

NA World Services Virtual Meetings Webinar Report

31 October 2020

Virtual Meetings and Carrying the Message Effectively and Virtually was recently approved as a primary focus for the Local Service Toolbox Project this Conference cycle. This project will continue through at least 2021, and we invite all members to help shape this important work for the Fellowship. Our first survey is online now at www.na.org/toolbox until 31 December 2020. You can find additional information posted about the project at that location. Please check back regularly.

We plan to hold a series of web meetings on *Virtual Meetings and Carrying the Message Effectively and Virtually*, and we will post a report after each webinar on the Virtual NA Meetings page: www.na.org/virtual. We'll also post the PowerPoint and other related materials after each webinar and hope you find helpful information and experience.

This first Virtual Meetings webinar of this cycle was held 31 October 2020 to inform members about the work of the project, encourage members to participate in the first survey recently posted on www.na.org/toolbox, and provide the opportunity for members involved in virtual meetings and service efforts around the world to share their experience.

At least 630 people attended the webinar for at least 30 minutes, with many more people attending for less time. Translation services were provided in Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian. Italian translation was available as a separate Zoom connection. Because of the expected size of the webinar, the platform was set up so that all attendees' microphones and the chat function were disabled. Attendees were invited to ask questions by typing them into a Q&A box. The webinar was also live-streamed on YouTube.

Eight meetings or communities shared about a range of topics during the two-hour webinar:

- The North Star Online Group talked about its structure and the processes used in its meetings, with a focus on creating a safe and welcoming atmosphere that encourages members to get involved with NA. They also mentioned their efforts to provide phonline services and public service announcements so that addicts can find information about NA.
- A member from the 7 am Coffee Time meeting shared about the creation and growth of their daily meetings, their focus on welcoming newcomers, and their successful efforts to be self-supporting. She raised the question of how a virtual meeting fits within a geographically-based service structure when the members attending it are from many different places, which is a topic that the group continues to discuss.
- A representative from the Latin American Zonal Forum presented some of the results from their recent Fellowship survey that asked about members' experience with virtual meetings. He also offered some information about the marathon meeting organized in Argentina that has been running since March.
- A member from Brazil with many years of experience with online meetings talked about the "Sistema R.A.D." service that provides online and hybrid meetings in Brazil. The guiding principles of this include a plan-driven approach to mentor newer members in service, develop service tools, and remain accountable to the Fellowship.
- The presentation from the UK Communications Committee focused on the evolution of virtual meetings in the region from a chat-based system 20 years ago for addicts unable to attend face-to-

face meetings. Virtual meetings are currently offered 14 times per week with audio only for participants, using a platform that still that allows for screen sharing and chat. He also shared about maintaining an atmosphere of recovery by setting expectations about behavior in the meetings, and regional efforts to provide sponsorship in a virtual environment for hundreds of addicts.

- The online area delegate from Poland shared some of the history of the creation of this service body, which currently consists of eleven groups that offer 20 meetings per week. Initially meetings were created to provide Polish-language meetings for NA members working and studying abroad. Meetings use PayPal to collect Seventh Tradition contributions to pay for the Zoom account. The online area is now recognized as a member area of the Polish region and is planning marathon meetings during the new year period.
- Two members from the Montana Regional Rural Outreach and Online Meeting workgroup talked about the development of this service effort as part of the Montana regional PR committee. Services began as an outreach effort to geographically isolated members within the state and then rapidly expanded in response to the coronavirus pandemic to provide 14 meetings a week, assist with virtual events, and plan for the future.
- The delegate from the Russian-speaking virtual Tranzit Region shared about the creation of this non-geographic service body and the subcommittees it consists of. She focused particularly on Tranzit's PR efforts and cooperation with the Russian-speaking Zonal Forum to provide information about online meetings to hospitals in Russia. She also spoke about their ongoing attendance at the European Delegates Meeting and their efforts to financially support other parts of the service system.

[Additional information about the North Star Group, LAZF survey, Argentina marathon meeting, Sistema R.A.D., the Montana Rural Outreach workgroup, and the Tranzit Region is contained in the PowerPoint and notes posted on www.na.org/virtual.]

General information about the current service efforts of NA World Services was also provided during the webinar.

Questions and Answers

We were able to answer some of the questions we received during the webinar. Several members asked how to provide information about virtual meetings to NAWS so that the meeting information will appear in NA World Services' meeting locator and app. The location to add that information is here:

www.na.org/?!D=updates. We ran out of time to answer most of the questions, but many are already addressed in material posted on the Virtual Meetings page: www.na.org/virtual. This page, which was highlighted during the webinar, includes information and experience about keeping meetings secure from disruption by non-NA members ("Zoom bombers"), practicing the Seventh Tradition, signing meeting attendance cards, and information about hybrid meetings, among other topics.

There were many questions about how virtual meetings can connect to the rest of the service system. Honestly, the answer is that we do not know yet. We are hoping to collect more member experience in the online survey. The survey asks two questions that seek ideas and experience about how virtual meetings connect to the rest of the NA community and provide services in addition to recovery meetings. We are hopeful that some valuable experience will be shared in response to these questions.

Some members at the webinar asked when virtual meetings would be recognized by NA World Services as NA groups. It may be helpful to explain, as we did during the webinar, that World Services has never advised

local service bodies whether or not to recognize online groups. It is not the role of NA World Services to determine what type of group can be registered at NAWS. That decision rests with the World Service Conference. NAWS does not currently register virtual meetings as groups because we have not been instructed to do so by the Conference. Here is a recent statement from the World Board:

"The topic of online meetings has been prioritized by the Conference, and we plan discussions for WSC 2022. We want to be sure whatever steps we take are deliberate and careful and reflect the conscience of the Fellowship. Until a change in policy happens we will continue to list online meetings but not register them as groups." This is not a question about whether or not these are NA meetings.

Additional questions related to how the webinar platform functioned and whether translations into various languages were available. In response to those, we would like to remind everyone that we are pleased to provide what is described as an "interpretation feed" in Zoom for any language communities that need it and that can provide a translator. Please email toolbox@na.org or wb@na.org well in advance of any webinar, and we will work with you to make this happen. We also want to remind everyone that we do not share video recordings of our webinars, or any videos shown during them, in order to protect members' anonymity, but we are exploring whether it is possible to share audio recordings from the event.

These were the most frequently asked questions. There were many more than can be addressed in this short report, and some questions that we cannot answer until we all collectively learn more. Please know that the entire World Board has seen each question asked during the webinar, and the questions themselves are input to the project. We hope that in the upcoming months that together we can find answers to all of these questions that our members are struggling with. Thank you for participating!

The World Board

Please share your experience by completing the survey, if you have not done so already at www.na.org/toolbox.

The next Fellowship webinar for this project will be **Saturday 19 December 2020 at 11 AM PST** focused on **Carrying the Message Effectively & Virtually**. Members will share experience providing PR service that supports virtual H&I efforts to carry the message to jails, prisons, and parolees. The webinar will be at 11 am Pacific Standard Time. Please join us if you are able.