

When you're a General Service Representative (G.S.R.)

You are linking your home group with the whole of A.A. In 1950, a new type of trusted servant, "group representative," was suggested to help in the selection of delegates to the newly formed General Service Conference.

By 1953, the job of group representative was also seen as a good means of exchanging up-to-date information between individual groups and "Headquarters" (now the General Service Office). That's still an important side of your work. But now, as general service representative, you have an even bigger responsibility: You transmit ideas and opinions, as well as facts; through you, the group conscience becomes a part of "the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship," as expressed in the General Service Conference. Like everything else in A.A., it works through a series of simple steps. (For the complete picture in detail, read *The A.A. Service Manual*.)

General services:

1. At **district meetings**, you join with G.S.R.s from other groups. Perhaps you've already worked with an intergroup or central office, where groups band together to help alcoholics just in your locality. But your general service **district** is the second link in an entirely different chain, which extends much farther. Your district is one part of a general service **area**. With your fellow G.S.R.s, you elect a district committee member, and all the D.C.M.s make up the area committee. Now, do you just sit back and let your D.C.M. take it from there? No! G.S.R.s stay very much in action in each of the 93 areas in the U.S. and Canada.
2. You attend **area assemblies** four times a year (in most areas). At the electoral assembly (held every two years), along with the other G.S.R.s and the D.C.M.s from the whole area, you elect committee officers — and your area's **Conference delegate**.
3. Just as you rely on your group for help in your personal recovery, so the A.A. groups of Canada and the U.S. rely on the **General Service Conference** in maintaining the unity and strength of our Fellowship — our obligation to all the alcoholics of today and tomorrow. It's up to you to keep two-way communication going between your group and the Conference. Via your D.C.M. and your delegate, you can see to it that your group's conscience on matters of importance to all A.A. becomes a part of the consensus when these matters are discussed at the annual Conference meeting in April. In return, you can enable your group to benefit from the meeting's sharing of experience among area delegates and the other Conference members. Your D.C.M. may want to present your delegate's report at a special group meeting. The D.C.M. receives a copy of the Conference Final Report, a full account of proceedings. Copies of the report are available to groups upon request.

Group services

4. As G.S.R., you are "group contact" in the original sense, too. Upon your election, your name and address are sent (by you or your group secretary) to the secretary of your **area committee**, or your **district** or **area registrar** and to **G.S.O.** (Be sure to include, as well, the name of the G.S.R. you are replacing, so the records won't be confused.) You will be listed as contact for your group in the next printing of the appropriate **A.A. Directory**.

5. In return, **G.S.O. sends you** the G.S.R. Kit (see the section below, or check G.S.O.'s website, aa.org, for some of its contents), and the quarterly bulletin *Box 4-5-9*. You use these — *and share them* with the other members of your group. Are some pamphlets marked “new” on the Literature Order Form? Check the literature rack to make sure your group is offering all the sobriety tools available. Does *Box 4-5-9* carry news of a future International Convention? Spread the happy word.
6. Because you've made a special point of studying the information listed below, you can help when your group faces a problem involving one of the **Traditions**. You don't have to know all the answers — no one member possibly could — but you learn where to look for good suggestions, drawn from broad A.A. experience.
7. Thinking of Tradition Seven particularly, you work with the group treasurer to remind your group of its part in **keeping all of A.A. self-supporting**. You explain the importance of financial support of your intergroup/central office, G.S.O., district and area committee, and the Birthday Plan for individual contributions. Contributions can also be made online through aa.org as recurring monthly, quarterly or annual contributions.
8. Since you're in touch with A.A. throughout your area, you can bring to your group the news of upcoming local conventions. As G.S.R., you share with your fellow members the joy of widening A.A. horizons.

Information you'll need

9. On the **general service structure**: *The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service*, “Inside A.A.” and “Circles of Love and Service” — all in the G.S.R. Kit; in addition, the Conference *Final Report*, and the video “Your A.A. General Service Office, the Grapevine, and the General Service Structure” (DV-07).
10. On the **Traditions**: “A.A. Tradition — How It Developed” (kit); also *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, *A.A. Comes of Age*, and “The Twelve Traditions Illustrated.”
11. On **group affairs**: “The A.A. Group” and “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix” (both in the kit); the A.A. Guidelines (listing of titles and prices in the Literature Catalog), which suggest ways your group can work with other groups and with agencies outside A.A.
12. Financial Support: Current experience indicates that many groups provide financial support for their general service representatives to attend service functions.

When your group elects a G.S.R.

You remember, as the cover of this leaflet says, that “the G.S.R. is your group's link to A.A. as a whole.” The G.S.R.s of the U.S. and Canada are the very foundation of our general service structure. Through your G.S.R., you can make your group's voice heard at district meetings, at area assemblies, and eventually at the General Service Conference. Through your G.S.R., your group is strengthened by the shared experience of the other U.S. and Canadian groups, just as your own sobriety is strengthened by the shared experience of other A.A. members.

When and how

1. The **two-year terms** of an area's G.S.R.s coincide with those of its D.C.M.s and Conference delegate. So a group usually elects its G.S.R. **before the assembly meeting** at which the delegate is elected. September is a good month, since that gives the new G.S.R. time to study the responsibilities of the job before taking office — most often on January 1, along with the new D.C.M.s and the new delegate.
2. An informed group enjoys a **special election meeting**, where a member with a solid background in service work explains the function of the G.S.R., and a G.S.O. DVD may be shown.
3. **Procedures** for electing a G.S.R. are the same as for any other group officer. There should be time for nominations from the floor, then for written ballots. A plurality is usually enough for election.
4. **Prompt notification** about your choice of G.S.R. is essential. If your district or area committee and G.S.O. do not have your new G.S.R.'s name and address, communication breaks down.
5. At the same election meeting, it is important also to elect an **alternate G.S.R.** (by the same voting procedure). The two will work together closely, so that the alternate can be a knowledgeable replacement if the G.S.R. is unable to attend a district or area meeting.
6. What happens if your group's G.S.R. is **elected committee member** for your district? Then the alternate automatically becomes your G.S.R. — an extra reason for care in filling both offices.

The makings of a good G.S.R.

7. Two or three years' **sobriety** is generally the required minimum. **Active membership** in a home group — yours — is also important, and your G.S.R. should **hold no other offices** in any group.
8. Prior A.A. **service experience** provides a long head start for a G.S.R.'s success. Consider former group officers and members who have shouldered responsibility at your intergroup or central office or on special committees.
9. Does your group include people who already have a **keen interest** in the Twelve Traditions and the service structure? If so, you're in luck!
10. Look for the same **character qualities** that mark a good trusted servant of any sort (and a good A.A.): patience, understanding and a firm determination "to place principles before personalities."

11. Most **future Conference delegates** will come from the ranks of **today's G.S.R.s**. So your choice now can help to insure good representation for your whole area in years to come and continuing vitality for our General Service Conference — the heart of our co-founders' Third Legacy to all of A.A.

Bill W. on General Services and the G.S.R.

“...an A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us reach a fellow sufferer — ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.'s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service.” (*A.A. Service Manual, page S1*)

Whether performed by individuals or groups or areas or A.A. as a whole, these activities are vital to our existence and growth. Nor can we make A.A. more simple by abolishing such services. To do so would only be asking for complication and confusion.

Among the most vital, yet probably least understood, group of services are those that help us function as a whole — the work of the General Service Office (G.S.O.) and the General Service Board (the trustees). Our worldwide unity and much of our growth since early times are directly traceable to them.

To get the benefit of direct guidance from A.A. as a whole, the General Service Conference was formed — a body of about 93 delegates from the United States and Canada. These delegates sit yearly with our trustees, directors, and the staffs of G.S.O., Grapevine and La Viña. The Conference has proved itself an immense success. Over the years, its record of achievement has been completely convincing.

The strength of our whole A.A. service structure starts with the group and with the general service representative (G.S.R.) the group elects. We cannot emphasize too strongly the G.S.R.'s importance.

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