

2 **Metropolitan services**

4 "Administer services as close as possible to where they'll be used." That's one of the
5 basics of N.A. service. Another is, "Keep it simple." Easy to say, but sometimes
6 difficult to practice, especially in delivering direct N.A. services in large cities.

7 *A Guide to Service in N.A.* assigns primary responsibility for the actual delivery of
8 direct services--H&I, P.I., phonedines, meeting lists, and the like--to area
9 committees. In many major U.S. cities, the N.A. community is served by two, three,
10 or more area service committees (ASCs); and in those larger cities where the ASC
11 has not yet divided, it's only a question of time before the growing number of GSRs
12 makes it impossible for an orderly area meeting to be conducted. For the most part,
13 having multiple ASCs in a metropolitan community is not a problem.
14 Subcommittees in each area conduct H&I panels, present P.I. talks to schools and
15 community organizations, and administer phonedines within that area's service
16 territory.

17 But what about those N.A. services which affect the entire N.A. community in a
18 major city--who administers those services? The principle implied in the Fourth
19 Tradition--"Each group should remain autonomous except in matters affecting other
20 groups or N.A. as a whole"--suggests that it wouldn't be appropriate for Area A on
21 its own to conduct a P.I. public media project which also affected Areas B, C, and D,
22 at least not without consulting with them first. But if *someone* doesn't take
23 responsibility for such projects, the N.A. recovery message will be that much less
24 likely to reach the addict who still suffers. How can issues affecting all the areas in a
25 major city be effectively, responsibly addressed?

26 Metropolitan service councils--or *metro councils*, for short--are simple, informal,
27 inexpensive tools to use in addressing such needs. Metro councils provide means by
28 which those already elected or appointed to positions of responsibility in each area
29 can communicate with one another on points of mutual concern. No additional
30 level of service is created. No additional money is required. No further points of
31 decision or accountability need to be defined. It's simple: Responsible trusted
32 servants from each area discuss issues of common concern, reach consensus on how
33 best to address those issues, and delegate the necessary work to the various area
34 subcommittees involved.

35 In order to discuss the details of how metro councils work, we'll first need to take a
36 look at how an area committee serving an N.A. community in a major city divides
37 itself into two or more ASCs. Once that picture has been clearly drawn, we'll have a
38 better idea of what kinds of cooperative projects need to be fostered among those
39 area committees in order to effectively carry the N.A. message throughout the city
40 and its environs. To help keep the discussion as down to earth as possible, we'll be
41 talking about N.A. services in a specific (though fictional) city: Metropolis.

The area is born--and grows

Narcotics Anonymous is alive and well in Metropolis. The city's first N.A. meeting was held back in 1976. The early years were a real struggle for the N.A. community in Metropolis, but by 1982 the city had a dozen meetings and a newly-formed area service committee, with subcommittees administering H&I meetings and a phoneline. All twelve GSRs attended almost all the ASC meetings, and most served on one or both of the area's subcommittees.

The years following the initial publication of the Basic Text in 1983 saw tumultuous growth. By 1987, the area had four subcommittees--H&I, phonelines, activities, and P.I.--handling services for the entire city and its environs. There were sixty-three groups in Metropolis, with more starting every month. With that many GSRs attending, the ASC chairperson was having a difficult time conducting an orderly meeting. In early 1989, a few people started talking about the idea of splitting up the area.

Initial reaction in Metropolis to the proposal was largely negative. The single area committee was doing a reasonably good job of providing services to the community, and nobody was crazy about the idea of dividing. Committee members did what they could to make the meetings more manageable. The ASC chairperson boned up on the rules of order, and the general officers conducted a one hour workshop at an area committee meeting on how the rules worked. Committee meetings went much more smoothly as a result.

The Metropolis Area Service Committee hoped to make the current arrangement work just a little bit longer--say, until the area had grown to between eighty and a hundred groups. But with the growth rate being what it was, they knew that those kinds of numbers would be seen in only a year or so. Responsible leadership called for initial plans to be made before the situation got further out of hand. The issue was raised before the entire ASC, and following discussion a special subcommittee was formed. The subcommittee's job was to consider the details involved in dividing the area, and to return with a proposal.

Considerations in dividing the area

The first question the special subcommittee considered was, how would the Metropolis area be divided? There were any number of possible ways:

- * *Natural geographic boundaries.* The Gotham River divides the city's northern end from the southern two thirds of Metropolis; the old Perry White Canal runs due south from the river through the city's center. These geographic features could be used as the boundaries between the north, southeast, and southwest areas.
- * *Political boundaries.* The City of Metropolis is the Washington County seat, but urban sprawl has created suburbs to the north in Jefferson County, where a number of groups served by the Metropolis ASC held their meetings. At least one new area could be formed to serve the Jefferson County suburbs.

83 The City of Metropolis itself is divided into four city council wards, which
84 could be used as demarcation lines for two, three, or four areas within the city.
85 * *Other boundaries* were briefly considered, included *postal districts* (the city has
86 three, based on the first three digits of the ZIP code, but they weren't of much
87 use to the special subcommittee in establishing N.A. service boundaries), *area*
88 *codes* (Washington and Jefferson Counties are in different telephone code
89 areas), and *points of the compass*.

90 Of equal importance to the special subcommittee was the question, how would
91 they *not* divide? Two basic considerations arose from discussions:

- 92 * Lines of demarcation would not be drawn which established any one area with a
93 majority of the original area's trusted servant experience, groups, or money.
- 94 * Regardless of whether boundaries were based on geography, government
95 jurisdiction, are anything else, divisions which had the effect of creating racial,
96 ethnic, cultural, or economic segregation would be avoided at all costs.

97 With these considerations in mind, the special subcommittee returned to the ASC
98 with a proposal. After thorough discussion involving everyone concerned--including
99 all the groups affected by the proposal--the ASC adapted a plan and a timetable for
100 division into three areas, each with its own subcommittees delivering direct local
101 services in Greater Metropolis.

102 **Metro councils--tools for communication and cooperation in direct services**

103 The division of the Metropolis ASC finally occurred in the spring of 1990.
104 Because planning for the division had been so thorough, each of the three ASCs was
105 able to start up almost immediately with the same complement of subcommittees
106 supported by the original area committee. Subcommittees in each area would
107 handle service responsibilities affecting those areas only. Services affecting all the
108 areas would be addressed, as needed, by metropolitan service councils.

109 The various activities subcommittees held their regular speaker meetings, dances,
110 picnics, and campouts, each for their own area. But they had decided at the time of
111 division that twice a year, a joint activity for the entire N.A. community in
112 Metropolis would be held. In order to coordinate these citywide events--and to
113 insure that the dates for the separate area events did not conflict with one another--
114 the chairpersons and vice chairpersons of the three area activity subcommittees got
115 together for an informal metro council dinner every few months. They exchanged
116 information about what each subcommittee had planned, and drew straws to see
117 which area would sponsor the next citywide activity.

118 Public information subcommittees in each of the new areas handled school and
119 community association talks, professionals mailings, flier distribution--most of the
120 normal things associated with P.I. work--for their respective services areas. But
121 contact between Narcotics Anonymous and the public media in Metropolis was a
122 little more complicated. The city had two daily newspapers, four television stations,
123 and eighteen radio stations. Public service announcements, printed meeting notices,

and assistance provided to reporters for any of these media outlets affected the entire N.A. community. The area P.I. subcommittee chairs and vice chairs had regular metro council meetings every two months to coordinate and review these kinds of contacts. Between meetings the regular work was divided up: one area handled television PSAs, another radio, the third newspaper announcements. And a contingency plan for responding to media inquiries received by any one area was worked out, providing for consultation among all three area P.I. subcommittees.

The matter of phonenumber administration was a subject of intense scrutiny during the discussions of how to divide the Metropolis area committee. There were a number of possibilities. Two phonelines--one for the Jefferson County area code, another for the Washington County areas--could be established. Since the Jefferson County suburbs had their own area committee, the arrangements for a separate phonenumber there would not be difficult.

But how would the two Washington County areas administer a common phonenumber? They would have to establish a joint subcommittee responsible at the same time to two separate ASCs. The joint subcommittee would have to be funded equally by both ASCs as well--easy to agree to at the start, but perhaps not so easy down the road. And this joint subcommittee, not truly a beast of either area, would somehow have to draw and train a sufficient number of volunteers to actually man the phone; without that identification with either ASC, attracting those volunteers would be an even more difficult task than usual.

In the end, they decided that each area would administer its own phonenumber. Despite the added expense, it would be easier to manage through each individual area committee, easier to fund, and easier to man. Each phonenumber would be listed in both the white and yellow pages of the local telephone directory as "Narcotics Anonymous--East Washington County," "West Washington County," or "Jefferson County." And the P.I. subcommittees would be alerted to list all three phonelines--in Washington and Jefferson Counties--in all their correspondence and contacts. Phoneline metro councils would be held as needed to exchange information.

Summary

Recap division criteria, metro council idea. Close with a fluff-o-matic wrap.

2 **Non-preferred options for delivery of direct services in**
3 **metropolitan jurisdictions**

5 This paper is written as an accompaniment to the FSO Group Services bulletin,
6 "Metropolitan Services." The bulletin presents the preferred option for managing
7 services affecting two or more areas in a metropolitan jurisdiction. This paper looks
8 at some of the other, less preferable options which have been raised in the course of
9 our discussions of metropolitan services. Those options are:

- 10 * Shared services subcommittees;
- 11 * Sub-regional service committees;
- 12 * Group service districts, and metro service committees;
- 13 * Quarterly ASC meetings; and,
- 14 * Metro office committees.

15 Each of these options creates an additional level of service, either between existing
16 levels or entirely outside the general service structure. And that creates problems:

- 17 * Volunteers for local service become overloaded, and unable to fulfill all that's
18 asked of them.
- 19 * What were formerly clearly defined points of decision and accountability
20 become hazy and unclear.
- 21 * The ability of the N.A. community to support all its local services is overreached.
- 22 * Questions of *who* represents *whom* at *which* service bodies become increasingly
23 complex and problematic.

24 Endorsing options which engender these kinds of problems cannot enhance this
25 fellowship's ability to effectively carry the recovery message to sick addicts.

26 We'll look first at the general nature of the shortcomings (or defects, if you wish)
27 of these less preferable options for provision of metropolitan services. Once that's
28 done, we'll look at each option itself and identify specific problems with its
29 implementation.

30 **PROBLEM: volunteer overload**

31 The first problem is the impact these additional levels of service have on the
32 already existing services of our voluntary organization. Except in a very few
33 instances, local services are run entirely by volunteers. These volunteers usually
34 have families, jobs, homes, and personal lives of their own, all laying claim to their
35 time. The group, the area, and the region, as presently constituted, have already
36 staked claims to all the time these people have available for voluntary service to
37 N.A.

38 The creation of any additional levels of service--either *between* existing levels or
39 *aside* from them--places too great a demand on the pool of available volunteers for
40 the service structure to bear. When additional levels are created, either existing

41 service levels suffer a drain of personnel resources, or the new level falters and fails
42 shortly after its creation due to the lack of volunteers available to support it.

43 In fact, as I recall, one of our reasons for redefining the region's function is that the
44 existence of *two* organized levels of local service, each administering direct services--
45 the area committee and the regional committee--was creating too much of a drain
46 on available volunteers. To solve that problem by creating a distinction between the
47 functions of the area and regional committees, only to turn around and create the
48 same kind of manpower strain by recommending *another* level of service, would be
49 just too ironic for words.

50 **PROBLEM: decision and accountability**

51 The Fourth Concept reads, "For each responsibility, a single point of decision and
52 accountability should be clearly defined." At present, we have a simple,
53 straightforward service set-up: groups are responsible for conducting N.A. meetings,
54 areas are responsible for administering direct local services, and regions are
55 responsible for resource development. With this simple arrangement, it's easy to
56 clearly define a single point of decision and accountability for any given service
57 operation.

58 When additional levels of service have been added to this scheme, however, that
59 clarity has been muddled in short order. The questions of *who* is responsible for
60 *which* particular projects and *what* general fields of service, and *to whom* are they
61 accountable, almost immediately arise. Either a breakdown in the delivery of
62 services results (if *everyone* is responsible to do something, *nobody* is responsible), or
63 political strife develops, based on territorial struggles.

64 **PROBLEM: financial support**

65 Groups contribute money to the *area* for direct services, to the *region* for resource
66 development, and to the *national* for services relevant to the entire movement's
67 welfare. The available supply of surplus group funds is just barely adequate for
68 maintaining conservatively administered operations at these three levels of service.

69 When additional levels of service are created, either one or more of the existing
70 levels of service must go without the financial resources necessary for even a
71 conservative administration of their responsibilities, or the newly created level is not
72 adequately funded.

73 **PROBLEM: representation**

74 With three distinct tiers of local service--groups, areas, and regions--there is no
75 question about who sends representatives to which service body. The group sends a
76 GSR to the area committee. The area sends one or more RCMs to the regional
77 committee.

78 When additional levels of service are created, those simple representative bonds
79 are compromised. Does the group send its representative to the area committee

80 *and* to the new body, serving as an actively contributing member of both, or does it
81 elect separate representatives for each? Does the *area* send a delegate to the new
82 body? In *addition* to, or *instead* of, group representatives? Does the new body,
83 then, send a representative to the region? If so, does the new body's representative
84 serve on the regional committee in *addition* to the RCMs elected by areas which
85 support the new body's work, or in *place* of those RCMs? "Oh, what tangled webs
86 we weave..."

87 **OPTION: shared services**

88 The only specific experience we're aware of with this option has occurred in Ohio.
89 The Buckeye Region and the Ohio Region, serving different portions of the state,
90 have established two shared services subcommittees: one administers the annual
91 Ohio Convention, and the other administers a statewide phonenumber and meeting list
92 service.

93 Volunteer overload has been a particular problem with the phonenumber and meeting
94 list subcommittee, in addition to the problems associated with delivering services
95 far, far away from where they'll be used. Maintaining accurate meeting information
96 for the entire state has been difficult; consequently, the meeting list itself is not very
97 useful, and the phonenumber has not had consistently good data at hand when
98 answering calls. The phonenumber, though sponsored by the entire state, is in fact
99 manned almost exclusively by N.A. members in one particular locale; those
100 members are, of course, not as available for service to their groups and area as
101 members are in other locales.

102 Potential problems with muddled definitions of points of decision and
103 accountability have been solved by total delegation of authority for these services to
104 the two subcommittees, but many members in both regions are unhappy with this
105 solution. At particular issue has been periodic dissatisfaction with the choice of
106 speakers for the convention, and the fact that neither region has any direct recourse
107 should either of them be displeased.

108 The convention is self-supporting, but strains have occurred in determining
109 percentages for support of the phonenumber operation. I don't know whether the
110 statewide phonenumber replaces area-administered phone services, or complements
111 them; hence, I don't know if the state-level expense eliminates the need for
112 expenditures at the area level, nor do I know to what extent the state service is a
113 wasteful redundancy.

114 **OPTION: sub-regions**

115 Detroit is the only place I know of where the sub-regional system has been tried,
116 and *all* the problems described above have occurred there. There's neither money
117 nor manpower enough to support an additional level of service. The sub-region,
118 and the service office it administers, have been on the brink of bankruptcy a number
119 of times.

Projects the sub-region has promised to administer, relieving member-areas of particular responsibilities, have gone unaccomplished. The volunteers necessary for completing such projects have been tied up at the area and group levels. The projects have been coordinated too far away from where the services were to be used; hence, management of the projects has not been adequately responsive to the actual need. And the sub-region, a step away from where most members are used to seeing direct services administered, has had difficulty enlisting support for its projects--the sub-region is just not "real" to N.A. members in Greater Detroit.

Muddled definitions of points of decision and accountability appear to be the rule rather than the exception in the Detroit sub-region. Some areas have their own H&I subcommittees; some areas depend on the sub-region's H&I subcommittee to administer panels in their territory; some areas administer *some* H&I services and depend on the sub-region for the rest. The same is the case with P.I. and phonelines. Every time the situation is straightened out in one field of service, it crops up in another. And all too often, as noted above, where *everybody* is responsible, *nobody* is responsible.

Representation battles have been waged almost yearly between the Michigan Region and the Detroit sub-region, and have created havoc within the Detroit areas themselves. Some of the sub-region's member-ASCs have separate representatives for the sub-regional committee and the Michigan Region, while others have only one person performing both jobs--in other words, ASCs either have to find *two* capable people, when it's hard enough finding one, or they are forced to overload one individual representative. Tension between the region and the sub-region (or pseudo-region, as some at the RSC call it) is always high, especially when the sub-region makes noises about wanting to send a representative to the RSC. The question of whether the sub-regional representative to the RSC would be in place of, or in addition to, the ASRs from member-areas of the sub-region has never been addressed.

And this is an option?!

OPTION: districts/metro committees

Here's the language that once appeared in the area chapter of the *Guide*: "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." It sounded like a great idea at the time. Could it actually be made to work? Yes, but only by forcing it.

Let's say... Each district is composed of from ten to twenty GSRs. The districts administer *no* direct services. They provide an opportunity for a group sharing

session. Districts elect an area service representative--yes, an ASR--for service on behalf of the district on the ASC. The ASR provides reports to GSRs at district meetings, allowing opportunity for full discussion of area services, and opportunity as well for redirection. GSRs still participate in the regional assembly, though the number of GSRs in such a region might force the regional committee to conduct a number of assemblies prior to the Fellowship Service Conference, each to facilitate participation from a different jurisdiction. The ASC still elects two RCMs for service on the regional committee. It would be possible for the ASC to conduct a special assembly of GSRs for the election of RCMs.

The biggest problem is that, while the link between groups in a neighborhood is preserved, the link between the groups-at-large and the service structure is stretched almost beyond tolerance. The distance created between the groups and the area committee make constant problems of funding, volunteer recruitment, and area sensitivity to group needs.

OPTION: quarterly ASC meetings

This was the second of two options formerly appearing in the area chapter of the *Guide*. Here's what we were saying: "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." So, what's wrong with that? In what sense does *this* set up an additional level of service? *What* new level?!

The steering committee is the new level. The distance between the groups and the community's direct service administrators is narrowed once every three months, but for the most part, the distance is as great and as problematic as with the district/metro scheme.

OPTION: metro office committee

I understand that this option was discussed by the committee a few years back. It is, essentially, a renaming of A.A.'s intergroup or central office committee set-up. Groups would elect representatives to both the ASC and the intergroup committee. Direct services for the entire greater metropolitan area--H&I panels, CPC development, contacts with the public media, literature distribution, etc.--would be administered either by central office staff at the committee's direction, or by volunteer subcommittees. Contact between the groups and N.A.'s national services would be maintained as usual through ASCs and RSCs. Such an arrangement provides clearly defined points of decision and accountability for these separate services. But it requires groups to focus their financial and manpower support of the service structure in two directions instead of one, making it far less likely that groups will be able to adequately support either. And questions concerning the

200 intergroup committee's relations with the area and regional committees, both in
201 terms of representation and authority, would undoubtedly arise.

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