

## The Group Support Unit – Carrying the Message



**Group-focused:** The group support unit (GSU) focuses on aiding the groups in their efforts to carry our message.

“The primary purpose of an NA group is to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. . . . The group is the primary vehicle by which our message is carried. It provides a setting in which a newcomer can identify with recovering addicts and find an atmosphere of recovery.”

*The Group Booklet, page 2*

The NA group will always be the single most effective way we as a fellowship carry the message. Many of our fellowship discussion topics over the last few conference cycles have centered on strengthening groups. All too often in our current service structure, however, groups feel unsupported, like they have nowhere to go to talk about the issues most immediately affecting them.

**“Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.”**

Fifth Tradition

The GSU is intended to help groups better carry the message within their meetings by separating out the group support function from the “business” of NA. The GSU gives groups the opportunity to share problems they may be encountering and to seek solutions from each other, while avoiding the distraction of discussions about complex services provided outside the group. By functioning as a discussion-based gathering of the local NA community, the GSU will offer an attractive alternative that complements the other more business-oriented service meetings.

The GSU is intended to be like a community or neighborhood gathering, not another level of service. Some of the kinds of things that happen at GSU meetings include:

- Informal training and mentoring
- Discussion of group issues, group sharing— no business
- Welcoming and outreach to new groups and members
- Orientation and introduction to service (recovery literature & service literature, traditions, concepts, etc.)
- Informal information sharing (e.g., upcoming events, LSU activities, new literature items, NAWs issues topics)
- Sending a delegate to the annual planning assembly
- In some instances or circumstances, GSUs may be asked to be involved in some service delivery (e.g., putting up PI flyers in the community)

### Size and Attendance

GSU attendance is open. Groups send a delegate and any interested member can come as well. In some cases, a community may decide to send a liaison from the LSU or to make a special effort to invite “veteran” service members or members with expertise in a particular area. Invitations are at the discretion of a local community; what is consistent is that groups send a trusted servant and that anyone who wants to attend is welcome. The GSU is intended to be a “neighborhood” sized body firmly rooted in its local recovery community. Typically a number of GSUs will be found within the geographic area of the LSU.

The LSU on the other hand has the focus of delivering services, and therefore is, where possible and practical, sized to conform with recognized boundaries such as counties, townships, and so on.

The GSU has a less formal atmosphere than found in many current service meetings. Structure and procedures should also be as informal as possible. The GSU meeting will not only assist groups, but will also serve to introduce new members to the basic principles of service. Our hope is that an improved atmosphere will encourage more members, both experienced and new, to attend and prepare them to serve at other service bodies.

### Administration of the GSU

There are a number of different options for administering a GSU. Recovery groups could take turns hosting the group support unit, or the LSU could play some part in administering or hosting the GSU, or there could be some sort of administrative component within the GSU itself. The key is to keep it simple, informal, and focused on group support rather than its own administration. There should be a format for the meeting but not much structure. In essence, it doesn't have to be much more or less formal than a recovery meeting. There should be a facilitator that can rotate or be a consistent person, whatever makes the most sense for the GSU and provides the least amount of administrative distraction.

Key challenges in our current structure	Key solutions provided by a GSU
Groups do not always receive help to deal with specific issues like drug court attendees in meetings.	Group support is its main focus.
Members are often unwilling or apathetic about service.	The GSU is an informal, discussion-based body, open to everyone interested in attending.
There is often a lack of NA unity and a common purpose.	The GSU increases unity within local NA communities by bringing groups together and strengthening their ability to carry the NA message.
Members are not always trained in the basics of service.	It offers an opportunity to introduce new members to service and help them learn about the basic principles of service. The GSU's open atmosphere ideally will help to empower, involve, and value each participant and assist them in their personal growth.

### Options for the GSU: Linear, Two-track, and Variations

In our first draft proposals we outlined two possible options for the relationship between the GSU and LSU: the two-track option and the linear option. These allow for groups to either send a delegate from their GSU to the LSU (the linear option), or send a delegate to both the GSU meeting and the LSU (the two-track option). Each community has different needs, and our thinking was that the linear model may fit one community better, but the two-track model might work better for another community, while some adaptation of the two may work best for a third. The more we have discussed how local services might function, however, particularly the idea of a quarterly LSU meeting with an annual planning assembly attended by all groups, the more the two-track model seems to make the most sense to us. For one thing it

will keep the focus in the GSU exclusively on group needs rather than the need to communicate ideas and decisions to and from the local service body. Also, with the LSU meeting quarterly it doesn't seem too burdensome for groups to send a delegate to both the GSU and LSU. In some cases as well, the GSU might meet every other month, in which case, groups would need to send a delegate to ten total meetings. Four LSU meetings and six GSU meetings is fewer than a monthly ASC which is the norm in many places now.

**Linear Option:** Nonetheless, the linear option may still make the most sense in some communities. This option makes the GSU a part of the "delegation stream" between the group and the rest of the NA service structure. The GSU would have the responsibility of selecting a delegate to attend the LSU. We call it the "delegation stream" because delegation (selecting a trusted servant to attend on behalf of the group or GSU) is what connects the group to the LSU, the LSU to the state/nation/province service body, and the state/nation/province body to the global level of NA. This is how the group's voice is heard and how it impacts the decision-making process. Resources and information flow back and forth across the delegation stream, and careful delegation allows for services to be accountable to groups.

The advantages to the linear model are that a group need only send a trusted servant to one body, the GSU. It's also possible that the GSU might function better as a kind of training ground or orientation to the sort of service provided at the LSU if it's within the delegation stream. This close connection to the LSU, however, is one of the disadvantages as well. It's more likely that the focus of the GSU would shift if the GSU were responsible to select a delegate and carry information back and forth from the LSU. Depending on how the LSU is set up and how communication functions in the community, it's also possible that the linear option may make the groups feel more distant from the LSU, the body that provides services on their behalf.

**Two-track Option:** In the two-track option, the group sends a delegate to both the GSU and the LSU. Perhaps the biggest advantage to this option is that the GSU would be able to focus solely on discussing group issues and would not need to send a delegate to the LSU. This would preserve the simplicity of the GSU meeting. The disadvantage, however, is that groups would also have to find a delegate to attend the LSU meeting, or ask the same person to attend both the GSU and the LSU. As we've already mentioned, if the LSU meeting is a planning conference that happens three or four times a year as outlined below, rather than a monthly or bimonthly meeting, it may be less daunting for groups to send a trusted servant to both the LSU and GSU. Certainly the decision whether to opt for a two-track or linear option should be made in relation to the whole system of service.

**Variations:** Some communities may decide to have GSU meetings less often (every other month instead of every month) to ease the strain on human resources. In most places, there will be several GSUs for each LSU, but in the case of small or rural communities, the populations may be roughly the same. In a rural part of a state where there are, for instance, eight meetings in a given county, those same eight meetings may gather to coordinate county-wide services and to discuss group needs. In these cases, communities may even decide to alternate GSU meetings and LSU meetings, or to devote the first half of a service meeting to the GSU and the second half to the LSU. It's important to note that this would be exceptional.

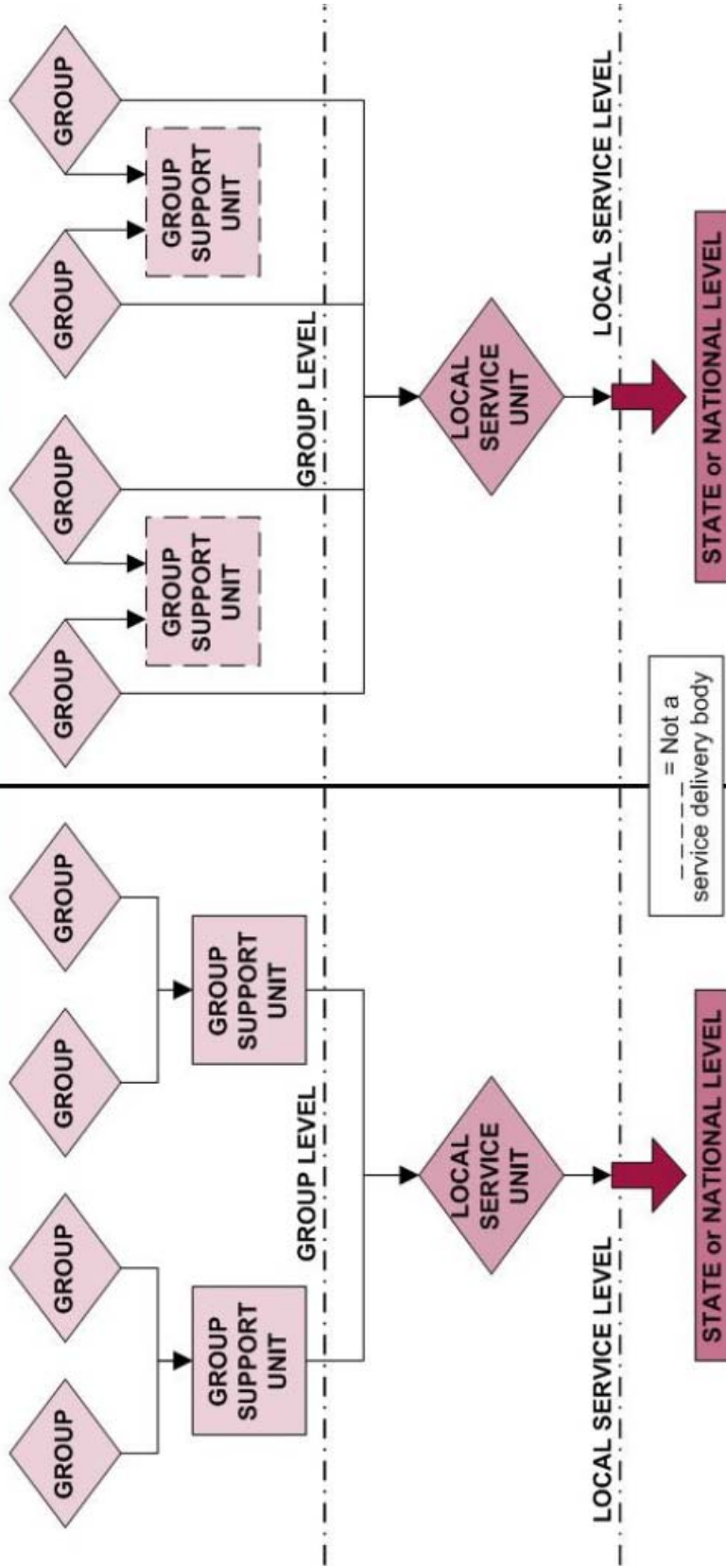
The final responsibility and authority for NA services rests with the NA groups.

*Twelve Concepts for NA Service  
Second Concept*

**PROPOSED NEW STRUCTURE**  
Linear Option

**PROPOSED NEW STRUCTURE**  
Two-track Option

One of the foundational principles of the proposals is flexibility. There are two different options for the configuration of groups, GSUs, and LSUs.



In the linear model, groups send a delegate to the GSU, which in turn sends one to the LSU. This helps the GSU function as a training program of sorts to let interested members get their feet wet with service, learn the "language" and how to relate to others in a meeting with this sort of focus. Potential disadvantages are that groups may feel they are further from the LSU that provides services on their behalf, and that the GSU may become more business focused.

In the two-track model, groups send a delegate to both the GSU and LSU. This ensures that the GSU is focused purely on group support, but it may mean that the groups must find two delegates to send. Having the LSU as a quarterly planning meeting makes this less daunting.