

## Service System

This *Conference Agenda Report* asks you to consider several different items about the Service System Project: the third draft of the Service System Proposals Report is contained in Addendum A and explains in detail ideas for possible improvements to our service system. This report is included in the CAR not for formal decision but to provide background information for the items which are included for decision here: the resolutions and straw polls.

There are eight resolutions related to the service system—as resolutions they don't require a specific action; they set a general direction for the project. Over the years since the Service System Project was approved at the 2008 World Service Conference, the board has presented a number of ideas for potential changes—some of which represent significant differences from the way we are currently structured or our current processes. Before developing an actual plan for transition and drafting the motions that will accompany it, it's important that we make sure there is actual agreement on the basic ideas—a service body devoted to group needs, geographically-based boundaries for service bodies, a purpose- and plan-based system, and so on. The resolutions which follow this essay are intended to measure this support.

In addition we have, for the first time, included straw polls in the CAR. As straw polls they are designed to measure support for some of the specifics of the proposals without making binding decisions at this time. Without a plan for transition it would be premature to decide on the details of the proposals, but it's important to measure the level of support for those specifics before moving forward. The board will use the results of the straw polls and resolutions to inform their work in the upcoming cycle.

Technically, decisions relating to the service system are “service related” and it's our practice to include those sorts of materials in the Conference Approval Track. Policy only mandates that we include a plan for the next phase of the Service System Project in the Conference Approval Track material and include motions for changes to the service system in the CAT material when those motions are framed in 2014. But it makes sense to us to include resolutions and straw polls related to the Service System here. We want to use the CAR to get a sense of how the fellowship as a whole feels about these ideas as soon as possible. Just as involving the fellowship early in the process of writing *Living Clean* resulted in a better book, we know that engaging as many people as possible earlier in the process of change will result in a more effective, stronger service system.

### Background

Through the life of this project we've been reporting on its history and we aren't going to devote a lot of space to the history that pre-dates the project since there is already so much to absorb in this CAR about where we are right now. For more information on the history of the Service System Project (or any other aspect of the project), see the webpage: [www.na.org/servicesystem](http://www.na.org/servicesystem).

Briefly then, the Service System Project grew out of an increasing awareness that some of our struggles in service (apathy, lack of mentorship and training, duplication of efforts, no atmosphere of recovery in service meetings, and so on) may require a

more holistic look at the service system as a whole to alleviate. For years at workshops and in input from Issue Discussion Topics, we have been hearing about, talking about, even lamenting, the same issues. At the 2008 World Service Conference we presented a plan for the Service System Project and that plan was renewed at the 2010 WSC.

### ***Creating a Common Vision***

The first major piece of work from the project was to create a “common vision for all NA services.” We used the NA World Services Vision Statement as a foundation, adding a bullet about the growth and fulfillment members feel from service and expanding the language to cover all service bodies, not just world services. The resulting “Vision for NA Service,” was unanimously approved at the 2010 WSC.

#### **A Vision for NA Service**

All of the efforts of Narcotics Anonymous are inspired by the primary purpose of our groups. Upon this common ground we stand committed.

Our vision is that one day:

- Every addict in the world has the chance to experience our message in his or her own language and culture and find the opportunity for a new way of life;
- Every member, inspired by the gift of recovery, experiences spiritual growth and fulfillment through service;
- NA service bodies worldwide work together in a spirit of unity and cooperation to support the groups in carrying our message of recovery;
- Narcotics Anonymous has universal recognition and respect as a viable program of recovery.

Honesty, trust, and goodwill are the foundation of our service efforts, all of which rely upon the guidance of a loving Higher Power.

Ideally: A Vision for NA Service focuses us on the same set of ideals—a shared, common vision.

### ***First Draft Service System Proposals***

With that common foundation laid, we drafted a set of proposals in August 2010 and distributed them as widely as possible. The proposals outlined our ideas about a revitalized service system (see Addendum A for the latest draft of the proposals). They talked about a “system” of service consisting of structure, process, people, and resources. The work that happens in such a system is collaborative and plan-driven. The service bodies themselves are formed deliberately. Their boundaries are logical, drawn along city, county, state, country, etc. lines. We proposed splitting the dual function of ASCs into two separate bodies, one devoted to discussing group needs and the other devoted to providing local services. We suggested that these local service bodies coordinate their efforts at state-, province-, or countrywide service bodies to make public relations efforts easier.

All of the ideas in the proposals, and these are just a few of them, were underpinned by four core principles: purpose-driven, group-focused, defined by geographical boundaries, and flexible. These ideas are foundational to all of the changes being proposed.

We posted these proposals on the web, announced them in our periodicals, held a series of weekend-long US workshops about them and did sessions at zonal forums and conventions in locations around the world.

We asked for input until 31 December on the first draft proposals and used that input together with our experiences at workshops and talking to members to make decisions about revising the proposals.

### ***Changes in the Second Draft Proposals***

Most of the changes to the proposals since they were first published are more “evolutionary” than “revolutionary.” In the second draft proposals we elaborated on how a local service body might work. Rather than monthly meetings focused largely on administrative matters, we suggested quarterly meetings focused on stages of the planning process. The day-to-day administration of service efforts would be handled by a local service board, project coordinators, and committees all overseen by the local service body as part of the quarterly planning sessions.

We also added a fifth “foundational principle,” collaborative. The notion that all elements of the service system work together to achieve our primary purpose is absolutely central to our thinking about what constitutes a “system,” and it seemed right to call out that idea as fundamental to the proposals.

Our thinking about some of the options that had been presented in the first draft proposals started to come into sharper focus. Initially we had presented two different possible ways to structure local services, but by the second draft proposals, fellowship input and our further thinking about quarterly planning meetings led us to recommend what we are calling the “two-track” model as the norm or standard. We also had initially offered two different seating models: seating by zones or seating based on state/national/province service bodies. The more we discussed it, the more we realized that changing to zonal seating needs to be further thought through. State/nation/province seating seems more realistic and it’s the model we are recommending at this time, as reflected in the resolutions.

### ***Changes in the Third Draft Proposals***

We released the second draft of the proposals in March 2011 and continued to collect fellowship input about the ideas and, of course, we had more discussions about the ideas in our meeting. Once again we have revised the proposal report draft, this time to be released with this *Conference Agenda Report*.

In addition to relatively minor changes to clarify points and update information, the third draft proposals have new material on zones and literature distribution and fund flow. We added diagrams to the appendix that gives examples of how the proposed structure might work in different contexts, and we added an explanation of how service body boundaries may be collaboratively determined.

Despite our many discussions and the several versions of the report we’ve published, there are still some aspects of the proposals that we know need more clarification and discussion—things like how to best sync planning cycles throughout the system; what to recommend for large states and nations that currently have several service bodies such as Brazil, Mexico, and California, for example; and further seating criteria beyond the state/nation/province criterion. These are among the details that we will

discuss in the cycle ahead, providing the project plan for work on a transition process.

In some respects this continues to be a work in progress despite there being resolutions and straw polls for consideration in this CAR. If we move forward to transition into a new system, aspects of the proposals will, no doubt, be refined and adapted. The proposals in this CAR represent our thinking at present. We look forward to continuing to refine them with your help.

### **What It Means to Be a Service *System* Not Just a Structure**

What will remain constant, however, is the fact that we are talking about a service system, not just a new structure. As we mention above, that means that structure, process, people, and resources all work together to provide services and help the groups to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

It also fundamentally means that the service work we do is cooperative and collaborative. Service bodies coordinate their efforts internally and with others throughout the system. As we discuss in the following essay on the resolutions themselves, this is why we are suggesting service body boundaries be collaboratively decided upon and no longer self-determined, so that collectively we can decide how services might best be delivered and how to most effectively serve all parts of a state, nation, or province.

Better collaboration and syncing of planning cycles will help make our communications more effective and eliminate duplication of services. We will be able to roll out workshop sessions, trainings, and other service efforts on a state- or nationwide basis more easily.

Our Second Tradition speaks to a leadership that is motivated by service not governance. We are all reading and deliberating about this *Conference Agenda Report* and the ideas before us in a spirit of service. Collaborative decision-making and service work are about a system not made for us but by us. We hope you will consider these resolutions in that spirit. As we've said over and over throughout the life span of this project, we cannot successfully undergo systemic change unless we work collectively.

### **Resolutions**

These resolutions are the broad-based ideas about which we need to reach consensus before we can move forward in the transition to new service system. This is not the first time a *Conference Agenda Report* has included resolutions. When world services restructured, many of you may remember, we went through a similar process: First we presented a set of resolutions in the *Conference Agenda Report*. After those resolutions were voted on, a transition group was formed and, upon the basis of those resolutions, created proposals for fellowship consideration for world services to restructure. We are at a similar place now where we are offering a set of resolutions to be voted on to make sure we have agreement on the basic ideas that underpin the service system proposals. We will offer a plan for a transition project in the Conference Approval Track material and discuss the details at the World Service Conference. The results of the votes on these resolutions and the straw polls that follow will form the basis upon which we will move forward.

These are resolutions rather than “motions” because they are calling for an agreement in principle, but not for any specific action at this time. Motions call for specific actions; resolutions establish the conceptual foundation of any future change. If the conference adopts them, these issues will be “resolved”: The principles outlined in the resolutions will be binding insofar as they will determine the direction we will take in transitioning to a new service system. Adopting these resolutions does not, however, mean agreeing to any concrete action. If we are resolved, as a fellowship, to move forward in this direction, the results of the discussions, votes, and straw polls at this conference will help the board develop a set of motions for the 2014 CAR. These 2014 motions will call for specific actions.

The ideals described below are important principles we feel need to be realized to achieve our vision and be true to the spirit of the traditions and concepts. At the same time, we are attempting to design a system that is flexible and practical; variations in the application of the ideals laid out here are expected. For instance, while one of the agreements in principle below mentions consensus decisions, many service bodies will still want to use voting for elections. To give another example, seating by national/state/provincial boundaries is mentioned, but the cases of very large or small nations/states may differ.

Our Basic Text explains, “Everything that occurs in the course of NA service must be motivated by the desire to more successfully carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers.” These resolutions are offered in that spirit.

- Resolution 1.      Our service efforts will be carried out through a system that includes structure, process, people, and resources.**
- Resolution 2.      The service system is group-focused and includes a local-level body dedicated exclusively to addressing group concerns.**
- Resolution 3.      Training and mentoring of trusted servants are essential functions of the service system.**
- Resolution 4.      Service bodies are purpose- and vision-driven.**
- Resolution 5.      Service bodies work together to utilize planning processes to organize and coordinate their efforts.**
- Resolution 6.      Service bodies make decisions by consensus.**
- Resolution 7.      The service structure includes local service bodies, state/nation/province service bodies, and intermediate bodies if needed. Service bodies follow established geographic boundaries. They are not self-determined, but are formed, based on need, through a collaborative planning process and agreement with other affected service bodies at the next level of service.**
- Resolution 8.      State/national/province boundaries are the primary criterion for seating consideration at the World Service Conference.**

These resolutions are broad statements. As we mentioned above, in some respects, they are like the resolutions that were proposed in 1996 that led to the restructuring of world services. While the conference agreed to all of those resolutions, when it came time to create proposals for their implementation, it wasn't always obvious how to proceed. In some cases, people agreed to a broadly stated resolution but actually disagreed on what that resolution might mean concretely. Perhaps the most obvious example is the second item in Resolution A: which called for "a change in participation at a new WSC...to provide for equal representation from all geographic entities." There was overwhelming support for the resolution, but the transition group was really challenged when putting together proposals when they realized that there were so many different ideas about what "equal" might mean. They offered several proposals to the conference, but the WSC was never able to agree on a single model.

When putting together these resolutions we worried about the same sort of potential confusion. In fact, one could argue that these resolutions are even more potentially ambiguous because they are at the level of principle or philosophy. For instance, Resolution 7 above says that service bodies will be formed "through a collaborative planning process." Here we are trying to capture the idea that it may best serve the needs of addicts within a particular state or country, for instance, to take a holistic view of the state or country and make collective decisions about the borders of the service units within it. How the boundaries of local service units are determined would be a decision made, not just within each individual service unit, but through a discussion with neighboring service units and the next level of service. This would better ensure that all parts of the state, country, or province are served, even the remote or sparsely populated areas, and it would limit the duplication of service caused by the proliferation of service bodies within the same county or area code, for instance. Part of what is implicit in a service system, not just a service structure, is that service provision is something that is coordinated among bodies. Just as the bones in a skeletal system are connected and the planets in a solar system act in concert, the bodies in a service system are connected through communication, cooperation, and planning. This is a big change from how we do things now, and we're not at all certain that it's a change everyone will agree with. That's why we're offering Resolution 7. We think geographically bounded service bodies and collaborative decisions about boundaries is the best approach to carrying the message effectively throughout the state/province/nation, but we need to make sure there is agreement within the fellowship about this approach.

That's a lot of explanation for just one word ("collaborative") in one resolution. You see the challenge here: We've tried to make the resolutions as clear as possible, but there are a lot of implications to each of them. If you haven't read the service system essay in this CAR or the proposal report (Addendum A), we urge you to do so. We know that the CAR can feel like a long, dense document and not everyone reads every page, but we want to make a particular plea about the service system material. The proposal report outlines some of the specific ways those broad resolutions might shape a new service system. Reading (or rereading) the proposals will help provide some of the background to make an educated decision about the resolutions. We really need to know how the fellowship feels about these ideas. Sometimes we hear the protest "Why should I bother to vote? This is a done deal." Not so. We cannot move forward successfully in this project unless we have broad understanding and

agreement. These resolutions are designed to measure that, so please help us by letting us know what you think.

In addition to taking a vote on the general agreements in principle expressed in the resolutions, we would also like to gauge your level of support of some of the specifics outlined in the proposals. In order to create a proposal for a transition plan that reflects the wishes of the fellowship and to make sure we share a common vision of what those agreements in principle might look like in actual practice, we plan to take a number of straw polls on more concrete ideas. As with the resolutions, the items to be straw-pollled below will make much more sense if you have read the detailed descriptions in the proposal report. We have provided page numbers next to the items to be straw-pollled to make it easier to reference the relevant sections of the proposal report and get caught up.

We plan to straw-poll the ideas in the bulleted list below to get a sense of the fellowship's preferences about some of the specific ideas in the proposals. In those proposals, we've described a great deal of the specifics of what a new service system might look like. We don't yet feel like we are ready to vote on motions that are as specific as the following because we know that there are still details to be worked out and because we have not yet worked out all of the detail of how a transition to a new system might actually take place. We do, however, need to make sure that the basic ideas in the proposals have broad support. We've already spent several years (two conference cycles) and thousands of dollars on the work to date and now is the time we need to know whether there is agreement (or not) on the specific ideas being proposed. The results of these straw polls will help gauge the strength of your support and guide the board in the next steps in the process of developing and transitioning to a new service system.

## Straw Polls

- A. There is a small, neighborhood-sized body devoted to group needs. This group forum, which is typically not part of the delegation stream, is informal in nature and operates through conversation not formal decision making. (See page 56 for a detailed explanation of the body devoted to group support.)**
- B. Groups send a delegate quarterly to a local service planning meeting. One of those quarterly meetings is a general assembly where all interested members are encouraged to attend and input is given to help plan service activities for the cycle. (See page 61 for a detailed explanation of the local service body.)**
- C. Services are coordinated by a local service board and carried out by members, committees, and project workgroups who report to that board.**
- D. Local service bodies follow county, city, or town boundaries, where practical. (They are much larger than the group forums mentioned above and in many cases larger than the current ASCs.)**
- E. The boundaries of those local service bodies are agreed to at the state or national level.**
- F. Planning cycles are synchronized from level to level (local to state to global) as well as across each level.**

- G. When service needs cannot be accomplished effectively by local service bodies and state/national/province bodies, an intermediate level of service can be added. (See page 64 for a detailed explanation of an intermediate service body.)**
- H. Most states, provinces, or countries have one state-, province- or nationwide service body that is responsible for state- or national-level public relations and coordinating efforts such as training across local service bodies. (See page 67 for a detailed explanation of state-, province-, and nationwide service bodies.)**
- I. Zonal boundaries are decided through a collaborative process with neighboring NA communities, other zones, and the WSC.**

A Vision for NA Service ends by assuring us, “Honesty, trust, and goodwill are the foundation of our service efforts, all of which rely upon the guidance of a loving Higher Power.” We have faith that the group conscience spoken of in our Second Tradition and Sixth Concept will guide us in the direction best for NA. Change is difficult, and we’ve heard from many of you about strife in your communities or service bodies over the prospect of change or over the details of proposals (from world services and elsewhere). It is our sincere hope that this conference represents a turning point of sorts and that we can move forward in unity in the direction of whatever course the resolutions set for us.

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