

VALLEY INTERGROUP SERVICE CENTER
OF
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS



**INTERGROUP
REPRESENTATIVE'S
HANDBOOK**

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TO THE NEW INTERGROUP REPRESENTATIVE

Congratulations on becoming your group's representative to the Valley Intergroup. You have been entrusted with voting your group's conscience on policies and decisions affecting "carrying the message" of Alcoholics Anonymous in our area.

At times you may be asked to vote your conscience at meetings as outlined in Concept III- "Right of Decision." We ask you to listen to the pros, cons, and alternatives, placing principles before personalities. It has been our experience that when we turn it over to our higher power we make the right decision.

At times an issue may be so critical in monetary figures or so sweeping in a policy change that you feel compelled to consult your group. When this occurs, you may make a motion that the matter be "tabled" until the following month, so that you can return with your group's conscience. If this motion is passed the matter will be deferred until the following month's meeting. This is in line with Concept IV and allowing your group the "Right of Participation."

We trust you will report all pertinent information to your group, including opportunities for service and bring your group's concerns and questions to the meeting.

Please call the Valley Service Center if you have any questions.

INTERGROUP REPRESENTATIVE

(A brief guide for trusted servants)

The Valley Intergroup Service Council (VISC) was formed by the groups in Dublin, Livermore, Pleasanton, San Ramon, and Sunol to coordinate their efforts and thus be more effective in their primary purpose: “To Carry the Message.”

Here's How It Works:

Following Concept I, “Final responsibility and ultimate authority for AA World Services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship”, our Intergroup is an upside-down organization. The groups are on the top and the advisory committees are on the bottom.

The Intergroup Representative (IGR) is elected by their group. They attend the monthly VISC meeting, which keeps a two-way flow of information going between the Valley Service Center (VSC) and the groups. They attend the business meeting of their group and ask for suggestions, comments, and opinions to take to the next VISC meeting.

To achieve its purpose of strengthening AA's unity, VISC has several special committees and liaisons. One committee is the Board, which serves as the standing committee of the VISC. The Board is the advisory arm of the VISC concerning the business and administration of the Valley Service Center and makes recommendations to the VISC regarding the VSC operations. The Board follows Concept I of the Twelve Concepts of World Service, as an upside down structure, with the AA groups holding ultimate responsibility and final authority. The Board of Directors are elected at the VISC meeting by IGRs.

The VSC is maintained by the VISC. The VSC mission is to assist member AA groups in their primary purpose of carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. It provides communication between the groups regarding the delivery of the Twelfth Step message and other local events and activities.

As an IGR you can do a number of things to serve your group and Alcoholics Anonymous!

Attend the VISC meeting.

Encourage your group to elect an alternate IGR who can attend if you are unable to.

Inform your group.

Arrange with your group Secretary for a few minutes to present Recaps of current events, functions and service opportunities occurring within VISC (see example report on page 4).

Know the bylaws.

The VISC operates under a set of guidelines.

Encourage service involvement.

Announce and encourage members of your group about service opportunities on committees, the telephone Hotline, Public Information, Workshops, Special Events, and more.

Keep your group's records up-to-date.

Be sure your group information is accurate in the Meeting Directory and report any changes to the VSC.

Help keep A.A. solvent.

Make sure the treasurer or the member who handles the Seventh Tradition money is informed as to where the money goes after group expenses are met. Disbursement information is available at the VSC and in the Secretary's Handbook.

Serving as an IGR offers you a rewarding opportunity to share in Alcoholics Anonymous' Third Legacy-Service.

EXAMPLE OF AN INTERGROUP REPORT

After attending the VISC meeting, it is important to give a report to your group to keep the members informed. Below is an example that we hope will be helpful to you in reporting.

“Hello I’m _____ your Intergroup Representative. This month the Intergroup voted to create a Web page with our meeting schedule on it. The special events committee needs volunteers to help with the annual picnic and the telephone hotline is in need of volunteers. If you are interested in being of service – call the VSC and volunteer. The number at the VSC is 8293160 and ask for the Office Manager.”

INTERGROUP OFFICERS

There are three VISC Officers: - the Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer. Elections of the Officers are conducted according to the Third Legacy Procedures as outlined below. This is a modification of the procedure to conserve time as agreed upon by VISC.

Election Procedure

- 1) All eligible members at VISC are informed of the job description and asked if they are available or unavailable to fulfill the position. (Except for the position of Treasurer and Webmaster. Nominees for these positions are screened by the BOD, and those eligible are presented to VISC for election by simple majority.)
- 2) If you wish to run for the office, state that you are available; and if you decline, state that you are unavailable.
- 3) Two nonvoting members will be selected as tellers to tally and report the vote.
- 4) Written ballots are cast if there is more than one candidate.
- 5) The first candidate to receive a 2/3 vote is elected.
- 6) After the second ballot (assuming no candidate has received 2/3 of the vote) any candidate with less than 1/5 is dropped, with the exception that at least the top two candidates remain.
- 7) After the third ballot any candidate with less than 1/3 is dropped.
- 8) After the fourth ballot the two remaining names are put in a hat and the name drawn becomes the elected person.

Chairperson of Intergroup

Requirement—Five years continuous sobriety

Commitment—Two years (one year as VISC Chairperson and Board Member and one year as Board Member only)

Duties: Preside over and guide monthly VISC meetings, working knowledge of the concepts, traditions, and Robert's Rules of Order, Able to conduct meetings in an orderly, timely, and impartial manner; Provide input for VISC meeting Agenda, Recaps, and Minutes; Serve on the VISC Board, Attend the monthly VISC Board meeting (last Monday of the month) and the monthly VISC meeting (first Monday of the month).

Secretary of Intergroup

Requirement—Two years continuous sobriety

Commitment—One year

Duties: Prepare agenda for monthly VISC meeting with input from Chairperson; attend and record minutes of the monthly VISC meetings; disseminate recaps of the minutes to Intergroup Representatives (IGRs) and all other VISC members; finalize minutes for dissemination to VISC Council and publication on the VSC website.

Treasurer of Intergroup

Requirement: five years of continuous sobriety.

Commitment: two years.

Duties: Oversees the Office Manager's recording of all incoming funds and distribution. Oversees the Office Manager's monthly financial report, and present financial report to the Board and VISC for approval. Co-signs for certain approved expenditures, tax forms, and/or

other required legal documents. Attends the monthly VISC meeting. Attends the monthly VISC Board's meeting.

The Secretary, Treasurer, Chairperson, Committee Chairs and co-Chairs of Intergroup are non-voting members; however, the Chairperson only may have a vote to decide a matter in the case of a tie.

INTERGROUP COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Those eligible are all members of Alcoholics Anonymous with at least two years of continuous sobriety. The term of office shall be 12 months. The election is by the third legacy procedure.

Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community (PI/CPC)

Chairperson

Requirement—Two years continuous sobriety

Commitment—Two years

Duties: Acts in an informative capacity with non-AA organizations and professionals to keep the community informed as to the availability of AA. Participates as a member of the California Northern Coastal Area (CNCA) Public Information Committee. Attends the CNCA PI Committee meetings on the third Wednesday of the month at Oakland Central Office and reports back to the monthly VISC meetings.

Hotline Chairperson & Vice Chairperson

Requirement—Two years continuous sobriety

Commitment—Two years (one year as Vice Chairperson, one year as Chairperson) First year functions as Vice Chairperson assisting Chairperson in all Hotline duties. Second year functions as Chairperson and responsible for all Hotline duties (shadowed by new Vice Chairperson)

Duties: Keeps an active list of volunteers to answer the Hotline and to conduct 12-step calls and provide updated lists to the VSC; oversees the gathering of names, phone numbers, and duty times of Hotline volunteers; schedules training sessions for 24-hour Hotline volunteers and 12-step volunteers. Attends & reports back to VISC with monthly usage of Hotline calls.

Special Events Chairperson & Vice Chairperson

Requirement—Two years continuous sobriety

Commitment—Two years (one year as Vice-Chairperson, one year as Chairperson) First year functions as Vice Chairperson, assisting Chairperson at all Special Events. Second year functions as Chairperson and responsible for all Special Events (shadowed by new Vice Chairperson)

Duties: Organizes and hosts Special Events including at least two fundraisers (Annual Anniversary dinner on the third Saturday of January and the Annual Picnic)

Workshop Coordinator Chairperson

Requirement—Two years continuous sobriety

Commitment—One year

Duties: Organize and host a minimum of three workshops throughout the year to share experience on recovery-related topics—one of the workshops is the Secretary’s Workshop.

Outreach Chairperson

Requirement— Two years continuous sobriety

Commitment—One year

Duties: Responsible for visiting groups that meet within the area covered by the VSC, specifically those groups that are not currently active within VISC, keep groups informed about upcoming VISC activities, encourage participation in VISC, and provide most recent copy of the Secretary’s Handbook and Valley View newsletter.

Home Bound AA Committee Chairperson and Vice Chairperson (2 positions)

Requirement: Two years of continuous sobriety

Commitment: Two years (one year as Vice Chairperson and one year as Chairperson)

First year functions as Vice Chairperson assisting Chairperson with all Homebound Meeting duties. Second year functions as Chairperson and responsible for all Homebound Meeting duties.

Duties: Provides access to a meeting for homebound/physically challenged members within the Tri Valley area who cannot attend regular meetings. Gathers and maintains an active/up to date list of available 12 Step members who volunteer to bring a meeting to the homebound and provides updated lists to the VSC. Provides 12 Step volunteers with the geographical location, appropriate number of attendees, and other factors, such as demographics (home, facility or hospital), etc. Suggests a meeting format (provide an example). Each group can dictate their own format based on the need of the member and by group conscious. Schedules appropriate training for 12 Step volunteers. Reviews procedures and considerations of member’s physical status and needs, Set up and clean up, Parking/smoking/special circumstances, Newcomers/ strangers to member’s home, Meeting formats, Attends monthly VISC meeting and gives report updates on Homebound/Accessibility Committee and Quarterly attend the monthly Area Accessibility Sharing Session in Napa, CA.

Webmaster

Requirement: two years of continuous sobriety; knowledge and experience with maintaining a website (i.e., ability to troubleshoot technical problems, ability to conduct software updates, etc.).

Commitment: two years

Duties: Attends monthly VISC meeting and keeps VISC informed about updates, changes and needs of the VSC website. Attends monthly VISC Board meetings as requested/needed and keeps VISC informed about updates, changes and needs of VSC website. Responsible for

day-to-day maintenance (i.e., ensure links and downloads are active and current, etc.) of VSC website in accordance with the VSC Website Guidelines.

INTERGROUP LIAISONS

Liaisons are non-voting members of Intergroup who act as a conduit to relay information to and from Intergroup and their other service entity.

District 70 General Service Liaison

This liaison position on the VISC is elected by the District 70 General Service Group and is not elected by the VISC. This liaison position gives and takes reports to and from VISC and District 70 General Service.

East Bay Young Peoples of Alcoholics Anonymous (EBYPAA)

This liaison position on the VISC is elected by EBYPAA and is not elected by the VISC. This liaison position gives and takes reports to and from VISC and EBYPAA.

H&I Liaison

Requirement— Two years continuous sobriety

Commitment – One year

Duties: Attends monthly VISC meeting and provides information about needs, service opportunities and activities of H&I, attends monthly H&I meeting in Oakland (first Wednesday of each month), and gives and takes reports between VISC and H&I.

Northern California Council of Alcoholics Anonymous (NCCAA) Liaison (2 positions)

Requirement—Two years continuous sobriety

Commitment—One year

Duties: Attends monthly VISC meeting and keeps VISC informed about needs, service opportunities and activities of NCCAA; serves on and attends NCCAA Steering Committee meetings and conferences; Gives and takes reports to and from VISC and NCCAA.

THE PURPOSE OF INTERGROUP

The purpose of the VISC is to provide service, activities, functions, and programs which strengthen AA's unity and spirit of purpose while perpetuating the program of Alcoholics Anonymous in our community.

A service center office is maintained by the VISC for the purpose of conducting ordinary AA business and to better serve individual groups and AA as a whole. This body is a partnership of community AA groups, whereby all groups equally enjoy the benefits of its operation. Meeting groups register at their own request for the common purpose of sharing and exchanging information amongst themselves.

Responsibility of service activities is placed at the groups' level, and all service center activities are guided by the 12 Traditions and the groups' will and conscience. Unity of purpose, thought, and deed is of primary importance in all VISC actions.

The continued advancement of the AA program through the performance of service work is the ultimate objective of the VISC.

THE GROUP CONSCIENCE

We know from reading the Twelve Traditions that the A.A. group is the primary authority in Alcoholics Anonymous.

Why do we need a Group Conscience?

From time to time, disagreements arise in groups, such as how money should be spent, group policy on various issues, and how to direct their IGR and GSR to vote. Group Secretaries and other officers are also elected by group conscience.

How does a group arrive at an “informed” group conscience?

An informed group conscience, as opposed to a vote, is where both sides of an issue are represented, and all alternatives are thoroughly discussed. All available information on a given subject is presented to the group, so that everyone understands.

Every group member is given the opportunity to express an opinion. Sometimes gifted speakers can sway the majority; therefore, the minority voice must always be heard.

The Group Conscience should always express a comfortable majority.

The greatest enemy of the group conscience is apathy. Often, we tend to take the line of least resistance; the peace-at-any-price attitude. This allows the members with the most dominating

personalities and the loudest voices to be our group's conscience. The group that listens to all its voices with an open mind and has a good understanding of the principles of A.A. is guided in its decisions by principles and not personalities.

Tradition One teaches that we can disagree without being disagreeable!!!

From time to time you may hear the term "substantial unanimity." It is a safeguard against any hasty or overbearing authority of a simple majority; and on the other hand we take notice of the rights and frequent wisdom of minorities, however small. This principle further guarantees that all matters of importance, time permitting, will be extensively debated, and that such debates will continue until a heavy majority can support the decision. In the case of Intergroup a "heavy majority" is usually 2/3 of those present and voting on the question. The principle of substantial unanimity does have certain practical limitations. Occasionally a decision will be of such urgency that something has to be done at once. In such a case, we cannot allow a minority, however well intentioned, to block a vitally needed action which is evidently in the best interest of A.A.

Some Simple Parliamentary Rules for Conducting a Meeting

Robert's Rules of Order is how we conduct our VISC meeting. This is true unless it conflicts with the Traditions, Concepts, or Principles of our Fellowship. Robert's Rules of Order is simply parliamentary rules, which are the tools of running an efficient, effective, democratic meeting. Listed below are some of the rules, which you may find helpful.

The majority rules

This rule is basic to the democratic process. The minority opinion has the right to be heard, but once a decision has been made by a majority of the members present and voting, the minority must then respect and abide by the decision.

Silence is consent

Those members who do not vote agree to go along with the decision of the majority by their silence.

One question at a time and one speaker at a time.

Personal remarks in debate are always out of order.

Chairperson's Guides

Be in control on the floor

The chairperson should recognize those members wishing to speak by calling out their name if possible. No other member may interrupt or call out remarks without being out of order. Private

discussion between members while another has the floor is out of order and disruptive and members should be reminded of this.

Be impartial

The presiding officer should impartially call on members wishing to speak. He/she should give members on both sides of an issue an opportunity to speak. No member should speak twice until all members that wish to speak have been heard.

Be focused

The presiding officer should not allow irrelevant discussion. Restate the question and, if necessary, ask the member to “confine their remarks to the question.”

Be composed

The presiding officer should remain calm and objective, keeping the meeting moving. A sense of humor and a smile can often save the day.

Motions and their uses

Main motions

A main motion is defined as a proposal that certain action may be taken or an opinion be expressed by the group. They are the motions that spend money; adopt projects; set policy; etc. The words to use are, “I move.” **A motion must be seconded or it dies.** The chairperson then states the motion so the proposal is clarified in the minds of the members.

Secondary motions

A secondary motion is one, which can be made while the main motion is on the floor and *before* it has been decided. A subsidiary motion may change the words, send it to a committee, delay it, etc. The secondary motion is voted upon before the main motion (sometimes referred to as an amendment).

Debate

The chair opens the debate by asking, “Is there any discussion?” Debate should continue as long as members wish to discuss the question, unless motions have been adopted to limit or close debate. At the end of debate, the chairperson asks, “Is there any further discussion? Are you ready for the question?” The chairperson announces the outcome.

General consent

A shortcut in voting, which should not be used for controversial decisions. It permits a chairperson to take action on a proposal on the assumption that it has the approval of the members. Examples are methods of voting and adjournments.

Debate and voting

You may move to limit the debate to ***two minutes for each speaker***, who shall ***not speak more than twice on the same question***. No member shall speak more than once to the same question unless everyone who wishes has spoken.

The previous question

To close the debate and call for a vote, state “I move the previous question.” A 2/3 majority must agree to take the motion to a vote.

Tabling a motion

This is to postpone the vote on a motion to a later date.

1. You may specify the time and date for a vote in the future.
2. It can be taken from the table at the next scheduled Intergroup meeting, or left on the table indefinitely.

Quorum

This is the number of members who must be present to conduct business. Our By-Laws state that all IGRs present at the VISC meeting constitutes a quorum.

These are only a fraction of Robert's Rules of Order but we hope they will be helpful.

ATTENDANCE POLICY FOR INTERGROUP

If an Intergroup Representative (IGR) is absent from three consecutive Intergroup Meetings without notice, their group will be contacted by a member of the Board of Directors (BOD) and informed of their absence and lack of representation. At this time the IGR may be dropped from the Intergroup Meeting rolls. If the IGR attends the next meeting, after notification, they shall be considered to be reinstated.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A member of the BOD that has three consecutive unexcused absences from the Board Meeting be contacted and asked if they wish to continue in their position. If there is no response, they will be assumed to have resigned from their office.