

Area 42 G.S.R. Survival Guide

A Brief Training Guide for New (and not so new)
General Service Representatives

Adopted by Area Assembly September 1994

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Area 42 GSR Survival Guide

Table of Contents

	Page
Welcome to Alcoholics Anonymous General Service -----	1
GSR Preamble -----	1
Introduction to General Service -----	1
Conference Structure in North America -----	2
The Group -----	3
The District -----	3
NAGSC and SAGSC -----	3
The Area Committee -----	4
The Area -----	5
The Region -----	5
The General Service Conference -----	5
A.A. Worldwide -----	5
The GSR: Role and Responsibilities -----	6
Home Group Meetings -----	7
District Meetings -----	7
NAGSC/SAGSC Meetings -----	7
GSR's Voice and Vote at Area Meetings -----	8
GSRs: Suggestions for Effective Service -----	8
Election of Area Officers -----	9
Area Officer Positions -----	9
The Election Assembly -----	10
Rotation of Area 42 Officers -----	10
Election Procedure -----	10
Putting It All Together -----	12
Service Tools -----	12
Area 42/District Map-----	13

WELCOME TO ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS GENERAL SERVICE

The GSR Preamble

We are the General Service Representatives. We are the link in the chain of communication for our groups with the General Service Conference and the world of A.A. We realize the ultimate authority in A.A. is a loving God as he may express Himself in our group conscience. As trusted servants, our job is to bring information to our groups in order that they can reach an informed group conscience. In passing along 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 groups as a whole.

This Area 42 G.S.R. Survival Guide

- Define general service as distinct from group service;
- Describe the structure of A.A. general service in North America and elaborate on the peculiarities of this structure in Area 42
- Discuss the role and responsibilities of the GSR and offer suggestions on how to perform these duties enjoyably and effectively.

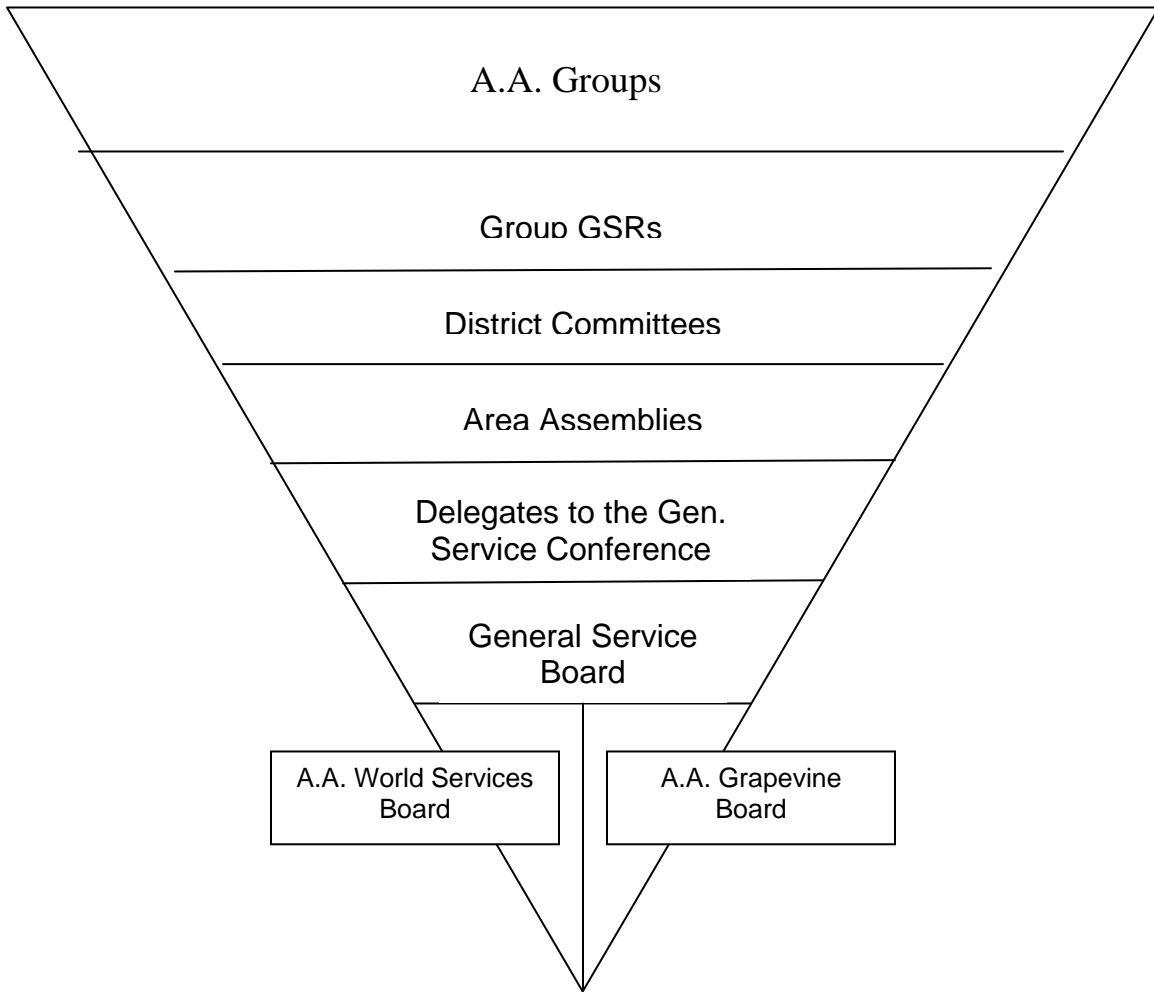
INTRODUCTION TO GENERAL SERVICE

“The Twelve Traditions make clear the principle that A.A., as such, should never be organized, that there are no bosses and no government in A.A. Yet at the same time, the Traditions recognize the need for some kind of organization to carry the message in ways that are impossible for the local groups – such as publication of a uniform literature and public information resources, helping new groups get started, publishing an international magazine, and carrying the message in other languages into other countries....”

Today, general services include all kinds of activities within the Conference structure, carried on by groups, districts, area committees, delegates, trustees, the General Service Office and the Grapevine. Usually, these services affect A.A. as a whole.”

A.A. Service Manual, Chapter One; Introduction to General Service (p. S15)

Here is the structure of the conference in North America: the “framework” in which the “general services” are carried out.



Constant communication among all parts of the structure is essential for our day-to-day functioning at all levels.

The Group

Constant communication among all parts of the structure is essential for our day-to-day functioning at all levels. Communication begins with the group.

“The strength of our whole A.A. service structure starts with the group...”

- Bill W. (as quoted in the pamphlet “G.S.R.”)

This is where the members participate in the group conscience and communicate it to the elected G.S.R. The best decisions are made when, in the spirit of Tradition Two,

- As many members of the group as possible participate in the process;
- Those participating express the widest range of perspectives on the subject;
- Enough time is allowed for the members to take all of the information into consideration before any final decision is reached.

One way or another, all healthy groups seem to have learned that this is the best way to arrive at an informed group conscience.

The District

Groups are organized into districts, usually are comprised of groups that are located near one another. Area 42 currently has 22 districts: twenty are geographically defined and two are linguistically defined. Groups in linguistic districts conduct their meetings in a non-English language. The G.S.R.s of the district elect a District Committee Member (DCM) to organize their district meetings and activities, provide support and information to the GSRs, and to provide communication between the GSRs and the Area Committee.

N.A.G.S.C and S.A.G.S.C.

Area 42 is peculiar among the areas in North America in as much as the area is divided into two entities. Not many of us remember how or when it happened, but general service members in Nevada Area 42 voted to divide the area into two parts. It was felt that the distance between Nevada’s two major population centers discouraged members from traveling to area events when they were held in “the other” end of the state. Further, group representation at assemblies could be heavily lopsided toward the part of the state that hosted the gathering. In this way we now have the Northern Area General Service Committee (NAGSC) and the Southern Area General Service Committee (SAGSC). Each of these entities has their own meetings, calendars and guidelines, but neither exists nor operates outside of the context of Area 42.

Both NAGSC and SAGSC have a Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Registrar and Archivist. In addition, each has Standing Committees such as Grapevine, Public

Information (PI), Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC), DCMs, Area and sub-area officers and Standing Committee chairpersons. GSRs are welcome to attend and participate in NAGSC/SAGSC meetings.

The Area Committee

The Area Committee consists of:

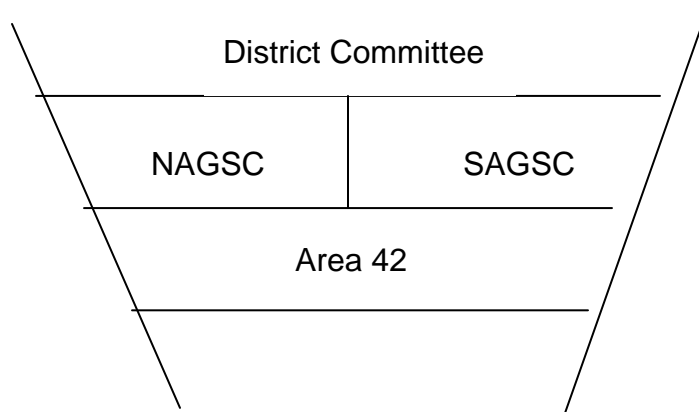
Area Officers (Delegate, Chairperson, Secretary, Archivist, Treasurer, Registrar) and their alternates, the DCM or alternate from each District and elected officers from NAGSC and SAGSC

The Area Committee meets in person at each assembly and by teleconference or web conference between Assemblies. The purpose of the Area Committee is to support the growth and harmony in the area service structure. It addresses service problems:

- o Insuring that our message is being carried appropriately to the public
- o Offering assistance to districts burdened with internal conflicts
- o Facilitates communication between the groups and the Delegate
- o Facilitates recommendations to the Assembly

In Area 42, the Area Committee is responsible for approving changes to the Area Website but can take no other action binding on the Area. The Groups communicate with the Area Committee through their DCMs.

Considering the north/south structure of Area 42, the middle section of the diagram from page three should look like this:



The Area

A.A. in North America is divided into 93 areas – often a state or province or a part of a state or province. In some cases an area encompasses more than one state or province. Area 42 includes the state of Nevada and the portion of California that lies on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada. One delegate is elected by each area to represent the area at the annual General Service Conference in New York.

The Region

The A.A. Service Manual shows the United States and Canada divided into eight regions:

- two in Canada
 - Eastern Canada
 - Western Canada
- and six in the United States
 - Northeast
 - Southeast (including Puerto Rico, the Bahamas, Bermuda and the Virgin Islands)
 - West Central
 - Southwest
 - Pacific (including Alaska, Hawaii, and Nevada Area 42 which actually contains part of California)

Each Region has a Regional Trustee who serves 4 years on the General Service Board.

The General Service Conference

The 93 Area Delegates, Trustees, Directors, General Service Office staff and Grapevine staff comprise the working members of the General Service Conference. Although Committees are at work throughout the year, the annual conference is the culmination of the year's activities. The Conference is where the collective group conscience of U.S./Canada A.A. comes together to take actions that will guide the groups in years to come.

A.A. Worldwide

Alcoholics Anonymous is a worldwide organization. There are General Service Offices in many countries, each of which is autonomous. No attempt is made to have the General Service Office (USA and Canada) in New York be the "world capitol" of A.A. Rather, the New York office is available to share experience, strength and hope with offices in other countries, mainly because it has been in existence a much longer period of time.

THE GSR: ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As an elected General Service Representative (GSR) you now represent the voice of your A.A. Group's conscience to the AA General Service Conference held in New York each April. Through your elected District Committee Member (DCM) and the Area 42 Delegate, you will become the two-way link between your Group and world of A.A. as a whole. As such, you and fellow GSRs worldwide have become the key to the Unity of A.A. By your active presence in General Service you will be helping ensure that A.A. will still be here for the future generations of suffering drunks seeking a way out.

There is a saying in A.A. that "you might be the only Big Book that someone sees". As a GSR you might be the only Service Manual someone sees. The GSR is the link for the group and the group conscience to General Service. You can also be the link for a newer member into service and General Service.

One ingredient for a healthy group is having its members involved. Have a job or position for all willing members. Make sure the group members have at least some understanding of what happens beyond the group level. Invite or bring a few members to a district meeting, a Northern or Southern Area Committee meeting, or any sort of service gathering. Let them have some exposure and explain what's going on.

The GSR knows that communication within the group is the basis of a strong service structure. The group's most important communication tools are 1) the informed group conscience and 2) the right of the minority opinion.¹ When the GSR safeguards these tools he/she helps the group to build and maintain a strong service structure.

Having a well-informed and experienced group will generate better future GSRs, stronger groups and can only benefit AA as a whole. As we grow in AA service, as we learn and see more, we come to understand what a gift it is to have the opportunity to repay AA for our new lives, and like most gifts in AA, it is one to be given away in order that we may keep it!

In order to more fully forge the two-way link between your Group and the General Service Conference, you (the GSR) will become active in building and keeping a strong service structure.

¹ For a complete description of these tools, please see the pamphlet *The A.A. Group*, pp 26-27, 28.

Home Group Meetings

- GSR Reports:
 - Keep your reports brief and concise
 - Report on things you think the Group can relate to or will be interested in
 - On items requiring a group conscience, present the information as neutrally as possible. An informed group conscience can only be obtained through a clear, unbiased understanding of the issue
 - Encourage discussion
 - Protect the rights of individual AA's to have their opinions acknowledged and heard. The minority opinion is a key aspect of the effective democratic process found in A.A. service
 - In carrying your group's conscience to District, NAGSC/SAGSC, or Area meetings, keep an open mind to new information that may be presented. You may need to use your Right of Decision when new information comes to light.
 - Report back to your group on issues they have discussed and/or voted at group level. Explain where and why you have voted using your Right of Decision rather than the group's decision

District Meetings

District meetings are usually held monthly or bi-monthly. Since your DCM participates in Northern or Southern Area Meetings and Area Committee Meetings between Assemblies, he or she is likely to have information that is vital to your group to discuss before the next Assembly.

The District decides the format of District Meetings. The format might include:

- Reports from the DCM
- Reports from the GSRs
- Discussion of the business of the previous or upcoming assembly
- Discussion of special events such as a "Workshop" that the District may organize for the general fellowship
- A presentation on some aspect of service
- Discussion of problems groups are experiencing, and sharing of solutions

Should a district have insufficient participation to conduct its meetings, it is considered "dark". Districts with little participation and commitment are considered "dim". When this happens, the GSR and the Home Group are encouraged to meet with a neighboring district in order to stay involved and informed.

NAGSC/SAGSC Meetings

NAGSC and SAGSC meetings are held 4 times per year. Information is shared between Standing Committees, Liaisons, Districts, Officers, and the Area Delegate. GSRs are encouraged to attend and participate; they are voting members at these meetings.

GRS's Voice and Vote at Area Meetings

At the Assembly, the GSRs are both voting members and collectively form a majority of voting members; therefore, GSRs should make every effort to attend the Assembly. All matters that affect the Area's finances or have a direct impact on all the Groups, whether raised on the floor of an Assembly or coming out of the Area Committee process, are presented and ratified, rejected or revised by the Assembly. The March Pre-conference Area Assembly is to inform and advise our delegate on issues to be considered at the April General Service Conference.

We become informed about what is going on in the larger world of A.A. by attending these meetings and discussing issues with others who are in a good position to have experience and information to share on most issues. In this way, the Assembly meets its purpose of strengthening AA as a whole in carrying our message in the best possible way for our Area. Again, participation by the GSR is the key link in the vital chain necessary in the two-way communication between members of the Group and the larger structure of AA.

GSRs: Suggestions for Effective Service

Attend General Service meetings and gatherings. In addition to Group, District, and Area Assemblies, you may also want to attend:

- NAGSC/SAGSC meetings
- Area Committee meetings
- PRAASA – Pacific Region A.A. Service Assembly (annual)
- Regional Forums (biennial on even numbered years)
- Workshops held in other Districts or Areas
- Local Unity Days events
- Keep a General Service notebook or binder for announcements and flyers
- Take notes at your Group, District, NAGSC/SAGSC, and Area meetings
- Work with a Service Sponsor, someone with experience in district or area service. A Service Sponsor is a mentor, whom you will utilize as you did your recovery sponsor.
- Learn as much as you can about the 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts
- Keep an A.A. Service Manual, a copy of the Area Guidelines, and this manual handy

ELECTION OF AREA OFFICERS

Area Officers Positions

- Chairperson, whose responsibility is to schedule the agenda for the Assembly and Area Committee Meetings and to conduct these meetings.
- Alternate Chairperson, who takes over the duties of the Chairperson when he/she is unable to serve, serves as chairperson of the General Service Committee (Northern or Southern)
- Delegate, whose duties shall be defined in the current edition of the A.A. Service Manual and as suggested by the Area Assembly.
- Alternate Delegate, whose duties shall be defined in the current edition of the A.A. Service Manual, serve as chairperson of the General Service Committee (Northern or Southern)
- Secretary, whose job it is to record the minutes of both the Assembly and Area Committee meetings, see that they are distributed to all interested parties.
- Alternate Secretary, who shall serve as Secretary of the General Service Committee in the section of the Area (Northern or Southern) in which he/she resides.
- Treasurer, who records and reports all Group contributions and other sources of revenue as well as disbursements of funds and participates heavily in the preparation of the annual budget for the Area. And shall serve with the Area Finance Committee.
- Alternate Treasurer, who shall serve as Treasurer of the General Service Committee in the section of the Area (Northern or Southern) in which he/she resides. And shall serve with the NAGSC or SAGSC Finance Committee.
- Registrar, who shall maintain a current mailing list and phone numbers of all members of the Area Assembly, and coordinate with GSO, the Delegate and DCMs to maintain current Group information.
- Alternate Registrar, who shall serve as Records Secretary of the General Service Committee in the section of the Area (Northern or Southern) in which he/she resides.
- Archivist, who shall catalog and maintain all archival material for Area 42 and provide displays of archival material at Area functions. The term of office for archivist is four years.
- Alternate Archivist, who shall serve as archivist of his/her respective general service committee (Northern or Southern) and to coordinate with the archivist for maintaining archival material for Area 42. The term of office for alternate archivist is four years.

Other positions, such as Webmaster and Newsletter Editor, serve at the request of the Delegate and Area Chairperson.

The standing committee chair positions are selected by NAGSC and SAGSC according to guidelines of each entity. These additional service positions include Grapevine, CPC, PI, Liaisons, Corrections, Treatment / H&I and Special Needs. Standing Committee chairs have a vote at the Assembly.

The Election Assembly

At the September Area Assembly of each even-numbered year, an Election Assembly is held to choose the Trusted Servants for the Area who serve a two-year term starting January 1 of the next odd year.

To allow for maximum service opportunity and even rotations, the following Officers, are elected at this time from different sections of the Area (Northern or Southern) on a rotating basis. The Delegate, Treasurer and Registrar will be elected from one section of the Area, and the Chairperson, Secretary, and Archivist from the other. Alternates will be elected from the opposite section of the Area from the officer.

Rotation of Area 42 Officers	
2-year terms South in 2010, 2014, 2018 North in 2012, 2016, 2020	2-year terms North in 2010, 2014, 2018 South in 2012, 2016, 2020
Delegate	Alternate Delegate
Alternate Area Chair	Area Chair
Treasurer	Alternate Treasurer
Alternate Secretary	Secretary
Registrar	Alternate Registrar
4-year term South in 2012, 2020 North in 2016, 2024: Archivist	4-year term North in 2012, 2020 South in 2016, 2024: Alternate Archivist

If you have been actively participating during your term, you will develop some perspective to enable you to make decisions about whom, of those standing for a given office, would best serve the Area in this capacity, who has shown that they do what they say they will do regularly and, by doing their best, set examples for you.

Election Procedure

Our Area uses the basic format of the Third Legacy Procedure. All current and past members of the area committee are eligible for delegate, providing rotation between North/South as specified by our Area Guidelines. The Area Chairperson may put the names of all those present and eligible to stand for the offices of Delegate, Alternate Delegate, Chairperson, and/or Alternate Chairperson on the chalkboard. Those who wish to withdraw their names for any of these offices may

do so. Or the Chairperson may ask for all present and willing to stand for these positions.

Individuals who are eligible and desire to serve may submit a résumé of their AA service history. (In rare cases, the meeting, by a majority vote, agrees to accept additional nominations.) All GSRs, Standing Committee Chairs, and Area Committee members who are present cast written ballots, one choice to a ballot. The tally for each candidate is posted on the blackboard. The first candidate to receive TWO-THIRDS of the total vote is elected. After the second and third ballots, candidates with less than one-third of the total vote will be withdrawn automatically, except the TWO TOP CANDIDATES remain. (In case there are ties for second place, the top candidate and second-place candidates remain.) After the fourth ballot, if no candidate has two-thirds of the total vote, the chairperson asks for a motion, second, and majority of hands on conducting a fifth and final ballot. If this motion is defeated, balloting is over and we go to the "hat" immediately. In case there are ties for second place, the top candidate and tied second-place candidates remain. If not, the candidate with the smallest total is dropped. If the motion carries, a fifth and final ballot will be conducted.

If no election occurs by this time, the chairperson announces the choice will be made by lot (from the hat). At this point, balloting usually involves only the top two or three candidates. Lots are then drawn by teller, and the first one "out of the hat" becomes the delegate.

This procedure, the duties for each office to be filled, and who may stand for office are reviewed and discussed for some time before the actual election so there is ample time to become informed and share in the excitement of an election rather than being perplexed and surprised at the election assembly—especially if it "goes to the hat" to be decided.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

For most of us, becoming a GSR was a first step in becoming involved in General Service. It is a learning experience for everyone, regardless of how long we have been in the program or service. We are sure to learn about ourselves and how we relate to those around us, and perhaps learn some more effective means of communication. Being “a part of” may take on new meaning.

When we were newcomers in sobriety, we went to meetings, even if we didn't understand or even care about everything that was said. We “kept coming back” and soon found ourselves a part of AA. We found a sponsor, someone who had been on the path of sobriety for a while and could help us find our way. We became more comfortable in sobriety when we fully participated, helped out when opportunities arose, and made the effort to meet other people. We took the Steps of recovery, even when we didn't think they were going to solve our problems.

The General Service experience is much the same. Jump in with both feet, and you will soon be comfortable here. Find a Service Sponsor and other guides to help you along the path. Take your commitment seriously, both because you are responsible to your group and because it is suggested.

Service work takes every bit as much energy as learning and working the Steps and is probably more difficult to explain to others what it is really about (participating in an informed Group conscience, the only recognized authority in A.A.). It may seem frustrating at times because you may think that nobody in the Group is listening or cares about what you have to say. Then you find the pulse of your group, and find out what sparks their interest. Or someone in your Group asks you to deal with a question in terms of the A.A. Traditions. Those times are part of what makes it all rewarding in the end.

SERVICE TOOLS

Many helpful tools are available on the Area 42 website, www.nevadaarea42.org including:

- Glossary of AA service terms and acronyms.
- General service FAQ's
- A guide to parliamentary procedure, helpful in understanding how A.A. business is conducted at meetings from our sub-areas to Area Assembly and the General Service Conference.
- Service meeting schedules
- Minutes of past meetings
- Printable Area, NAGSC, and SAGSC Guidelines
- Maps and descriptions of our District and Area geographic boundaries, Link to the A.A. Service Manual

Area 42

Nevada and Eastern California

