

**The area service committee**

**A GUIDE TO SERVICE IN NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS**

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## 1 Introduction

2 "Workhorse" of the service structure--maybe that's the best way to describe the  
3 area service committee. Most of the hands-on work of delivering N.A. services to  
4 the groups and to the community occurs at the area level.

5 N.A. groups support meetings where addicts can share their recovery with one  
6 another. Only minimal organization is necessary to hold those meetings. But  
7 there's lots more that can be done to further the aims of Narcotics Anonymous:

- 8 \* N.A. panel presentations at addiction treatment centers and correctional  
9 facilities can reach addicts particularly in need of what we have to offer.
- 10 \* Public information presentations to schools and community groups, mailings to  
11 addiction treatment professionals, meeting notices in newspapers, and public  
12 service announcements on local radio and television stations can help direct  
13 people to N.A.
- 14 \* A phoneline service can help addicts seeking recovery find a meeting in their  
15 area, and also provide information about N.A. to interested community  
16 members.
- 17 \* A readily available supply of N.A. books and pamphlets can make it easier for  
18 groups to stock their literature tables.
- 19 \* Social activities can help addicts feel more comfortable in their local N.A.  
20 community, and can increase unity and camaraderie among area members.

21 All of these services require a certain degree of organization, the complexity of  
22 which could easily divert N.A. groups from the week-in, week-out task of conducting  
23 Narcotics Anonymous meetings for their members. Most of these services also  
24 require more money and manpower than any single group could possibly muster.  
25 How do groups stay focused on their primary purpose, and still see that these other  
26 services are developed and maintained? They " . . . create service boards or  
27 committees," in the words of N.A.'s Ninth Tradition, "directly responsible to those  
28 they serve." And the service committee closest to home, the committee best situated  
29 to provide the most direct service to the groups and the community, is the *area*  
30 service committee.

31 A newly formed area committee will not be able to provide the same level of  
32 service as a longer established committee. That's as it should be, and a new area  
33 service committee should not expect to hit the ground running at full speed. The  
34 development of the full range of area services described in this chapter often takes a  
35 few years. Be patient, and keep plugging; it's worth the effort.

## 36 The area committee and other N.A. services

37 Area service committees are ultimately responsible to the groups they serve.  
38 Narcotics Anonymous groups send GSRs--group service representatives--to serve on  
39 the area committee and its subcommittees. While still maintaining *final*  
40 responsibility and authority for area services, they invest enough *delegated* authority

41 in their GSRs--and through them, in the area committee--for the necessary work to  
42 get done.

43 N.A. groups also send money to the area committee, money needed to coordinate  
44 panels, maintain phonelines, and conduct public information activities. Through  
45 their contributions of money and manpower, the groups exercise both their  
46 responsibility and their authority for N.A. services.

47 How does the area service committee relate in turn to N.A.'s regional, national,  
48 and international services? In principle, in much the same way as the group relates  
49 to the area committee: through carefully selected representatives, delegated with  
50 the authority necessary for effective service. The specific ways in which all these  
51 elements of the N.A. service structure relate to one another are described in the  
52 N.A. Service Charter. You'll find the charter in the back of this book.

### 53 **Area committee participants**

54 There are three groups of participants in most area service committees: GSRs,  
55 general officers, and subcommittee chairpersons. The "principle of participation"  
56 (Principle Seven) "allows all those entrusted with responsibility for our services to  
57 take part in the decision-making processes affecting those services." Group service  
58 representatives provide input to the area decision-making process from the "grass  
59 roots" level, helping insure that the committee's feet are planted firmly on the  
60 ground. Committee officers and subcommittee chairpersons "are chosen for their  
61 experience, their working familiarity with our principles, and their ability to apply  
62 those principles in carrying out their responsibilities. The principle of participation  
63 insures that we draw from that pool of experience when we are making the  
64 important decisions of our fellowship."<sup>1</sup> Each area is responsible to create its own  
65 decision-making plan. Area committees should carefully consider the principle of  
66 participation when determining who votes.

### 67 **Group service representatives**

68 The group service representative (GSR) is the person who links the group with the  
69 rest of Narcotics Anonymous. Most groups also elect an alternate GSR who can fill  
70 in for the group representative when needed. The GSR takes part on the group's  
71 behalf in the area committee and the regional assembly, and brings back  
72 information on what's happening in the larger world of N.A. For more information  
73 on the GSR's job, see the earlier chapter in this book on the N.A. group.

74 Basic equipment for group service representatives usually includes copies of *A*  
75 *Guide to Service in Narcotics Anonymous*, area guidelines (if the area has them), and  
76 the log of area policy actions (available from the area secretary). Qualifications and  
77 terms of service for GSRs are determined by the groups which elect them.

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1 See the Seventh Principle of Service.

**General officers**

Most area service committees have five general officers: a chairperson, a vice chairperson, a treasurer, a secretary, and a regional committee member. These individuals are responsible for administering the general affairs of the entire area committee. Because of that, it's important that great care be taken in their selection. A substantial amount of clean time and personal maturity should be the first consideration, along with experience in the steps, traditions, and principles of service. Our leaders should demonstrate the stability and personal sense of direction that serve as an example to others. They should be capable of serving without attempting to govern. The specific amount of clean time required for each office will vary from area to area, according to how long the local N.A. community has been in existence.

Significant area service experience often makes more effective general officers. Experience both as a group service representative and an area subcommittee member is also helpful. Recent leadership experience as a subcommittee chairperson will prove invaluable. For more discussion of the role of leadership in N.A. services, see the essay on Principle Four in the Twelve Principles of Service.

**Chairperson.** The area committee chairperson is responsible for conducting committee meetings, preparing the agenda, and various administrative duties. His primary tools are the rules of order which appear at the end of this book, a firm hand, a calm spirit, and a clear mind. Careful study of *Robert's Rules of Order* will help broaden a chairperson's understanding of the principles involved in conducting a well-ordered, productive business meeting.

**Vice chairperson.** The primary responsibility of the area committee vice chairperson is the coordination of the area subcommittees. She keeps in regular touch with the chairpersons of each subcommittee, even attending subcommittee meetings when possible, in order to stay informed of their projects and problems. If disputes arise, within a subcommittee or between subcommittees, she helps find solutions to them. She works closely with subcommittee chairs when they prepare their annual reports and budget proposals.

The vice chairperson is also responsible to conduct area committee meetings in the chairperson's absence.

**Secretary.** If the area committee is the "workhorse of the service structure," then the area secretary is the "workhorse's workhorse." He handles all the committee's paperwork, a formidable job. His first responsibility is to take clear, accurate minutes of area committee meetings, and to distribute those minutes to all committee participants within a reasonable period of time after each meeting.

In the process of keeping the minutes of each meeting, the secretary should regularly update a log of area policy actions. The log lists motions the committee has passed regarding the activities of general officers and subcommittees. These

118 motions should be listed chronologically under the officer or subcommittee they  
119 affect. The secretary should periodically distribute an updated log of policy actions  
120 to all area committee participants. He should also have copies of the most recent  
121 printing available for new GSRs.

122 Because most secretaries mail minutes to area committee members, they need to  
123 keep an updated list of participants' addresses. With their committee's permission,  
124 they should mail a copy of this list once or twice a year to the national service office.  
125 That list will make it possible for the NSO to provide groups, subcommittees, and  
126 committee officers with current information pertinent to their areas of service, and  
127 with reports from the national service conference.

128 **Treasurer.** The area treasurer's job is critical to the committee's work. Because  
129 of the peculiar pitfalls associated with service as treasurer, it's important that area  
130 committee members look carefully at those they elect as treasurers. If the  
131 committee elects someone who is not capable of handling the responsibilities of the  
132 job, then the committee is at least partly responsible if something goes wrong. It's  
133 recommended that areas elect people to this position who are financially secure, are  
134 good at managing their personal finances, who inspire the trust of the committee,  
135 and who have substantial clean time. Experience in business, accounting,  
136 bookkeeping, or as a successful group treasurer is also very helpful.

137 The treasurer receives contributions from the groups, reimburses officers and  
138 subcommittee chairs for their budgeted expenses, keeps careful records of all  
139 transactions, and reports on the financial condition of the area committee at each of  
140 its meetings. As the administrator of the area's unified general fund, she is also  
141 responsible to prepare an annual budget<sup>2</sup> for the area committee. The *Treasurer's*  
142 *Handbook*, available from the national service office, contains a more detailed  
143 description of the treasurer's job, as well as most of the forms the treasurer will need  
144 to keep her records.

145 Along with another officer (usually the chairperson or vice chairperson), she  
146 administers the area's checking account. When at all possible, group contributions  
147 should be made in the form of checks payable to the area service committee. Wide  
148 experience also strongly suggests that area committees should only use two-  
149 signature checking accounts. These strong suggestions are offered to protect the  
150 treasurer from controversy as well as to protect area funds. Discussions of other  
151 considerations relating both to the treasurer's responsibilities and to area finances  
152 appear later in this chapter.

153 **Regional committee members.** Regional committee members are just that:  
154 members of the regional service committee. The regional committee is a body  
155 which coordinates service seminars throughout the region, is responsible for the  
156 regional convention, and conducts the regional assembly.

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2 See the section later in this chapter, "Area Budgeting."

Regional committee members serve two-year terms. Most areas have two RCMs serving at any one time; one is elected in odd-numbered years, the other in even-numbered years. This helps regional committees maintain a balance between experienced members and those just learning the ropes. It also insures that a regional committee serving only three or four areas will have enough members to be able to do its work.

The regional committee is primarily a service resource group, not a deliberative body. RCMs share reports with one another of projects, discussions, and challenges in their respective areas. When an area asks for help in dealing with a problem, the RCMs seek solutions by sharing applicable experience from their home areas, and by applying their collective insight into the traditions and principles of service to the problem. Information shared in the RCMs' area reports also give the regional committee indications of what kinds of service seminars need to be conducted, and where.

The regional committee at times also serves as a sounding board for the region's national service conference delegate. Each delegate receives regular reports on activities of the national service board, and also provides assistance to one of the trustee committees as an advisory panel member. The delegate, in turn, gives summary reports of national service affairs at each regional committee meeting. If the delegate needs broader consultation on a national service issue in order to perform his duties, he usually turns to the RCMs for their assistance.

Regional committee members form the pool from which the regional assembly selects the conference delegate. Participation by the RCMs in discussions of national service affairs helps insure that all of them are as capable as they can be of performing as active, informed members of the national service conference, whoever among them is chosen to actually serve.

### **Subcommittees**

Area subcommittees deliver the direct services of the area committee: H&I, P.I., phonelines, activities, and the rest. And much of the agenda of any area committee meeting is taken up with reports from subcommittee chairpersons and discussion of subcommittee activities. Most newly-formed area service committees will probably not be able to support the same wide range of subcommittee services as a longer established committee. Rather than attempt to set up all their subcommittees at once, it's recommended that new area committees take their time. Bring subcommittees on line one at a time, and give a great deal of attention to developing each subcommittee before bringing on another. *Easy does it.*

Since the area committee bears final responsibility for the operations of its subcommittees, all area committee participants need to be as informed as they can possibly be about subcommittee activities. Handbooks are available from the national service office for most of the subcommittees listed below. Specific

directions for subcommittees in your area can be found in your log of policy actions, and (if applicable) in your area guidelines.

**Hospitals and institutions** subcommittees conduct panels presenting the Narcotics Anonymous program to addicts at two different kinds of facilities. *Treatment panels* are conducted for patients at addiction treatment centers, mental health facilities, and therapeutic communities. *Correctional panels* are held for jail and prison inmates. The *Hospitals and Institutions Handbook*, available from your local H&I subcommittee or by writing the national service office, explains more about how to conduct panels, interact with facility administrators, and organize subcommittee work. The amount of work your local H&I subcommittee does will depend on a number of factors: the number of treatment and correctional facilities in your area, the number of N.A. members in your area interested in H&I service, and the amount of collective experience in H&I work in your N.A. community.

**Public information.** The general mission of your area public information subcommittee is to inform addicts still in the community, and others who might refer addicts, of the availability of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. Services provided by P.I. subcommittees vary widely from area to area. The simplest kind of P.I. project is the production and distribution of fliers throughout the community, announcing that N.A. is available and that more information can be had by calling the local N.A. information phoneline. As P.I. subcommittees become better developed, they often mail information packets to treatment professionals, conduct public meetings for community members, distribute public service announcements to local radio and television stations, and respond to public media inquiries. *A Guide to Public Information*, available from your local P.I. subcommittee or by writing the national service office, provides detailed information on conducting a wide range of projects designed to increase community awareness of Narcotics Anonymous.

Many public information projects serve primarily to encourage people to call the local phoneline for more information on N.A. Because of the close link between P.I. and phoneline work, it will often benefit these two subcommittees to cultivate close relationships with one another. Some phoneline and P.I. subcommittees make it a standard policy to send members to one another's meetings to better facilitate communication between the two.

The **phoneline** subcommittee maintains a telephone information service for Narcotics Anonymous that helps addicts and others in the community find us easily and quickly. Phoneline volunteers often serve as the first point of contact between the community at large and the N.A. Fellowship. For this reason, it's vital that careful attention be paid the work of this subcommittee.

Phoneline subcommittees in different N.A. communities organize their work in different ways to meet local needs. In some areas, P.I. and phoneline services are

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operated jointly by a single subcommittee. In smaller communities, the phoneline may be as simple as a call forwarding service, connecting callers with N.A. members' home telephones. In the largest metropolitan areas, computerized systems may route incoming calls to the appropriate people and information. For more details on N.A. phonelines, consult *A Guide to Phoneline Services*, available from your local phoneline subcommittee or by writing the national service office.

**Literature supply.** One service of an area committee is the maintenance of a stock of N.A. books and pamphlets, available for group purchase. Many groups find they are able to keep a regular supply of literature on their meeting tables if they are able to purchase it easily at their area committee meeting. In some areas, this subcommittee may consist of only one or two people; in others, it may involve as many as half a dozen members who take responsibility for processing group orders, monitoring stock levels, and reordering materials from the local or national service office. In order to keep area funds in a single account, most areas ask their treasurers to serve as cashier for literature sales, and to write the checks when new material needs to be purchased to replenish stocks. To help organize the job of processing group orders, tracking inventory, and reordering depleted items, an *Area Literature Workbook* is available from the national service office.

**Newsletter.** Some areas form subcommittees which publish local newsletters, listing area and regional events. Some newsletters also run articles on local service activities, and on members' recovery experiences. Because of the highly visible nature of newsletters, the area committee is strongly encouraged to take steps that insure adequate control is maintained over the newsletter's editorial content. A *Handbook for N.A. Newsletters* provides more information on the work of the newsletter subcommittee.

**Activities.** Dances, picnics, campouts, special speaker meetings--these events are put on by area activities subcommittees. Activities like these can provide a greater sense of community for the local N.A. Fellowship and produce additional area income. It should always be kept in mind, however, that these functions are designed to enhance N.A.'s primary purpose, not to replace group contributions in funding area services. Because most of the arrangements necessary for a local activity depend on the kinds of local facilities available, and the money and manpower the local activities subcommittee has at its disposal, it's not possible to prepare a comprehensive handbook for N.A. activities subcommittees. Your local subcommittee members will have to exercise their creativity to discover the best ways of conducting activities for your N.A. community.

A couple of remarks must be made regarding legalities relevant to N.A. activities. Most activities subcommittees distribute fliers announcing their next event to N.A. groups in the area. If your subcommittee's flier displays one of the N.A. logos--either the stylized initials "N.A." within a circle, or the diamond in a circle--a small



277 circled letter "R" should appear to the right of the logo. This mark shows that the  
278 logo is a registered trademark of Narcotics Anonymous worldwide, and helps  
279 protect the logo from misuse outside the fellowship.

280 **Include graphic displays of the two logos and the name "Narcotics**  
281 **Anonymous" with registration marks shown.**

282 Some activities subcommittees have conducted raffles of one sort or another,  
283 either as separate fundraising efforts or as parts of another activity. It should be  
284 noted that, in many U.S. states and in some other countries, such raffles are illegal.  
285 Activities subcommittees should also consider whether raffles--and especially cash  
286 raffles--appeal more to the spirit of self-interest, rather than inspiring the spirit of  
287 voluntary support implicit in our Seventh Tradition.

288 **Outreach** subcommittees serve as the outstretched hand of an established N.A.  
289 community to isolated groups and addicts, particularly in large, rural areas. By  
290 phone, by mail, and by car, they make sure, if at all possible, that no group, no  
291 addict has to go it alone. The subcommittee helps keep geographically isolated  
292 groups and addicts in touch with the mainstream of the N.A. Fellowship.

293 The outreach subcommittee is not the only subcommittee concerned with reaching  
294 out to isolated addicts. Sometimes addicts are isolated by factors other than  
295 geography--social, economic, and cultural factors, for instance. P.I., H&I, and  
296 phonline subcommittees can help an area committee focus additional attention on  
297 the needs of addicts in our own towns who, for one reason or another, have not  
298 found N.A. accessible. Area service committees and their subcommittees need to  
299 do whatever they can to insure that recovery is available to *any* addict who seeks it,  
300 "regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion, or lack of religion."\*

301 Though production of **meeting lists** does not usually require the creation of a  
302 separate subcommittee, most area committees do have one or two people who are  
303 responsible for printing meeting schedules on a regular basis. In some areas, this  
304 job is handled by one of the committee's general officers; in others, by one of the  
305 regular subcommittees. Meeting lists show days, times, locations, and other  
306 pertinent information for local N.A. meetings. Meeting schedules often show:

- 307 \* whether the meeting is "open" or "closed,"
- 308 \* meeting format (Basic Text study, discussion, etc.),
- 309 \* whether or not smoking is allowed at the meeting place,
- 310 \* additional needs services (wheelchair accessibility, availability of sign-language  
311 interpreter, etc.), and
- 312 \* if the meeting is conducted by a specialized group (for instance, a men's or  
313 women's group).

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\* Area subcommittees in the U.S. engaging in community outreach activities may find help in the FSO Group Services bulletin, N.A.: Serving the Community.

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Area committees are encouraged to send a copy of their meeting schedule to the national service office each time the list is updated. Accurate, current lists of meetings help NSO maintain an up-to-date directory for use in answering questions from around the country.

### **Electing officers and subcommittee chairpersons**

Most area committees hold officer and subcommittee chairperson elections at the same time each year. General officers (with the exception of RCMs) and subcommittee chairpersons usually serve one-year terms, and generally serve no more than two consecutive terms in the same position.\* Some area committees use a standard nomination and election procedure. Others use another option, what we call the *trusted servant selection procedure*. It works like this: All area committee participants who meet the basic eligibility requirements--current officers and subcommittee chairs as well as GSRs--are considered nominated for each position, unless they make it known that they're not available for the job or that they don't meet the eligibility requirements. The individual nominees, not the committee, determine whether they meet those eligibility requirements. Separate written ballots are cast for each position, then collected and tallied. If no one person receives a majority on the first ballot, a second written vote is taken between the two people who received the most votes the first time.

### **Area committee policy and guidelines**

One particular word comes to mind regarding area committee policy and guidelines: *caution*. One of N.A.'s early service manuals remarked, "Committees tend to get lost in their own dust as they stumble down the road of uncertain destiny." And no discussions raise more dust in an area service committee than those concerning area policy and guidelines. Here are a few points to consider when entering into policy discussions, points that may keep the dust to a minimum and the committee squarely on track.

N.A.'s Twelve Principles of Service are tailor-made resources for policy discussions. Time invested in studying the Twelve Principles will repay itself many times over with the clarity the principles provide. In particular, the principles of service speak to the subject of delegated authority. When groups want the area committee to perform services on their behalf, they delegate to the committee sufficient authority for the work to get done. And when the area committee elects officers and subcommittee chairs, expecting them to perform particular tasks, the committee also delegates to them the authority to apply their best judgment to the fulfillment of those tasks. Our trusted servants do not govern; but they must be given the trust necessary for them to effectively serve.

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\* The ad hoc committee discussed including language under this heading describing how rotation is practiced in area committees. The committee also discussed the great need for balance and continuity of service at the area level.

Consideration of N.A.'s primary purpose, simple as it may seem, can be quite effective in getting area service committees out of some pretty complex problems. Area committees exist primarily to help make N.A. groups more effective in carrying the recovery message to the still-suffering addict. Area committee services either:

- \* attract addicts to meetings,
- \* provide materials for use in meetings,
- \* conduct activities designed to strengthen meetings, or
- \* perform the administrative functions necessary to do those things.

When caught in a conflict for which there seems to be no resolution, an area committee can stop, call for a moment of silence, and ask itself, "What does this discussion have to do with carrying the message?"

A regularly updated log of area policy actions can be of tremendous help. When confronted with a policy question, area committees can consult it to see what decisions have already been made regarding it. The policy log makes it unnecessary for area committees to rehash the same question over and over and over again.

Hopefully, enough tools already exist to provide adequate guidance for the work of most area committees: this chapter of *A Guide to Service*, the log of area policy actions, and the Twelve Principles of Service. Some areas, though, will want to develop their own area guidelines, giving specific directions to their general officers and subcommittees. This will be the case particularly for large metropolitan area committees, whose subcommittees have substantial responsibilities. It's suggested that area committees give themselves some time to see what kinds of needs for guidelines actually exist in their areas before beginning to draft their own. An area committee equipped with a year or two of entries in the log of policy actions will be in a better position to see what kind of guidelines ought to be developed than an area committee trying to write guidelines during the committee's formation. You can get sample guidelines by writing to the national service office. Areas who wish to prepare their own guidelines may wish to appoint an ad hoc committee to adapt those sample guidelines to local needs.

It should be remembered that guidelines, rules of order, logs of policy actions, and similar tools are designed to help keep things simple. If an area committee finds these tools, instead, making things more complicated, time should be scheduled during the sharing session to talk about it.

### **Area inventory**

Some area committees set aside one day each year for conducting an area service inventory. Why? For much the same reason as N.A. members do personal inventories: to stop, consider their actions and attitudes, and rededicate themselves to their ideals. The area inventory considers three general topics:

1. How well has the area committee done this year at serving the *groups*, and how can it better serve them in the coming year?

- 392 2. How well has the area committee served the larger *community*, and how can the  
393 committee better serve the community at large?  
394 3. How well has the area committee done at supporting N.A.'s *regional, national,*  
395 *and international services*? How can the area provide better support for these  
396 services?

397 A substantial amount of preparation is required on everyone's part for an effective  
398 area inventory. GSRs, officers, and subcommittees must take a fearless, searching  
399 look at their work over the last year, and come to the inventory session prepared to  
400 review their roles on the committee. GSRs should spend time with their groups  
401 considering what needs might be addressed by the area committee in the next year,  
402 and come to the inventory session with ideas in hand. Officers and subcommittees  
403 should take the time to look at the make-up of the larger community they live in,  
404 ask themselves how N.A. could be more effective in reaching out to that community,  
405 and be prepared to share their thoughts with the entire area committee. And  
406 perhaps most importantly, all area committee participants should make an extra  
407 effort to prepare themselves spiritually to make the most of the area inventory  
408 meeting. Because of the great differences among area committees in size, local  
409 custom, and specific services, each area committee will have to craft an inventory  
410 agenda suitable to its own activities and needs.

411 Having conducted an area inventory, many committees will come to the conclusion  
412 that certain aspects of their work need to be altered. It should be remembered that  
413 there is no one model for area service committees that will be completely  
414 appropriate to all areas. A number of factors will affect the kinds of services an  
415 area committee offers, and the ways in which it offers them: community size,  
416 number of meetings, availability of experienced N.A. members, geography, local  
417 laws and customs, and other such considerations. What works in a major  
418 metropolitan setting probably won't work at all in a rural community. What *will*  
419 work--in any setting--is an effort to maintain sensitivity to the needs of the groups  
420 and the community. Each area committee will, to a great degree, have to find its  
421 own way of effectively providing services to those groups, and to the larger  
422 community of which those groups are a part.

423 Versatility is called for. Area committees in small or mid-sized communities may  
424 see fit to combine the work of some subcommittees, while well-established  
425 metropolitan committees might find themselves with a large number of highly  
426 specialized subcommittees, each with its own specific focus.<sup>3</sup> Given reasonable  
427 consideration, an area committee should not be afraid to configure its services in

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3 For further discussion of various means of reconfiguring local services to account for area expansion, see the section later in this chapter, "Growing Area Committees."

whatever way it sees fit, so that it may help carry the N.A. message in the most effective way possible.\*

### **Participation**

Participation is a critical factor in delivering services at any level. Lagging subcommittee participation and poor attendance at area committee meetings are problems all area committees must address from time to time, particularly during the annual inventory session. Sometimes the solutions to these problems are simple and quick; more often, they require deliberate, extended attention.

An area lacking support for the work of its subcommittees, or with little participation by GSRs at area committee meetings, probably has one of the three following problems:

- \* Either groups and members in the area are not sufficiently informed concerning the role of the area committee and the kind of work being done by its subcommittees;
- \* The area is not providing services that attract members' support;
- \* Or, members are simply not interested in supporting area services.

One way for an area committee to find out which of the three is actually the case is to send current committee participants out to the groups--especially to those groups who are not sending GSRs--and simply ask them what *they* think. If local N.A. members are unaware of the kind of work being done by the area committee, an ad hoc committee could be appointed to organize a service workshop. Such workshops, creatively conducted, can present groups and members with options for service of which they'd previously been unaware, and pique their interest in becoming a part of those services.

If the area committee is not currently providing services that local members are interested in supporting, such a workshop could serve as a combination open forum and brainstorming session. Drawing from the experience and insight of everyone who cares to be involved in the discussion, such a forum could pinpoint inadequacies in current services and develop directions for future services that have the support of a broad spectrum of the local N.A. community.

Some N.A. groups, no matter how effective and inviting area services might be, will not be interested in taking part. They may feel that their experienced members have more than enough to do with just supporting their recovery meetings (which is, after all, the group's primary purpose). N.A. groups *are* responsible to support N.A. services--but they are responsible first to conduct N.A. meetings. Our tradition of group autonomy gives them the right to decide for themselves whether or not they are able or willing to extend their support to the area committee. And the area

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\* Deleted from this paragraph was encouragement for the development of shared services subcommittees, administering P.I., phonelines, H&I, or other direct services for a number of areas. It was eliminated because further investigation revealed that shared services subcommittees have, for the most part, created more serious trouble than they've solved.

committee has a responsibility to serve *all* the groups in its service territory, regardless of whether or not a particular group has chosen to participate in the work of the committee.

### **Area budgeting**

A budget helps an area committee be a better steward of the funds it receives. The basic process for developing an area committee annual budget is pretty simple. On a quarterly or annual basis, general officers and subcommittee chairpersons present their plans for the next work period, along with estimates of how much that work will cost. By comparing the projected work plans and expenses with income reports from the last work period, the area committee will have a pretty good idea of how feasible the budget proposal is, and can vote to either adopt it or alter it.

### **Other funding considerations**

Most area committees set aside a certain amount of money, called a *prudent reserve*, to help ease them through financial dry spells. The prudent reserve is usually equal to about one month's worth of total committee expenses. The established level of the prudent reserve should be reviewed each time the budget is prepared to make sure reserve levels keep pace with current expenses.

Narcotics Anonymous groups directly support area, regional, and national services from money left over after covering their own expenses and establishing a prudent reserve. Area committees are encouraged to do the same with their surplus funds, providing much-needed financial support for N.A.'s regional and national services.

Area committees generally maintain all their funds in a single account for which the area treasurer is responsible. When an officer or subcommittee chairperson needs money for a budgeted project, they go to the treasurer at the area committee meeting and ask him to write them a check. The officer or subcommittee chair turns receipts for their expenses in to the treasurer, along with whatever money may be left over from their advance. If the project produces income, that money is also returned to the treasurer, to be deposited back into the general fund. Maintaining a single general fund helps insure that the area committee is able to maintain final responsibility for the activities of its subcommittees. It also eliminates the need for each subcommittee to duplicate the treasurer's job.

Most areas periodically struggle with the question of fundraising versus group contributions for support of their work. Activities subcommittees usually plan to have their projects come out in the black (as opposed to coming out in the red), so that unexpected expenses can be covered. As a result, most activities do in fact generate some excess funds. The time and energy that goes into putting on activities is contributed by N.A. members in the spirit of our Seventh Tradition, so plowing the extra money generated by those activities back into the area committee's general fund is not inappropriate. But the primary purpose of an area activity is to promote

unity within the N.A. community, not specifically to raise funds for the area committee.

Some area service committees have come to depend too greatly on extra income from activities. These area committees then sometimes find themselves tending to ignore the expressed needs of the groups, because the "power of the purse" implied in the First Principle of Service has been nullified. An area committee that finds itself in such a situation must ask itself whether it has become more a fundraising agency than a group of trusted servants devoted to the delivery of Narcotics Anonymous services. Once the question has been asked, and the committee has engaged in an honest evaluation of its activities, the area committee can correct its course and return to its work.

### **The monthly meeting**

The monthly area service committee meeting is the event at which the work of the subcommittees and the well-being of the groups all comes into focus. Officers, group service representatives, and subcommittee chairpersons give reports on what's happened since last the committee met. The sharing session gives all participants the opportunity to engage in wide-open discussion of issues raised by the reports. After the sharing session, the committee is ready to go straight to business, considering questions about the work of its officers and subcommittees. The sample agenda which appears at the end of this book can be used by most area committees as a tool for organizing the monthly meeting. And the short-form rules of order, also appearing at the end of this book, can help the business of the committee be processed in an orderly, respectful fashion.

### **The sharing session**

The sharing session has two types of agenda: discussion of group problems, and consideration of philosophical issues relating to the goals of the area committee. Agenda items for the sharing session usually come up during reports from group service representatives, general officers, and subcommittee chairpersons. After each report is given, anyone on the area committee--including the person who gave the report--can ask the committee chairperson to place a particular question on the sharing session agenda. Items discussed during the sharing session often relate to motions considered later in the committee meeting; but no voting takes place during the sharing session itself.

The Third Principle of Service talks about group conscience as being "the spiritual means by which a loving God influences our decisions," and carefully distinguishes the spiritual discipline of group conscience from the decision-making mechanism. Perhaps nowhere is that distinction more evident than in the sharing session. In the sharing session, committee participants consult their individual conscience--and their Higher Power--on the broad issues at hand, share the insights resulting from that, and together develop a collective direction for the committee. In the business

portion of the meeting, those same participants try to express that group conscience in the specific form of motions and votes. But committee motions cannot be an effective expression of the spiritual aims of our fellowship without the free exchange necessary for the development of a group conscience having first occurred. The sharing session is designed specifically to facilitate that occurrence.

For area committees who've not conducted sharing sessions as part of their regular format, some trial and error may be required before the session runs smoothly. But with a minimum of "traffic direction" from the chairperson, and the mutual respect and common courtesy of committee members, most areas will find that a little time in the sharing session can save a lot of time on business motions.

**On group problems.** Groups are encouraged to seek their own solutions to the challenges they face--and most of the time, they find them. But sometimes a group faces a problem that is beyond any of its members' experience. When that occurs, groups can send their GSRs to the area committee sharing session with a request for help.

That help usually comes in the form of the shared experience of other groups in dealing with the same kinds of questions. Since N.A. groups are entirely self-governing, only rarely can an area committee motion deal in any appropriate way with a group problem. The sharing of committee members' experience with solutions to similar problems in their groups may, however, provide a GSR with just the information or insight her group has been lacking.

**On committee goals.** The sharing session is also a time when the area committee can focus on *issues* rather than *motions*. Although the rules of common courtesy are in place, Robert's Rules are not. It's an informal time in which ideas can be freely shared, ideas which can help the committee be more effective in fulfilling its mission.

How does it work? Well, let's say the public information subcommittee's report suggested in general terms the need to be more energetic in reaching out to drug abuse treatment professionals in the area. During the sharing session, a variety of issues pertaining to P.I.'s suggestion can be discussed: What's the difference between "energetic" P.I. work and outright promotion of N.A.? Beyond that, to what extent, if any, does cooperation with the professional community border on the endorsement of outside enterprises? And is *this* where the area wants to spend more money, or are there other projects that have been on the back burner a while, projects more deserving of immediate attention? No motions, no calling of the question, no parliamentary inquiries--just a free exchange of ideas among N.A. trusted servants, producing greater understanding of directions in which area services might head.

The sharing session can provide an area committee with an alternative to restrictive or punitive motions as means of dealing with its problems. For instance,



the activities subcommittee may be having difficulty choosing monthly event speakers who are representative of the N.A. recovery experience. One way to deal with such a situation would be to pass a motion explicitly directing the subcommittee to select speakers meeting such-and-such criteria. If such a problem is addressed in the sharing session, however, area committee participants can freely convey their feelings about the issues involved. Under such conditions, the activities subcommittee chairperson may feel less threatened, more open to hearing what's being said, and more likely to make the appropriate adjustments in the subcommittee's speaker selection process than if he were being faced with the threat of an official slap in the face.

The sharing session is the appropriate time for members to exercise the principles of appeal and petition. N.A.'s Eighth and Ninth Principles of Service remind us that our committees are responsible to listen to *all* participants' voices with respect, and that all members have a right to be heard. Minority opinions on committee business can be expressed freely and clearly in the sharing session. And problems potentially calling for the redress of a personal grievance on the part of a committee member can be aired in an open, supportive atmosphere.

#### **Area committees in rural areas**

In many rural towns, even after many years of existence, only one N.A. group may have formed. The distances between those towns may make it impractical for an area committee to conduct any common services for its groups. The relatively few members available to serve on a rural area committee may also make it difficult to conduct the kinds of activities a metropolitan area committee conducts. It's more common in such areas for the individual groups to administer what direct services there are in each community.\*

Rural area committee meetings often become mostly a sharing session. Group service representatives discuss their groups' progress with one another, and provide solutions to each others' problems. Some rural areas conduct joint activities--dances, speaker meetings, and workshops--to promote unity and enhance their groups' effectiveness. Many rural committees appoint individual members as resource contacts for particular fields of service, whose job it is to gather information on H&I, P.I., or phonelines for other groups to use. Most rural groups find it easier to order literature by mail, either from the nearest local service center or directly from the national service office. Rural area committee operations are simple, but the strength gathered from the unity provided is just as important there as it is in the metropolitan setting.

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\* In the U.S., an FSO Group Services bulletin, N.A. Groups in Small Communities, provides more information on how individual groups in rural settings can carry the recovery message to their community.

**Learning days, workshops**

Learning days and workshops sponsored by area subcommittees are valuable tools for increasing area members' awareness of the work conducted by the area committee. For most fields of service--H&I, P.I., phonelines, etc.--complete descriptions of how to conduct local learning days and workshops are provided in the respective service handbooks. Many area committees also conduct topical workshops on the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Principles of Service, sponsorship, and other subjects. If experience in a particular subject or field of service is low in your area, you can ask your regional committee to conduct a workshop to help strengthen understanding of that branch of service in your area.

Group service workshops, conducted by an area ad hoc committee, can help focus trusted servants of local groups on their primary purpose and the tools available for fulfilling it. Some group service workshops open with members of the area committee sharing their experience in different group service positions, using the chapter on the N.A. group from *A Guide to Service* as a reference. The workshop can then be opened for questions from those attending, or discussion. Others break up into small groups to review different topics relevant to group services--meeting formats, for example, relations with the community, or conducting group business meetings. However they're conducted, a group service workshop is one direct way for the members of an area committee to share their experience with the groups they serve.

**Growing area committees**

Areas grow and change. As time passes, some area committees find themselves with so many GSRs attending that it's almost impossible to conduct orderly monthly meetings. Others start to ask whether an area committee that serves many towns, established when N.A. was young, shouldn't be broken up into a number of committees separately serving those towns. Still others experience internal conflicts, and wonder whether it wouldn't be easier just to separate the camps into their own area service committees. Regardless of where the question comes from, it's important that the answer follow only upon careful consideration of the group conscience of the entire area committee. There's much to consider in dividing an area committee.

Metropolitan area committees, regardless of the number of GSRs attending, will want to go to great lengths to avoid division. Multiple area committees in a single metropolitan community almost inevitably end up duplicating services, creating confusion, and wasting money and manpower. By exercising a little versatility and creativity, most metropolitan divisions can be avoided.

One alternative to division is the creation of *districts* within a metropolitan area. The main purpose of these districts is to provide a forum for the sharing of group experience. Districts elect representatives to serve a role on the metropolitan area committee--or *metro committee*--similar to that played by the GSR in the standard

area. The metro committee serves as an administrative umbrella for the subcommittees providing direct N.A. services affecting the districts and groups in the area.

Some areas, wanting to avoid the administrative complexities of the district/metro plan, will conduct quarterly, day-long meetings in large halls capable of holding all the GSRs in the metropolitan area. In such an area, a steering committee administers subcommittee services, and mails reports to GSRs between meetings.

It would be nice to be able to lay out one neat, simple plan for managing N.A. services in all metropolitan areas, but that's just not possible. The needs are so varied that each area will have to carefully find its own way through the maze of decisions that will ultimately create its area service arrangement. The regional committee can be a valuable resource in helping the area chart a course; be sure to include them in your discussions. Regardless of the arrangement chosen, the strength of a single committee responsible for administering N.A. services to a metropolitan community should not be splintered if at all possible.\*

If, after careful discussion in the sharing session, an area committee feels it must divide in order to provide effective services, it may want to ask the regional committee for guidance on how to go about it. The regional committee can coordinate a workshop to help the current area committee facilitate a smooth transition to multiple area services. Following the regional workshop, an area should appoint an ad hoc committee to develop a timetable for division. That timetable should be carefully considered by all parties, including the groups belonging to the current area. An area partition conducted in this way insures that the new areas begin their service with adequate resources, and on good terms with their neighbors.

### **Creating new area committees**

Each year, as Narcotics Anonymous grows, groups are formed where no area service structure exists. The first priority of such groups is, of course, getting the group on its feet and developing stable meetings. In larger communities, a stable group often sprouts new groups and new meetings. At some point, those groups begin to think about creating a common committee for themselves--what we call an area service committee--to serve their mutual needs and to make it easier for the groups to pool their efforts in reaching out to the community. Groups considering the formation of a new area committee can tap the experience of their regional service committee, or, if no regional service committee exists, their national service office. New area committees forming in countries without a national service office may wish to contact the World Service Office for assistance.

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\* For more information in the U.S. on N.A. services in metropolitan communities, write the Fellowship Service Office and ask for their Group Services Department bulletin, Metropolitan Area Committees.

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Some new area committees will try to start up all at once with a full complement of general officers and subcommittees, monthly dances, a convention, and a local service center. Area committees which try to do this may sorely disappoint themselves. Remember: *first things first*.

Area committees are formed, first, to strengthen the groups that create them. Before an area committee can start serving the community, the groups which make up that area must be on solid footing. An area committee just beginning its service journey may serve primarily as an environment in which groups can share their strengths and solutions with one another.

The new area committee might also consider focusing a considerable amount of its attention on the study of N.A.'s Twelve Traditions and Twelve Principles of Service. An area committee that takes care to establish a firm foundation *before* attempting to erect even a simple service structure will not be likely to regret the time taken in doing so.

Once the new area committee has established a pattern of facilitating communication among the groups, and of nurturing an understanding among its members of the principles behind N.A. service, it will be ready to begin providing simple direct services to the groups and to the community. Fellowship gatherings--learning forums, cooperative speaker meetings, dances, picnics, and the like--require a minimum of organization, yet can go a long way toward increasing unity among the groups in the area. Area meeting lists made available through the groups, and simple N.A. posters distributed in the community, can help direct more addicts seeking recovery to more of an area's meetings. Direct services don't have to be grand, complicated, expensive enterprises in order to be effective in promoting unity and carrying the recovery message. New area committees will do well to start with simple projects.

There are a few more things a new area committee will want to keep in mind, both in its initial formation and in its first few years of operation. First is the need to share the workload--the need to make sure that no one person is burdened with most of the area committee's work. Not all N.A. members in the area will be interested in serving on the area committee; most, in fact, will be satisfied to fulfill their primary commitment to their groups, leaving the area service committee to others. But those who *are* involved in the area committee should see to it that committee work is divided evenly among them. A committee supported primarily by one member is too vulnerable to collapse should that lone individual begin to suffer from "trusted servant burnout" or become unavailable for some other reason. If only a few members are involved in an area committee, they should consider keeping their workload light rather than overreaching their capacity.

A second consideration for new area committees is the idea of making a commitment right from the start to meet regularly--once a month, if possible. Most new committees will be occupying themselves primarily with developing means of

739 supporting member-groups and the study of N.A. traditions and principles of  
740 service. Those agenda items require regular, concentrated attention as the area  
741 committee establishes its foundation. A commitment to meeting regularly, right  
742 from the start, helps keep that need in the foreground.

743 Finally, the new area committee will greatly benefit from continued contact with  
744 its regional service committee and with neighboring area committees. Just as  
745 individual addicts don't often make it on their own, area committees can greatly  
746 benefit from the shared experience, strength, and hope of those who've gone before  
747 them. None of us has to do it alone--not any more.

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- 748 **Group services bulletins**
- 749 **(available in the U.S. from the Fellowship Service Office)**
- 750 *N.A.: Serving the Community*
- 751 *N.A. Groups in Small Communities*
- 752 *Metropolitan Area Committees*
- 753
- 754
- 755
  
- 756 **Other publications of interest to area committees**
- 757 **(available in the U.S. from the Fellowship Service Office)**
- 758 *Treasurer's Handbook*
- 759 *Hospitals and Institutions Handbook*
- 760 *A Guide to Public Information*
- 761 *A Guide to Phoneline Service*
- 762 *Area Literature Workbook*
- 763 *Handbook for N.A. Newsletters*
- 764 *It Works: How and Why*

## **Sample agenda**

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The agenda for each meeting follows a basic plan that is adopted from Robert's Rules. Here is the skeleton of that agenda. We fill it in each month with more specific topics under each heading.

### **Call to order**

- \* reading of the serenity prayer
- \* reading of decorum statement
- \* roll call
- \* reading of last month's minutes (additions or corrections are made).

### **Reports**

- \* general officers' report
- \* group reports
- \* special (ad hoc) committee reports
- \* standing committee reports
  1. H&I
  2. P.I.
  3. phonelines
  4. activities
  5. literature supply
  6. outreach

### **Sharing session**

General discussion of issues raised by reports.

### **Old business**

Motions are in order regarding business left over from previous meetings.

### **New business**

Motions are in order regarding business that is new to this committee.

### **Adjournment**

## 793 **Sample rules of order**

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### 794 **Decorum statement**

795 Meetings will be conducted according to these rules of order, adapted from  
796 Robert's Rules of Order. This time-honored system for conducting business is the  
797 clearest way yet devised for getting a maximum amount of business done in a  
798 minimum of time, and to get it done regardless of the degree of disagreement  
799 among the participants. By following these rules of order, we strive to be sure that  
800 we are making decisions on the basis of principle, rather than personality. In  
801 keeping with that spirit, we encourage all participants to become familiar with these  
802 rules of order, and to conduct themselves accordingly. Once the meeting is under  
803 way, only one matter will be before the committee at any one time, and no other  
804 discussion is in order. Please respect the chairperson's right to be in control of the  
805 *process* of this meeting, so that you can have maximum benefit of its *content*.

### 806 **Debate, limits**

807 *Debate* is the formal exchange of views on an idea. Unless otherwise specified,  
808 debate on both main motions and parliamentary motions is usually limited to two or  
809 three *pro's* and two or three *con's* (speakers for and against the motion). Speakers  
810 addressing a motion in debate usually have two or three minutes in which to speak  
811 their minds.

### 812 **Motions**

813 There are two basic types of motions. It is important to understand the difference  
814 between them. The two kinds of motions are *main motions* and *parliamentary*  
815 *motions*.

### 816 **Main motions**

817 A *motion* is a statement of an idea a committee member wants the committee to  
818 put into practice. After being recognized by the chairperson, the member says, "*I*  
819 *move that* such-and-such be done by (this committee, one of its subcommittees, or a  
820 particular individual) under these terms." The person making the motion then  
821 speaks briefly about why he feels the idea is important--this is called *speaking to the*  
822 *intent* of a motion. Because the exact wording of all motions must be recorded in the  
823 minutes, the maker of the motion should write it out whenever possible. This is  
824 especially important for complicated or long motions.

825 Every motion requires a *second*--the backing of another person who also wants the  
826 idea put into practice, or who simply wants to see further discussion of the idea take  
827 place. The chairperson will ask, after one person makes a motion, whether the  
828 motion has a second. The seconder simply raises his hand and, when recognized by  
829 the chair, says, "*I second that*." If nobody seconds a motion, the chair will say, "*The*  
830 *motion dies for lack of a second*." This means that the idea will not be discussed any



further because there is not enough interest in it. The committee then moves on to other business.

Once a motion has been made, the chairperson may rule it *out of order*. A motion may be ruled out of order for any one of a number of reasons: the motion goes against the committee's standing policy, clearly contradicts one of the Twelve Principles of Service or Twelve Traditions, or is inappropriate at the particular point in the meeting at which it is made. *Robert's Rules of Order* can be consulted for more specific examples of motions which are out of order at any given time.

Any member of the committee who wishes to challenge a ruling made by the chairperson may *appeal* that ruling, as described below. If no appeal is made, or if the decision of the chair is upheld, the committee moves on to other business.

## **Parliamentary motions**

*Parliamentary motions* can be best understood as "sub-motions" that are made during debate on a main motion, which affect in some way the main motion. There are many more of these than space and practicality permits us to include here, but a few that seem to be the most practical are discussed here.

### **1. Motion to AMEND.**

**SIMPLE majority required.**

**Is DEBATABLE.**

This is perhaps the most commonly used parliamentary motion. During debate on a motion, if a member feels that the motion would benefit from a change in its language, she can say, "*I move to amend the motion...*" and suggest specific language changes in the motion. If an amendment has been moved and seconded, debate then turns to the merits of the amendment. When debate on the amendment is exhausted, the body votes on the amendment. Then, debate resumes on the merits of the main motion (as amended, if the amendment carried). When debate is exhausted on the merits of the main motion itself, a vote is taken and the body moves on to the next item of business.

### **2. Motion to call the PREVIOUS QUESTION.**

**TWO-THIRDS majority required.**

**Is NOT DEBATABLE.**

For our purposes, this may be the most important parliamentary motion. Use it often. This motion is made by a member saying, "*I call for the question,*" or "*I move the previous question.*" It is another way of saying, "I move that debate stops right now and that we vote immediately." This is one of many that can be used to prevent needless, lengthy debate once an issue is clearly understood. This motion is in order after any speaker is finished. You need not be called on. The chair must recognize you when you make this motion, and a vote must be taken with no debate. If two-thirds of the body feels that no more debate is necessary, then it is time to vote and move on.

One point worth making about this motion is that you must be careful not to squelch debate before an issue has been thoroughly aired. Be sure to vote "no" to this motion if you are still confused about the issue, or if you are unsure of how to vote. By allowing debate to continue, we avoid half-baked decisions about half-understood questions. On the other hand, the liberal use of this motion makes it unnecessary for the chair to be heavy-handed in stopping discussion, because he knows you will stop it soon enough.

**3. Motion to TABLE.**  
**SIMPLE majority required.**  
**Is NOT DEBATABLE.**

One way of disposing of a motion that is not ready for a vote is to *table* it. This is done by saying, "*I move we table this motion until such-and-such a date/meeting.*" This motion is not debatable; if it is made and seconded, it is voted on immediately. If it fails, debate continues on the motion itself. If it passes, the committee moves on to its next item of business. The tabled motion will be included in the committee agenda on the date specified.

**4. Motion to REMOVE FROM THE TABLE.**  
**SIMPLE majority required.**  
**Is DEBATABLE.**

A motion that has been tabled can be taken up before the time originally set in the motion to table. This is done by saying, "I move to remove from the table the motion to such-and-such." If this motion passes, the motion that had been tabled becomes the main motion, and debate on it begins again. If the motion to remove from the table fails, the body moves on to the next item of business.

**5. Motion to REFER.**  
**SIMPLE majority required.**  
**Is NOT DEBATABLE.**

Sometimes the committee does not have enough information to make an immediate decision on a motion. Such motions can be removed from debate and sent to one of the subcommittees for further study; or, it can be sent to a special ad hoc committee.\* This can be done by a member saying, "*I move to refer the motion to the such-and-such subcommittee.*" If the motion to refer passes, the committee moves on to its next item of business. The subcommittee to which the motion is assigned will take it up at its next meeting. The subcommittee will report back on what it has come up with at the next meeting of the full committee.

**6. Motions to RECONSIDER or RESCIND.**  
**TWO-THIRDS majority required.**  
**Is DEBATABLE.**

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\* See below, the section on ad hoc committees under the title, "Committees," for further information.

Sometimes a member feels that a motion the committee has passed will prove harmful. He can move to either *reconsider* (reopen for debate and voting) or *rescind* (void the effect of) the original motion.

There are a few conditions on motions to reconsider or rescind:

- \* The motion must have been passed in either the last month's or the current meeting.
  - \* The member making the motion must have information on the issue that was not available in the original debate on the motion.
  - \* The member must have been with the winning side in the original vote.
- These limits are placed to protect the committee from having to reconsider again and again the motions it passes, while still allowing it to examine potentially harmful situations it has created inadvertently. If any of these requirements are not met, the chairperson will declare the motion out of order.

**7. Request to WITHDRAW A MOTION.**  
**UNANIMOUS CONSENT required.**  
**Is NOT DEBATABLE.**

Once a motion is made and the debate begins, the maker of the motion may move to withdraw it. The chair asks if there are any objections. If there is even one objection, the motion stays on the floor, and debate resumes. If there are no objections, the motion is withdrawn and the body moves on.

**8. Offering a SUBSTITUTE MOTION.**  
**SIMPLE majority required.**  
**Is DEBATABLE.**

A *substitute motion* is the same thing as an amendment to a main motion. The only difference is that it is offered to entirely replace the original idea, instead of merely revising a portion of it. It is handled in the same way an amendment is handled.

**9. Motion to ADJOURN.**  
**TWO-THIRDS majority required.**  
**Is NOT DEBATABLE.**

Any voting member may move to adjourn at any time. This motion is always in order, is not debatable, and requires two-thirds to pass. Obviously frivolous motions to adjourn may be ruled out of order. After all business is finished, the chair may declare the meeting adjourned without a motion.

**Other procedures**

In addition to parliamentary motions, there are other ways in which members may alter or clarify the proceedings. Here are a few of the most common.

**Order of the day.** If a committee member feels that business is going too far astray from the original agenda, he can help get things back on track. He says, "I

948 *call for the order of the day.*" This means, "I move that the chair bring us back on  
949 track and conduct the meeting according to procedure, adhering to the agenda."  
950 This does not require a second, and is not debatable. Regardless of what else is  
951 going on at the time, it requires an immediate vote.

952 **Point of order.** If a committee member feels that something that is happening is  
953 in violation of the rules of order, and if the chairperson does not appear likely to do  
954 anything about it, the member can raise a point of order. She need not raise her  
955 hand, but may simply say out loud, "Point of order." The chairperson then says,  
956 "What is your point of order?" The member then states how she feels the rules of  
957 order are being violated. If the chair agrees with her judgement, he says "Your  
958 point is well taken," and the situation is cleared up. If he does not agree, he says,  
959 "Overruled." This decision, as all others, can be appealed.

960 **Point of appeal.** Any time the chair makes a decision, that decision may be  
961 appealed. Any voting member who wishes to appeal a decision may do so by saying,  
962 "*I appeal the decision of the chair.*" The chair then says, "On what grounds?" The  
963 member states his reasons. The chairperson then speaks briefly to the intent of his  
964 ruling. A vote is taken, requiring a two-thirds majority to overrule the decision of  
965 the chair.

966 This procedure should not be confused with the practice of the Eighth Principle  
967 (the principle of appeal).

968 **Parliamentary inquiry.** If a committee member wants to do something, but  
969 doesn't know how it fits in with the rules of order, all he has to do is ask. Without  
970 raising his hand, he simply says out loud, "*Point of parliamentary inquiry.*" The  
971 chairperson must immediately recognize him, so that he may ask how to do such-  
972 and-such. The chair will answer the question, possibly by referring to a specific  
973 passage in this document in his explanation.

974 **Point of personal privilege.** If the smoke is getting too heavy for you, the air  
975 conditioner or heater is on too high, or if there is too much noise in the room, you  
976 can ask that something be done about it. You may interrupt the proceedings by  
977 saying, "*Point of personal privilege*" The chair must recognize you immediately. State  
978 the situation, and ask that it be corrected. The chair will request that whatever  
979 needs to be done, and is reasonable, be done to help make you comfortable.

## 980 **Voting procedures**

981 There are several ways that votes can be taken. Two of them are described here.

982 **Show of hands.** This is the most commonly used method at the area and  
983 regional levels. With rare exceptions, votes will be taken by a request from the chair  
984 to see the hands of all in favor, then all opposed, then all abstaining on each issue.

985 The chair should ask for all three categories every time, just to be thorough, even  
986 when the majority is overwhelming.

987 **Roll call vote.** Sometimes when a vote is taken on a controversial issue, or a very  
988 important one, members may call for a roll call vote. This request must be honored,  
989 whether or not it is made after a show-of-hands vote was already taken. The  
990 secretary calls out the group or position titles of all the voting members and asks for  
991 their voice vote, yes or no. Each person's vote is then recorded in the minutes by  
992 position title or group.

993 **Committees**

994 There are two kinds of subcommittees: standing subcommittees and ad hoc  
995 committees.

996 **Standing subcommittees.** These are the regular subcommittees of the area,  
997 such as H&I and P.I. The basic descriptions of these, and how they relate to the  
998 committee as a whole, are detailed elsewhere under the descriptions of each level of  
999 service.

1000 **Special (ad hoc) committees.** Sometimes a question or special project needs to  
1001 be referred to a subcommittee, but the question does not fit in with the focus of any  
1002 existing subcommittee. In such cases, the motion can be made to *refer to a special*  
1003 *committee*. These special committees are set up for specific purposes, and they have  
1004 limited lives--when they have finished their jobs and have reported back, they are  
1005 disbanded. A motion to refer to a special committee should specify what the  
1006 committee's purpose will be. The chair may then appoint an ad hoc committee in its  
1007 entirety, or he may appoint just the ad hoc committee chairperson, who will put the  
1008 committee together himself later.

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1010 \*\*\*\*\*

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1012 These are only brief notes on rules of order for business meetings. For further  
1013 information, see *Robert's Rules of Order--Newly Revised*. That book is the official  
1014 authority on parliamentary procedure.