

PRE-CONFERENCE INFORMATION

2015

The pre-conference information session is held to inform Area 8 group representatives of current topics for discussion at the General Service Conference April 19- April 26 in New York. The topics are related to changes to existing literature to proposals to create new literature.

The 8 topics listed in this document will be covered in detail today and are selected from the full list of more than 50 agenda items that will be considered at the conference. Each agenda item in this handout includes a written summary intended to provide background information on the topic and to help inform the group during discussion. Also available thru email or download is are powerpoint graphic slides that even further simplifies each topic. You might choose one or the other as the best way of communicating to your group. By making a report on the topics discussed today to your group and collecting their responses you are giving them a voice in the future of Alcoholics Anonymous.

PLEASE SHARE THE RESPONSES FROM YOUR GROUP AT THE APRIL 11 AREA ASSEMBLY

The assembly begins at 9:00am.

Time change applies only to this assembly.

GSR orientation will begin at 8:00a.

See flyer at Area8aa.org

Encinitas Senior Center
1140 Oakcrest Park Drive
Encinitas, CA 92024

A list of all agenda items and the presentation material used for the Pre Conference sessions, is available for download on the Area 8 website, www.area8aa.org, on the front page. and background information on these selected topics is available by contacting the delegate, 2dufflebags@gmail.com or alternate delegate, jmga@cox.net.

If you have email they will provide you link to the read only background online, or make arrangements to get you a hard copy of the specific lettered agenda item you wish to have.

There are several ways to use this document in making reports to your group. Using the right of decision granted to you by Concept 3 you may decide whether to present some or all of these agenda items. Methods of presentation include making a presentation directly to the meeting, scheduling a separate meeting for the presentation, or making several short presentations at consecutive meetings. Another method of gathering responses is to make several copies of this document and circulate it during several meetings encouraging members to record their thoughts on it. Each group is allowed a voice on all topics in Alcoholics Anonymous so do your best to inform them.

If you have any questions with the pre-conference process or help in any way just email delegate@area8aa.org or alt_del@area8aa.org.

Flowchart and Timeline for Conference Agenda Items in Area 8

Pre-Conference Sessions Late February



Group Responses Gathered by GSRs in March

Group responses heard at Area Assembly April 11



Voice of AA heard at Conference April 19-26

A note regarding all summary documents provided by the Area 08 Delegate for group consideration of the 2015 General Service Conference Information

- *Neither AA as a whole, or your local trusted servants presenting agenda item summaries are “proposing” anything to pass or to fail. Each one of the agenda items is either proposed by an A.A. member, group, district, area, or Trusted servant within the service structure. In A.A. ideas are considered from all sources. Once the idea is accepted as a conference agenda item, those items will not be implemented unless approved by 2/3 of the Conference Delegates who are trusted to represent A.A. as a whole. Of course we all have biases when faced with A.A. topics however we have done our best to remove even the slightest possibility of inserting that bias in these summaries. Please understand when positive reasons are provided that “support” the agenda item, that viewpoint is coming from the originator(s) of the proposal. **Please remember all of us are asked to consider AA as a whole when considering our views on these matters, not necessarily what is best for ourselves or our groups alone.***
- *The text included in the title of each agenda item doesn’t necessarily (by itself) include a specific topic or question for groups to review. Many times the primary issue for consideration is stated in more detail within the notes provided for that agenda item. In both the single page agenda summaries and the presentation slides for Area 08, background information has in some cases been cut and pasted, and in other cases summarized so the “general idea” of the agenda proposal can be expressed in one page or less. When available, it was our intention to include background information regardless of whether it supported the item or not. If you have concern about bias or lack of information, please contact your Delegate 2dufflebags@gmail.com or your DCM to gain access to the full background document for that particular item in question.*
- **What information best helps your Delegate to Participate at the conference?** *Any input from the groups is welcomed, even yes or no answers. Participation is the key. However what best helps your delegate participate at the conference is what viewpoints your groups for and against an agenda item. This may help you at the group level stay out of debate when reviewing items with the group. If there are strong principles and against, regardless of how many people are behind each, knowing principles supporting both views is most helpful. Once hearing this at the group level, members relax knowing both sides can be heard by your Delegate. Of course, only you know your group and are trusted to approach the agenda item discussions in a way you and your group feel most comfortable. **Don’t forget to invite group members as guest at the Pre-Conference Assembly as well. Or “Invite a friend”!***

POLICY AND ADMISSIONS

AGENDA ITEM C:

Consider proposed revision to the policy regarding General Service Conference audio recordings.

Proposed Audio Policy "Recordings of General Service Conference presentations be made available for distribution, in accordance with Archives' Policies, to include audio recordings of keynote presentations; other selected presentations, talks from the Opening Dinner A.A. meeting and the trustees' farewell talks given at the closing brunch. Access to all other General Service Conference sessions will continue to be prohibited."

Reasoning provided for this motion to be considered:

1. A request to consult archival material relating to Spanish speaking groups in Texas, California and Arizona However, was approved for written material but a request was denied to consult audio recordings of the General Service Conferences. Subsequently a request was made to the Trustees Committee on Archives to consider a change to the audio policy to allow some audio portions of the conference to be made available in the future in some capacity.

Summary of Background Documents - (6 Pages)

- 9-1-14 Memo from Archivist, Michelle Mirza to the trustees' Archives Committee regarding General Service Conference recordings

Additional Information from the Background Notes.

- A 1984 General Service Conference Advisory Action was mentioned in denying (recently) the request for conference audio:
Tapes of Conference presentations not be made available, affirming the 1979 General Service Board recommendation which prohibits making tapes of any Conference session for distribution outside of the A.A. archives, except for the opening dinner and the closing brunch.

**The A.A. Archivist was asked to report on the background on the 1984 advisory action, and the history of the audio policy. The Archivist general findings were that 1) "I did NOT find a clearly expressed General Service Board recommendation of 1979 and 2)" I did NOT find any Conference Advisory Action that predates 1979 regarding Conference tapes.

Also in the Archivist reported there were various times in history when some audio portions of conference presentations were available for distribution, opening dinner speakers, closing Trustee Talks, and other mid conference presentations.
- In summary, it appears that there has been a practice at various times to release audio recordings and at other times not to. A clear reason for either case is not clearly stated in the background. Anonymity of voice related recordings seems to be an unstated reason since printed versions of some presentations were distributed while the audio not released.

QUESTIONS FROM THE DELEGATE

1. Could access to select audio from the General Service Conference stimulate interest at the group level? Why?
2. Any A.A. principles or traditions related to your decision?

LITERATURE

AGENDA ITEM E:

Consider creating a book combining Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions with the Twelve Concepts for World Service.

Reasoning provided by originating Area(s) for this motion to be considered:

"We believe it is important for the general membership to have easy access to the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts in one book so that the membership can understand the principles that guide our fellowship.

We believe this could be done at minimal cost by combining the 12 and 12 (B-2) with the 12 concepts (BM-32).

If the Delegate, Area Committee, DCM's, and GSR's understand the right of decision etc. --but the general membership doesn't-- then the people that serve us are at a disadvantage.

By adding them to the book itself we feel that way our membership would get acquainted with all three legacies.

During presentation, the argument was made that a "12 and 12 and 12 book" would expose everyone in the rooms to "the rest of AA". Presently the Twelve Concepts of AA World Service are a mystery to most of our AA Fellowship.

Hopefully, by affording greater exposure of the 12 Concepts to our Fellowship, we will create greater support for and understanding of our AA General Service structure, for the function of AA General Service as a whole, and for its vital work in supporting our legacies of unity and recovery.

At present many A.A. members do not understand the Concepts and would benefit from knowledge of such things as the Rights of Decision, Participation, and Appeal as well as the Warranties of Article 12. Hopefully with greater exposure, by having the thirty-six principles in one book, we would have more support for General Service and better understanding of the program in general to protect the future of A.A."

Summary of Background Documents - (10 Pages)

1. *Requests from two different Areas for a book combining Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions with the Twelve Concepts for World Service. Each request demonstrated support from their respective Area Assemblies.*
2. *Non-format related Conference Advisory Actions pertaining to the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.*
3. *History of Suggestions for a book combining the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions with the Twelve Concepts for World Service.*

QUESTIONS FROM THE DELEGATE

1. Are members of your group aware there are Twelve Concepts of World Service?
2. Does your group feel a combined book could stimulate interest in the Concepts that guide our 3rd legacy of Service? Why or why not?

LITERATURE

AGENDA ITEM D:

“Consider developing literature for the alcoholic with mental health issues”

Some reasoning provided in the background for considering this agenda item (from some area members supporting this proposal):

The only reference to a mental illness is in the pamphlet: AA for the Alcoholic with Special Needs. The last story is about a person with a learning disorder and mental illness. There needs to be a pamphlet exclusively for alcoholics with a mental illness. Many alcoholics suffer from depression or have been suicidal. More and more alcoholics are being discharged from treatment facilities with a dual diagnosis of substance abuse and mental illness.

A pamphlet for the mentally ill alcoholic would serve several purposes:

- 1) Often the first A.A. literature that a newcomer reads is a pamphlet. The mentally ill newcomer would be assured that they too belong and can recover from alcoholism. That would fulfill our Primary Purpose and tradition 3.*
- 2) Doctors would have an excellent tool to pass on to their mentally ill patients who have a problem with drinking.*
- 3) It would help the Fellowship to understand the unique difficulties of the mentally ill.*
- 4) An informed and sensitive sponsor and home group can go a long way, in a spirit of love and tolerance, to help the mentally ill alcoholic.*

Past Conference references noted in background:

By past Conference Advisory Actions (1986, 1987) dual purpose groups with outside affiliation were removed from directories and G.S.O. was instructed not to list them in the future. (Note there didn't appear to be indication in background that these past advisory actions are linked with this literature proposal)

The General Service Conference has, over the years, developed "special interest" pamphlets directed toward members and potential members. These pamphlets include:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <i>"Young People and A.A."</i> | <i>"A.A. for the Native North American"</i> |
| <i>"A.A. for the Woman"</i> | <i>"A.A. and the Gay/Lesbian Alcoholic"</i> |
| <i>"A.A. and the Armed Services"</i> | <i>"A.A. for the Black and African American Alcoholic"</i> |
| <i>"What Happened to Joe"</i> | <i>"A.A. for the Older Alcoholic- Never Too Late"</i> |
| <i>"It Happened to Alice"</i> | <i>"Do You Think You're Different?"</i> |
| <i>"Too Young?"</i> | |

Summary of Background Documents - (21 Pages)

- 1. Letters of support from multiple General Service areas either requesting the development of literature for the alcoholic with mental illness, (or supporting other Areas forwarded the agenda item request), and in some cases reasoning while their area supports this agenda item.*
- 2. General Service Conference Directory Listings and Literature*

QUESTIONS FROM THE DELEGATE

- 1.** Does your group think pamphlets in general help to carry the A.A. message?
- 2.** Does your group literature for the alcoholic with mental health issues will help some of our membership stay sober? Why or why not? Traditions concerns?

VI. LITERATURE

AGENDA ITEM C:

Consider updating the pamphlet “A.A. and the Gay/Lesbian Alcoholic”

with information to include the perspective of the entire Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender (GLBT) community and Gender Non-Conforming individuals.

Reasoning provided by originating Area(s) for this motion to be considered:

1. This literature may help the transgender and gender non-conforming community overcome access barriers to recovery in A.A.
2. Literature of this nature could be educational for the Fellowship at large.

Summary of Background Documents - (14 Pages)

- Letter of Support from two General Service Areas
- Report from a temporary Sub-Committee formed within one Area to research issues surrounding Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Alcoholics
- Recent Sharing from A.A. Members

Excerpts From a local Area Sub-Committee Report in 2013 “Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Alcoholics”:

“What is gender? 'Gender' refers to the socially created roles of men and women, while 'Sex' refers to biological characteristics, which define humans as female or male.”

“Sex is biological and includes physical attributes such as reproductive structures, and external genitalia. At birth it is used to identify individuals as male or female. Gender, on the other hand, is far more complicated. It is the complex relationship between physical traits and one's internal sense of self as male, female, both genders, or neither gender. It also includes a person's outward presentations, appearance, and behaviors as related to that internal sense of self.”

Other experiences in A.A. Trans/GNC individuals experience include being stared at, harassed, and even being asked to leave meetings because people are uncomfortable or disagree. This can make it difficult for Trans/GNC individuals to feel safe finding new meetings or trusting the membership principles of our program. Additionally, Trans/GNC people have had trouble finding and/or keeping sponsors. Some may also have trouble finding a sponsor who is the same gender they identify with, even in the Gay and Lesbian community.

QUESTIONS FROM THE DELEGATE

1. Does your group think pamphlets in general help to carry the A.A. message? If yes, how?
2. Does your group feel adding language to the pamphlet “A.A. and the Gay/Lesbian Alcoholic” will help some of our membership stay sober?
3. Any experiences at the group level that support or don't support literature of this type?

LITERATURE

AGENDA ITEM F:

Revise the current pamphlet "A.A. for the Woman." (Pamphlet No. P-5)

Reasoning provided by originating Area(s) for this motion to be considered:

1. Updating the recovery pamphlet - "A.A. for the Woman" would make it more relevant for a woman coming into A.A. today.
 - Specific Comments by originators:

(Inside front cover). Page numbers of stories copyrighted by A.A. Grapevine, Inc. do not align with the start of stories.

(Page 5) Some younger members wondered who Ann Landers was. The questions are still relevant, so maybe mention she was an advice columnist.

(Story starting on page 10) Contains material which dates the story, such as reference to crashing into a stanchion and the Bowery.

(Story starting on page 13) Sounds dated. Today children would be in foster care and not an orphanage. Mention of "Kentucky Gentleman".

(Story starting on page 18) reference to year 1977 dates the story, nurses don't wear white uniforms and caps today.

(Story starting on page 24) Reference to tranquilizers, doctor stating you can't become addicted to tranquilizers, etc.

(Story starting on page 27) Very dated. Should be replaced with a story that reflects a more typical housewife of today.

(Where to find A.A. on page 35) Needs to be updated to include reference to website, availability of phone meetings, etc.

Summary of Background Documents - (3 Pages)

- Letter Request from delegate indicating support from their general service area

QUESTIONS FROM THE DELEGATE

1. Does your group think pamphlets in general help to carry the A.A. message? How?
2. Does your group feel adding language to the pamphlet "A.A. for the Woman" will help it be more relevant and useful in carrying the message? Why or why not?

PUBLIC INFORMATION

AGENDA ITEM B-1:

Review 2015 Public Information Comprehensive Media Plan.

- 1. Consider suggestion that the trustees' Public Information Committee explore the use of specific social media platforms and social networking platforms as potential channels for sharing information about Alcoholics Anonymous.**

Historical Communications regarding use of Social Media by A. A. for public information purposes:

Between 2012 and 2013 requests from the fellowship for A.A. to have a presence on Facebook led to the conference committee on Public Information requesting the Trustees Committee on Public Information to research all aspects of a potential social media page that would not include any personal interaction.

The Trustees Committee was asked to provide an implementation plan by 2013 and instead provided a report that concluded at this time that A.A. World Services, the General Service Office, and the A.A. Grapevine and La Viná cannot establish a presence on Facebook in a manner which would be consistent with A.A. Traditions. The conference committee agreed.

The trustees' P.I. committee has noted that thru 2015 questions continue to arise regarding how social media platforms and social media networks might be used (a) for A.A. public informational purposes, and (b) by individual A.A. members in their personal communications, in a manner that is consistent with A.A. Traditions. Several requests for A.A. presence in social media were submitted for consideration as agenda items at the 2015 general service conference.

Reasons provided in the background for considering this agenda item:

The committee agreed that taking action on any of these individual items (provided to the conference for 2015 agenda) prior to the exploration and discussion being proposed by the Comprehensive Media Plan might be premature.

The 2015 Comprehensive Media Plan lists several "Potential Items for Action" in 2015 (by the conference committee), including:

Begin exploring specific social media platforms (Twitter and Instagram) and social networking platforms (Google+) as potential channels for sharing information about Alcoholics Anonymous.

Summary of Background Documents - (25 Pages)

- 1. Trustees Committee on Public Information Media Plan (attached to P.I. Item B, 4 total Pages)*
- 2. Background Notes that refer to Trustees Committee/Sub Committee and conference committee on Public Information communications between each other. Additionally Conference Advisory Actions are referenced.*
- 3. Requests Information on anonymity and social media in existing A.A. literature.*
- 4. 2012 Report of the Public Information Social Media Page Subcommittee*

QUESTIONS FROM THE DELEGATE

- 1.** Should A.A. continue to explore Social Media platforms that might be used for Public Information Purposes, as long as it could be done in a manner consistent with our Traditions?
- 2.** Could information about how members could stay within tradition(s) while using social media platforms be helpful to our fellowship and primary purpose?

FINANCE

AGENDA ITEM A:

Discuss a request to increase the maximum annual contribution that the General Service Board can receive from an A.A. member from \$3,000 to \$5,000.**

*** (This item is not related to the maximum limit of \$5,000 allowed for donation at time of death called "Bequest")*

Reasoning provided by originating Area(s) for this motion to be considered:

1. Historically on the average this amount has been increased every 8 years. The last time an increase to the limit for A.A. member contributions was 2007.

Summary of Background Documents - (14 Pages)

- Letter Request from delegate indicating support from a general service area
- History and statistics

Summary from General Service Board Statistics:

Since 1998 approximately 110 members have contributed up to the limitation set on personal contributions

Excerpts From General Service Board Statistics showing years of historical increases:

| Year | Existing Amount | | New Limit |
|------|--------------------|----|--------------|
| 1967 | \$100 | to | \$200 |
| 1972 | \$200 | to | \$300 |
| 1979 | \$300 | to | \$500 |
| 1986 | \$500 | to | \$1,000 |
| 1999 | \$1,000 | to | \$2,000 |
| 2007 | \$2,000 | to | \$3,000 |

QUESTIONS FROM THE DELEGATE

1. Does your group feel this amount should be raised regardless of the limited number of members who contribute the maximum contribution limit each year? Why or why not?
2. Is there a different limit they think should be considered?
3. Any Traditions or A.A. principles to consider?

PUBLIC INFORMATION

AGENDA ITEM C1 & C2: Public Service Announcements (P.S.A.s):

1. Consider approving the proposed video P.S.A., "Doors"
2. Consider centralized distribution, tracking and evaluation of the proposed video P.S.A., "Doors", at a cost not to exceed \$40,000, as an addition to the work of local Public Information Committees.

Reasons provided in the background for considering this agenda item:

2014 Conference Advisory Action recommended that a new public service announcement be produced in 2014 at a cost not to exceed \$30,000.

Other background notes and communications regarding this item

The trustees' Committee on Public Information agreed to forward a report to the 2015 Conference Committee a report that recommends production of the P.S.A "Doors" and that it be centrally distributed, tracked and evaluated at a cost not to exceed \$40,000, in addition to the work of local Public Information Committees.

Excerpt from: Subcommittee on Production of New Video P.S.A. Final Report January 23, 2015

Concerns regarding the use of authentic voices (as opposed to our usual practice of using professional actors/voiceovers for P.S.A.s) have been discussed several times by the subcommittee, G.S.O. staff and by the full trustees' Public Information Committee. In light of a core principle expressed in the current Comprehensive Media Plan - that one of our most effective P. I. tools is real members telling real stories - the members of the trustees' Public Information Committee agreed that the authenticity of using real members' voices is part of the emotional power of the piece.

Excerpt from: History of Centralized Distribution and Tracking of A.A. Television Public Service Announcements Updated January 2015

Possible Benefits of Tracking Use & Centralized Distribution-

- *Packaging of centrally distributed P.S.A.s includes an attractive tape box, cover letter and A.A. literature to highlight the tape to TV station personnel.*
- *Centralized distribution would provide P.S.A. coverage to areas that do not have active P.I. committees.*
- *Districts and other local service entities that do not wish to contact stations could request P.S.A.s be sent directly to local stations.*
- *Tracking would allow local committees the opportunity to see where P.S.A.s were being played and to approach stations not utilizing our P.S.A.s.*
- *Tracking could provide insight into which videos are played most often, thus providing guidance on the type of P.S.A. that reaches the still-suffering alcoholic.*

Summary of Background Documents - (7 Pages)

1. *Memo regarding options/process for reviewing draft video P.S.A.*
2. *Final Report - 2014 Subcommittee on Production of New Video P.S.A.*
3. *History of Centralized Distribution and Tracking of A.A. Television Public Service Announcements.*
4. *Proposed video P.S.A., "Doors" - to follow; video will be made available to Conference P.I. Committee members only, by mid to /ate March 2015*
5. *Script, Proposed video P.S.A., "Doors" - to follow; will be mailed to Conference P.I. Committee members only, when video is made available in mid to /ate March 2015*

QUESTIONS FROM THE DELEGATE

1. Does your group feel use of real members telling real A.A. stories can be effective in carrying the message to the Alcoholic who still suffers?
2. Does your group have any concerns with traditions of anonymity by using real **A.A. voices in a public service announcement? (**voices are used from Grapevine Audio Submissions)