

## METROPOLITAN SERVICES AND THE STATE ASSEMBLY

At its June 1990 meeting, the committee adjusted the course it had charted for local services. Previously, they'd drawn a hard line between area and regional service committees. Area committees, they said, were the only ones capable of delivering local services--phonelines, public information, meeting lists, H&I panel coordination, and the like. Regional committees were too far from where such services would be delivered, and should stay out of these activities. Instead, regional committees should be conduits for the exchange of information and experience between the region's areas, and between the areas and the national service body. The region should also host at least one assembly each year, where the region's GSRs gather to form a collective conscience concerning national service issues.

The committee ran into three problems with this hard-and-fast definition of areas and regions. First, in cities too large to have just one area service committee, it made almost no allowance for coordinating services affecting all the areas in the metropolitan district. No *one* area could perform services affecting *all* the city's areas, but the *region* couldn't coordinate services for that *city's* areas at the expense of the ASCs that were *not* in the city.

Second, the committee's model did nothing to stem the proliferation of regions. More and more regions had been developing, for a variety of reasons. If that trend continued, there could easily have been more than a hundred RSRs, plus alternates, by the time a U.S. National Service Conference was created--an expensive, unwieldy conference, indeed.

The proliferation of regions created another problem. In order to recognize new *delegates* to the world or national conference, some judgment would have to be made concerning the validity of the newly-formed *region* which sent delegate. That would place the conference in the position of deciding whether or not local service units could organize themselves as they saw fit, and whether they could be represented at the conference. That would directly contradict the Twelfth Concept for Service, "Our structure at all levels is one of service, never of government. No one element of our service structure should have unqualified authority over any other."

Third, the area/region model still did not provide any service body with clear responsibility for interacting on behalf of the fellowship with government, professional, business, religious, media, and civic agencies organized on a statewide basis in the United States. This had long been a shortcoming of the N.A. service system, and the *Guide to Service* did nothing to amend it.

While the committee acknowledged these defects in the *Guide*, it also desired to keep many of the features of the area/region model it had developed. The regional

GSR assembly, they felt, provided a much sounder basis for national service than what already existed. They wished to see the region set aside, one way or another, with its own distinct role in N.A. service: a place where experience could be shared. And they were convinced that the idea, "Deliver services as close as possible to where they'll be used," had great validity.

The committee needed to make alterations in its model, alterations which would:

- \* preserve the region as a forum for the exchange of information and experience,
- \* provide means by which multiple areas in a metropolitan district could coordinate those activities affecting them, but *not* affecting the region's other areas,
- \* allow local service units to organize themselves as they saw fit, while still maintaining a simple, manageable system for recognizing conference delegates, and,
- \* clearly designate a level of service responsible for interface with state- or province-wide organizations.

### **The state assembly**

The solution they developed required two alterations in the *Guide to Service*. First, while the services provided at the regional level--the shared experience, the GSR assembly, and the selection of conference delegates--would remain, the jurisdiction would be altered.

- \* The *regional* assembly would become the *state* assembly. The assembly would meet at least once annually to consider national service affairs and elect a delegate to the national conference.
- \* The assembly would be coordinated by a *steering committee*.
- \* The state assembly steering committee would be composed of area-elected representatives, called *steering committee members (SCMs)*, the equivalent of the *Guide's* RCMs. Steering committee officers would be elected from among the SCMs.
- \* The state steering committee, like the regional committee described in the *Guide*, would meet on a regular basis to exchange area service experience, consult with the state's conference delegate, and plan local service seminars.
- \* To provide additional focus on particular fields of service such as P.I., H&I, and phonelines, steering committee resource assignments would be made, as described in the *Guide's* current chapter on the region. In addition, the steering committee might also form information-exchange subcommittees, led by those SCMs given resource assignments, composed of the chairpersons of the area subcommittees for each field of service.

- \* Interaction between statewide N.A. and other statewide organizations could be conducted either by the steering committee itself, by the SCMs with the related resource assignments, or by steering committee subcommittees.

### **Metropolitan regions**

Second, the name *regions* would be given to service bodies created to meet the common needs of multiple areas in a metropolitan setting. This new-style region would meet local service needs only; it would not interact with the state assembly steering committee or with the national conference. Areas in the metropolitan district would elect one representative to the region, and a second representative to the state assembly steering committee. The conference delegate elected by the state assembly would represent *all* the areas in the state, including those areas in the state's metropolitan regions. Areas within the metropolitan region could divide, as needed, to provide for more manageably-sized area committee meetings, without significantly affecting the administration of citywide services. Metropolitan regions could be formed, as needed, throughout the state--even across state boundaries--without affecting the state assembly, because state steering committee members would come from areas, not from regions.

At the local level, the new-style region would assume as many of the direct-service responsibilities of its component areas as those areas wished. Here are two examples of the possibilities of such a flexible arrangement:

- \* In Region One, each area has its own H&I subcommittee, but no P.I. subcommittee or phonline subcommittee. The region conducts those services citywide.
- \* In Region Two, the areas also have H&I subcommittees. These area H&I subcommittees handle interaction with treatment facilities in each area, and conduct the H&I panels presenting N.A. recovery both in treatment and correctional facilities. However, the regional H&I subcommittee, composed of the area H&I subcommittee chairpersons, is responsible for interacting with the city and county correctional agencies on behalf of all the areas in the metropolitan region.

The area committees in a metropolitan region would still facilitate the regular exchange of information and experience among their groups, along with administering whatever direct local services not administered by the metropolitan region. The regional committee, however, would meet solely to review the activities of the metropolitan service subcommittees. The exchange of *area* service experience would take place in the assembly steering committee meetings, not the regional meetings.

### **Multiple-assembly states**

The most populous states--California, Florida, Pennsylvania, and Ohio among them--would probably have to have more than one assembly per state. In these states, a single assembly and a single assembly steering committee would probably be too large to work well.

The assemblies are conducted primarily as part of the national service system, to consider conference business and elect conference delegates. For this reason, the national conference would be asked to approve the formation of more than one assembly in a given state.

That decision would be based on the number of constituent groups in that state, and on no other factor. Such decisions would be made on a case-by-case basis, without a specific number of groups being named as a requirement, so that individual circumstances--such as size of facilities available in each state for conducting assemblies--can be taken into account when deciding whether the single assembly has grown too large to be managed effectively.

The point at issue is *not* that states with more groups should have more votes at the national conference. The point is that, when so many groups participate in a state assembly that the assembly cannot be conducted in orderly fashion, the national conference should allow more than one assembly to be conducted in that state. The question is one of logistics, not representational ratios.

### **Alterations to be made in A Guide to Service**

The addition of the metropolitan region to the N.A. service model, and the redefinition of the state assembly and steering committee, will affect the current draft of *A Guide to Service* in a number of ways.

- \* The chapter on the area service committee will include a brief additional section, describing the need to coordinate services among multiple areas in the same city, referring for more complete discussion to a new chapter on metropolitan regions.
- \* A new chapter will be written about metropolitan regions.
- \* The chapter currently titled "The Regional Service Committee" will be retitled "The State Assembly."
- \* Throughout, minor adjustments in terminology and other descriptive narrative will be made for consistency.