

Chapter Two

The Group and Its G.S.R.

For most A.A.s, membership in a home group is one of the keys to continuing sobriety. In a home group, they accept service responsibilities and learn to sustain friendships. The home group affords individual A.A.s the privilege of voting on issues that affect the Fellowship as a whole; it is the very basis of the service structure. While most A.A. members attend other groups regularly, the home group is where they participate in business meetings and cast their vote as part of the group conscience of the Fellowship as a whole. As with all group conscience matters, each member has one vote. The Long Form of Tradition Three and a section of Warranty Six, Concept 12, aptly describe what an A.A. group is:

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

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

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

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

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

communicates the group conscience, can the Conference truly act for A.A. as a whole.

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

Qualifications

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

Duties

- G.S.R.s attend district meetings.
- They also attend area assemblies.
- G.S.R.s serve as the mail contact with the General Service Office, and they are listed in the A.A. directories as contacts for their groups. They receive the G.S.O. bulletin *Box 4-5-9*, and keep their groups abreast of A.A. activities all over the world.
- They serve as mail contact with their district committee member and with the area committee.
- G.S.R.s supply their D.C.M.s with up-to-date group information, which is relayed to G.S.O., either directly to the Records department or through the area registrar updating G.S.O.'s database, for inclusion in the directories and for G.S.O. mailings.
- They are knowledgeable about material available from G.S.O. — new literature, guidelines, bulletins, videos, tapes, kits, etc. — and they are responsible for passing such information on to the groups.
- They learn everything they can about the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts and are familiar with this manual, the books *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and *A.A. Comes of Age*, *Twelve Concepts for World Service*, and the pamphlets "The A.A. Group," "A.A. Tradition – How It Developed," "The Twelve Traditions Illustrated," and "The Twelve Concepts Illustrated."
- They usually serve on group steering committees.
- They work with group treasurers to develop practical plans for group support of G.S.O., such as the Regular Contribution Plan and the Birthday Plan. They encourage the group to support the area and district committees and local central offices or intergroups, and they are familiar with the leaflet "Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix."
- They participate in district and area service meetings, and often help with planning for area get-togethers and conventions. Following these events, they make reports to their groups for the benefit of those who could not attend.