

HAWAI'I AREA 17

General Service Representative (G.S.R.)

Orientation Handbook

The G.S.R. Preamble

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We are the General Service Representatives. We are the link of communication for our groups with the General Service Office and the world of A.A.

We realize the ultimate authority 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 this 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.

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HAWAI'I AREA 17 G.S.R. HANDBOOK

Aloha and Welcome New G.S.R.

Your participation in 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 you to read this handbook because it explains the purpose, procedures, and participants of area service.

This handbook will tell you how to report a group conscience, pre-register for an assembly, and give you a general idea of the way Area business is conducted at the District and Area level.

This handbook is not a substitute for A.A. approved literature nor does it supersede the *Hawai'i Area 17 Structure and Guidelines* or *The A.A. Service Manual*. Rather, this handbook has been published as a tool that, we hope, will 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 offices; 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. (*The A.A. Service Manual, page 1 & 91*)."

LITERATURE LIST

The following Conference-approved literature will help the GSR in their service position:

- ***G.S.R. General Service Representative*** (Pamphlet P-19)

On General Service Structure:

- ***The A.A. Service Manual Combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service***
- ***Inside A.A.*** (Pamphlet P-18)
- ***Circles of Love and Service*** (Pamphlet P-45)
- ***The Twelve Concepts for World Services Illustrated*** (Pamphlet P-8)

On the Traditions:

- ***A.A. Tradition – How It Developed*** (Pamphlet P-17)
- ***A.A. Comes of Age***
- ***Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions***
- ***The Twelve Traditions Illustrated*** (Pamphlet P-43)

On group affairs:

- ***The A.A. Group*** (Pamphlet P-16)
- ***Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix*** (Pamphlet F-3)

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

CHAPTER 1: PREPARING FOR WHAT'S AHEAD

A. Developing a Service Attitude: The statements below 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." (*12 & 12, 106*).
- "Here we experience the kind of giving that asks no rewards." (*12 & 12, 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." (*12 & 12, 106*)
- "Freely ye have received; freely give . . . 'is the core of this part of Step Twelve." (*12 & 12, 110*)

B. Lots of Meetings

Prior to becoming a GSR, you have been a voting member of one level of the A.A. service structure – usually the homegroup level. However, GSRs have a vote at three levels of the service structure – the Homegroup, the District, and the Area. Because of this, GSRs attend a lot of meetings. Over

a typical two-year term, GSRs attend twenty-four (24) homegroup business meetings, twenty-four (24) district meetings and eight (8) Hawaii Area 17 Assemblies. Another purpose for this handbook is to present the similarities and differences between these three business meetings. Aside from the homegroup, district, and area meetings, GSRs are often asked to participate in workshops and other events; 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 GSRs, but experience has shown that the best approach is to focus on one meeting at a time!

When GSRs start attending these meetings, especially at the district and the area levels, they may be unfamiliar to them, just as topics of discussion may be unfamiliar to them too. The new GSR 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 GSRs are feeling and understand many of the questions they bring with them.

A solution to quieting those nerves and “getting with the program” is by talking with people. Introduce yourself to the District Committee Member (DCM); do not be afraid because the DCMs are there to help the GSRs get familiar with their new position. GSRs should ask questions and keep asking them, not only until they feel their questions have been answered, but until the GSR understands the answer. Soon, the GSR 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 sobriety 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 GSR is the link between the homegroup and A.A., linking the Homegroup with the District, the Area, and the General Service Office (GSO). As such, the GSR is, probably, the most important group service position. Most homegroups in Hawai'i hold regular homegroup business meetings, often monthly.

These meetings are usually relaxed and mildly structured if they are 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 you will get acquainted with your homegroup members and their ideas and vice versa. A spiritual advantage is that the GSR demonstrates that they are trustworthy.

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

Most homegroup business meetings ask the GSR to give a brief report on the recent area assembly or district meeting. Have a report ready. Have a list of topics and the points you want to touch on. At the end of the area assembly, the chair will provide you with a list of "What to Take Back" that will help you prepare your report. This will also be posted to the Area 17 website, www.area17aa.org. Many DCMs will also provide GSRs with a "What to Take Back" summary at the end of the district meeting. Upcoming events and other highlights of the area or district meeting should also be reported (area meetings are discussed in Chapter 4).

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 your report is *lengthy*, consider emailing your article to homegroup members.

Sometimes, you will be required to seek a group conscience from your homegroup. Practice presenting the issue simply, fully, and fairly, so the group can arrive at an *informed* group conscience. When seeking a vote from your homegroup members you will need ample time for discussion. Consider emailing the information to home group members in-advance of the meeting. Critical issues could be presented and discussed in one meeting, and a vote taken at the next meeting. Be sure to inform your homegroup of any ~~important~~ upcoming votes.

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: DISTRICT MEETINGS

In Hawai'i, district business meetings are held once every month. There are fourteen (14) districts in Hawai'i, with seven (7) on Oahu, three (3) on Maui and the Big Island and one (1) on Kauai. GSRs and district committee officers meet to discuss matters of importance to their specific district, Hawaii Area 17, and A.A. Although most groups join the district in which their meeting is located, this is not mandatory; groups join districts to whom they are attracted.

Hawai'i Area 17 has fourteen (14) Districts. All A.A. members may attend district meetings and area assemblies. In most areas, only elected GSRs and alternates (when the GSR is absent) may vote (A.A. Service Manual page 12). Ideally, each registered A.A. group should have a GSR attending district meetings, but, sadly, sometimes and for a variety of reasons, this is not the case. Each GSR has a vote on district matters and in district elections (A.A. Service Manual page 14).

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

- 01 – Diamond Head
- 02 – Honolulu
- 03 – Leeward
- 04 – Windward
- 05 – Maui No Ka Oi
- 06 – Kauai
- 07 – Hilo Hamakua
- 08 – West Hawaii
- 09 – Central North Shore
- 10 – Waikiki
- 11 – Kihei
- 12 – Puna
- 13 – Tri-Island
- 17 – Waianae

(Please refer to *The Structure and Guidelines* for definition of the above Districts.)

The tone of a district meeting is one of being more structured than a homegroup business meeting, but less formal than an area assembly. Some districts have "official" guidelines and by-laws that they adhere to. Many districts loosely follow Robert's Rules of Order, discussed in detail in Chapter 8. The presence of some structure is evident in that a GSR will receive written minutes and a treasurer's report, rather than a verbal one. Motions are made and seconded to accept these reports by participants eligible to vote at that meeting.

After the minutes and the treasurer's report have been accepted, unfinished business and new business will be discussed. Later in the meeting, GSRs are given time to give a homegroup report. Time constraints do not allow lengthy reports, so a well-prepared GSR is an asset to the district meeting. Here is 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 GSR reports is the DCM report. They have a lot to say; so keen listening skills will be a plus. Sometimes, a DCM will invite a guest speaker (for instance, the Hawai'i Area 17 Corrections Committee Chair) to the district meeting. Take notes. Whether the information comes from your fellow GSRs, the DCM, the district officers or visiting guest speakers, do not rely on your memory.

You will find organizing your paperwork and computer files will help. This will help reduce the clutter and keep you from becoming confused. As mentioned earlier, you will be given written minutes and a treasurer's report. Likewise, the DCM will distribute a lot of paperwork for you to go over. Then, you will

get more paperwork at the area assemblies. Organizing your paperwork means lessening the odds of it getting lost. Some will prefer to keep copies on their computer rather than paper copies.

Being ready for the district meeting means, not only showing up, but bringing your folder and your homegroup business meeting notes, as well. Do not forget a pen.

Briefly, just as all the GSRs in a district meet to discuss A.A. issues, so do all the DCMs in Hawai'i Area 17 meet to discuss those same vital issues at the Area 17 Committee Meeting. This is one of the ways that our delegate receives information of how Hawai'i's groups are doing. The DCM, in return, learns about what is happening in A.A., nationally and internationally, and passes this message on to the GSRs at the next district meeting.

CHAPTER 4: AREA ASSEMBLIES

STRUCTURE & GUIDELINES

The Hawai'i Area Structure & Guidelines (from now on identified as the *S&G*) is a document by which the Hawai'i Area 17 Assembly operates. 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 their position, they can obtain a copy of the S&G from the area website, www.area17aa.org, their DCM or Hawai'i Area 17 Alternate Delegate.

WHO ATTENDS AREA ASSEMBLIES?

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 its behalf. Voting members include the Hawai'i Area 17 Officers, DCMs, Area Standing Committee Chairs, Intergroup Chairs, and, of course, the GSRs

HOW OFTEN ARE ASSEMBLIES HELD?

Currently, Hawai'i Area 17 holds 3 assemblies in **odd years** and 4 assemblies in **even years**. A fourth assembly may be scheduled in 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 GSRs the purpose of this assembly is to familiarize the GSRs 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, GSRs participate in sharing sessions, also

known as, Roundtables. The alternate delegate and past delegates usually facilitate the GSR roundtable sessions. Topics discussed at the roundtable often include GSR 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.

Regular area business items, such as various reports from service workers other than the GSRs, are also on the agenda. So, the new GSR would benefit best by listening first, then asking questions about issues that are still unclear to them. The pace is usually medium to fast. If a GSR finds themselves "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 early in sobriety, you will catch on and everything will fall into place, if you regularly attend your district meetings and area assemblies. Also, feel free to ask for help.

Inform-the-Delegate Assembly: About two months before the assembly is held, GSRs will receive a question or questions from their DCMs or Area Standing Committee Chair along with background material to be reviewed.

What is important to keep in mind is that every registered A.A. meeting in the U.S., its territories, and Canada will be discussing the very same questions. Simply put, the questions focus on how A.A. is doing in the areas of Recovery, Unity, and Service. Once a GSR gets this question, the GSR should present it to the homegroup for discussion, taking care to write down the group's response(s).

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 them to New York, where the process is repeated once again, and this time with other delegates. This process has enabled A.A. to grow, harmoniously, worldwide.

Budget Assembly: The Budget Assembly is (perhaps) the most challenging of all the assemblies and for the obvious reason – money. Discussing and agreeing on a budget must be done if the area is to run effectively. For this assembly you may want to employ the help of past GSRs, or your sponsor. Another helpful resource is to seek information from the *S&G*, particularly the Priority of Spending, page 7. The Priority of Spending indicates the key areas for the distribution of the 7th Tradition contributions.

First, every GSR will receive a proposed budget for the ensuing year, prepared by the Hawai'i Area 17 Finance Committee, from their DCM. The budget ought to be taken to the homegroup. See if the homegroup would like copies of the budget made.

Next, find out whether your homegroup wants to accept the proposed budget. Ask

your group members what they would like to keep and if there were 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. Often your DCM will 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 GSRs. The FC has been known to make amendments after meeting with the GSRs, and the DCM will keep the GSRs informed as the process develops. Any objections to items on the budget should be voiced as early in the process as possible as no line-item discussions or changes will be entertained at the Budget Assembly.

Finally, the Budget Assembly arrives. GSRs will be asked to vote on the final proposed budget. Any suggestions should have been given when the FC member visited the individual districts. 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. **Remember, 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 – GSRs will be given new questions to discuss with their homegroups.

Budget Assembly: The purpose and process are the same as the previous year.

Election Assembly: The purpose of the election assembly is to choose the area officers who will 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* pages 110-111.

WHO DECIDES WHAT DISTRICT WILL HOST WHAT ASSEMBLY?

The decision is made by lottery. The name of each district is put into a “hat” and a district is drawn for each of the following year’s assemblies and committee meetings. 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 airfare and registration expenses of its GSRs. This is the proper use of the 7th Tradition. Some districts in Hawai’i render full aid to GSRs whose groups cannot afford to fund their GSRs. Some districts cover half the expenses, and the group must shoulder the other half. Some districts have no means of supporting their GSRs 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

Registration: All participants must register online at <http://www.area17aa.org> before attending an assembly. Also, you will receive a registration flyer from the hosting district. It would be best to mail in your registration form and payment **as soon as possible**, so 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? vegan? gluten free?
- ❑ Lodging needs—home stay or not? Saturday nights.
- ❑ Transportation—to and from airport if you are off island. (Note: if your plans include leaving early 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 observed.

Don’t forget to take your **A.A. Service Manual, Area 17 Structures & Guidelines**, and this **G.S.R. Handbook** with you to the assembly.

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

Imagine 100+ GSRs arriving at an 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 GSRs do – and that is registering with the area registrar.

Former GSRs 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 copies of items you need. You will find them on a designated literature table. To be financially prudent, Hawaii Area 17 decided to provide a **limited** number of paper copies of documents being discussed at the assembly. Attendees are asked to make copies of their own and bring them with them either as hard copies or on their computers/other devices. Copies of the documents will be posted on the area website in advance of the assembly and should be downloaded or printed as desired. **Copies at the assembly are intended for those unable to print them prior to the assembly.**

CHAPTER 7: THE AGENDA:

The agenda is designed by the Hawai'i Area 17 Chair. Each GSR. will want an agenda, either downloaded and printed or electronically. Please check 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.
 - Selected readings done.
 - Count of eligible voters is taken, and a 2/3 majority is calculated.
 - Agreement to the use of Rules of Debate and simple majority vote on some agenda items. (More details about simple majority votes given in Chapter 8).
 - Minutes of previous assembly were distributed shortly after the previous assembly. Check area website, area17aa.org.
 - 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, DCMs, Intergroup Chairs
 - Special purpose motions/discussions addressed. For example: Orientation, Inform-the-Delegate, questions, etc...

Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are provided by the hosting district.

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
- “What to Take Back” presented by area chair.
- Announcements by hosting district
- ADJOURNMENT (Motion and second needed.)

Once again, breakfast and lunch will be served. Your registration fee covers the cost of hosting the assembly including all five meals.

CHAPTER 8: UNDERSTANDING ROBERT’S RULES OF ORDER

The following procedures are accepted practices of the General Service Conference and 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. (See Appendix A for Brief Guide to Motions.)

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 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 of Order, which helps it to proceed more closely in accordance with the Twelve 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*.

Our tradition of conducting business is **loosely** based on the “Robert’s Rules of Order.”

- It is the member who can change the whole course of the meeting if they have acquired knowledge of the fundamental laws and procedures. They, then, can make a most effective contribution to the group’s needs. . . (Roberts’ Rules of Order 130-131).
- What is the primary rule? We discuss **only one motion at a time.**

Here is how we operate:

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

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, GSRs, DCMs and district officers can bring motions to the floor.
- ❑ At the area level, the list expands to include standing committee and intergroup chairs, and area officers.

Presenting a Proposal for Assembly Consideration: Anyone may present a proposal to the assembly at any time, but the following process of presenting a proposal for discussion at the assembly floor is recommended:

1. The author presents the proposal at their homegroup. ("I move 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 author submits the proposal to the area chair to be discussed at a committee meeting prior to being presented at the area assembly. As a courtesy, please notify the chair a month in advance of the committee meeting if possible.

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 submit the proposal to the general service office to be considered as an agenda item at the next general service conference.

General Rules of Debate: These rules 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, if 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 simple majority to pass.

Simple Majority and 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 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.

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 they heard something during the expression of the minority opinion that changed their 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 then asks, "Does anyone who voted in the minority want to speak?"

- If no, the motion stands.
- If yes, all who voted in the minority have a chance to speak.

After everyone has 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 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 their 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 timewaster, for it can force the assembly body to reconsider a question that might well have been decided the first time around, if it had been thoroughly examined from all sides.

See Appendix A1 for *Brief Guide to Motions* table.

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 a crucial 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 slow in making changes. Except in rare cases, there should be no rush.
- Has a substantial majority carried the vote? (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 Twelve Concepts for World Service*] states "All decisions should be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, substantial unanimity.")

Sometimes, the GSR may not personally agree with their group's conscience concerning specific issues. What is important to remember is that, if the GSR 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 GSR 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, 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.

Fourth – 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, you can use your sponsor, DCM. or anyone that you respect, that has been or still is in general service. 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: The following Standing Committees are recognized as part of Hawaii Area 17:

1. Archives
2. Convention Steering Committee Chair
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 & Accessibilities
11. Website Committee

Service Meeting: During your term as a G.S.R., you will be attending several

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 **P**acific **R**egion **A**lcoholics **A**nonymous **S**ervice **A**ssembly 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 rotates among the 16 areas in the Pacific Region. The purpose of 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 members 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 (GSC).

Regional Forum: Regional Forums are sponsored by the General Service Office (GSO) 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 members of the General Service Board of Trustees, certain GSO staff members of A.A. World Services and the Grapevine staff. The purpose is to bring the General Service Office to you. The Forums acquaint GSRs, 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 GSR, 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 intense 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 Twelve Concepts for World Service, 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 GSRs are:

- Don’t take yourself too seriously but take your sobriety seriously.

- ❑ Consider getting 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 in taking a group conscience, ask your group members how 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 sometimes 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. This might occur when presenting the Inform-the-Delegate questions or the proposed budget.

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 on your business calendar such as, the district meetings, area assemblies, workshops, and other meetings.

The Delegate: Explain to 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 their conscience, instead of carrying the groups' conscience of Hawai'i.

The group 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, text, or email group members to remind them of upcoming group events.

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 GSR can facilitate the discussion while the alternate takes notes. If there is no alternate, ask a member to take notes for you.

Distribute the information: Email or distribute hard 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 copying an agenda of issues to be discussed is that an agenda will help keep homegroup members 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 assure that everyone has had an opportunity to share, but you will also 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 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 GSR., to observe the group conscience from a different point of view. Sometimes, this has proven to be highly 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.

Personal General Service Inventory

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 GSR 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*.

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.

Suggested personal general service inventory questions:

1. Am I doing MY job?
2. Do I make weekly announcements at the homegroup?
3. Do I keep the announcements as short and simple as possible?
4. Do I show enthusiasm for service work (attraction) when making announcements?
5. Do I make announcements at meetings where no G.S.R. is present, if something is happening in general service?
6. Do I keep trying to get an alternate GSR (or DCM) and bring that person to district or area meetings and pass on to them that I have learned?
7. Do I occasionally suggest one of the Traditions as a topic at a recovery meeting?
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?
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?
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."
11. Do I read *The A.A. Service Manual* and do my job as outlined? Am I committed to my service duties?
12. As a GSR, DCM 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 the group decides to do is not my responsibility. My job is to see that the group has all the facts to make an informed decision.
13. Do I encourage sponsees to get involved in general service?

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Appendix A

Brief Guide to Motions

At a microphone, give your name and service position.

To do this:	You Say:	When another has the floor?	Is a second required?	Is discussion permitted?	Can it be amended?	Required vote?
To Make a Motion	I Move that...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
To Amend a Motion	I Move that the Motion be Amended to Read	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
To Withdraw a Motion	I Wish to Withdraw my Motion	Yes	No	No	No	Majority
To End Discussion	I Call the Question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
To Object to an Error in Procedure	Point of Order	Yes	No	No	No	Chair Decides
To Table an Item	I Move We Table This...	No	Yes	No	No	Majority