wide assembly held each year for A.A.s in the Pacific region to discuss A.A. issues and service activities in general. The location varies among the States and Areas of the Pacific Region – Areas bid to host this event. The purpose of the PRAASA is to develop greater unity among members, groups, and areas of the Pacific Region; to encourage the exchange of information, ideas and experiences; and to provide an opportunity for member to discuss pertinent aspects of A.A., as a whole.

PRAASA provides the first opportunity for newly elected delegates in the Pacific Region to meet with those who have already been serving for a year to help prepare them for the General Service Conference.

Regional Forum:

Regional Forums are sponsored by the General Service Office in cooperation with the delegates of the region and are held every other year – each time in a different area. Regional Forums are attended by the Regional Trustee, the delegates, past trustees, several numbers of the General Service Board of Trustees, GSO staff workers member of A.A. World Service and the Grapevine staff.

The purpose is to bring the General Service Office to you. The Forum acquaints G.S.R.s and other service-interested A.A. members in the Region with the activities, accomplishments and plans of the service personnel associated with the General Service Conference, and equally important, keeps GSO informed of grass roots sentiment and opinions in the Pacific Region.

General Service Conference:

You have been reading a lot concerning Group Conscience – because you, as a G.S.R., are the Custodian of the Group Conscience. The thoughts and opinions expressed in Group Consciences are pooled together at the district meetings that you will be attending, and pooled again at the area assemblies. The A.A. Group Conscience, finally, comes to a focus for one (1) long week each April at the General Service Conference in New York. Our Hawaii Area 17 Delegate carries the Group Conscience of Hawaii's Area (along with the **“Right of Decision”** found in the *The A.A. Service Manual, Concept III*) when attending the Conference. The General Service Conference is A.A.s way of keeping our Fellowship strong and healthy by looking for weaknesses to be corrected and new challenges to be met.

CHAPTER 11: SOME SUGGESTIONS

Some Suggestions for the New G.S.R. are:

- Don't take yourself too seriously, but take your sobriety seriously.
- Consider getting a sponsor (someone who is in service) or a service sponsor.
- Read the A.A. pamphlet, *G.S.R.*
- Read *Box 4-5-9*
- Read *The A.A. Service Manual*
- Remember nothing happens in or on our time, it's all done in our Higher Power's time.

HOW TO TAKE A GROUP CONSCIENCE:

If you are met with some resistance, take a Group Conscience and ask your group members how do they want a group conscience to be taken? Don't forget to take notes! The most common method is to hold a special discussion meeting (often called a *business meeting*) either before or after the regularly scheduled meeting. The topics are generally too complex to be discussed in a single meeting. Sometimes more than one meeting is necessary, so that all concerned members of the group are given an opportunity to participate. Two occasions would be when presenting the Inform-the-Delegate questions and Budget Proposal.

GATHER SUPPORT:

Meet with group members individually and let them know you value their opinions.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE:

Attend other meetings in your district that are not on your usual schedule. Keep all appointments with on your business calendar such as, the district meetings, area assemblies, workshops and other meetings.

THE DELEGATE:

Tell the Group that the area delegate will be uninformed or misinformed, if they don't come up with a group conscience. The delegate will be forced to vote his/her conscience, instead of carrying the Groups' Conscience of Hawai'i.

THE SECRETARY CAN HELP:

Develop a good relationship with the group secretary. More than any other individual, this person can help and support you.

MAKE ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Make announcements of events that are coming up: include other meetings in need of support.

USE THE PHONE:

Call group members to remind them of upcoming group events, not only, the members that you admire, appreciate or get along with.

FACILITATE, DON'T DOMINATE:

Your job is not to dominate, but to facilitate the discussion. Facilitate is defined as "to make easier."

TAKE NOTES:

If you can facilitate and take notes – all the better. If not, the G.S.R. can facilitate the discussion while the alternate takes notes. If there is no alternate, ask a member to take notes for you.

USE THE COPY MACHINE:

Make and distribute copies of material to be discussed for group members before a discussion. This will give them time to do some "homework" on selected issues. The Group cannot, effectively, take its conscience until the members are educated as to what the issues are. This will give you time to spend with them and give them the opportunity to hear your opinion. Be prepared to have your Literature available, and then you'll be ready to answer should someone ask, "What book or pamphlet did this information come from?"

Another practical reason for xeroxing an agenda of issues to be discussed is that an agenda will help keep them on track, as you move from subject to subject.

ASK EACH MEMBER, TIME MANAGEMENT:

Ask each member to limit their sharing to one or two minutes. Not only does doing this

assures that everyone has had an opportunity to share, you will be able to get a true cross-section of opinions. Encourage the quieter members to share by calling on them by name. If time permits, then a second sharing may be done at the microphone for the more vocal members.

ROTATION:

Have a different group member chair or participate in the discussion with you. This increases involvement and allows you, the G.S.R., to observe the group conscience from a different point of view. Sometimes, this has proven to be very effective.

TALK IT OUT:

Discuss each topic until there is a clear group consensus. Recognize, that in some cases a true consensus cannot be reached. We will “agree to disagree” on some issues.

DON'T BE A PERFECTIONIST:

It's not necessary to explain all facets of each issue. Part of your job is to simplify and condense the issues a bit. Be sure to cover all important points. “Keep It Simple.”

GROUP CONCERNS:

Ask your group what their concerns are. Ask if anyone has anything that they would like you to take to the district or area levels. In A.A., the minority opinion or voice is not a theory. It is a fact of our society.

DID I HEAR YOU CORRECTLY:

After each discussion, summarize the results to the Group. Determine what you think the Group conscience or consensus is and tell them. Ask them if they agree with your understanding.

Just as the area takes an area inventory in odd-numbered years, so do the districts “take inventory” to evaluate how well it is fulfilling its purpose. As a G.S.R., you will be expected to participate in the inventory process. More about group inventories may be found in the pamphlet, “**The A.A. Group**” and in the “*A.A. Service Manual*”
Taking A Personal Service Inventory

As a final note, it may serve us well to, periodically, take our own personal *service* inventory, regarding our participation in General Service. The Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous* refers to taking periodic “spot-check” inventory. The following is a suggested list of questions. It provides a starting point to help you begin, such an inventory.

Personal General Service Inventory

- Q.1. Am I doing MY job?
- Q.2. Do I make weekly announcements at the homegroup?
- Q.3. Do I keep the announcements as short and simple as possible?
- Q.4. Do I show enthusiasm for service work (attraction) when making announcements?

- Q.5. Do I make announcements at meetings where no G.S.R. is present, if something is happening in General Service?
- Q.6. Do I keep trying to get an alternate G.S.R. (or D.C.M.), then bring that person to district or area meetings and pass on to them what I have learned?
- Q.7. Do I occasionally suggest one of the Traditions as a topic at a recovery meeting?
- Q.8. Do I suggest, in a kind loving way, that we may need to have a group conscience (discussion of all sides and sometimes a vote) when I feel the Traditions are not being followed or when someone in the group brings up an issue?
- Q.9. Do I feel uncomfortable making these announcements or asking the group to discuss a topic? Do I remember that the group asked me to do this?
- Q.10. Do I let “God” as reflected in the group conscience, select who gets involved in service, or do I sometimes know better than “He.”
- Q.11. Do I read the “*A.A. Service Manual*” and do my job as outlined? Am I committed to my service duties?
- Q.12. As a G.S.R., D.C.M. or district officer, am I responsible for having the best possible informed group or district, telling them what’s happening in A.A., as a whole, at the area and in the district? Keeping in mind that **what they decide to do is not my responsibility: My job is to see that they are able to make an informed decision.**)
- Q.13. Do I encourage sponsees to get involved in General Service?

Copyright © 2006 Hawaii Area 17

Ver 67.0