Highlights from WSC 2023

• This was the first truly hybrid World Service Conference, with almost 40 participants joining virtually.

• A Vision for NA Service was revised, changing the phrase his or her to their. See it here.

• Communities with local stories in the Little White Booklet can now publish up to six in their translated version of the Basic Text.

• Virtual meetings were officially recognized as groups.

• The following Issue Discussion Topics were approved for the upcoming two years. Thank you to all who participated in the CAR survey.
  » Dealing with disruptive and predatory behavior
  » Gender-neutral and inclusive language in NA literature
  » Reimagining and revitalizing service committees
  » DRT/MAT as it relates to NA

• The Fellowship Intellectual Property Trust was revised for the first time. Zonal delegates are now recognized as decision makers, and the definition of recovery literature has been clarified. The FIPT Operational Rules and Use Policy were also revised. Click here for the revised versions.

• The conference is going to try a three-year cycle until 2029, with an interim virtual meeting mid-cycle. The CAR will be released a month earlier (180 days before the WSC).

• Five regions were seated: Brazil Central, Iran Region #1, Nordeste Brazil, Rio Grande do Sul, and Thailand. With those new participants, for the first time in history, the majority of seated WSC participants (regions and zones) are now from outside the United States.

BY THE NUMBERS

242 participants attended WSC 2023

126 delegates, 13 World Board members, and 103 alternate delegates. In addition, there were 4 HRP members, 2 cofacilitators, and 6 translators.

39 participants joined virtually

11 RDs, 2 ZDs, 1 World Board member, and 25 alternates. [WSC 2018 had one voting participant and two alternates join virtually.]

66 delegates from the US, 60 from outside the US.

179 men and 63 women from 45 countries speaking 28 languages were among the conference participants—delegates, alternates, World Board members, and zonal delegates.

www.na.org/virtual on-screen resources to download this slide for your meetings
CREATING OUR FUTURE

WSC 2023

The first in-person WSC in five years took place 30 April–6 May 2023 in Woodland Hills, California. This issue of NAWS News is a digest of conference activities and decisions. To facilitate translations and make it easier reading for all, we have tried to keep it as brief as we could, but we covered a lot of ground at this conference. A summary of the decisions reached at the WSC is available at: www.na.org/conference and www.worldna.org.

The theme of WSC 2023 and of the cycle ahead is Creating Our Future. Almost 40 of the 242 participants who attended joined the WSC through virtual connections. Thirteen of the 126 delegates, one of the 13 World Board members, and 25 of the 103 alternates were virtual conference participants. The number of virtual participants grew slightly later in the week, as some participants who felt ill joined from their hotel rooms.

Out of respect for the participants joining from time zones around the world, for the first time in history, there were no official conference sessions scheduled after dinner. History presentations open to everyone and zonal meetings took place on several evenings. This was also the first WSC in memory, possibly ever, with a schedule that did not change during the week, again in an effort to make it more accessible for virtual participants. Having a saner conference schedule not only made a hybrid WSC possible, but it also allowed in-person participants more time for informal networking, attending recovery meetings, and resting. We missed some of the usual sessions like Fellowship Development and PR presentations and breakout sessions to shape Issue Discussion Topics, but the tradeoff was worth it. Conference participants have regular web meetings throughout the cycle, and we can cover any material we need to in the months ahead.

COVID protocols (masks and testing) were in place throughout the WSC week. One staff person tested positive for COVID after the WSC, but as far as we know, that was an isolated case. Thank you, everyone, for helping to keep the meeting safe for our most vulnerable members.

It always takes a lot of moving pieces and parts to put on the World Service Conference. As the size of the conference has expanded, the need for translations has grown, and the technology requirements have intensified, it’s become an even more amazing accomplishment. This was a different kind of conference, a hybrid high-tech WSC, administered with fewer staff than ever before. Coordinating travel and lodging for more than 200 people from over 40 countries, managing connections for remote participants and making sure they have access to the same visuals and audio as in-person participants, streaming audio for non-participants, providing translation in five languages, coordinating small group discussions and electronic voting and polling for a multilingual WSC with in-person and remote participants . . . it’s a lot. Thank you to all of the trusted servants and volunteers who helped make it a success. Every conference we learn how to make the next one better.

TECHNOLOGY CHANGES

WSC Portal

There were minimal paper handouts at this conference, with all materials posted on a new WSC Portal: www.worldna.org. The portal gave participants a single interface to find all the schedules, session materials, announcements, WSC-related surveys and forms, and a wealth of other resources. The portal was such a big success that we hope to be able to use it in place of Dropbox for conference participants (CPs) moving forward.

Electronic Voting and Polling

It took a lot of research and testing to find an electronic polling system suited to a hybrid WSC. As it turns out, we were able to use the same “clicker” technology we had for WSC 2018 and 2016 with an online option for virtual CPs. We did two separate orientations before the conference, one specifically for virtual participants, and we tried to have one-on-one conversations with each of the voting members who were attending WSC remotely.

Livestream of the WSC

For the first time, we were able to livestream the audio of the WSC, and the numbers surprised us. The total number of listeners over the course of the week was 6,753, and the total listener hours was 1,866. The number of unique listeners peaked late Sunday at 562.

VIRTUAL MEETINGS

After years of discussion on the topic, the conference passed a motion:

To acknowledge that an NA meeting that meets regularly in person or virtually can choose to be an NA group if they meet the criteria described in The Group Booklet, including the six points for an NA group, and are consistent with NA philosophy as expressed in our Traditions.

Service bodies have always been able to recognize virtual groups if they wished to, but this decision reflects a Fellowship wide consensus. Footnotes will be added to The Group Booklet and A Guide to Local Services reflecting the decision of the WSC and referencing Virtual Meeting Basics as a possible resource.

As we note below, Virtual Service Basics has been selected as one of the focuses for the service tools project.
**FIPT CHANGES**

The conference made several decisions related to the Fellowship Intellectual Property Trust (FIPT). For the first time since it was created, the FIPT was revised, according to the Fellowship’s conscience on Conference Agenda Report, Motion #1. Zonal delegates were added as decision makers in the FIPT, and the definition of recovery literature was clarified. Changes were also made to the Operational Rules; most notably, the inspection clause was revised so that only the WSC, on behalf of the Fellowship, can decide to undertake an inspection. The Operational Rules were also edited to reflect current language and consistent terminology. The final FIPT-related decision was approval of a revised Intellectual Property Bulletin #1, otherwise known as the Use Policy. Groups that wish to reprint NA literature must now contact World Services for permission to reproduce book-length pieces. Longstanding policies that groups are only permitted to reproduce current versions of literature, and that electronic posting or distribution is not permitted, were added to the bulletin. As with the Operational Rules, other non-substantive edits were made to the bulletin. The 2023 CAR explains these changes in depth. The FIPT is, by necessity, a complex legal document, and its sole purpose is to protect the Fellowship’s intellectual property for the present and the future. If you’re new to the topic or you are confused, see the video explainer on www.na.org/fipt and don’t hesitate to email us with questions!

**The purpose of the FIPT . . .**

is to “hold and administer all recovery literature and other intellectual properties of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous in a manner that will help addicts find recovery from the disease of addiction and carry that message of recovery to the addict who still suffers, in keeping with the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of NA” (FIPT, Article I, Section 4).

**PLANNING**

We spent half a day at the conference rebooting the strategic planning process, which had been stalled due to the pandemic. The ultimate goal in the cycle ahead is a more collaborative planning process, one that better involves zonal forums and that unifies the various streams of ideas (regional motions, CAR survey, etc.) into one unified process. Ultimately, we look forward to planning together, cooperatively, across the whole service system. The process for the 2023-2026 conference cycle looks like this:
To begin the process, conference participants were asked to perform a scanning exercise by discussing and then prioritizing the factors within NA and in the external environment that might affect our ability to achieve our Vision. See the Summary of Decisions, p 17, for the list of factors. The WSC discussions will help inform the “environmental scan” that shapes the strategic plan. The board will draft specific questions for zonal forums and conference participants as well.

THREE-YEAR CYCLE

The conference had consensus on all the motions the World Board put forward in the CAR related to the WSC and conference cycle. Perhaps most notably, the WSC opted to try a three-year conference cycle for the next six years, with an interim virtual meeting to take place mid-cycle. The next World Service Conference will be WSC 2026. We are still finalizing the facility contract, so we do not have the exact dates yet. When we do, we will post them on www.na.org/dates and in A Guide to World Services in NA, and we will determine dates for the interim meeting.

2020–2023 was NA’s first ever three-year conference cycle, thrust upon us by the conditions of the pandemic. Having an abbreviated virtual interim meeting worked well, and we anticipate that the next mid-cycle meeting will be similar. The motion passed at WSC 2023 specifies that the interim meeting is “for decisions that are legally necessary and those that conference participants choose to address” and that voting conference participants will be polled to choose the items they wish to address, with material to be posted online 90 days prior to the meeting.

The English-language Conference Agenda Report for WSC 2026 and WSC 2029 will be released 180 days prior to the conference, a month earlier than in the two-year cycle. Translated versions of the CAR will be posted 150 days prior, and regional and zonal motions will be due 270 days in advance. Another WSC-related decision the conference made was to change delegate funding from automatic to being available upon request. Delegates from seated regions and zones will receive funding if they ask for it. We’ve been raising the issue of delegate funding for some time now, and more and more service bodies are doing what they can to partially or fully fund their delegates. Forty-seven regions and one zone fully funded their delegates for WSC 2023, and eleven regions partially funded their delegates. Thank you!!

Six board members’ terms were due to expire in 2024, in the middle of the cycle, and the conference extended those terms through the end of the cycle.

PROJECTS

WSC 2023 approved six projects and the 2023–2025 budget with consensus support.

Four of the projects were written without a specific focus to allow the WSC to select a focus using the CAR survey results as a guide:

- New Recovery Informational Pamphlets
- Revising Existing Recovery Informational Pamphlets
- Issue Discussion Topics
- New and Revised Service Tools

The other two approved projects are the next steps in work that has been happening for years:

- Future of the WSC
- Invest in Our Vision

More on the projects below. (See the Summary of Decisions, pp 18–20, for the CAR survey results.)

New Literature

Rather than drafting a new IP, the WSC decided to begin exploring a revision of The NA Step Working Guides. An edit or simplification of the SWG could satisfy three of the ideas that were prioritized in the CAR survey:

- Step working guide aimed at members not new to working the Steps
- Step working booklet focused mainly on Steps 1–3, aimed primarily at new members and those in treatment and drug courts
- Revise and simplify the Step Working Guides

The board will survey the Fellowship this cycle about what members would like to see in a step working guide.

Revised IP

Last cycle, the Fellowship was surveyed about a revision to The Loner IP. The survey results are included in the 2023 Conference Report (pp 83–94). The conference agreed to continue the work of revising The Loner. This is work that may involve focus groups but does not require a standing workgroup. The main idea that came up in member input on the survey was that the IP should address the ways technology has changed our ability to connect. Another idea that was frequently mentioned is that we may want to rethink or provide a more nuanced understanding of the term “loner.” We expect to publish a review draft at some point this cycle and have an approval draft in the CAR.
Issue Discussion Topics (IDTs)
The conference supported the following IDTs for the upcoming cycle:

- Dealing with disruptive and predatory behavior
- Gender-neutral and inclusive language in NA literature
- Reimagining and revitalizing service committees (to further the reach of the NA message, improve communication, provide mentorship and training, and make service more attractive and accessible, learning from our experience of the past few years)
- DRT/MAT as it relates to NA

You may recall that the Fellowship was surveyed last cycle about DRT/MAT, which stands for drug replacement therapy/medication assisted treatment. Those survey results are also in the Conference Report (pp 70–82). The Fellowship does not seem to have a unified position on the topic, but given the importance of the issue, the board is recommending continued discussion. See page 29 of the Conference Report for more on the topic.

Conference participants will help us frame questions for all of the IDTs, and we will post workshop materials in the months ahead.

Service Tools
The WSC had consensus that the focus of the New and Revised Service Tools Project be the following:

- Virtual service basics (including virtual service meetings, virtual meetings and areas participating in the service system, virtual workshops and trainings, etc.)
- PR video explaining what NA is, how it works, and how to contact us
- Revise and update H&I Basics
- Revise and update the service pamphlet Group Business Meetings, with a section on using a CBDM process, and the concept of delegation

Invest in Our Vision (IIOV)
For decades, NA World Services has been talking about the need to shift from literature sales to member contributions as the primary source of NAWS’ funding. The pandemic plunged us into a financial crisis, and IIOV became a primary focus for the World Board and the Business Plan Group, who will be the workgroup for this project. The immediate crisis is over, but the need for contributions is not. There is a direct connection between NAWS becoming self-supporting through member contributions and our ability to achieve our Vision. This project is focused on increasing awareness of that reality and fostering greater commitment to contribute both time and resources to NA, and NA World Services in particular.

Future of the WSC
This project is focused on framing conversations for conference participants and the Fellowship about how a three-year conference cycle might work. Some of the ideas that have come up over and over that this project may address include: vetting CAR motions and the CAR survey, making decisions in advance of the WSC, developing a prioritization process for literature projects, and addressing the size of the WSC, including WSC seating. This project will have a standing workgroup that will meet virtually. Each zone was asked to forward a name for the project workgroup.

Getting Involved with the Work
We will report more about all of these projects in future issues of NAWS News and via NAWS Update emails. We are not back to “normal” at NA World Services but believe we can get much of this work accomplished or advanced with your help. We plan to lean on zonal forums for much of this. Most of these projects will utilize focus groups and web meetings rather than standing workgroups; that’s a more flexible approach that allows us to pull in more members. We plan to post an electronic form to collect information from members who wish to be involved with the work and who have relevant experience or who wish to recommend others. We’ll use the same form to collect names for needs beyond the projects, such as evaluating recordings of potential WCNA speakers.

Another way to get involved with the work is to respond to calls for input. Every cycle, we post surveys and material for review, and responding to those surveys and drafts and helping us to spread the word helps the work more than you might imagine. Fellowship input is the wind in the sails of all the projects. We can’t get anywhere without it!

NAWS REPORT
The NAWS Report session at the WSC spotlights World Services’ plans and accomplishments. Some of the highlights from the previous cycle included:

- World Services’ staff levels are still down almost 40% from the 2018 WSC.
- WSO Iran has a website! www.wsoiran.org
- Technology allowed World Services to participate in more than 60 events around the world and hold dozens of webinars. (See the Conference Report, pp 105–112 for a full list.)
- We continued to ship free and subsidized literature throughout the pandemic—more than half a million dollars’ worth during the last fiscal year.

The NAWS Report covered many of the topics included elsewhere in this issue of NAWS News: WCNA, CAR and literature survey results, the board’s plans for projects, and more. Three other major topics were succession planning, literature categories, and meeting information.
Retirements and Succession Planning

Anthony E, NAWS Executive Director, announced that this would be his final World Service Conference on staff. Anthony’s first WSC was in 1987 as the H&I Coordinator. Over the years, he has learned how to be a book publisher, plan conventions, and ultimately become responsible for the business of NAWS. His contract runs through 2025, after which time, he looks forward to moving to be closer to his grandchildren. Becky M, NAWS Assistant Executive Director, will step into the Executive Director position.

Jane N, NAWS PR Manager, is planning a more immediate retirement. As of this writing, Jane is already transitioning to a new chapter back east. She will continue to do some work for NAWS on a contract basis.

On the closing day of the WSC, Anthony, Jane, and Steve L (who retired during the pandemic) were surprised with video tributes.

Literature

One topic that we addressed at length in the 2020 CAR and surveyed the Fellowship about (pp 28–31) is how we categorize material and how we can get the resources we already have into the hands of interested members and groups. We never got to talk about the topic at WSC 2020, because of the limitations of moving the conference online, but it continues to be a concern.

Service pamphlets were designed to be shorter, easier-to-translate pieces that speak to specific needs and service experience. When we first started publishing them, they were frequently translated and distributed, but then the WSC asked that a statement be put on the cover that they were not to read in recovery meetings. That statement seems to have discouraged groups from having them available on a table or in a rack.

We know there is a need for more resources containing current, relevant information accessible to members and groups, but we do not currently have the mechanism to get the material onto group tables and into members’ hands. We are interested in continuing the conversation about how to address the needs of members and groups better.

Meeting Information

Anthony began the NAWS Report by talking about plans to change the way NAWS helps people find NA meetings. Currently, NAWS tries to keep updated meeting information for NA around the world. Meeting information is one of the most, if not the most, important functions we have in NA service—to ensure that someone looking for a meeting can find one. And yet NAWS has struggled for decades to keep accurate, current meeting information in our database. The pandemic has only exacerbated the challenge.

At last count, there were more than 72,000 NA meetings worldwide. Trying to keep a centralized up-to-date database of meeting information doesn’t really seem to be possible. The meeting data held by local NA communities is more current and therefore more accurate. As a result, we intend to transition to a geo-tagged system that directs people to local NA sites where the meeting information is much more likely to be accurate. This is consistent with the approach taken by most other Twelve-Step Fellowships: They do not maintain the meeting data themselves; they just facilitate finding that information.

It is our intention to stop trying to maintain meeting information by the end of December 2023. We will do everything we can to try to keep and update an accurate list of areas, regions, and zones that maintain our Fellowship’s meeting information.

NA World Services will continue to maintain virtual meeting information for those meetings that choose to provide us with their information. Virtual meetings may or may not be connected to geographic entities, and people who are looking for virtual meetings are usually not looking in a specific place but rather by time, day, and language.

Before every conference, we update meetings numbers around the world. We expected the numbers to decline as a result of the pandemic, but it’s clear from the chart on the next page that there has been a flattening of growth in some parts of the world for years prior.

With a longer conference cycle, we hope that NAWS can shift more of our attention to supporting efforts to grow NA.

“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.”

Basic Text, Introduction
WSC PROCESSES
As a body operating on consensus-based processes, WSC 2023 was the first in-person (hybrid) WSC without a parliamentarian, and 86% of the motions that passed did so with consensus (at least 80% according to WSC rules). All amendments and motions were submitted in advance of the WSC for the first time, and once again, initial straw polls were done in advance of the conference.

NEW IDEA DISCUSSIONS
For the second time, the WSC had new idea discussion sessions with topics submitted and prioritized by participants. The four topics chosen for discussion dovetail nicely with the Issue Discussion Topics and the new planning process:
- How we can respond to predatory behavior in NA
- Reimagining/revitalizing services and service committees, especially post-pandemic
- We propose that we discuss how to develop a single, well-understood process for prioritizing future literature project plans
- DRT/MAT as it relates to NA how we can best welcome members on DRT/MAT lovingly and kindly and how we can cooperate with the current treatment approach without compromising our principles or expressing an opinion on an outside issue.

UNITY DAY
We continued the tradition of holding a Unity Day on the Saturday before the WSC—with an open house at the WSO, workshops at the conference hotel, and a recovery meeting with a panel of international speakers followed by the World Market in the evening. We gave away lots of surplus WCNA merchandise at the open house. Hopefully you'll see some World Convention swag at your local events and auctions. Zonal forums collaborated to put on the Saturday workshops—thank you, zonal forums! The recovery meeting was available for members to join online, as were the recovery meeting on the closing night of the conference and the history presentations Sunday and Monday nights.

WCNA
WCNA 38 will take place in Washington, DC, in 2024: from 29 August to 1 September. The theme is The Power of Love. We are not sure when we will go on sale, but it won't be before the last quarter of this calendar year. We'll send a
Highlights from WSC 2023

NAWS Update email when we have more information. Members who want the latest information should subscribe to one of our email lists; doing so will ensure they get NAWS Updates: www.na.org/wcna.

WSC 2023 made a decision to suspend the WCNA rotation after WCNA 38 to decide what is practical and possible, given all the changes wrought by the pandemic. When we have a better idea about what can take place, the World Board will discuss the possibilities with conference participants and seek approval.

ELECTION RESULTS
The conference elected the following trusted servants:

World Board
• Carla W—Upper Rocky Mountain Region
• Jack H—Washington-Northern Idaho Region
• Jose Luis A—Region Del Coqui
• Tim S—Australian Region
• Veronica B—Sweden Region

Human Resource Panel
• Ron M—Florida Region
• Sam L—Northern New England Region

Cofacilitator
• Louis H—Chicagoland Region

THANK YOU
Many people beyond the WSC participants, trusted servants, and NAWS staff helped make the conference successful. The West End and San Fernando Valley Areas provided airport pickup and hospitality throughout the week. A number of members traveled to the WSC just to volunteer and spent the week running microphones, picking up supplies, helping with IT, taking ill participants to urgent care, and more. Local members, including some NAWS staff who had been furloughed, helped with all of those tasks as well. The translators worked tirelessly to make the conference accessible. Thank you everyone! Our gratitude is boundless.

FROM THE HUMAN RESOURCE PANEL
Greetings from the Human Resource Panel. We hope this report finds everyone safe and healthy. Thank you all for a great World Service Conference. Thanks to Craig R and Nathanael M for their years of service as HRP members. And welcome to our new HRP members, Ron M and Sam L!

We have yet to meet as a group but wanted to take this opportunity to remind everyone of our interest in gaining affirmation of the RBZ (region, World Board, zone) process as the means for nomination at the WSC. As a reminder, last cycle we asked all members who wish to be considered for nomination to acquire an RBZ recommendation. This ensured that all candidates were first vetted by a region, zone, or the World Board before the HRP considered them. This decision to rely on regions, the board, and zones to forward candidates through the RBZ process would also retire nominations coming from regions and zones outside of the RBZ process. Please review our HRP Report in the 2023 CAR for details on our historical evaluation of the nominations process that supports these changes. We hope to ratify these changes at the interim WSC, mid-conference cycle.

We are also interested in strengthening the RBZ process by encouraging service bodies to identify candidates proactively. This will help us all to find the most qualified candidates for nomination and service. We are excited to consider the prospect of working together and hope to offer more ideas in the future. We envision web meetings to begin discussions with conference participants about identifying future leaders. We are hopeful that collaborative discussions throughout the conference cycle can support leadership identification.

We welcome any thoughts and encourage you to forward them to the HRP at hrp@na.org. Thank you for allowing us to be of service.

CALENDAR
First Conference Participant Web Meeting—22 July
Unity Day 2023—2 September

Dates for the cycle will be posted here as they are set: www.na.org/dates
NAWS event flyers will be posted here: www.na.org/nawsevents
Fliers from zonal, regional, and area events are posted here as we receive them: www.na.org/events

We welcome your ideas and input: worldboard@na.org