IS YOUR GROUP LINKED TO A.A. AS A WHOLE?

Most groups in the United States and Canada choose to be linked to A.A. as a whole by listing the group with the General Service Office (G.S.O.), as well as with the Area Assembly, district and local central/intergroup office.[1]

Groups listed with G.S.O. have either General Service Representatives (G.S.R.s), or "group contacts," who act as channels for two-way information and shared experience. Once a group is listed with G.S.O., the group information is shared with the Area Assembly via the delegate. Group information may be first received by the Area, which then shares the information with G.S.O.

What's the point? Each group linked to the local general service structure is automatically a part of the "group conscience" of A.A. in Canada and the U.S. through their G.S.R.'s participation in district meetings and Area Assembly. Each G.S.R. communicates his or her group's "conscience" on important matters of policy considered by the district and Area Assembly. During the Annual General Service Conference, the Area's groups are represented by their elected delegate. Groups in our listings are included in the *confidential* domestic directories[2] published annually, which provide contact information for traveling A.A. members.

New groups listed with the General Service Office are assigned an identifying service number (ID),[3] receive a "Group Handbook" (through their G.S.R. or group contact), and are included in mailings sent to all listed A.A. groups. For instance, groups receive our quarterly newsletter *Box 4-5-9* that keeps them informed on policies being considered by the Conference, changes to A.A. literature, and when and where their Regional Forum will be held (Forums are weekend gatherings where current experience is shared). Additionally, G.S.R.s or group contacts for listed groups receive registration details for each International Convention, held every five (5) years.

How? To participate in services provided by G.S.O. to A.A. groups, it is vital to furnish simple information to G.S.O. through the *Alcoholics Anonymous New Group Form.* To notify G.S.O. when group information changes, i.e. the group contact or G.S.R. moves or resigns, and a new G.S.R. or contact is elected; or, when there is a change in the group's location or meeting day(s) and time, please use the *Alcoholics Anonymous Group Information Change Form.* Group changes should also be given to the Area registrar/secretary, to the District Committee Member (D.C.M.), and to the local integroup/central office.

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[1] To participate fully, a group lists itself 1) with the general service structure (G.S.O., Area and District); and, 2) with the local intergroup/central office.

[2] Domestic directories are: Eastern U.S., Western U.S. and Canada. Each group is identified by city or town, Area and district, group name, meeting day(s), and G.S.R.'s or contact's name and phone number. Alternate G.S.R.s or contacts are also listed. *Directories are widely used by traveling members, so only groups that provide a G.S.R. or contact's telephone number are listed.*

[3] Once an ID number is assigned and becomes part of a group's record, the number remains with the group and is not usable by any other group.

A New Group: When a new group forms, the members usually take time to decide on the name of the new group,[4] elect trusted servants, plan the time and format of meeting(s), and obtain A.A. literature from the nearby central/intergroup office.

A new group may first ask to be listed with the local district and Area, or through direct contact with G.S.O. Either way works well. When G.S.O. receives an *Alcoholics Anonymous New Group Form,* a copy is forwarded to the delegate of the Area where the group is located, so that the delegate may communicate the good news to the D.C.M. and Area registrar/secretary. Thirty (30) days after group information is sent to the delegate, the group is assigned an ID number for G.S.O.'s records, and a "Group Handbook" is mailed to the G.S.R. or group contact.

Your District: Regardless of how new group information is received, the D.C.M. will make contact and welcome the group to "general service."

Whether a group is "new" or has existed for years, the D.C.M. is the primary contact through the G.S.R. or group contact. Group representatives attend district meetings where they are kept up-to-date on A.A. activities and topics of interest. G.S.R.s attending district meetings are an excellent resource for addressing group problems and concerns. In matters affecting A.A. as a whole, a group's "conscience" is communicated to the Area Assembly by their G.S.R.

If you do not know how to contact your group's D.C.M., Area registrar/secretary, and delegate, staff members in the General Service Office can often provide that information.

Mailing address:
General Service Office
P.O. Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163

Location:
475 Riverside Drive
11th floor
New York, N.Y. 10115

Telephone: (212) 870-3400

Website: www.aa.org

G.S.O. staff members are always happy to hear from A.A. members and groups. G.S.O. has two primary purposes: 1) to serve as a resource to better enable groups to carry the A.A. message of experience, strength and hope to the still-suffering alcoholic; and, 2) to provide services to A.A. as a whole which individual groups cannot usually manage, such as the publication of A.A. literature. The A.A. group is the fundamental unit supporting A.A. recovery.

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[4] Guidelines for naming an A.A. group are based on "group conscience" as expressed through the Annual General Service Conference. "The A.A. Group" pamphlet, the basic guide for all groups in Canada and the U.S., suggests that a group avoid choosing a name that might suggest affiliation with any organization, club, political or religious institution. New groups are also advised to avoid names that refer to "family," "double trouble", "alcohol and pills" or the name of any actual person, living or dead. ("The A.A. Group" pamphlet is available at central or intergroup offices, through G.S.O. or on aa.org.)