

3 **Introduction**

4 The regional committee serves as a kind of pivot point in Narcotics Anonymous
5 service. It is the junction between N.A.'s national and local services.

6 The regional committee is a service *resource* group rather than a service *delivery*
7 organization. It is composed primarily of trusted servants elected by the areas which
8 have joined to form the region. Those trusted servants are called *regional committee*
9 *members* (or RCMs), and they represent the region's most important resource: its
10 collective experience.

11 RCMs are elected on the basis of their knowledge and background in area service,
12 their familiarity with the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Principles of Service,
13 and their personal maturity. The regional committee pools that experience, insight,
14 and character to create a service resource for all the areas to tap. Through
15 discussion of current area affairs and consideration of our principles, the RCMs
16 develop the kind of understanding among themselves necessary to conduct service
17 seminars for the groups and areas in the region. Those seminars enhance the entire
18 region's ability to carry the recovery message.

19 Reports on national service affairs given at regional committee meetings provide
20 information that keeps areas and groups current on issues affecting the fellowship
21 nationwide. Discussion between the RCMs and the conference delegate of those
22 reports provide the national service board with feedback from the fellowship it
23 serves.

24 **How the regional committee works**

25 Since the regional service committee is primarily a service resource group rather
26 than a service delivery organization, it usually has no need for standing
27 subcommittees. The kind of work it does is best performed by the whole committee,
28 or by ad hoc committees set up to conduct special projects. Direct N.A. services--
29 phonelines, hospital and institution panels, public information work, and such--are
30 more effectively administered at the area level rather than by regional committees.
31 Area subcommittees are closer both to the groups and to the community, and thus
32 are in a better position to assess local needs and determine the most efficient means
33 of meeting those needs.

34 Though regional committees generally do not establish standing subcommittees,
35 there are no absolute rules preventing them from doing so. In some regions it will
36 be impractical, for a variety of reasons, for individual area committees to administer
37 some kinds of direct service operations. Under such circumstances, a region may
38 want to consider establishing a subcommittee to meet the specific need in question.

39 Regional committees try not to create unnecessary distinctions among their
40 members. The regional committee does not elect a separate body of officers.

41 Instead, each year it selects from among current RCMs individuals who act as
42 committee chairperson, recording secretary, and treasurer. Those individuals
43 continue to serve primarily as RCMs.

44 **Regional committee members**

45 Regional committee members are part of a service resource team. The local
46 Narcotics Anonymous community depends on them to be well-versed in N.A.
47 service practices and principles. The Twelve Traditions and Twelve Principles are
48 the fundamentals of service in our fellowship. Familiarity with all published service
49 manuals and bulletins puts the resources of the whole fellowship at the RCM's
50 fingertips.

51 The RCM's primary responsibility lies in his service as a participant in the regional
52 committee, rather than as a member of the area committee which elects him. Yet in
53 order for him to effectively fulfill his role on the regional committee, a good portion
54 of his service time must be spent at area committee meetings and with other area
55 committee members. The RCM should carefully study the reports from his own
56 area's groups, officers, and subcommittee chairs, so that he can pass on his area's
57 experience to others at the regional meeting. He will also serve as a more effective
58 contact between his area and the regional committee if he takes time to talk
59 personally with other area participants. That way, he can get a better idea of what
60 kinds of needs and concerns the regional committee should address.

61 The regional committee member also plays a critical role in the N.A. national
62 service model. He serves as the communication link between the groups and the
63 national service board. His report to the regional committee on the welfare of the
64 groups and the area committee he serves gives the conference delegate a better idea
65 of where national service energies could best be concentrated. His participation in
66 discussions of national service affairs at regional committee meetings lends
67 perspective to the delegate's interaction with the trustees. The RCM's active
68 participation also helps keep group service representatives in his area fully informed
69 of national service board activities. And without an informed body of GSRs, the
70 national service structure could easily find itself crippled.

71 **Regional resource assignments**

72 The regional committee pools the service experience of the groups and areas it
73 serves, making it possible for all of them to tap the region's collective resources.
74 Rather than establishing separate subcommittees to pool particular kinds of area
75 experience, regional committees make *resource assignments* to RCMs who are not
76 already serving as committee officers. Under such an arrangement, one regional
77 committee member takes on the responsibility of being the best informed person he
78 can be regarding public information work, or hospitals and institutions service, or
79 phonelines organization.

80 The regional resource person makes it his job to know the manuals and bulletins
81 on his resource subject, available from NSO, backwards and forwards. Though by
82 no means an "authority" or "director," he does take the time to keep in regular touch
83 with the chairpersons of corresponding area subcommittees, familiarizing himself
84 with their projects, making them aware of available resources, and trying to help
85 them untangle problems their subcommittees have not been able to effectively
86 address.

87 In turn, if an area subcommittee has a particular need, it can contact the regional
88 resource person for help, or raise the issue at an informal sharing session. Many
89 regional resource persons conduct such sharing sessions from time to time, bringing
90 together the members of the various area subcommittees to discuss issues related to
91 their particular branch of service.

92 **Conference delegate**

93 The national service conference delegate is a full participant in the regional
94 service committee. The delegate serves as the primary contact between N.A.'s
95 national services and the local N.A. community. On the one hand, the delegate
96 provides information on current national and international projects in his report to
97 the regional committee. On the other, based on his discussions with regional
98 committee members, he offers a "grass roots" perspective to the work of the national
99 service board and its subsidiary divisions, and particularly to the efforts of the
100 trustee committee to which he is assigned as a delegate review panel member. Each
101 year during his two-year term, he attends the national service conference as an
102 active participant in his own right and not solely as the region's advocate.

103 What the Fourth Principle of Service says about our leaders in general applies
104 especially to the conference delegate: "Skilled leadership is highly valued at every
105 level of N.A. service. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when
106 selecting trusted servants." The national service conference operates with the
107 understanding that conference delegates are among the most experienced and
108 knowledgeable people each region has to offer, and the regional committee relies
109 upon them to exhibit these same qualities at home. Delegates need to have a
110 thorough understanding of the Twelve Principles, the Twelve Traditions, and the
111 service structure, as well as detailed knowledge of activities and issues in the groups
112 and areas which make up their region. They are called upon for vigorous service
113 from all directions; they must be fit to answer the call.

114 From time to time, the national service board asks conference delegates for their
115 advice. At such times, the delegate *may* respond to the trustees' request himself. In
116 matters of wide concern, however, he may feel he needs to hear broader discussion
117 before he can responsibly reply. Then he may ask the regional committee to discuss
118 the subject with him in its sharing session. With that foundation in the region's
119 group conscience, he may feel more confident that the response he offers to the
120 trustees is a well-considered one.

The conference delegate works closely with the *alternate delegate* from the region. Like the conference delegate, the alternate is a full participant in the regional service committee. These two trusted servants make up a team of those within the regional committee who are most knowledgeable of national service affairs. The delegate often consults with the alternate, asking for different perspectives and seeking to involve the alternate in helping carry the workload. The alternate delegate is a full participant in the national service conference only in the event of the primary delegate's absence at the conference annual meeting. However, he may be asked to participate as a member of one of the delegate review panels attached to a trustee committee. He attends regional committee meetings, the regional assembly, and the annual conference meeting, offering support where he can and learning his way while he's at it. At the end of his two-year term, he will very likely be the region's most promising candidate for full delegate service.

The sharing session

The regional service committee meets to form a consensus among its members concerning the service needs of the groups and areas composing the region, as well as the needs of the fellowship nationwide. Following reports from the RCMs and the conference delegate, much of the region's meeting time is spent in a sharing session.

The regional committee's sharing session begins with discussion of challenges and innovations disclosed in the RCMs' area reports. If a subcommittee of one of the areas has taken a new tack in approaching a particular job, the RCMs may want to spend time discussing it so that they can share that experience with their own area committees. And if one of the areas has had a problem it's not been able to solve by itself, its RCM can ask other regional committee members to talk with him about the experience of their areas.

Sometimes solutions can be found in one of the N.A. service handbooks. At other times, the question is not of *procedure* but of *principle*. Then the sharing session focuses specifically on the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Principles of Service, trying to see how the simplicity of those concepts might clarify an otherwise confusing situation.

The sharing session can also be a time for discussion of national service issues raised in the conference delegate's report. This opportunity for the conference delegate to consult with the RCMs on questions relating to the work of the national service board is crucial to his effectiveness. This portion of the sharing session also helps prepare RCMs for the annual regional assembly, an event sponsored by the regional committee which brings the region's group service representatives together to review topics of importance in national service. Maintaining the fluency of regional committee members in national service issues is doubly important, considering that new conference delegates and alternate delegates are drawn from among them.

Service seminars

In the sharing session, the regional committee has focused most of its attention on group and area needs. With that perspective, the committee is in a good position to consider its agenda of service seminars--what kinds of seminars are needed, and where. A pattern may have emerged in the sharing session, showing the need to further develop a general understanding of public information work among all N.A. members in the region. An area forming a brand new hospitals and institutions subcommittee might have asked the regional committee to conduct a seminar for prospective members of the subcommittee. Special support may be needed for an area committee in transition, either a large committee considering division or a brand new committee serving a new area. Or perhaps it's time for another group services seminar. Topics for service seminars can range all the way from taxes and liability insurance for service committees to sponsorship and Twelfth Step work--anything useful to the areas and groups served by the region. Whatever the needs, the regional committee takes a look at its calendar, considers its resources, and goes over plans for upcoming seminars.

Regional service seminars are usually organized by the entire regional committee, although sometimes a small ad hoc committee of RCMs will be formed to conduct one specific seminar. When planning a seminar, the regional committee should consult with the area service committee responsible for the territory in which the event is to be held. This is especially important in regions where area committees assume the responsibility of making arrangements for seminar facilities, leaving the regional committee free to focus its attention on developing the agenda. If the seminar is being organized primarily to serve one particular area, the regional committee should involve some members of that area committee in developing plans for the seminar.

The regional committee can draw upon a number of resources in developing service seminars. Committee members may know of a similar seminar that has been conducted in a neighboring region. A phone call to a member of that regional committee, and perhaps an invitation to attend, can make additional experience available to the seminar. Some support for regional seminars is available from the national service office. A wide range of bulletins and handbooks covering specific topics and fields of service are available. The office may also be able to provide descriptions of seminars other regions have conducted on similar subjects, or other useful materials. For further information, contact the national service office.

Conventions

The annual regional convention is a celebration of recovery and unity, a time when all N.A. members in the region can gather to share their experience, strength, and hope with one another. Regional convention corporations may be created, within the N.A. service structure, by regional committees to handle the financial and legal matters often associated with conventions in ways consistent with local and national

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law, without distracting the regional committee itself from its primary purpose. The regional convention corporation is *separate* from, but *accountable* to, the regional service committee. Ordinarily, the corporation has language in its bylaws describing the specifics of its relationship with the regional committee. In addition, recommendations are sought from the regional committee concerning proposed changes in the convention corporation's bylaws prior to the adaptation of such changes.

A representative of the convention corporation provides regular reports to the regional committee. The regional committee selects the pool of candidates from which the corporation elects its board members. But both the Sixth and Tenth Principles of Service discourage the regional committee from attempting to directly manage the affairs of the convention corporation; that's the corporation's responsibility.^{1*}

Activities

Some regions conduct activities in addition to service seminars and the regional convention--dances, special speaker meetings, campouts, retreats, and the like. Regionwide activities can foster a sense of unity among members of all the groups and areas served by the regional committee. The same kinds of topics that came up for discussion under area activities apply to regional activities as well; see the chapter on area service committees earlier in this book for more detail.

Regional funding

In comparison with the financial needs of area service committees, the need for regional funds is fairly limited. The regional committee needs enough money to conduct its meetings and put on the annual regional assembly. Beyond those expenses, its needs are small.**

Groups regularly send a portion of their surplus funds directly to the regional treasurer. When areas have money above and beyond their prudent reserves, they also contribute to the regional fund. Regional committees set a prudent reserve level of their own, enough to cover one month's average expenses, also putting a

¹ The Sixth Principle: "The principle of decision provides that trusted servants responsible for the fulfillment of particular N.A. services be given the authority to use their best judgment in carrying out their duties." And the Tenth Principle: "The final point of decision should be clearly defined for each responsibility. Two-headed management within the N.A. service structure should be avoided at all times."

* More detailed information on regional conventions can be found in the Convention Handbook, available in the U.S. from the Fellowship Service Office. In the U.S., the Fellowship Service Office also conducts convention workshops several times a year, bringing local convention volunteers together with the staff of the FSB's Fellowship Convention Division to review the latest information on N.A. conventioning. Additional consultation is sometimes available, for new corporations as well as for corporations experiencing difficulties. For further information, contact the Fellowship Service Office.

** As review draft readers will see when the chapter on national services is released, conference delegate and alternate delegate national service conference travel, lodging, and per diem expenses are considered conference expenses, not regional expenses, and are covered from the national service board general fund.

little extra aside each month for the regional assembly. They contribute whatever money may be left over to the national service board.

Regional forums

Each year the national service board conducts several weekend sharing sessions, called *regional forums*, around the country. Regional forums are designed to facilitate direct contact between local N.A. members and national-level trusted servants. Trustees, directors, and staff conduct workshops throughout the weekend on various aspects of service in Narcotics Anonymous. Each workshop allows ample "open mike" time, when local N.A. members can ask questions or express their conscience on whatever topics come to mind. Regional forums help N.A. members understand services affecting the fellowship nationwide, and also help trustees keep in touch with those they serve.

The regional assembly

One weekend a year--usually usually two or three months prior to the annual national service conference meeting--the regional committee organizes an assembly of group service representatives. At the assembly they discuss important national service matters, including those likely to come before the national service conference. The annual regional assembly puts representatives of N.A. groups together with their conference delegate for the purpose of developing a collective conscience concerning those issues affecting Narcotics Anonymous nationwide. That direct contact between the groups and the conference helps keep our national services attuned to the needs of our fellowship. Without the kind of primary foundation provided by the regional assemblies, it would be much more difficult for the national service conference to effectively address the concerns of the N.A. groups. Regional assemblies are a key ingredient in the maintenance of N.A.'s First Principle of Service.²

Members of the regional committee conduct a number of individual discussion panels throughout the course of the weekend. Each panel considers a specific field of national service, paying special attention to those subjects scheduled to be addressed at the annual conference. When the panels have finished their work, all the GSRs and RCMs gather in a large group to hear reports from spokespersons selected by each panel. A sharing session follows the reports, in which all participants are encouraged to speak their mind.

An additional expression of the First Principle of Service occurs at the regional assembly when group service representatives take part in electing the region's conference delegate and alternate delegate. Since the delegate and the alternate serve concurrent two-year terms, elections usually take place every other year, except when a delegate or alternate resigns in mid-term. Because she has spent two

² The First Principle: "The final responsibility and authority for N.A. services rests with the N.A. groups."

years becoming familiar with the national service conference, the alternate is usually affirmed to replace the outgoing delegate, and the assembly only has to elect a new alternate delegate to replace her. If she's not affirmed as conference delegate, however, the assembly elects a new delegate and a new alternate at the same time. Under such circumstances, special care should be taken to select a conference delegate who is already fairly familiar with current national service affairs.

Conference delegates and alternates are elected from among the current regional committee members. Group service representatives and regional committee members are all eligible to vote. The delegate and alternate are chosen according to the trusted servant selection procedure as described in previous chapters. If both conference delegate and alternate delegate are to be selected at the same assembly, separate votes are used to select each of them. All RCMs, except those who make it known that they're unavailable for delegate or alternate service, are automatically considered candidates. Written ballots are taken and tallied. If no candidate receives a substantial majority of votes on the first ballot, a second ballot is taken between the two top candidates to choose the delegate or alternate.

Dividing regions

Regions are formed to facilitate communication among member-areas and between the local N.A. community and the national fellowship, to pool local service experience, and to provide learning opportunities for areas and groups. If developments within an existing region occur which make it impossible for the regional committee to continue providing those services effectively, then it's time for the entire committee--and the groups and areas belonging to the region--to consider making changes in the way the region is organized.

The process used for considering those changes should be a thorough and thoughtful one. The idea of dividing the region may come initially from any of a number of sources, for any of a number of particular reasons. The possible reasons for dividing regions are as diverse as the regions themselves, and their comparative merits can only be decided by the groups and areas belonging to each individual region considering a division.

Wherever it comes from, whatever the reason, the idea should be discussed first by the entire regional committee. In evaluating the possibility of a regional split, many regions consult with the Committee on Conference Admissions to find out how other regions have handled this question. If a division appears to the RCMs to be warranted, the next step should be a discussion including all the region's group service representatives at the regional assembly. If, following that discussion, a broad consensus for division appears, the assembly can appoint an ad hoc committee to develop a specific plan. Once the plan is reviewed by the regional committee, it should be presented to each area service committee in the region for full discussion. Ratification of the plan then takes place at the next regional

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310 assembly. By using this method, a region can be assured that a division plan truly
311 meets the needs of all the groups and areas it serves.

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A NOTE FROM THE WSC AD HOC COMMITTEE ON N.A. SERVICE:

Regarding regional divisions

Questions related to the division of existing regions have been troubling us for some time now. When the N.A. service structure was first forming, it was recommended that regional or state committees be developed, mostly for the purpose of electing delegates to the new World Service Conference. Since then, new regions have been created in the United States out of existing ones primarily for one or more of the following four reasons:

- 1) Huge mega-regions like Mid-America, Mid-Coast, Mid-South, and Mid-Atlantic have been subdivided as Narcotics Anonymous has grown in the Southern and Central Midwest, Southeast, and Northeast. Regional committees serving only one or two states, for the most part, have been formed in those parts of the U.S.
- 2) Apparently irreconcilable conflicts, both of principle and personality, have forced a number of regional splits.
- 3) Area service committees serving major U.S. cities, unable to conceive of a plan for maintaining single, manageable-sized ASCs capable of administering direct services, have formed their own regions, sometimes cutting the old parent region and the primarily rural areas left in that region off from the financial and personnel resources concentrated in the metropolitan area.
- 4) Parties within existing regions have disagreed either with the regional majority's views on world service issues, or with the World Service Conference itself, and have created their own regions primarily for the purpose of sending their own regional service representative to the WSC.

Of the above four reasons for regional division, only the first appears to us to be truly worthy. And since only two regions serving more than two entire states or provinces now exist in North America, we expect that from here on out, regional divisions will be founded primarily on controversy and lack of forethought. The exceptions to that will occur either in the most geographically farflung regions, and in the very most densely populated regions, where divisions might yet occur that will be based on a need to better facilitate communication or some other well-considered plan of better serving Narcotics Anonymous.

If we had our 'druthers, what we would actually like to propose is a wiping of the current regional slate, and the establishment in its place of a regional system in North America with one region serving one state or province. Regions with enormous numbers of groups could hold a number of annual assemblies around the state, rather than conducting a single assembly for the entire region. Following that, no further regional divisions in North America would be recognized by the conference(s). Besides eliminating the recurrent confusion of division questions, N.A. would find itself with a single service unit in every state and province which would be capable of interfacing on behalf of the fellowship with agencies and non-

356 governmental organizations organized on a state or provincial basis. Under our
357 current regional arrangement, many area committees find themselves with no single
358 entity capable of performing that particular function on their behalf.

359 We're aware that such a proposal would be a radical one, and could easily create
360 such significant upheaval that whatever benefits it might bring would simply not be
361 worth the cost. Nonetheless, we wanted to raise the subject for your consideration.