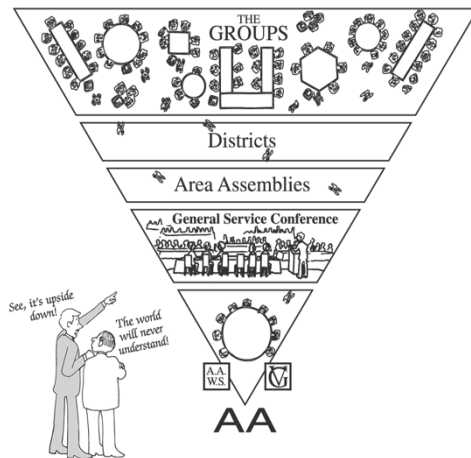


## *An Upside-Down Organization*

Alcoholics Anonymous has been called an upside-down organization because, as the structure chart shows, the groups are on top and the trustees at the bottom. Bill W. wrote in Concept I: “The A.A. groups today hold ultimate responsibility and final authority for our world services...” Then in Concept II, Bill made it clear that the groups “delegated to the Conference complete authority for the active maintenance of our world services and thereby made the Conference... the actual voice and effective conscience for our whole society.”

S 15 The A.A. Service Manual Combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service



The Twelve Concepts for World Service Illustrated, (pamphlet) page 3

Aloha. I'm Coleen and I am an alcoholic. I serve as Area 17 Delegate for Panel 69. The Theme this year for the General Service Conference is Our Big Book- 80 years, 71 Languages. With this as a starting point, here's an overview of the upside down triangle service structure.

The upside down triangle is how we determine what needs tending to in A.A. as a whole. Looking back, there are traces of this type of service structure from the beginning of A.A. In A.A.'s first five years of existence, the first 40 members realized they had a solution for alcoholism. The decision was made to write down a middle of the road description of what was working for them.

Our co-founder Bill W. called himself the designated "scribe." He wrote the first draft, shared it with other members, received input, and amended that first draft accordingly. By 1939 when The Big Book was finished and published, there were 100 sober members in Alcoholics Anonymous.

In the beginning of A.A., Dr. Bob and Bill W. were the people to go to for solutions to problems. When Dr. Bob became ill, it became obvious we would need a way to keep A.A. functioning after our founders passed on.

We had traditions which are the spiritual principles we practice to create unity. We also needed a way to make decisions and move forward in a way we hope is in the best interest of A.A. and alcoholics around the world.

In 1950, the first annual meeting for Alcoholics Anonymous was held in New York City, NY. Delegates had the responsibility to check out the General Service Office, meet the staff and make a few decisions. We now call that weeklong event the General Service Conference.

Let's fast forward to 2019. This year will be our 69<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference. Hawaii Area 17 will be sending me with your experience, strength and hope to serve as the Delegate from Area 17. GSO knows this, so they have assigned me to the Agenda Committee, and given me a Delegate Buddy to help me when attending my first year at the GSC.

When it comes to the GSC, how does Area 17 use the upside down triangle to get A.A. business done and participate in A.A. as a whole? I'll put it in the framework of a timeline:

This weekend: The Orientation Assembly is an overview of Hawaii Area 17, the Service Structure, who is in service and what our responsibilities are.

Later this month, I'll meet via conference call with the GSC Agenda Committee and help finalize the agenda for the 69<sup>th</sup> GSC.

February 15<sup>th</sup>: Final Agenda Items are distributed to all area delegates and participants in the GSC, in English, Spanish, and French. As Area 17 delegate, I'll review these items and choose which items I'd like input about, and assign those topics to standing committees, DCMs, officers and Intergroup Chairs.

March 1st-3<sup>rd</sup>: The Pacific Region Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly (PRAASA) is held at the Marriott in Irvine, CA. No business is conducted at this meeting. I will talk more about this tomorrow. This is a Pacific Region wide sharing session, with a formal structure in which topics of interest to A.A. are presented. All who attend have an opportunity to share at the mic, if they have something to add. Area 17 sends the Delegate and Chair, so Tommy and I will be there. Districts typically provide funds for their DCMs to attend, and meetings choose whether to fund and send their GSRs. Any A.A. member is welcome to attend.

After PRAASA: Districts usually follow through and present PRAASA Report Backs so their members can hear from the DCMs, GSRs and A.A. members who attended.

March 9<sup>th</sup>: Area 17 has a Committee meeting hosted by Kihei District 11 on Maui. I'll distribute to the standing committee chairs, DCMs, Intergroup Chairs, and officers their assigned topics that are on the GSC agenda. The background and agenda items are in a lengthy document which you will have access to. I select from that document the agenda items I'd like you to share on. This is a time when the Area 17 trusted servants need to get things done in a timely manner.

DCMs – please contact your GSRs and give them the agenda items along with background information assigned to their committee. Past experience suggests, the more time GSRs and groups have, the better the input and experience. If your district meeting is a few weeks after March 9<sup>th</sup>, consider meeting up with your GSRs individually, or hold an extra meeting to give GSRs their agenda items and background information. It seems better to get the information to GSRs sooner rather than later.

GSR's you will get your topic assignments from your DCM. Let this be the be a two way communication, It's OK to ask your DCM for your "assignment."

Between March 9<sup>th</sup> and April 27<sup>th</sup>: As you read the Agenda items, they will fall into three general categories: Review, Discuss, and Consider.

**Review** is review the work that was completed in the past year. Provide suggestions, changes or corrections.

**Discuss** a request to brainstorm and bring your groups ideas and suggestions.

**Consider** means a vote might be taken at the GSC on this item. Ask your group for a yes/no or for/opposed response. If your group has no strong opinion either way, it's OK to report that as well.

GSRs, please be thorough getting input on the agenda item assigned to you. Of course, you can get input on any other agenda item your group would like to discuss.

What if your group does not send you to the Inform the Delegate Assembly? If you cannot attend the ITD Assembly, let your DCM know your group's thoughts or decision on the topic/agenda items you were assigned.

April 27-28<sup>th</sup>: Inform the Delegate Assembly hosted by Tri Island District in Lahaina, Maui. Saturday morning, GSRs, DCMs, Officers and Intergroup Chairs meet in their assigned agenda committee. Time is given for you to review your topic, and prepare a 15 minute presentation to summarize a balanced report. Choose a few members to present this to the Assembly. Your presentation will be followed by time at the mic for those who wish to share. Then, through a show of hands, I'll get "sense of the room." It is not a formal vote. Agree/Don't agree. Yes/No. Your voice is what I take with me to the GSC.

Here I'd like to note that the decisions we make are not necessarily for ourselves, our group, district or for Area 17. The decisions we choose are the ones we think are best for A.A. as a whole. Later today you will hear about the concepts that help in decision making: the right of participation, right of decision, and right of appeal.

May 19<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>: The General Service Conference is held in New York City, NY. I'll take your input, hear what others at the conference have to say and vote my conscience. Again, I'm not there to vote for Hawaii Area 17, I'm there to vote in the best interest of A.A.

June 8 – pau: I'm available to give a GSC Delegate Report Back to your district, meeting, or group. District 8 has already reserved June 8<sup>th</sup>, so I suspect I'll be in Hilo, Hamakua and Puna districts on the 9<sup>th</sup>. Some district hold reports back together. Maui is known to do that, and sometimes Tri Island sends the delegate to Molokai or Lanai as well. The Delegate report back is a way to pass on what was decided at the GSC. It is for those of us in service, your group members and any A.A. member. It's a time to meet face to face, ask question and get clarity.

Sometime in the Fall: If by the Budget Assembly, hosted by Central/North Shore #9 on Oahu in August, I have received the Final Conference Report, you will receive a copy. If not, I'll hope they arrive in time to distribute them at the October Committee meeting held by Windward District # 4 on Oahu. This is a written summary of the GSC in booklet form. Please share it with your group. Since last names, addresses, phone number of those who attended the GSC are part of this report, the booklet needs to be handled in a confidential manner and shared only with members of A.A.

December 15<sup>th</sup> – The last day of the year to submit agenda items to be considered for the 70<sup>th</sup> GSC.

Where do these agenda items come from? Does GSO make them up? (No.) Why is GSO telling us to discuss this stuff? The answer I've often heard is, a good idea can come from anyone. Agenda items come from A.A. members, groups, districts, and areas. We can submit our idea to any level of the service structure. The end result is to see if it is an idea that A.A. as a whole would like to make use of. We use the service structure to find that out.

If a member of your group has an idea, ask them to bring it up in your group business/home group meeting.

If the group likes the idea, the GSR can take it to the district meeting.

If your district likes the idea, the DCM can take it to a committee meeting.

The committee meeting is a time to discuss the details and intent of the idea. If the district wants to present it to the assembly as a proposal, the committee meetings is the place to clarify the wording and intention.

If your district wants to submit your proposal to the Area, the DCM submits the proposal to the Area Chair in a timely manner. Remember, the Area Chair sets the agenda 30 days ahead of an assembly, so get your proposal to the Chair more than 30 days before the assembly.

At the assembly, the Chair can schedule time for the DCM to talk about the written proposal.

The assembly members take the proposal back to their groups to get their input.

The Chair puts the agenda item on a future assembly for us to consider and possibly vote on.

If the proposal does not have substantial unanimity, no action is taken. If the assembly approves proposal by 2/3rds majority, the area can implement the decision. If a proposal to be considered at the GSC passes, the proposal will be forwarded to the GSO by the Delegate.

Does this happen quickly? Not really. It has been said A.A. moves at the pace of an iceberg floating in the arctic. We move slowly because we want to be thorough and deliberate in the actions we take and decisions we make for A.A. and for future potential A.A. members.

I'll end by telling you, it took years of sobriety before it dawned on me that A.A. had done a lot for me. And, maybe I should do something for A.A. I resisted at first, but my friends who were new GSRs said come on, it will be fun, we'll do this together. I am so glad I gave service a chance. A.A. has given me a life I didn't know I could have. I'm looking forward to our panel together, and want to take this time to thank you for allowing me to be of service.

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