

Area 72 – Pre-Conference Material for the 71st General Service Conference

Purpose: The purpose of the Pre-Conferences is for the Delegate to communicate with the GSRs (and through them, to the Group) about some issues which will be addressed at the General Service Conference (held in April). This way the GSRs can inform the Delegate about their Groups conscience on the issues so that the Delegate has a sense of our Area while attending the General Service Conference.

The full conference agenda is available with background and individual summaries with question. There are over 100 items and the topics will all be discussed by each committee, and the committees may or may not send recommendations to the whole Conference for consideration and vote. If you would like to review certain sections and provide feedback or even feedback on the entire conference it is available on the area web page.

For the purpose of the Pre-Conference - 5 agenda topics have been selected for discussion.

How do you or your group provide feedback on different agenda items?

1. **New: Survey** With the help of our amazing tech team we have created 2 surveys for you to provide information on you and your groups thoughts.
 - **Survey 1** will be only the items that we discuss during the Pre-Conferences. Remember to save your responses.
 - [Click here to access summary and survey](#)
 - **Survey 2** includes all items on the agenda broken down by committee. You can complete all or part of the survey. Just remember to save your responses.
2. Email me at delegate@area72aa.org

Deadline: I would like all feedback by April 12, 2021.

Items for consideration:

1. Policy/Admissions – Consider request regarding participation of online groups in the General Service Structure
2. Corrections - Discuss innovative ways of carrying the message to alcoholics in correctional facilities/programs.
3. Report and Charter – Discuss the AA Directories (Canada, Eastern U.S., and Western U.S.)
4. Literature - This discussion is meant to sparks a conversation – Is there a problem with our literature that prevents someone from identifying with our common message? IF so, why?
5. Finance - Reconsider the 1972 G.S.C. Advisory Action stating “G.S.O. should not accept contributions from clubs, listed or known as such, whether or not composed solely of A.A. members. Contributions are welcome from groups meeting in clubs as long as they are sent in the name of the group.”

Please pay special attention in these summaries to the section that ask the questions. This is what your Delegate needs to learn from you.

Thank you for participating in the Conference process and helping me be better prepared.

Yours in Joyous Service

Geene D.

Western Washington Area 72 Delegate Panel 71

Item 1

Committee: Policy/Admissions

Consider request regarding participation of online only groups in the General Service Structure

Questions for discussion:

1. How does your group feel about online only groups wanting to participate within the General Service Structure?
2. Do you or your group think online only groups not participating in the service structure is a problem that should be address by GSO? Please explain why or why not?
3. Who are we missing from General Service without allowing online only meetings to be recognized?

What is the request?

The committee agreed to forward to the 2021 Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions six proposed agenda items related to the topic of online groups not affiliated with a physical meeting space having a voice and a vote in the General Service structure. While each of the six agenda items are related to the same topic of the participation of online-only groups in the General Service structure, they are unique in how they are worded, their path to becoming an agenda item, and what if any background they have included with the submission; all have a unique way of wording the request.

Each individual proposal is listed below, and the submission documentation provided is what makes up most of the background. With the help of the International assignment, a request was sent to all the General Services offices outside the U.S./Canada structure asking for any shared experience they might be able to offer regarding online groups and their participation in general service.

***Clarification: This item is different than the discussion topic that is occurring within the Area regarding the need for a virtual district. I want to be clear to not confuse the two. The requests below are being made at a broader US/Canada level.*

J.1 - Consider a request from a local district that recognizes "Online Groups" as voting members of the district and asks that the Conference take action to grant "Online AA Groups" the same privileges as "Brick and Mortar Groups".

J.2 - That the General Service Conference consider allowing participation of all virtual groups, not affiliated with a physical meeting space, by creating a 94th Area to our Service Structure that will encompass those A.A. groups.

J.3 - Adapt the General Service structure to recognize online-only groups as official groups. Without that recognition, members have no voice and are denied access to service opportunities.

J.4 - Consider allowing Virtual or Online Groups to register under their respective district and area instead of the Online Intergroup.

J.5 - Consider holding a discussion about how to give online only (virtual) meetings a voice and a vote in the General Service Structure and access to General Service Offices (GSO) services.

J.6 - Discuss the current procedure of referring non-face-to-face Groups to an entity outside the A.A. service structure to be listed and consider creating a Traditions based policy that meets the needs of the Fellowship and its Groups.

History (See background for details)

1. Online-only meetings are not a momentary phenomenon. AAs have been meeting online for 25 years. The Online Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous (OIAA) directed Area 72's Online Meetings Ad Hoc Committee to an article in Grapevine entitled, "How do cyber meetings act like F2F AA meetings?" (AA Grapevine, May 1996).
2. Fifteen years later the author raises the same questions we ask today: "Questions facing online groups are: Are they to be registered at GSO as face to face meetings are? How do online meetings fit into the existing service structure? GSO does not register online meetings at present."

Why is it important?

1. Accessibility and inclusiveness
2. During the Pandemic, groups everywhere transitioned to online virtual platforms to continue to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholics.
3. This agenda item is specific to the participation of online-only groups in the General Service structure.
4. Online groups have been carrying the message of AA for year yet are not included in the general service structure.

Information for consideration:

1. Who participates in online only groups?
2. There is no way for an online only group to be registered with GSO, have a group number, or a voice in AA affairs.
3. Online only groups b are unable to fully participate in decisions made by Alcoholics Anonymous because they do not belong to a District or an Area.
4. Online only groups are not provided a Group Service Number (GSN) by GSO they are provided a customer service number.

5. General Service structure is entirely geographically based. Currently all online only groups are categorized and listed in the international directory.
6. If a district and area are open-minded, online only groups can participate in service, but it is an exception (A15, A51 and A72) rather than the rule in US and Canada.
7. GSO places online only groups into a fictitious Area 95 and directs them to participate in service through OIAA, Online Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous. Intergroups are outside of the General Service structure.
8. The international Coordinator at G.S.O., requested experience strength and hope from other GSO around the world. Asking the following question. There full responses are in background.
 - a. Did online-only groups participate in your general service structure before the pandemic? • Are they able to participate now? • If online-only groups do participate in your service structure, are there any concerns that members from outside of your structure have a voice and/or a vote?
 - b. There were a wide range of responses:
 - 1) GSOs in other countries are in the same quandary as the US/Canada.
 - 2) Australia created a virtual Area be included in the review of the General Service structure.
 - 3) Brazil reports having a lot of online meetings, but they are not included in their General Service structure.
 - 4) Great Britain (GB)/Continental European Region – Shared experience and recommended the recognition of online groups. They gave examples of the request that their General Service Board GB was asked to investigate the implications, practicalities and how such groups can be incorporated within the structure of AA GB.
 - 5) Ireland recognizes online and physical groups as equal. Ireland allows online only groups to participate in the General Service structure as long as they have a contact. (Encourage you to read Ireland's response found on page 8 in the background.)
9. Last year Area 72 organized an ad hoc committee to investigate online meetings. The report is included in background information.
10. Using Area 72 as an example:
 - a. Pre-COVID-19, Area 72 had virtually no online-only meetings.
 - b. Pre-COVID-19, 3,553 meetings were listed on Area 72's website, www.area72aa.org. In the early months of the pandemic (March to early July), 28% of those groups formed online meetings -1000 groups are meeting online.
 - c. In Area 72, at least 53 online-only meetings were discovered to have formed in four months, between March 6 to early July 2020.

- d. Area 72 has allowed GSR's from online only groups to full participate at the Area Assembly. Yet they are unable to participate in a district.
- 11. GSO currently sees online only meetings as outside of this service structure due to the international geography of online meetings. Online only groups can register with the Online Intergroup. Intergroups are entities that provide services to AA, groups, and the public, but are not included in the upside-down triangle.
- 12. By allowing online groups to register normally, more data would be available to draw on to determine the need for an online Area.
- 13. It would be a major change in the service structure, and those are never taken lightly or quickly.

Background documents: - Item 1 Background PDF. Additional Background can be found at area72aa.org.

- 1. Submitter letter District 10/Area 15 (South Florida)
- 2. Submitter letter Area 51(North Carolina) a. Area 51 Additional information b. Application for Additional Delegate Area (for reference)
- 3. Submitter letter Portland Eye Opener Group
- 4. Submitter letter Area 20 (Northern Illinois) a. Area 20 Additional information
- 5. Submitter letter District 17 Area 72 (Western Washington District 17) and Area 72 Online Committee Ad Hoc Report
- 6. Submitter letter Tues. Night Traditions & Concepts Study Group
- 7. Sharing gathered from International G.S.O. offices

Discussion/Notes:

Item 2

Committee: Corrections

Discuss innovative ways of carrying the message to alcoholics in correctional facilities.

Questions for discussion:

1. What are new innovative ways to carry the message to alcoholics in correctional facilities/programs?
2. What do you or your group think about the included shared ideas?
3. What new ideas or suggestions could you or group could share?

What is the request?

A letter from members of Alcoholics Anonymous who belong to various Home Groups across the United States requested a “sharing from the Fellowship to assist A.A. groups in finding innovative ways of carrying the message to alcoholics in correctional facilities/programs” for consideration and discussion.

Why is this important?

1. There needs to be updated information about possible solutions and resources with which the Groups are finding success. While it is still important to have coordination performed at the district or area level, using the tools that have emerged during this difficult time can help more Groups participate in this vital Twelve Step work.
2. AA’s primary purpose - to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic.

Information for consideration:

1. Each correctional facility and program are unique, and because of the pandemic there are challenges for Groups who want to carry the message into them.
2. As Groups have been finding new ways to hold meetings, work with alcoholics, and participate in the service structure, we have also been finding new ways in which we might reach alcoholics in corrections facilities and programs.
3. A few examples of ways others have been trying to still carry the message of AA into correctional facilities:
 - a. For example, one Group has meetings in person (when mandates allow) as well as through a teleconference call. An inmate from a state penitentiary called a member of the Group during a meeting and the member hit the speaker button. This allowed one alcoholic from “behind the walls” to start attending that meeting. As there were other members already attending the meeting via teleconference, the addition was most welcomed! When he was released, he became a member of that Home Group.
 - b. Gathering sharing from the Fellowship could give Groups ideas on how they might carry their A.A. message in correctional facilities. There needs to be updated information about possible solutions and resources with which the Groups are

finding success. While it is still important to have coordination performed at the district or area level, using the tools that have emerged during this difficult time can help more Groups participate in this vital Twelve Step work.”

- c. Video - A local correction committee in Minnesota created a video combining their public service announcement, "Sobriety in AA: Opening Doors to a Life Without Drinking" with the 3:57 minute version of "A New Freedom". The video was broadcast throughout the facility.

Sobriety in AA: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXvcszOH60M>

A new freedom: https://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/a-new-freedom

- d. Literature - Female inmates were given access to the Grapevine issues that were available for free during the pandemic. Administrative staff allowed literature to be dropped off. A Large quantity of books was purchased for when the facilities re-open.
- e. The Correction Chairs have supplied all chaplains with literature.
- f. Technology –
 - ✓ Packets of GSO pamphlets with meeting resources (local directories, website information, and Meeting Guide information) were prepared for inmates once the facility re-opens. TABLETS FOR INMATES
 - ✓ The Corrections department provided female inmates tablets in order to access approved A.A. stories.
- g. Zoom meetings -
 - ✓ In Area 36 Southern Minnesota the Administrative Staff assisted in establishing video conference A.A. meetings (jails and detention centers.)
 - ✓ The jail in Franklin County has begun video conference meetings for inmates.

Background documents: - Item 2 Corrections Background PDF

Additional Background can be found at area72aa.org

1. Proposed Agenda Item from a Tuesday Night Concept Study
2. Excerpts from Request for Sharing (Activity Report) 11/23/2020
3. Shared experience from H & I committee member

Notes:

Item 3

Committee: Report and Charter

Discuss the AA Directories (Canada, Eastern U.S., and Western U.S.)

Questions for discussion:

1. Are you or your group familiar with the AA Directories (Canada, Eastern U.S., and Western U.S.)?
2. What could be an alternative method of accessing and distributing the contact information contained in the A.A. Directories?

What the request?

In 2019, the committee considered the A.A. Directories (Canada, Eastern U.S., and Western U.S.) especially in light of the new ERP System and the Meeting Guide App, and requested that the General Service Office explore alternative methods of accessing and distributing the contact information contained in the A.A. Directories. The committee requested that a report be brought back to the 2020 Report and Charter Conference Committee. This report will focus on the role directories currently play, what is involved in continuing to print directories, and what an alternative to printed directories might be. The report will hopefully provide context and background for further discussion by the committee and by the Fellowship.

Information for consideration

1. Who uses directories and why? As the past History & Actions mention, regional directories are to provide A.A. members with contact information about groups, especially members who are travelling or who live in rural or remote areas.
2. Directories generally aren't used by newcomers, but they may be used for newcomers, to supply them with a phone number of a member in a group near where they live or will be going. Intergroups/Central Offices (IG/COs) have traditionally purchased and used regional directories.
3. The A.A. Directories are considered confidential publications and ought to be used for A.A. purposes only. They are not to be used as a mailing list or for any form of solicitation or commercial venture.
4. The Organization of This Directory
 - a. The Regional Trustees, Trustees-at-Large and Special International Contacts appear on page iv.
 - b. The Online Intergroups and Online Meetings appear on page v.
 - c. The International Correspondence Meetings and Telephone Meetings appear on page vi.
 - d. General Service Conference Area Web Sites appear on page vii.
 - e. The Listing of Area Delegates and Chairpersons begins on page 1.
 - f. The Central Offices and Intergroups located throughout the country are listed by

city within each province or territory beginning on page 8 of this directory. It is suggested that these offices be used for local information.

- g. The Individual Groups are listed by city within each province or territory alphabetically.



Western United States AA Directory

Background: Item 3 – Report and Charter

1. Report on Regional Directories 2.10.2020
2. Advisory Actions and additional Committee considerations
3. Samples of one or more of the current directories (see note)

Notes:

Item 4

Committee: Literature

This discussion is meant to sparks a conversation – Is there a problem with our literature that prevents someone from identifying with our common message? IF so, what?

70 GSC Big Book Presentation –

<https://vimeopro.com/user112910871/big-book-riptab/video/500617913>

Questions for discussion:

1. Should the Literature Committee explore possible solutions that could help make our message more available? IF so, what additional information would be helpful to determine if additional items are needed to increase accessibility and relatability to the AA program?
2. Is there a problem with our literature that prevents someone from identifying with our common message? If so, why?
3. What has been done to address accessibility/relatability challenges in our literature?
4. Our program of recovery depends upon on the alcoholic to be able to self-identify. What could be done about relatability? How is our big book meeting the need of self-identification?
5. Do we need to grow and change with time?
6. Would a translation into modern or simple langue help? What tools would help others understand our program of recover? Workbooks? Dictionaries?

Information for consideration:

1. There are several motions from the fellowship that relate to accessibility and relatability all trying to lower the barriers to recovery of the Big Book.
2. A subcommittee was formed called “Researching Issues, Possible Tools and Access to our Big Book.” They gave a presentation at last year’s GSC which was requested to be shared with the fellowship. The link is at the top of this page.
 - a. The committee also noted the specific options outlined in the report to discuss digital material related to the message of recovery along with the idea to develop a plain language version of the Big Book. This idea of a new book is not meant to replace the Big Book, rather to overcome relatability and accessibility barriers so the A.A. message might reach more still-suffering alcoholics.
 - b. The subcommittee has been tasked with identifying and gathering information about the issues driving both previous and current requests regarding the language and tools to access the book Alcoholics Anonymous. The objective is to collect relevant information concerning all aspects related to these issues.
 - c. Two main themes have been identified from our discussions:

- ✓ Accessibility – due to the literacy level or lack of ability to adequately comprehend the message of recovery by the individual as written in the book Alcoholics Anonymous.
 - ✓ Relatability – changes in current language and culture (including views on modern language, gender and religion) which hinder the individual’s ability to relate and embrace the program asset forth in the book Alcoholics Anonymous.
- d. The subcommittee’s report suggested that nearly all requests come back to accessibility and relatability. What has been done to address accessibility/relatability challenges?
 - e. Our program of recovery depends upon on the alcoholic to be able to self-identify. What could be done about relatability? How is our big book meeting the need of self-identification?
3. Concerns about our literature are not new.
 - a. Bill W. – Reasons for a second edition “To bring the story section up-to-day, to portray more adequately a cross section of those who have found help...Since the audience for the book is likely to be newcomers, anything from the point view of content or style that might offend or alienate those who are not familiar with the program should be carefully eliminated.” Archives Letter from Bill W.

Below are some of the different proposed items for consideration by the Literature Committee

Big Book

1. Add pages 3 through 41 of the pamphlet “The A.A. Group” as an appendix in the next printing of the Big Book.
2. Consider request to revise the book Alcoholics Anonymous – the first 164 pages.
Considerations of the changes to the Big Book
 - a. Pronoun usage – where possible the gender-neutral form should be incorporated.
 - b. Passages or sections that are no longer consistent with or relevant when taken in context of society in general or the A.A. membership composition.
 - c. The chapters To Wives and The Family Afterward should specifically be evaluated for revisions to be more consistent with today’s membership.
 - d. Considering that 38% of the fellowship are women, the chapter To Wives and some of The Family Afterward have ceased to be particularly relevant, as written, in the context of our current and future membership of the fellowship are women, the chapter To Wives and some of The Family Afterward have ceased to be particularly relevant, as written, in the context of our current and future membership.

3. Develop a Fifth Edition – A request from Area 20 (Norther Illinois) suggested changes to reflect our changing society; because alcoholics cannot identify with any of the stories due to the age of the stories; the stories need to reflect the current socio-economic experiences of the average person; and there are no stories that reflect the current societal experience.
4. Consider development of a draft Fourth Edition of the Spanish version of the Big Book.
5. Consider if proposed agenda items for plain language, simplified language, accessible translations, and large print versions of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*.
6. Consider the development of to help study the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, can be addressed with a common solution.
7. Develop aids to help understand the Big Book.

Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions:

1. Consider removing the phrase “opposite sex” from paragraph two on page 117 in the chapter “Step Twelve.”
2. To reconsider use of the phrase “lustful enough to rape” in paragraph one on page 66 in the chapter “Step Six.”
3. Consider a proposal to add the long form of the traditions to the top of the page of each tradition.

Background documents: - Item 4 Literature Background (This is lengthy – just a caution before printing)

Additional Background can be found at area72aa.org

Notes:

Item 5

Committee - Finance

Reconsider the 1972 G.S.C. Advisory Action stating “G.S.O. should not accept contributions from clubs, listed or known as such, whether or not composed solely of A.A. members. Contributions are welcome from groups meeting in clubs as long as they are sent in the name of the group.”

Questions for discussion:

1. Should districts, areas or GSO be able to accept contributions from a Club? Why or why not?

Information for consideration:

1. A GSC Advisory Action in 1972 states: “The Conference agreed that G.S.O. should not accept contributions from clubs, listed or known as such, whether or not composed solely of A.A. members. Contributions are welcome from Groups.”
2. What is a club? (There are other variations of this but this is a general example of a club.)
 - a. A meeting space is rented by various groups meeting at this location.
 - b. The club is not a part of A.A. however the members of the club are A.A. members.
 - c. The club may rent to groups from other twelve step program.
 - d. Money is collected from each group (AA and non-AA) to cover the rent cost.
3. District 21 in Area 21 (Southern Illinois) requested a reconsideration of the 1972 G.S.C. Action stating “G.S.O. should not accept contributions from clubs, listed or known as such, whether or not composed solely of A.A. members. Contributions are welcome from groups meeting in clubs as long as they are sent in the name of the group.”
4. It has been almost 50 years since this matter was last addressed by the GCS.

Historical context

What happened. District 21 made an initiative in 2019 to get our local Club more involved at the District level. This resulted in a few club members attending the monthly District meetings and a few groups selecting GSR's. Their involvement resulted in the Club sending a donation check in November 2019. District 21's position is they believe that the donation that the District received and returned in December 2019 was from money collected from AA members and made in good faith to our District. This contribution was discussed at a district meeting and voted to return the check received from the Club in accordance with guidance from the GSC. The minority opinion indicated understanding why it violates the 7th tradition and GSC Action; however, the opinion is that anyone that attends the meetings at the local Club is part of AA therefore the money should be accepted. He further stated that there is a difference between Clubs being an outside entity providing money versus a hospital being an outside entity.

Background documents: - Item 5 7th tradition and aa clubs

Additional Background can be found at area72aa.org

1. Letter from District 21

Notes: