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District 5
Structure & Guidelines
San Diego-Imperial California Area 8
(Dec. 2005)
Preface

The District 5 Guidelines are based on AA. General Service knowledge and experience shared in “The A.A. Service Manual” and in the “San Diego-Imperial California Area 8 Structure and Guidelines.” Additionally, other A.A. Conference-approved literature has been used to develop these District 5 Guidelines, such as “The A.A. Group.”

Article I. District Purpose

- A. To keep the lines of communication open between the General Service Office (GSO) and the District 5 groups through full registration and representation of all active groups.
- B. To developing knowledgeable and experienced General Service Representatives (GSRs) through the study, practice, and application of the Twelve Traditions, the Twelve Concepts, the Six Warranties, and other principles of service as contained in “The A.A. Service Manual.”
- C. To elect officers to represent District 5 at Area Service Committee meetings and to participate with GSRs at Area Assemblies and other San Diego-Imperial California Area functions.
- D. To strengthen District 5 groups through service work to ensure that the opportunity for recovery from alcoholism through the practice of the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions will be available to future alcoholics.
- E. To support the A.A. service structure, including the GSO, the San Diego-Imperial California Area 8, and District 5, in the spirit of the Seventh Tradition by encouraging all groups in District 5 to establish and participate in a regular contribution plan.
- F. To further support of the A.A. service structure by encouraging individual participation in Regional Forums and Assemblies, such as P.R.AA.S.A.
- G. To assist in the development and communication of an informed group conscience.
- H. To make sure that all questions, including recommendations for consideration and voting, will be decided by substantial unanimity which is defined as a two-thirds majority.

Article II District Description

- A. District: District 5 is part of the San Diego-Imperial California Area (Area 8) in the Pacific Region of the General Service Conference. It is located in San Diego County, California. The boundaries of District 5 are specified in Appendix A and B of the “San Diego-Imperial Area 8 Structure & Guidelines” with these geographical boundary lines: **North – I-5 & I-805 Merge. East – West of I-805 & Rt. 163. South – North of I-8. West: East of I-5.**

Article III District Membership

- A. Voting members of District 5 are:

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1. District Officers: District Committee Member (DCM), Secretary, Treasurer, Registrar, and their Alternates;
 2. All GSRs who are currently registered as representing a District 5 group;
 3. District Committee Chairs and Co-Chairs;
 3. Alternates: Individuals serving in alternate Trusted Servant positions have the same voting privileges as their principals when their principals are absent.
- B. In order to build a greater level of service experience in the District, the following Trusted Servant positions are encouraged to recruit members to serve as their alternates:
- 1) GSRs;
 - 2) District Officers;
 - 3) Committee Chairs and Co-Chairs.
- C. Voting exclusions are:
1. Each qualified individual shall have a single vote even though a member may serve in more than one capacity.
 2. District Officers who have missed three consecutive District Committee meetings are considered inactive and are automatically removed from office. They are ineligible to serve as a Trusted Servant unless reinstated by a vote of the District Committee. The DCM may appoint another individual to assume the duties of that office on a temporary basis with the approval of the District Committee.

Article IV. District Funding

- A. District 5 accepts no money or items of value from nonalcoholic individuals or organizations and raises no funds except voluntary contributions from its members.
- B. District 5 is entirely self-supporting through contributions from groups and from 7th Tradition contributions at District 5 Committee meetings.
- C. When discounts or subsidies are offered to District 5, the following policy applies: Whenever a discount or subsidy is available to other organizations of similar size, it may be accepted. Whenever it is partly or totally offered because we are A.A., it must be declined.

Article V. District Elections – District Officers

- A. Positions and Eligibility Requirements for District Officers
 1. DCM -
 - a) A background in A.A. service work related to the DCM position,
 - b) A minimum suggested sobriety of four years,
 - c) The time, energy and willingness to serve the District well,
 - d) The ability to attend all Area Service Committee meetings, Area Assemblies, and other Area events, and
 - e) The ability and willingness to assume duties described in Article VI, Section A.
 2. Alternate DCM -
 - a) A background in A.A. service work related to the GSR position,

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- b) A minimum suggested sobriety of four years,
 - c) The time, energy and willingness to serve the District well,
 - d) The ability to attend all Area Service Committee meetings Area Assemblies and other Area events
 - e) The ability and willingness to assume duties described in Article VI, Sections A and B.
3. Secretary -
- a) A minimum suggested sobriety of two years,
 - b) The time, energy and willingness to serve the District well, and
 - c) The ability and willingness to assume duties described in Article VI, Section C.
4. Treasurer -
- a) A minimum suggested sobriety of four years,
 - b) A willingness to maintain the District's post office box,
 - c) The time, energy and willingness to serve the District well, and
 - d) The ability and willingness to assume duties described in Article VI, Section D.
5. Registrar -
- a) A minimum suggested sobriety of two years,
 - b) The time, energy and willingness to serve the District well, and
 - c) The ability and willingness to assume duties described in Article VI, Section E.

B. Election Procedures

- 1. Elections are held in November of odd-numbered years.
- 2. The principal of rotation applies to all District 5 officer positions.
- 3. The term of office for District 5 Trusted Servants is two years commencing on January 1st of the even-numbered year following the election.
- 4. All District Officers with alternates are elected by Third Legacy Procedure.
- 5. Voting is by written ballot.
- 6. It is preferred that more than one person is nominated for each office.

C. Vacated and Newly Created Positions

- 1. Vacated district officer positions will be filled automatically by the alternate. If there is no alternate, the DCM may temporarily appoint a member to the position subject to confirmation by Third Legacy procedures at the next District Committee meeting.
- 2. Newly created district officer positions will be filled by an election at the next District Committee meeting.
- 3. Current and past officers are ineligible for election to a district officer position where they have served in the past.

Article VI. District Officer Responsibilities

Structure & Guidelines**San Diego-Imperial California Area 8****A. District Committee Member (DCM) responsibilities:**

1. Schedule and prepare agenda for District meetings;
2. Maintain roster of officers and GSRs; provided by registrar
3. Maintain an effective service structure throughout the District;
4. Respond to group requests for information on General Service, the A.A. service structure, application of the traditions or any other question;
5. Service sponsor District GSRs and direct their study of the "The Twelve Traditions," "The Twelve Concepts," "The AA Group," "The A.A. Service Manual," "Box 4-5-9," and other General Service material;
6. Attend and chair monthly meetings of the District 5 Committee;
7. Attend and participate in Area Service Committee meetings, Area Assemblies, P.R.A.A.S.A. and the Regional Forum;
8. Maintain active communications between the District and the San Diego-Imperial California Area Delegate and the Area Service Committee;
9. Assist GSRs in developing leadership, knowledge, experience, and the love of General Service work;
10. Keep bank-account signatures current with the Treasurer;
11. Direct District elections by (a) Coordinating the biannual District Election and conducting any other District elections, (b) Ensuring that prompt reports of the District election are communicated to District 5 groups and to the San Diego-Imperial California Area;
12. Service sponsor the next DCM to ensure an orderly transfer of responsibilities.

B. Alternate District Committee Member (Alt. DCM) Responsibilities:

1. Assist the DCM in maintaining an effective service structure throughout the District;
2. Substitute for the DCM whenever necessary;
3. Attend all meetings of the District 5 Committee;
4. Attend and participate in all Area Service Functions and Area Assemblies;
5. Participate as a voting member of District 5 at the Area Assembly and at the Area Service Committee when the DCM is absent;
6. Chair the District meetings and report on special project committees when DCM is absent;
7. Service sponsor the next Alt. DCM to ensure an orderly transfer of responsibilities.

C. Secretary Responsibilities:

1. Attend and take minutes at all District Committee meeting, then present the minutes for approval at the next District Committee meeting;
2. Attend all Area Service Functions and Area Assemblies;
3. Participate as a member of the Assembly;
4. Distribute minutes from the previous meeting to each District Committee meeting;
5. Purchase office supplies with district funds and maintain custody of such supplies;
6. Maintain copies of all District minutes, agendas, and correspondence in good condition;
7. Process correspondence;
8. Recruit an alternate secretary
9. Service sponsor the next Secretary to ensure an orderly transfer of responsibilities.

D. Treasurer Responsibilities:

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1. Attend all meetings of the District 5 Committee;
2. Attend and participate as a member of the Area Assembly;
3. Keep an accurate record of District finds;
4. Record donations to the District by group name and registration number on the District Treasurer and meeting-record forms;
5. Maintain Treasurer's records in good condition and retain them for 7 years;
6. Acknowledge each donation by a receipt to donor;
7. Provide Secretary with a copy of the Treasurer's Report containing a list of donating groups for inclusion in the monthly District Committee minutes;
8. Make available a copy of the Treasurer's record from the previous month's meeting at each District Committee meeting;
9. Maintain checkbook records and balance the District bank account;
10. Ensure that post office box and meeting room rental fees are paid on time;
11. Recruit an alternate treasurer
12. Ensure that the DCM's, Treasurer's and Alternate Treasurer's names are placed on the District bank account;
13. Assist DCM in maintaining accurate signature records for the District bank account;
14. Make purchases with District funds, and maintain custody of the Treasurer's records, of Treasurer's supplies, and of the key to the District post office box;
15. Distribute mail from post office box to District members;
16. Service sponsor the next Treasurer to ensure an orderly transfer of responsibilities.

E. Registrar Responsibilities:

1. Maintain accurate records of District groups, group officers and GSRs, including name, address, telephone number(s), and Email address
2. Attend all District 5 committee meetings and Area Assemblies;
3. Participate as a member of the Area Assembly;
4. Work closely with DCM, Secretary, Treasurer, and GSRs to keep District Group Records current;
5. Inform the DCM, Area Registrar, GSO Records Department and/or the Conference Secretary of changes in group, or officer information;
7. Inform new GSRs of their group name and number as currently registered with GS0;
8. Recruit an alternate registrar
9. Service sponsor next Registrar to ensure an orderly transfer of responsibilities.

Article VII. District Elections – Committee Chairs and Co-Chairs

A. Positions and Eligibility Requirements for District Committee Chairs and Co-Chairs

1. Inter-Group Coordinator -
 - a) A minimum suggested sobriety of one year,
 - b) The time, energy and willingness to serve the District well,
 - c) The ability to Attend San Diego Intergroup meetings
 - d) The ability and willingness to assume duties described in Article VIII, Section A.

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2. Grapevine Coordinator -
 - a) A minimum suggested sobriety of one year,
 - b) The time, energy and willingness to serve the District well,
 - c) The ability to Attend Grapevine/La Vina Committee meetings
 - d) The ability and willingness to assume duties described in Article VIII, Section C
3. CPC Coordinator -
 - a) A minimum suggested sobriety of one year,
 - b) The time, energy and willingness to serve the District well,
 - c) The ability to Attend CPC Committee meetings and
 - d) The ability and willingness to assume duties described in Article VIII, Section C.
4. H&I Coordinator -
 - a) A minimum suggested sobriety of one year,
 - b) The time, energy and willingness to serve the District well,
 - c) The ability to Attend H&I business meetings and
 - d) The ability and willingness to assume duties described in Article VI, Section D.
5. Communications Coordinator -
 - a) A minimum suggested sobriety of one year,
 - b) A willingness to work with DCM and registrar to improve communications to the District 5 GSRs and their Alternates,
 - c) The time, energy and willingness to serve the District well, and
 - d) The ability and willingness to assume duties described in Article VI, Section E.
6. Visitation Coordinator -
 - a) A minimum suggested sobriety of one year,
 - b) The time, energy and willingness to serve the District well, and
 - c) The ability and willingness to assume duties described in Article VIII, Section F.
7. Group Liaison -
 - a) A minimum suggested sobriety of one year,
 - b) The time, energy and willingness to serve the District well, and
 - c) The ability and willingness to assume duties described in Article VIII, Section G.
8. Accessibilities Coordinator –

Currently serving as a GSR, alternate GSR, DCM, or alternate DCM.

 - a) A willingness to work with the Area 8 Accessibilities Committee, Central Office and District volunteers to assist carrying the message to alcoholics with special needs.
 - b) The time, energy and willingness to serve the District well
 - c) The ability and willingness to assume duties described in Article VIII, Section H.

B. Election Procedures

1. Elections are held in February of even-numbered years.
2. The principal of rotation applies to all District 5 committee chair and co-chair positions.
3. The term of office for District 5 Trusted Servants is two years commencing on March 1st of the even-numbered year (following the election).

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C. Vacated and Newly Created Positions

1. Vacated district committee chair positions will be filled automatically by the alternate. If there is no alternate, the DCM may temporarily appoint a member to the position subject to confirmation by Third Legacy procedures at the next District Committee meeting.
2. Newly created district committee chair positions will be filled by an election at the next District Committee meeting.
3. Current and past committee chairs and co-chairs are ineligible for election to a district committee chair or co-chair position where they have served in the past.

Article VIII. District Committee Chair Responsibilities

A. Inter-Group Coordinator Responsibilities:

1. Attend monthly meetings of the District 5 Committee;
2. Attend and participate in San Diego Intergroup Meetings;
3. Report to District 5 GSRs all Intergroup matters to be taken back to groups;
4. Recruit a co-chair;
5. Service sponsor the next Inter-Group coordinator to ensure an orderly transfer of responsibilities.

B. Grapevine Coordinator Responsibilities:

1. Attend Grapevine / La Vina meetings;
2. Attend all meetings of the District 5 Committee;
3. Work with GSRs to encourage the creation of as many Grapevine reps as possible at the group level;
4. Coordinate the creation and communication with District 5 Grapevine reps;
5. Recruit a co-chair;
6. Service sponsor the next Grapevine Coordinator to ensure an orderly transfer of responsibilities.

C. CPC Coordinator Responsibilities:

1. Attend CPC Committee meetings;
2. Coordinate and recruit members to a District 5 CPC committee whose purpose it is to carry the message to the local professional community, in coordination with the Area CPC committee;
3. Regularly communicate District 5 CPC activities to DCM or DCM's designee for reporting to GSRs;
4. Recruit a co-chair;
5. Service sponsor the next CPC Coordinator to ensure an orderly transfer of responsibilities.

D. H&I Coordinator Responsibilities:

1. Attend H & I business meetings;
2. Attend all meetings of the District 5 Committee;
3. Work with GSRs to encourage the creation of as many H & I representatives as possible at the group level;
4. Coordinate the creation and communication with District 5 H & I reps;
5. Recruit a co-chair;
6. Service sponsor the next H & I Coordinator to ensure an orderly transfer of responsibilities.

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E. Communications Coordinator Responsibilities:

1. Attend all District 5 committee meetings and Area Assemblies;
2. Work closely with DCM and registrar to create effective communication with GSRs, Alternate GSRs, District officers and District chairs and co-chairs;
3. Recruit a co-chair;
3. Service sponsor next Communications Coordinator to ensure an orderly transfer of responsibilities.

F. Visitation Coordinator Responsibilities:

1. Attend all District 5 committee meetings and Area Assemblies;
2. Work closely with DCM and registrar to organize at least one visit to each AA Group or meeting in District 5 from a District 5 representative every two years;
3. Recruit a co-chair;
4. Service sponsor next Visitation Coordinator to ensure an orderly transfer of responsibilities.

G. Group Liaison Responsibilities:

1. Attend all District 5 committee meetings and Area Assemblies;
2. Work closely with DCM, registrar and visitation coordinator to create effective communication with Groups or meetings in the District 5 area without GSRs on all matters effecting AA as whole;
3. Recruit a co-chair
4. Service sponsor next Group Liaison to ensure an orderly transfer of responsibilities.

H. Accessibilities Coordinator Responsibilities:

1. Attend all District 5 committee meetings and Area Assemblies;
2. Attend Accessibilities Committee meetings;
3. solicit volunteers from the district committee (and potentially from groups within the district) to serve on 12-step calls from alcoholics with special needs;
4. work closely with the Accessibilities Committee, Central Office and District Volunteers to coordinate response to 12-step calls received by Central Office from Alcoholics with special needs;
5. Recruit a co-chair
6. Service sponsor the next Accessibilities Coordinator to ensure an orderly transfer of responsibilities.

Article IX. Guidelines Ratification.

A. Ratification. These guidelines shall become effective immediately upon acceptance by two-thirds of the District members who are present and voting at the next District meeting.

B. Annual Review.

1. A District 5 Guidelines Review *Ad Hoc* Committee Chair shall be appointed by DCM each odd-numbered year in February to review the District 5 Guidelines and to make recommendations for any changes deemed necessary. A written report shall be made to the District Committee reflecting suggested changes.
2. The *Ad Hoc* Committee Chair is responsible for a complete and thorough review of the

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guidelines. The Chair's term of service is from the date of appointment until the guidelines have been revised and are distributed at a District Committee meeting.

3. The *Ad Hoc* Committee Chair may implement editorial changes, such as spelling, grammar and other revisions with no significant impact on the guidelines, with the concurrence of the District 5 Committee.
4. The District 5 Committee must review any recommended changes that may affect District policies and procedures. Each "Recommended Change" shall be presented on a separate page when presented at the District Committee meeting.
5. Upon completion, the Guidelines Review *Ad Hoc* Committee Chair shall complete the following sequence of actions:
 - a) Deliver the completed Review/Study report to the DCM at a District 5 Committee meeting;
 - b) Explain the Editorial Changes and request the concurrence of the Committee in order to incorporate the Editorial Changes;
 - c) Explain each Recommended Change to the District Committee;
 - d) Upon acceptance by two-thirds of the those present and voting, incorporate the recommended changes into the District 5 Guidelines;
 - e) Arrange to publish and distribute the revised District 5 Guidelines.

C. Amendment.

1. Guideline changes proposed by the District Guidelines Review *Ad Hoc* Committee Chair shall follow the procedure in Article VII, Section B above.
2. All proposed amendments must be in writing and submitted to the District Secretary for presentation to the DCM.
3. The Secretary shall present the proposed amendment to a District Committee meeting no later than two months after receipt.
4. Prior to presentation to the District Committee meeting, the DCM shall provide the opportunity for GSRs and other District members to become fully informed on the proposed amendment by announcing the receipt of the proposed change(s) and making them available in writing at the next District Committee Meeting.
5. Upon acceptance by two-thirds of the District members present and voting, the proposed amendment becomes part of the District 5 guidelines.

D. Suspension. Upon agreement by two-thirds of the District members, present and voting, these guidelines, or any part thereof may be suspended temporarily, when necessary.

Article X District 5 Committee Meetings

- A. District Committee Meeting Day. The District Committee meeting is held on the 4th Monday of each month from 7:00PM until 8:00PM.
- B. Typical District Committee Meeting Format:

Call to order	Registrar's Report, including visitations
Serenity prayer	Old/Continuing Business
Introductions	DCM Report, including reading and
Celebration of birthdays	explanation of any complex agenda items
Twelve Traditions (short form)	New business
Brief summary of assigned Concept	Questions or problems reported from
Reading & approval of minutes	attendees

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Treasurer's Report

District & Area Calendar

Closing

Possible Programs

- I. Area officer presentations
2. Delegate's annual General Service Conference report
3. Quarterly OSO Board meeting report
4. General Service Conference agenda items and advisory actions
5. Area Committee presentations.
 Agenda, Grapevine, San Diego Imperial Area Institutional Committee,
 Archives, Literature, Contact Services, Finance, Policy, Special Needs,
 Cooperation with the Professional Community Newsletter Public Information (PI)
 and *Ad Hoc* Committees
6. Study session on Traditions, Concepts and conference agenda or on A.A. concerns
7. Skits or plays depicting some aspect of General Service or an A.A. concern.
8. Films or video features.

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 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 group and for A.A. as a whole.

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A.A. Glossary (terms frequently used in General Service activities)

ACYPAA - All California Young People in A.A.

AAWS - Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

Alternate - A service worker who, at Group, District, or Area level, assists, supports, and participates in the service responsibilities of an officer.

Area - A geographical division within a state or province. Each conference delegate represents an Area.

Area Service Committee (ASC) - An S.D.I.A. committee made up of Area Officers, past Delegates, D.C.M.s, alternate D.C.M.s, other district officers, Standing and Coordinate Committee chairs and co-chairs. There is a minimum of two A.S.C. Meetings between each regular Assembly. The Area Service Committee has the following purposes:

1. Identifying, defining, and discussing area, district and group problems and Issues;
2. Obtaining the consensus of each district and its groups;
3. Acting as an advisory Committee to the Assembly, Executive Committee and the Delegate;
4. Establishing the agenda for the next assembly.

Archives – A collection of A.A. memorabilia usually maintained by a committee.

ASC - Area Service Committee.

Assembly - Membership includes the Delegate, Alternate Delegate, and all other Area Officers, currently serving, including D.C.M.s, Alternate D.C.M.s, other District Officers, and Standing and Coordinate Committee Chairs and Co-chairs. The Assembly is the mainstream of the Conference structure and is the representative voice of the movement expressing itself. It is the gathering of the GSRs and the ASC, who deliberate and vote upon resolutions concerning service matters brought before them.

Assembly responsibilities include:

1. Electing and supporting the area officers, including a Delegate to the General Service Conference;
2. Being an interim repository, through its GSRs, of the collective group conscience of the Area;
3. Seeking substantial unanimity in all important decisions;
4. Strengthening A.A. as a whole and carrying the A.A. message the best way possible in the MSCA.

Box 4-5-9 - A bimonthly publication of the GSO, including many items of interest.

Conference - The General Service Conference can mean:

1. The structure involving committee members, GSRs, and Delegates in the United States and Canada or
2. The annual meeting of Delegates each April in New York.

CPC - Cooperation with the Professional Community maintains committees at the District, Area, Trustee, and Conference levels to help carry the message to professionals who work with alcoholics.

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Delegate - The individual elected every other year to represent the Area at the annual Conference meeting in New York and to bring back the results of that meeting to the Area.

DCM - A member of the District Committee elected by the GSRs to represent the entire district and to coordinate service activities within the district.

District - A geographical division within the Area, sometimes divided into sub districts, that is represented by Committee Members.

FC - Finance Committee

General Services – Movement-wide services performed by anyone in the General Service Structure (GSR, DCM, Delegate, *etc.*).

GSO - General Service Office in New York that provides services to groups in the U.S. and Canada.

GSR - General Service Representative is an A.A. member elected by a group to voice that group's opinion in discussions at the Area level, and to vote for the district and area officers and for the Delegate.

GVR - Grapevine Representative; the group or district or area contact with the Grapevine office.

H&I - Hospitals and Institutions Committee.

ICYPAA - International Conference of Young People in A.A

Informed Group Conscience — a term implying that pertinent information has been studied and all views have been heard before a group votes. The group conscience is the collective conscience of the group membership and thus represents substantial unanimity on an issue before definitive action is taken.

PI - Public Information committees at the District, Area, Trustee, and Conference level help carry the message by working with the media.

PRAASA - Pacific Region A.A. Service Assembly is held each year in March in the Pacific Region. It is a weekend of sharing experience with our counterparts from all the different areas in the Pacific Region, and with staff members from GSO.

Region - A grouping of several areas that elects a Regional Trustee to the Board of Trustees. There are six regions in the U.S., and two in Canada.

S.D.I.A — San Diego-Imperial Area.

Third Legacy – The third legacy is service. This legacy represents the sum of all A.A. services, from a twelfth-step call to A.A.'s worldwide service activities.

Trustee - A member of A.A.'s General Service Board. There are 7 Nonalcoholic Trustees (Class A) and 14 Alcoholic Trustees (Class B).

Twelve Concepts - The Twelve Concepts are analogous to the Twelve Steps (for recovery) and The Twelve Traditions (for unity). They are the guidelines for service, a set of principles designed to provide service to both A.A. members and to the still-suffering alcoholic. They also protect the structure which makes such service possible.

The Conference Structure-An Overview

“The Conference structure is the framework in which these ‘general services’ are carried out. It is a method by which A.A.’s collective group conscience can speak forcefully and put its desires for worldwide services into effect. It is the structure that takes the place of government in A.A., ensuring that the full voice of A.A. members will be heard and guaranteeing that movement-wide services will continue to function under all conditions. Today, general service include all kinds of activities within the Conference structure carried on by districts, area committees, delegates, trustees, the GSO and the Grapevine. Usually, these services affect A.A. as a whole.”

An Upside-Down Organization

Alcoholics Anonymous has been called an upside-down organization because, as the structure chart shows, the groups are at the top and the trustees are on the bottom. Bill W. wrote in Concept I: ‘The A.A. groups today hold ultimate responsibility and the final authority for our world services...’ Then, in Concept II Bill made it clear that the groups “delegated to the Conference complete authority for the active maintenance of our world service and thereby made the Conference... the actual voice and effective conscience of our whole Society.”

Why do we need a General Service Conference?

The late Bernard B. Smith, nonalcoholic, then chair of the board of trustees and one of the architects of the Conference structure, answered that question superbly in his opening talk at the 1954 meeting: “We may not need a General Service Conference to ensure our own recovery. We do need it to ensure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from this room. We need it to ensure the recovery of a child being born tonight destined for alcoholism. We need it to provide, in keeping with our Twelfth Step, a permanent haven for all alcoholics who, in the ages ahead, can find in A.A. that rebirth that brought us back to life.

“We need it because we, more than all others, are conscious of the devastating effect of the human urge for power and prestige which we must ensure can never invade A.A. We need it to ensure A.A. against government, while insulating it against anarchy; we need it to protect A.A. against disintegration while preventing over integration. We need it so that Alcoholics Anonymous, and Alcoholics Anonymous alone, is the ultimate repository of its Twelve Steps, its Twelve Traditions, and all of its services.

‘We need it to ensure that changes within A.A. come only as a response to the needs and the wants of all A.A., and not of any few. We need it to ensure that the doors of the halls of A.A. never have locks on them, so that all people for all time who have an alcoholic problem may enter these halls unasked and feel welcome. We need it to ensure that Alcoholics Anonymous never asks of anyone who needs us what his or her race is, what his or her creed is, what his or her social position is.’”