

World Service



Conference Report

WSC Outreach Ad Hoc Committee

Greetings from the dynamic, innovative, and relentless WSC Outreach Ad Hoc Committee. At present, your WSC Outreach Ad Hoc Committee consists of Lucie V (Alsask), Bob S and Dickie D (both from Louisiana), Rick G (North East Atlantic), Ivan F (Ohio) as vice chairperson, Kimberly V-D-E (Wisconsin), and myself, Scott A (San Diego/Imperial) as chairperson. We are grateful for this opportunity to serve our fellowship. This conference year, our assignment was to receive and report on input to the outreach handbook. We received input from nine members of World Services leadership, twelve outreach subcommittees, and a collective report from the Board of Trustees. Ivan and I also attended a WS leadership meeting in St. Louis and received verbal input from the leadership group. The areas and regions from which we received written input ranged from Portugal to North America to Australia. We wish to thank members of WS leadership and registered outreach subcommittees for their verbal and written input.

The input we received reflects two differing perspectives with some common items identified across the board. Many of the handbook's reviewers mentioned the need to edit the extensive redundancy identified in the material, and the volume or number of pages in the handbook. Input received from world level trusted servants tended to be critical at both a philosophical and detail level, and considered it inappropriate to make reference to a WSC outreach committee. Input from area and regional outreach subcommittees was positive overall, did not indicate any problem with references to a WSC outreach committee, and did not mention any philosophical differences over who should be doing some of the tasks which outreach subcommittees are performing at the direction of their ASC or RSC.

All of the input suggests that outreach is a necessary function of our service structure. Most of the input affirms outreach subcommittees as a useful service at the area and regional level. The input also suggests that the outreach handbook is a necessary tool to be provided to local outreach subcommittees. A major weakness perceived by some members of WS leadership centers on what is referred to as the "expanded focus" of outreach work defined in the handbook. With roots in various local efforts happening all around our fellowship, the experience we share is that the goal of outreach efforts is to overcome isolation.

Isolation comes in many forms: long distances, natural obstacles, cultural differences, prison walls and apathy. Accepting isolation as more than a function of physical geography may be the source of this philosophical difference.

The input generally identifies the Institutional Group Guide as a strength of the handbook. Originally developed by the WSC H&I Committee, we are grateful for the presentation of this work to outreach. The Institutional Group Guide (Addendum G) is a more polished work than the rest of the handbook. Input indicates this piece is needed, useful, and practical. As stated in the handbook, it is our hope that the Institutional Group Guide can eventually be approved as a separate NA booklet for use in institutions. Being closer to finalization, the Institutional Group Guide could be completed and presented to the fellowship for approval sooner than other parts of the outreach handbook. No specific mention was made in the input regarding the Institutional Group Guide as a separate piece of literature, and we are very interested in feedback on this from the fellowship.

Input from WS leadership identifies as a weakness much of what is presented as "activities of existing outreach subcommittees." Outreach as described in the handbook is characterized as a shotgun philosophy that "appears to be an attempt to compensate for communication and structural breakdowns within the service structure." Many tasks identified as ongoing work of existing outreach subcommittees are referenced as the responsibility of either an ASC or the ASR. Our experience has been that many regional and area committees follow the suggestions in our service manual (TWGSS, pages 4 & 7) and assign the actual work to subcommittees. This committee has tried to report realities and present working service solutions. As outreach matures as a service of our fellowship, the extent and appropriateness of delegating tasks will become more clearly established.

Chapter IV and the bulletin "How To Be A GSR" received varied responses. The trustee collective input recommendations center on having the conference approve a policy on the creation of bulletins, other than trustee bulletins, before this is included in the handbook for distribution. Some of the input expressed the belief that this bulletin duplicates already existing service material. Other input considered the bulletin fairly well written, though suggested placing this material in an addendum rather than as a chapter of the handbook. Input from outreach subcommittees was favorable, stating that "How To Be A GSR" was especially helpful for GSR orientations. One input requested additional bulletins for group secretary and treasurer. Another requested inclusion of detailed information about home groups. The acceptance and positive response of local outreach subcommittees parallels requests for additional information on being GSR from conference participants at our committee meetings. GSR information has been the single most repeated request to this committee.

The definition of outreach as "those service activities designed to provide guidance for NA communities in their efforts to help develop and sustain NA groups and to encourage their involvement in NA service" is identified in the input as a weakness. This definition is perceived as too broad in scope, allowing for interpretations which would go "way beyond assistance to isolated groups or coordination of outreach subcommittees." Similar input expresses concern with a philosophy "professing that outreach is the do-all committee that

can consume all services not being done." Input from outreach subcommittees did not identify problems with the definition or scope of outreach work. Other input notes that "outreach's purpose is also to help isolated groups survive through contact with other parts of NA—not just service structure and services. Activity functions such as baseball tournaments, picnics, camp-outs, etc., are outreach activities when they are intended to bring together isolated NA members and communities."

Again, we thank those who provided written or verbal input to this committee. All of the input is valuable, and we look forward to additional feedback at WSC '96. The purpose of this report has been to provide information on the input we have received from WS leadership and outreach subcommittees. At last year's conference, participants were given a "working draft" outreach handbook. We encourage all conference participants to share your perceptions from your review of the outreach handbook. At our next committee meeting, we will be assessing the input. Clearly, we know the book needs editing, has too many pages, and has too much redundancy, even for a handbook. We have a general awareness of some sections which can be removed and some topics we need to develop or receive material on. The lack of enough specific examples has also been noted. We are particularly interested in how the fellowship feels about Addendum G, the Institutional Group Guide, as a separate booklet tailored for use in institutions. We also look forward to this year's WSC vote on the outreach motions in the Conference Agenda Report. If the conference agrees, we would like to proceed first with the Institutional Group Guide for development into approval form as a booklet for fellowship consideration. We propose following this with a review form of the remaining outreach handbook. For the next conference year, we believe this work will require two committee meetings, two conference calls, and the assistance of a WSO staff writer. As participants in the inventory and resolution process, we look forward to addressing the future in whatever shape it evolves.

Scott Allen, chairperson