

I am responsible...

Whenever anyone, anywhere,
reaches out for help,

I want the hand of A.A.
always to be there.

And for that:

I am responsible.

Alcoholics Anonymous –
Responsibility Statement

SECRETARY'S

HANDBOOK

Prepared by:

Santa Barbara Intergroup

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Financial Information

Most groups have a sobriety requirement for the position of Treasurer. Normally, this is at least one-to-two years of continuous sobriety. A Treasurer is required to make regular financial reports to the group. It is suggested that the Treasurer keep records of the 7th Tradition, the contributions they send to Central Office, Hospitals and Institutions (H & I), the General Service Organization (GSO), and the Group expenses, such as rent, coffee and literature. A Treasurer Record Book is available at your local Santa Barbara Central Office for a nominal fee.

Each A.A. Group is self-supporting, and after financial obligations, such as rent, coffee, and literature are met, it divides the remaining 7th Tradition monies among the various A.A. services in the manner it sees fit. The chart of Percentage Distributions listed below shows some possible ways to do this, but is suggested only.

Suggested Percentages

Central Office	Hospitals & Institutions	GSO	GSR	Area
60%	20%	10%	5%	5%
60%	10%	10%	10%	10%
50%	20%	10%	10%	10%

Once the group decides the percentage disbursements of the 7th Tradition monies, all you or the Treasurer needs to do is bring the monies to your Santa Barbara Central Office, which will make the distributions for you.

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SELF-SUPPORT

The 7th Tradition states: "Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

While contributions cover each group's rent and other expenses, the 7th Tradition is essential at every level of A.A. service. It is both a privilege and a responsibility for groups and members to ensure that not only their group, but also their Intergroup/Central Office, local services, District, Area, and the General Service Office remain self-supporting. This keeps A.A. free of outside influences that might divert us from our primary purpose — to help the alcoholic who still suffers.

The amount of our contribution is secondary to the spiritual connection that unites all groups around the world.

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TO THE NEW SECRETARY

Congratulations on being elected secretary of your group. It can be a wonderful and rewarding experience for you.

This handbook is designed to answer any questions you may have about your specific responsibilities as secretary of the group and about A.A. in general.

Never hesitate to ask for help from Central Office. Also, it will be helpful for you to always keep in mind Tradition 2 and Tradition 4.

Tradition 2 states:

"For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority -- a loving God as He may express himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern."

While Tradition 4 states:

"Each group should remain autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole."

We know the wisdom of these two traditions will support you in the execution of your duties as Secretary. It is our hope that the guidelines in this book will also be useful, but keep in mind that the guidelines are suggestions only.

*For further information, see World Service Pamphlet, P-16, A.A. Group... Where It All Begins: How a Group Functions and How to Get Started. Here you will find information on: Informed Group Conscience, Rotation of Leadership, Service Structure within a Group and more.

10. What is Hospitals and Institutions (H & I)?

The sole purpose of Hospitals and Institutions (**H& I**) is to carry the message to those confined in hospitals, jails, prisons, and other facilities.

Various types of meetings, such as Speaker meetings, Panel meetings, and Participation meetings are taken in to these facilities. Also, there are meetings by mail. The activities and service opportunities at these facilities are managed by our local H & I Committee, which meets Monthly.

11. What does an H & I Representative Do?

The Home Group elects the H & I Representative. To qualify, a representative must have at least 30 days of continuous sobriety.

12. An H & I Representative's duties include:

Attending an H & I Committee meeting once a month and keeping the Home Group informed of announcements and service opportunities

8. What does an Intergroup Representative (IGR) do?

- Attends the Intergroup meetings
- Attends the group's business meetings to ask for suggestions, comments, and opinions to take to the next Intergroup meeting
- Presents to the group an unbiased account of what Intergroup and Central Office is doing
- Knows the by-laws of the Intergroup and Central Office
- Recruits members of each group for service
- Assists in keeping their group's records up-to-date, including proper recording of the group's contributions to Central Office
- Ensures the group's listing in the current meeting directory is accurate

9. What is a General Service Representative (GSR)?

The General Service Representative has the responsibility of linking his or her group with A.A. as a whole. The GSR represents the voice of the Group Conscience by reporting on the group's issues to the local district meetings and thus, linking the group to others throughout Central California and to the General Service Office (GSO) in New York. In addition, GSRs are the mail contact with GSO by receiving the Bulletin, Box 459, thus bringing information to the Group concerning information about A.A. from around the world. GSRs are listed in the A.A. directories as contacts for their individual groups.

The GSR is responsible for attending the local district meetings and area assemblies (times and dates published in the *Messenger*). The representative also reports back to their group the results from local district meetings.

When you find it is time to pass the work of love on to your successor, please make his or her appointment known to your Santa Barbara Central Office so they can be welcomed. Our contact information is as follows:

Phone: (805) 962-3332

Email: manager@santabarbaraaa.com

Website: www.santabarbaraaa.com

A Group Secretary's required length of sobriety and term of service is usually decided by an informed group conscience. The general consensus seems to be a minimum of between six months and a year of sobriety.

The Group Secretary - Responsibilities & Additional Information

The Secretary's main responsibility is to ensure that the meeting is opened, conducted and concluded in accordance with the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Most groups schedule several special sessions (Business Meetings) throughout the year, apart from regular meetings, and the Secretary conducts these meetings. **See *World Service Pamphlet, The A.A. Group.***

Other responsibilities may include:

1. Arriving 30 minutes prior to the start of the meeting.
2. Arranging for a meeting leader and ensuring the group's format is understood.
The Secretary should advise the leader about the length of the meeting and recommended time the leader shares their story with the group. A leader may be selected in advance as well as just prior to the start of the meeting. Each member of the group should have the opportunity to be the leader. Also, having A.A. members from outside your group lead the meeting is vital for a fresh viewpoint.
3. Starting and closing the meeting on time.
4. Overseeing all other group commitments, including:
 - Treasurer (See page 15)
 - Commitment Coordinator (Optional)
 - Greeter
 - Set-up/Clean-up
 - Coffee Maker
 - Literature Representative
 - Grapevine Representative (GVR)
 - Intergroup Representative (IGR)
 - General Service Representative (GSR)
 - Hospitals & Institutions Representative (H&I)
 - Other Group Commitments

6. What is a Home Group?

The Home Group introduces service and the service structure to its members. A Home Group is a meeting one regularly attends, has commitments, and sustains friendships.

In the Home Group, people really get to know each other. They feel safe, they feel comfortable, and they feel a sense of belonging. They share in each other's problems and willingly help each other by telling about their own experiences and solutions to similar problems. For the member of the group, it is a source of strength and stability. The Home Group can be counted on to be there for each individual.

Members of a Home Group have a right to vote on important issues that affect the Group as well as A.A. as a whole — a process that forms the very cornerstone of A.A.'s service structure.

The Home Group can participate in activities that can help carry the message. A few examples of this are helping Central Office with distributing "The Messenger," participating at Marathon Meetings as a group at an A.A. Convention; and actively supporting H & I (Hospitals and Institutions).

7. What is an Intergroup?

The Santa Barbara Intergroup is the conduit for making your meeting's (or Group's) wishes and/or needs known to all the groups in this area. It is your link to those elected to maintain and operate the Central Office and the Intergroup Administrative Board. The members of the Administrative Board are the officers elected by the Intergroup. They are responsible for facilitating communication among the fellowship and overseeing the operation of Central Office.

4. What is an informed group conscience?

We often hear the phrase “group conscience” in A.A. This concept is fundamental and vital to the operation and functioning of A.A. at all levels. It flows out of our 2nd Tradition regarding “one ultimate authority” and is the spiritual concept of the “group conscience.” Its voice is heard when a well-informed group gathers to arrive at a decision. In order to have a Group Conscience, it is necessary to have 3 essential elements:

- a) **Subject must be appropriate.** The matter should be of sufficient importance (e.g. the format of the meeting or whether Central Office will be open on Saturdays.)
- b) **Timing is appropriate.** Sufficient prior notice must be given, and the topic under consideration needs to be announced. Also, when a topic is being considered, it is presented at one business meeting with a brief discussion and the final decision is made at the next meeting. (e.g. “There will be a business meeting two weeks from tonight to elect new officers” or “It’s suggested that we eliminate the meeting break because...”)
- c) **Substantial unanimity is reached.** It is a practice in A.A. to vigorously encourage and respect the minority opinion. The goal of open discussion, in which all views are considered, is to lay the foundation for attaining an informed and unanimous decision.

5. How is disruptive behavior during a meeting handled?

No individual, drunk or sober, should be permitted to repeatedly interrupt or otherwise disturb the meeting. However, “troublemakers” can be teachers, as they oblige us to cultivate patience, tolerance, and humility. Though it is traditional that our fellowship may not coerce anyone, we may tactfully encourage the “troublemaker” to have a separate one-on-one meeting with another member of the group in order for the group to continue with its meeting.

Sometime during the meeting, you will want to make Secretary Announcements, start the 7th Tradition, ask for reports from the Group’s Treasurer, IGR, GSR, H&I Representative, and “any other announcements for the good of A.A.”

OPTIONAL READINGS

THIS IS A CLOSED MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

This is a closed meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. In support of A.A.’s singleness of purpose, attendance at closed meetings is limited to those who have a desire to stop drinking. If you think you have a problem with alcohol, you are welcome to attend this meeting. We ask that when discussing our problems, we confine ourselves to those problems as they relate to alcoholism.

(The 1987 General Service Conference made this statement available as an A.A. service piece for those groups who wish to use it.)

THIS IS A OPEN MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

This is an open meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. We are glad you are all here – especially newcomers. In keeping with our singleness of purpose and our Third Tradition which states that “The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking”, we ask that all who participate confine their discussion to their problems with alcohol.

(The 1987 General Service Conference made this statement available as an A.A. service piece for those groups who wish to use it.)

Suggested Discussion Meeting Topics

Acceptance	Participation
Action	Prayer & Meditation
Amends	Powerlessness
Anger	Pride
Anonymity	Principles before Personalities
Anxiety	Procrastination
Attitude	Projection
Clean House	Promises
Dependence	Recovery
Easy Does It	Resentments
Fear	Responsibility
First Things First	Selfishness
Freedom	Self-pity
Gratitude	Serenity
Growth	Service
Guilt	Spiritual Awakening
Happiness	Spiritual Progress
Help Others	Sponsorship
Higher Power	Steps
Honesty	Surrender
Humility	This Too Shall Pass
Just For Today	Tolerance
Keep It Simple	Traditions
Let Go, Let God	Trust God
Live and Let Live	Turn It Over
Living Sober	Unity
One Day at a Time	Unmanageability
Open-Mindedness	Willingness

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What is the difference between open and closed meetings of A.A.?

Closed meetings are for A.A. members only, or for those who have a drinking problem and “have a desire to stop drinking.” Open meetings are available to anyone interested in the Alcoholics Anonymous program of recovery from alcoholism. You do not have to identify yourself as an alcoholic at an Open Meeting. (See page 7 for optional readings at Open and Closed Meetings.)

2. What is the Secretary’s term of office?

The suggested length of service is six (6) months to one (1) year. Since each meeting is autonomous, the group should decide this issue. Some groups have written group guidelines that address these issues. Traditionally, rotation of service prevents A.A. volunteers from becoming entrenched in their office. Service commitments, like almost everything in A.A., get passed along for all to share.

3. How do group problems get solved?

Each group should have a business meeting to discuss and decide on a policy when issues need to be addressed. From this discussion, a “group conscience” can be achieved. When issues cause rifts in the group, a cooling-off period should be declared. Trust in a Power greater than ourselves has been found to be more useful than legalistic arguments or personality conflicts. Some of the ideas in Bill W.’s “Twelve Concepts for World Service”** are very useful in settling most issues.

****For more information, refer to the A.A. World Services publication, “The A.A. Service Manual combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service.”**