

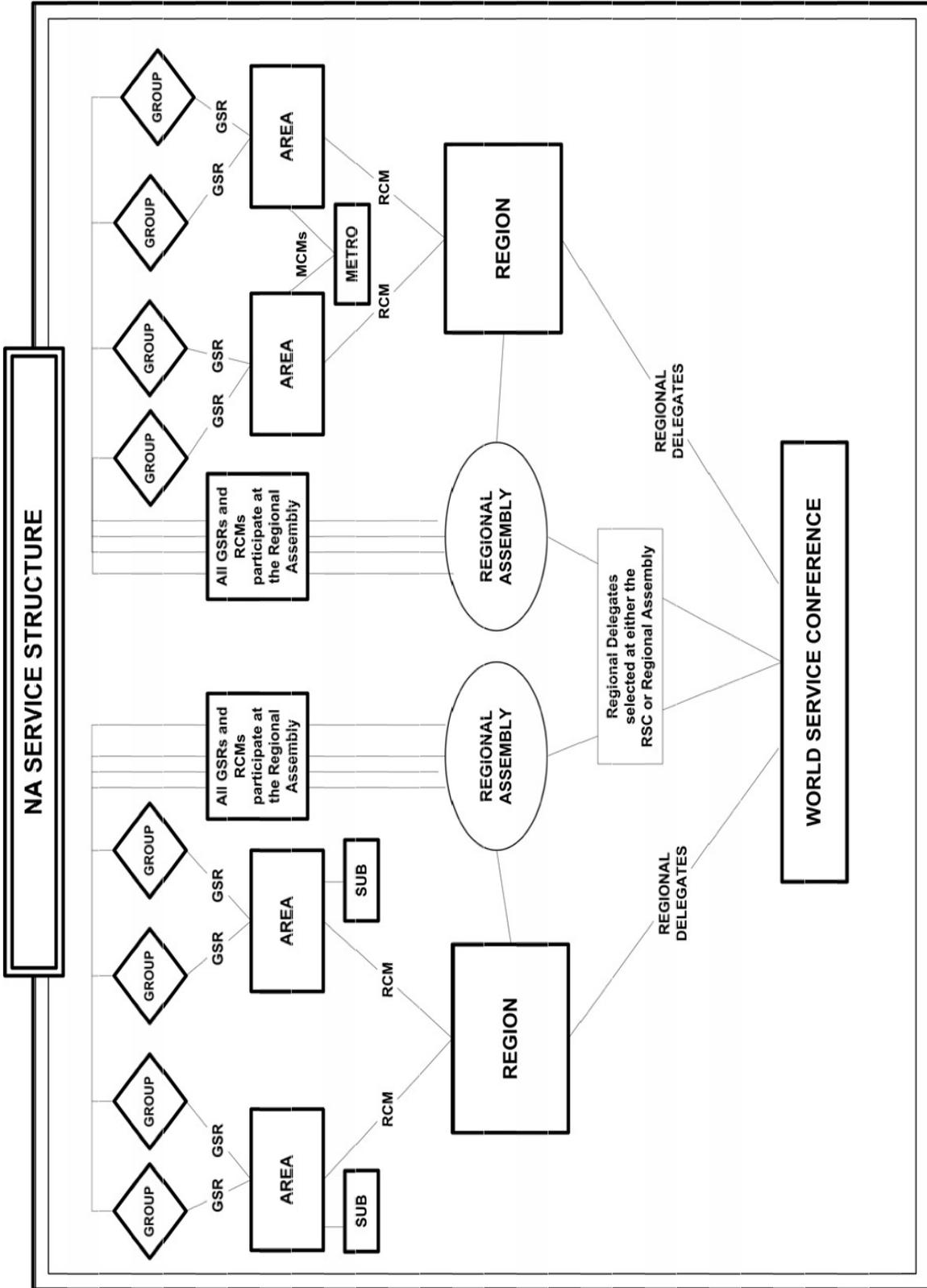
North Atlanta Area  
Of  
Narcotics Anonymous

GSR Guide

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The information compiled in this GSR Guide is compiled from various NA service materials, including *A Guide to Local Services in NA*, *The Group Booklet*, and NAASC Policy. Some language has been updated to reflect the consensus-based decision-making model used by the North Atlanta Area.



## **NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS SERVICE STRUCTURE**

The following is a brief description of the service units of Narcotics Anonymous. A more complete description of service on the local level, including groups, areas, metropolitan services, regions, etc., can be found in *A Guide to Local Services in Narcotics Anonymous*. Additional information about NA World Services may be found in *A Guide to World Services in Narcotics Anonymous*.

### **The NA Group**

NA groups are local, informal associations of recovering addicts. They are the foundation of the NA service structure. Groups are formed for the primary purpose of carrying the NA message of recovery, and all their activities should reflect that purpose. Conducting Narcotics Anonymous meetings is the primary activity of an NA group. The group may conduct its own affairs in whatever way seems fit to its members, provided the group's actions are consistent with NA's Twelve Traditions, and do not adversely affect other groups or the entire NA Fellowship. In the conduct of the affairs of NA as a whole, the groups delegate to the rest of the service structure the responsibility for the fulfillment of NA services. Group service representatives (GSRs) are elected to participate on behalf of the groups in the area committee and the regional assembly.

### **The Area Service Committee (ASC)**

The area committee is the primary means by which the services of a local NA community are administered. The area committee is composed of group service representatives, administrative officers (facilitator, co-facilitator, secretary, treasurer), subcommittee facilitators, and the area's regional committee members (RCMs). The area committee elects its own officers, subcommittee facilitators and co-facilitators, and RCMs.

### **The Metropolitan Service Committee (MSC)**

A metropolitan service committee may exist to administer a single set of coordinated NA subcommittees in a city that has more than one ASC, eliminating duplication of services and providing greater effectiveness in carrying the NA message.

### **The Regional Service Committee (RSC)**

Regional service committees exist to pool the experience and resources of the areas and groups it serves. The RSC is composed of regional committee members (RCMs) elected by the region's member areas; these RCMs usually elect regional committee officers from among themselves or member areas. RSCs organize regional assemblies at which GSRs and RCMs discuss a wide range of service matters, including those likely to come before the World Service Conference (WSC), and may elect a regional delegate and alternate delegate to the WSC.

## **Zonal Forums**

Zonal forums are service-oriented sharing and/or business sessions that provide the means by which NA communities can communicate, cooperate, and grow with one another. Although not a part of NA's formal decision-making system, world services and zonal forums interact in many ways.

## **NA World Services (NAWS)**

World services are those services which deal with the needs of NA as a whole, and which NA offers to its members, its groups, and to society. The basic purposes of our world services are communication, coordination, information, and guidance. We provide these services so that our groups and members can more successfully carry the message of recovery, and so that our program of recovery can be made more available to addicts everywhere.

## **World Service Conference (WSC)**

Unlike all other NA service bodies, the conference is not an entity; it is an event – the coming together. Every two years, regional delegates, the members of the World Board, and the executive director of the World Service Office meet to discuss questions of significance to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous as a whole. The purpose of the WSC is to be supportive of the fellowship as a whole, and to define and take action according to the group conscience of Narcotics Anonymous.

## **The World Board (WB)**

The purpose of the World Board of Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc. is to contribute to the continuation and growth of Narcotics Anonymous. The World Board manages all activities of world services, including oversight of the operations of the fellowship's primary service center, the World Service Office.

## **The World Service Office (WSO)**

The purpose of the World Service Office, our main service center, is to carry out the directives of the World Service Conference in matters that relate to communications and information for the Fellowship of NA, its services, groups, and members. The World Service Office achieves this purpose by maintaining correspondence with NA groups and service committees, by printing and distributing WSC-approved literature, and by maintaining the archives and files of Narcotics Anonymous.

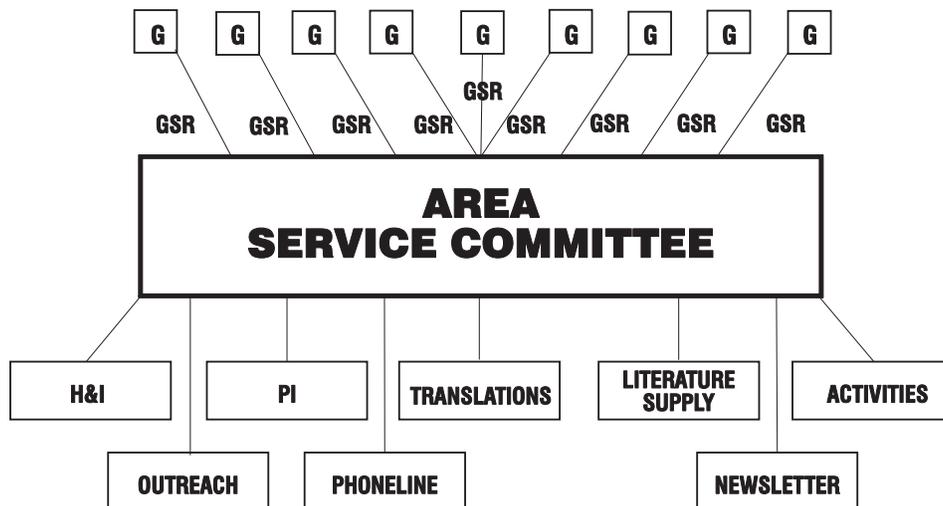
## **The Human Resource Panel (HRP) and the World Pool**

The Human Resource Panel facilitates an election/selection process that allows the World Services Conference to choose trusted servants based upon the principles of ability and

experience, and help to allow members to be nominated from around the world without having to be present at the conference to receive due consideration. The HRP administers the world pool, which is the source for candidates that the HRP can select from to recommend for WSC elections for the World Board, for the WSC Co-Facilitators, and for the Human Resource Panel. The World Board can also draw members from the pool to serve on board committees or project workgroups.

### Area Service Committee

*Note: If an area is a member of a metropolitan services committee, this information may not apply directly to the ASC. Please see the chapter on MSC's in A Guide to Local Services in NA for a description of area committees who are members of an MSC.*



### Introduction

How do groups stay focused on their primary purpose and still see that other services (such as maintain meetings schedules, providing literature, and providing PR and H&I services) are developed and maintained? In the words of NA's Ninth Tradition, they "create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve." And the service committee closest to home, the committee best situated to provide the most direct service to the groups and the community, is the area service committee.

### The Area Committee and Other NA Services

Area service committees are ultimately responsible to the groups they serve. Narcotics Anonymous groups send group service representatives (GSRs) to serve on the area committee. While still maintaining final responsibility and authority for services, they invest enough delegated authority in their GSRs – and through them, in the area committee – for the necessary work to get done.

NA groups can also send money to the area committee, money needed to coordinate panels, maintain phonelines, and conduct public relations activities. Through their contributions of money and manpower, the groups exercise both their responsibility and their authority for NA services.

### **Area Committee Participants**

There are three groups of participants in most area service committees: GSRs and their alternates, administrative officers, and subcommittee facilitators. The Seventh Concept for NA service says that, “All members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body’s decisions and should be allowed to fully participate in its decision-making processes.” Group service representatives provide a “grass roots” perspective to the area decision-making process, helping ensure that the committee’s feet are planted firmly on the ground. Administrative officers and subcommittee facilitators also bear substantial responsibility for the fulfillment of area services. Their ongoing growth and experience in carrying out their duties is an invaluable resource to the area as it develops and expresses its group conscience. We ought never allow a base of valuable experience to be created without utilizing it to the fullest. Each area is of valuable experience to be created without utilizing it to the fullest. Each area is responsible to create its own decision-making plan. In doing so, area committees should carefully consider the Seventh Concept.

### **Group Service Representative (GSR)**

Group service representatives link their groups to the rest of Narcotics Anonymous. Most groups also elect an alternate GSR who can fill in for the group representative when needed. GSRs serve a dual role. As our fellowship’s Second Concept for service indicates, GSRs take part on their groups’ behalf in the area committee and the regional assembly, conveying a sense of their groups’ wishes to the service structure and bringing back information on what’s happening in the larger world of NA. Yet our Twelve Concepts also suggest that GSRs are delegated the authority to serve in their own right as ASC and regional assembly participants, exercising their own conscience and best judgment in the best interests of NA as a whole. For more information on the GSR’s job, see both the Twelve Concepts for NA service and the NA Group chapters in *A Guide to Local Services*.

Basic equipment for group service representatives usually includes copies of *A Guide to Local Services in Narcotics Anonymous*, area guidelines (if the area has them), and the log of area policy

actions (available from the area secretary). Qualifications and terms of service for GSRs are determined by the groups, which elect them.

### **Group Service Representative Alternates (GSRA)**

Many groups elect an alternate group service representative in order to allow this service member to learn the position of GSR and to provide a designated alternate to represent their group in the absence of the GSR.

### ***Administrative Officers***

Many ASCs have six administrative officers: a facilitator, a co-facilitator, a treasurer, a secretary, and two regional committee members (RCMs). 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 (determined by each area's guidelines) and personal maturity should be the first consideration, along with experience in the steps, traditions, and concepts of service. Our trusted servants 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. Significant area service background often makes more effective administrative officers. Experience both as a GSR and an area subcommittee member is helpful. Recent leadership experience as a subcommittee facilitator will prove invaluable. For more discussion of the role of leadership in NA services, see the essay on Concept Four in the chapter on the Twelve Concepts for NA service in *A Guide to Local Services*. The current administrative officers for the North Atlanta Area are described below.

### **Facilitator**

The ASC facilitator is responsible for conducting ASC meetings, preparing the agenda, and various administrative duties. The facilitator's primary tools are the rules of order described in the area's guidelines or policy, a firm hand, a calm spirit, and a clear mind.

### **Co-facilitator**

The primary responsibility of the ASC co-facilitator is the coordination of the area subcommittees. The co-facilitator keeps in regular touch with the facilitators of each subcommittee to stay informed of their projects and problems, attending subcommittee meetings whenever possible. If disputes arise within a subcommittee or between subcommittees, the ASC co-facilitator helps find solutions to them. The co-facilitator works closely with subcommittee facilitators when they prepare their annual reports and budget proposals. The co-facilitator is also responsible to assist the facilitator in conducting ASC meetings and to conduct ASC meetings themselves in the facilitator's absence.

## **Secretary**

Area secretaries handle all their committees' paperwork, a formidable job. Their first responsibility is to take clear, accurate minutes of ASC meetings and 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, secretaries should regularly update the log of area policy actions. The log lists topics the committee has passed regarding the activities of administrative officers and subcommittees.

## **Treasurer**

The area treasurer's job is critical to the committee's work. Because of the added responsibility of handling money associated with service as a treasurer, it's especially important that area committees select their treasurers with care. It's recommended that areas elect people to this position who are financially secure, good at managing their personal finances, inspire the trust of the committee, and have substantial clean time. Experience in business, accounting, bookkeeping, or as a successful group treasurer is also very helpful.

The treasurer receives contributions from the groups, administers the area's checking account, pays the rent for the ASC's meeting place, reimburses officers and subcommittee facilitators for their budgeted expenses, keeps careful records of all transactions, and reports on the financial condition of the area committee at each of its meetings. As the administrator of the area's unified general fund, the treasurer is also responsible to prepare an annual budget for the ASC.

Cash transactions can create a number of problems for ASC treasurers. Having large quantities of currency can make an area treasurer particularly vulnerable to robbery. Handling large undocumented sums of cash may also leave the treasurer open to unwarranted accusations of theft, or may even provide an unnecessary temptation. This is why *A Guide to Local Services* encourages groups to make ASC contributions in the form of checks or money orders payable to the ASC whenever possible.

## **Regional Committee Members (RCMs)**

Regional committee members serve as the core of the regional service committee, a body which coordinates service forums throughout the region, is responsible for the regional convention, and conducts the regional assembly. The regional committee also serves year-round as a contact point between NA world and local services.

RCMs keep their areas in touch with the larger world of NA by providing information on activities in neighboring areas, functions being sponsored by the regional committee, reports relevant to subcommittee affairs, and important issues being discussed at various levels of service. Both the region and its areas depend on RCMs to be well-versed in NA service practices and principles. RCMs should carefully study the reports from their own areas' groups, officers, and

subcommittee facilitators so that they can pass their areas' experience on to others at the regional meeting.

### ***Elections and Rotation***

Some area committees hold elections for all their officers and subcommittee facilitators and co-facilitators at the same time each year; others stagger their elections, selecting members for different trusted-servant roles at different times of the year, so that their committees always have a mix of new and experienced leaders. Administrative officers and subcommittee facilitators generally serve no more than two terms consecutively in the same position and, with the exception of RCMs, usually serve one-year terms. This allows for the rotation of a variety of individuals through an area's trusted-servant positions, providing a diversity of viewpoints and talents and a freshness of perspective that would be lacking were these positions to be held year after year by the same individuals. The rotation of trusted servants at the area level also helps the committee better reflect the full range of insight available among committee members, preventing the area committee from becoming the mere extension of an individual's personality. Rotation emphasizes that our efforts to help carry the message through service involvement is just one way of practicing our twelfth step.

Area committees can foster continuity in their services by a number of means. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, some area committees stagger their elections of trusted servants, ensuring these committees always have a certain proportion of experienced leaders. Many area committees also encourage those who have completed terms as administrative officers and subcommittee facilitators to remain active in the ASC either in another leadership position, as individual members of one of the area's subcommittees, or informally. By balancing the practice of rotation with the kind of experience available from past officers, an area committee can partake in the best of both worlds.

### ***Subcommittees***

The ASC is responsible not only to develop and maintain subcommittees in each field of service, but also to coordinate the work of each of those subcommittees with the work of others. For these reasons, all area committee participants need to become as informed as they can possibly be about subcommittee activities. Area committees devote significant portions of their meetings to reports from subcommittee facilitators and discussions of subcommittee activities. Below is a description of the standing subcommittees for the North Atlanta Area.

### **Hospitals and Institutions (H&I)**

H&I subcommittees conduct panels that carry the NA message to addicts who often have no other way of hearing our message. Treatment panels are conducted for patients at addiction treatment centers, mental health facilities, and therapeutic communities. Correctional panels are

held for inmates at jails, prisons, and forensic hospitals. H&I subcommittee responsibilities sometimes overlap those of the local public relations subcommittee. For this reason, we encourage H&I and PR subcommittees to closely cooperate with one another.

### **Public Relations (PR)**

The general mission of your area public relations subcommittee is to inform addicts and others in the community of the availability of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. Services provided by PR vary widely and can include activities such as poster drives, letter writing campaigns, and informational panels provided to treatment facilities and public agencies. In the North Atlanta Area, the PR subcommittee also maintains the meeting schedule, website, and the helpline that provides information about meetings and offers callers the option to talk to a recovering addict for support.

### **Literature**

The literature subcommittee maintains a stock of NA books, pamphlets, key tags, medallions, and service materials that can be purchased by local groups at the monthly ASC meeting. The amount of literature kept on hand is dictated by ASC policy.

### **Activities**

The activities subcommittee plans and facilitates various social activities, such as dances, picnics, campouts, and game nights. Activities like these can provide a greater sense of community for the local NA fellowship and produce additional area income. It should always be kept in mind, however, that these functions are designed to enhance NA's primary purpose, not to replace group contributions in funding area services.

### **Ad Hoc Committees**

Sometimes an area committee comes up with a question or special project that does not fit into any existing subcommittee's job description. Ad hoc committees are set up for specific purposes and have limited lives. When they have finished their jobs, they are disbanded. For example, NAASC policy outlines the procedure for appointing an ad hoc committee to review the ASC policy each year – more information can be found in NAASC policy.

### ***Area Inventory***

Some area committees set aside one day each year for conducting an area service inventory for much the same reason as NA members do personal inventories. This is often discussed and decided upon at the ASC meeting.

## **ASC SAMPLE AGENDA**

This is a brief summary of the format of the ASC meeting. The sections of each part of the ASC meeting are described below.

### **Call to Order**

The meeting begins by reciting the Serenity Prayer, reading the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts for NA Service. There is also a roll call of groups present with each GSR/A presenting a group report. New groups may also be recognized at this time, and the minutes from the previous month's ASC meeting will be approved or amended.

### **Group Reports**

GSRs/GSRAs are asked to present a report on the state of their group. The group report includes the following components: name of the group; day(s) of the week and times that the group meets; location of the meeting; monthly donation and literature purchase; number of newcomers in attendance; and celebrations, anniversaries, and upcoming events.

### **Administrative & Subcommittee Reports**

In the North Atlanta Area, group reports are presented during group roll call. After this, administrative and subcommittee officers present reports on position/subcommittee activities and updates.

### **Open Forum**

This is a general discussion of group concerns and issues raised by reports or group members.

### **Nominations**

This is the time when NA members are nominated to fill administrative and subcommittee positions. The North Atlanta Area has a designated election cycle where nominations for all positions (except RCM and RCMA which follow the regional election cycle) take place in November, are taken back to groups for discussion (then ASC votes in December), and then the new positions begin in January. Vacant positions can be filled as needed.

### **Business**

Topics are in order regarding ASC business. Old business that is left from the previous ASC meeting is addressed first followed by topics regarding business that is new to the area.

### **Announcements**

Any announcements from groups, NA members, and/or administrative and subcommittee officers.

## **CONSENSUS-BASED DECISION-MAKING (CBDM)**

All ASC voting is conducted using consensus-based decision-making, which is a voting procedure based on compromise, cooperation, participation, and inclusivity. CBDM embraces participation by giving everyone, including minority opinions, a voice in the process, and depends on the ability of the group to work together as a whole to find solutions to issues. The principles behind this procedure align well with the spiritual principles of Narcotics Anonymous. The outline for making decisions by consensus is outlined below.

- A voting member of the ASC brings a proposal to the ASC in the form of a topic that is read by the ASC secretary.
- The ASC facilitator first asks if any member has clarifying questions about the topic. This is not a debate on the merits of the topic, but is simply a chance to ensure that everyone understands the language of the topic.
- The facilitator opens the floor for discussion of the topic. During discussion, members can voice their support and/or reservations. The discussion may lead to amendments and alterations to the original topic.
  - The facilitator may take a straw poll to determine the members' feelings about the topic
    - A straw poll is an informal, non-binding vote either in favor or opposed to the topic or some amendment.
    - If the straw poll reveals a general consensus against the topic, then the topic automatically dies because it would not pass in a formal consensus-taking process.
- Once the discussion concludes, the facilitator calls for a consensus. When coming to a consensus, members may take one of the following four positions:
  - Assent – this means to agree with and support the topic
    - A member does not have to fully agree with every aspect of the topic, but agrees enough to support the topic.
  - Assent with reservations – this means that the member is willing to support the topic, but does not fully agree with it, and would like their reservations to be noted.
    - Another explanation for assenting with reservations is that the member still has some concerns about the topic, but trusts in the decision of the body.
  - Stand aside – this means that the member does not support the proposal, but does not have grounds to block it.
    - A stand aside is not equivalent to an abstention in the parliamentary model, but more closely resembles a “no” vote.

- Block – this can only be presented in the event that a member believes that a topic violates spiritual principles, traditions, concepts, or the law.
  - Once a member has presented a block, they must speak to the principle, tradition, concept, or law that is violated.
  - The body will then reach a consensus as to the validity of the block.
    - If the block is found to be valid, then the proposal dies.
    - If the body determines that the block is not valid, then the consensus-reaching procedure resumes.
  - Because a proposal can be defeated simply from a large number of stand asides, a block is rarely necessary and should only be utilized when a member strongly believes that the proposal directly violates a principle, tradition, concept, or law.
- In the North Atlanta Area, topics must reach 80% consensus (either assent or assent with reservations) to be accepted.

#### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- More specific information about North Atlanta Area procedures and policies can be found in the current NAASC Policy at [www.northatlantana.org](http://www.northatlantana.org)
- More detailed information about the roles of elected trusted servants, GSRs, GSRA's, and various committees can be found in *The Group Booklet, A Guide to Local Services in Narcotics Anonymous*, and NAASC Policy. You can access the service literature for free at [www.na.org](http://www.na.org)