

IS YOUR GROUP LINKED TO A.A. AS A WHOLE?

Most A.A. groups in the United States and Canada choose to be linked to A.A. as a whole by listing their group with the General Service Office (G.S.O.). This in turn connects the A.A. group with the Area Assembly and the local district. G.S.O. is often asked, “Will filling out a new group form ensure my group appears in local meetings lists?” The answer is no. The new group form is only so that communication can flow between your group and the U.S./Canada Service structure (your district, your area, and your G.S.O.) Please contact the local A.A. entity that publishes meeting lists such as your local intergroup/central office, district, or area. Many of the local entities that publish meeting lists also share information with the Meeting Guide app. A.A. groups participate in the General Service Conference structure and list with the G.S.O., but also find it helpful to elect an Intergroup representative and list with their local central/intergroup office.¹

Often groups choose their elected General Service Representative (G.S.R.) as the group’s primary contact; however, if the group has not yet elected a G.S.R., any group member can serve as the primary contact by providing a current email address. An email address allows G.S.O. to send the group helpful information and acknowledgments of group contributions quickly and at no cost. Groups listed with G.S.O. have their G.S.R.s or “group contacts,” who act as channels for two-way communication and shared experience. Once a group is listed with G.S.O. directly or through the Area registrar, the group information is shared with the Area delegate and the local District Committee Member (D.C.M.) via G.S.O.’s database, Fellowship Connection. In addition, based on a decision made by the General Service Conference, the Area delegate receives an email alert as well to help prompt communication through the General Service Conference structure locally.

What’s the point? In the spirit of our Twelve Concepts of World Service, each group linked to the local general service structure has the opportunity to participate via District meetings and Area Assemblies in the collective conscience of A.A. in the U.S. and Canada. Each G.S.R. communicates their group’s “conscience” on important matters of policy considered by the District and Area Assembly. By attending Area Assemblies and District meetings, they are expressing their group’s thinking on local matters and that of the entire U.S. and Canada General Service Conference structure. This in turn helps the Area delegate at the Annual General Service Conference meeting to represent the Area’s groups and take part in decisions that affect A.A. as a whole.

Listing with the G.S.O. can begin with an A.A. group “making a good start,” which can generally be described by a group being established for a period of time before requesting to be listed. Once a new group has passed this suggestive period and they request to be listed with G.S.O., the Area delegate is sent an email alert and given the opportunity to connect to the Area delegate, D.C.M. and others in the local service structure. A new group is assigned a group ID.² Thirty (30) days after group information is sent to the delegate and listed in Fellowship Connection, this pending active status period concludes and new groups are provided with a complimentary *Group Handbook*, either in an electronic form or a print version. Any newly elected G.S.R. can request a G.S.R. kit in the electronic or print version.

New groups and their members who wish can go to aa.org/box-459, fill in their name and email address, and receive our quarterly newsletter *Box 4-5-9*. This helps keep members informed on policies being

considered by the Conference, changes to A.A. literature, and when and where their Regional Forum will be held (Forums are weekend events where members throughout the service structure share experience and exchange information regarding A.A.'s primary purpose). Additionally, G.S.R.s or group contacts for listed groups receive registration details for each International Convention, held every five (5) years.

How? To participate in services provided by G.S.O. to A.A. groups, it is vital to furnish simple information to G.S.O. or your Area registrar through the *G.S.O. New Group Listing Guidelines/Form*. To notify G.S.O. when group information changes (e.g., the G.S.R. rotates, the group contact moves, or a new G.S.R. is elected) or when there is a change in the group's location, please use the *G.S.O. Group Information Change Form*. Group changes can also be given to the Area registrar to input into Fellowship Connection. G.S.O. lists groups and not meetings; therefore, for the local meeting time and locations it may also be helpful to connect with the District Committee Member (D.C.M.) and the local intergroup/central office to be published in the local meeting lists or on Meeting Guide.

A New Group: When a new group forms, the members usually take time to decide on the name of the new group³; elect trusted servants such as the G.S.R., secretary, treasurer and others as described in *The A.A. Group...Where it all Begins*; plan the time and format of meeting(s); and obtain A.A. literature from the nearby central/intergroup office.

Your District: Regardless of how new group information is received, the D.C.M. along with the Area delegate will make contact and welcome the group to "general service."

Whether a group is new or has existed for years, the D.C.M. is the primary contact through the G.S.R. Group G.S.R.s attend District meetings, where they participate in A.A.'s General Service Conference structure and give their group a voice in the process while also receiving information about happenings in A.A. as a whole. G.S.R.s attending District meetings are an excellent resource for addressing group problems and concerns and to gather experience of how to effectively carry the message of A.A. beyond the group's meeting time and space. In matters affecting A.A. as a whole, a group's "conscience" is communicated to the Area Assembly by their G.S.R.

If you do not know how to contact your group's D.C.M., Area registrar/secretary or delegate, staff members in the General Service Office can often provide that information.

Website: www.aa.org **Telephone:** (212) 870-3400

Mailing address:

General Service Office
P.O. Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, N.Y. 10163

In addition to contacting G.S.O. you can also use the following resource to locate your local Area:
<https://www.aa.org/list-of-general-service-conference-area-web-sites-uscanada>

If you would like to locate your intergroup/central office, please go to <https://www.aa.org/find-aa>.

G.S.O. staff members are always happy to hear from A.A. members and groups. G.S.O. has two primary purposes: 1) to serve as a resource to better enable groups to carry the A.A. message of experience, strength and hope to the still-suffering alcoholic; and 2) to provide services to A.A. as a whole that individual groups cannot usually manage, such as the publication of A.A. literature. The A.A. group is the fundamental unit supporting A.A. recovery, unity and service.

¹ To participate fully, a group lists itself 1) with the general service structure (G.S.O., Area and District); and 2) with the local intergroup/central office.

² Once a group ID number is assigned and becomes part of a group's historical record, the number remains with the group and is not usable by any other group.

³ Guidelines for naming an A.A. group are based on "group conscience" as expressed through the annual General Service Conference. "The A.A. Group" pamphlet, the basic guide for all groups in the U.S. and Canada, suggests that a group avoid choosing a name that might suggest affiliation with any organization, club, political or religious institution. New groups are also advised to avoid names that refer to "family," "double trouble," "alcohol and pills," or the name of any actual person, living or dead.