

# 2016 General Service Conference Committees Agenda Items

## I. Conference Committee on AGENDA

### A. Review suggestions for the theme of the 2017 General Service Conference

The theme for the 2017 General Service Conference be: "Supporting Our Future."

### B. Review presentation/discussion topic ideas for the 2017 General Service Conference

The following be presentation/discussion topics for the 2017 General Service Conference:

#### a. Growth:

1. Diversity -- Outreach and Attraction
2. Safety – An Important Consideration
3. Communication – Today and Tomorrow

#### b. Participation:

1. Fellowship vs. Membership
2. Leadership: "I am Responsible..."
3. Is Your Voice Heard?

#### c. Contributions:

1. Spirituality and Money
2. Fully Self-Supporting Our Obligations
3. Apathy and Power of the Purse

### C. Review the General Service Conference Evaluation Form.

The Conference Agenda Committee review the summary of the previous year's Conference evaluations and, where appropriate, make suggestions for improvement to the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference.

### D. Discuss report on the Conference Agenda process from the Trustee's Committee on the General Service Conference.

The General Service Office post to the Conference dashboard, and regularly update information concerning the status of all proposed Conference agenda items.

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## II. Conference Committee on COOPERATION with the PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY

### A. Consider discontinuing the pamphlet "Three Talks to Medical Societies by Bill W."

The committee agreed to forward to the 2016 Conference Cooperation with the Professional Community Committee the subcommittee's recommendation that the pamphlet "Three Talks to Medical Societies by Bill W." be retired because the pamphlet is too lengthy and dated. The committee acknowledged that "Three

Talks to Medical Societies by Bill W." remains a very important piece of A.A. history and asked the subcommittee in their review of the other Cooperation with the Professional Community pamphlets to ensure that any still-relevant information from the pamphlet was captured in other A.A. literature.

- B. Consider adding text regarding A.A. and medications to the pamphlet "If You are a Professional..."

That text be added to the pamphlet "If You are a Professional..." to suggest that in cases where a patient says they cannot take prescribed drugs because they are a member of A.A., the doctor can refer them to the pamphlet "The A.A. Member- Medications and Other Drugs."

Draft text for new section in the pamphlet "If You are a Professional..." (Page 5 beneath the "Singleness of Purpose and Problems Other Than Alcohol" section):

#### A.A. Members and Medications

No A.A. member should "play doctor"; all medical advice and treatment should come from a qualified physician. The suggestions provided in our pamphlet "The A.A. Member-Medications & Other Drugs" may help A.A. members find the right balance and minimize the risk of relapse.

- C. Consider adding text to the pamphlet "Is there an Alcoholic in the Workplace?" regarding A.A. as a resource for small businesses.

That text be added to the introduction of the pamphlet "Is there an Alcoholic in the Workplace?" to clarify that A.A. can work with employers of any size, including small businesses such as medical practices, etc.

Draft additional text for pamphlet "Is there an Alcoholic in the Workplace?" (First page, last paragraph additions in bold)

**A.A. can help organizations of any size from large corporations to small businesses such as medical practices, etc., contact men and women who have achieved sobriety, and are willing to share their experience freely with anyone who seeks help.**

- D. Review draft revision of the pamphlet "How A.A. Members Cooperate with Professionals."

- Replace "think straight about" with "understand" in third paragraph, Page 9:
- Add "less" before "rigid" in Question 7, Page 10:
- Remove "rest homes" in question 14 and "rest farms" in question 15, Page 19:
- Replace "patients" with "clients" in question 17, page 20:
- Remove "an 'A.A. farm' or" from second paragraph of question 19 and replace "1992" with "latest" in first paragraph of question 20,

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### III. Conference Committee on CORRECTIONS

#### A. Review draft of video created to replace “It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell.”

The committee agreed to forward to the 2014 Conference Committee on Corrections a request to consider a new corrections video be developed to replace "It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell" (DV-08). Note: Estimated cost is \$70,000. The committee noted that the video was produced over 25 years ago and is outdated. The committee also acknowledged that the main purpose of the video is to carry the A.A. message of hope and recovery to alcoholics who are incarcerated, to reflect that A.A. works, and that A.A. has a presence in Correctional settings. The following represents the subcommittee's suggestions for the proposed video:

- Reflect diversity (race, gender and age).
- Include a variety of correctional facilities (example: a juvenile detention center).
- Inmate sharing to be consistent with A.A.'s singleness of purpose.
- Include inmate sharing on the Twelve Steps and A.A. literature.
- Include references to Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS) and Prerelease.
- Provide information about A.A. as a source of hope for incarcerated alcoholics.
- Revise/update service piece that is included with the video.

#### B. Discuss the Corrections Correspondence Service (C.C.S.)

There are currently two major areas of focus. There are still not enough Spanish-speaking male correspondents to answer the needs of Spanish-speaking inmates, so we are actively recruiting volunteers. Also, awareness and participation of Correction Correspondence Service in Canada is much lower than in the U.S. A major effort is underway to expand Correction Correspondence Service in Canada.

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### IV. Conference Committee on FINANCE

#### A. Review suggested area contribution for delegate expense for the Conference.

There has not been an increase in the Area Delegates Fee since 2012. The increase was from \$1,200 to \$1,600. The \$1,600 is the minimum amount requested by our General Service Office to send your Delegate to the annual conference. However, the actual total cost for the time your Delegate is in New York is \$7,800.00 (verify) US. In 2015 with the exchange this \$7,800 came out to \$10,320.00. Last year was the first year, since the area voted to be fully Self-Supporting in 2008, our Treasurer was unable to send the full assessed amount due all at once due to the financial situation of Area 83. The full amount was paid by the years end. If anyone is wondering why it costs so much, this is not only for the cost of the weeks' business meeting at the conference. This assessed amount includes all the pre and post costs incurred to get all the information out to the Delegate and members. Eg: Final Conference report, all 500 plus pages of background material.

YEAR	2012	2013	2014	2015 (est)
TOTAL COSTS	709,868	903,211	750,522	974,886
CONTRIBUTIONS	-228,168	-288,731	-246,999	-281,457
NET COST:	481,700	614,480	503,523	693,429

- B. Review the Conference approved level of \$5,000 for individual bequests to the General Service Board from A.A. Members.

**In 2012 the bequests amount was increased from \$3,000 to \$5,000**

- C. Review the Conference approved maximum annual contribution to the General Service Board from an individual A.A. Member of \$3,000. The following are some of the points made last year when this came up:

**The Individual Contribution amount was increased in 2007 from \$2,000 to \$3,000.**

- ❖ **Only 20 members contributed 3,000 in 2014.**
- ❖ **Should encourage more members to contribute in basket rather than annual contributions.**
- ❖ **May make those feel who don't have that kind of money to feel less than.**
- ❖ **Are we setting up a Special class of Members who can afford to contribute this much?**

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## **V. Conference Committee on GRAPEVINE**

- A. Review Audio Strategy status update.

**Grapevine began collecting audio story submissions from the Fellowship in January 2013. As of January 13, 2016 Grapevine has collected 252 audio stories. 211 stories have come in through the "Simple Voice Center" which is a dial-in telephone service. The balance of the stories have been submitted digitally or on disks.**

**Stories have been submitted by individuals who have recorded on their own as well as from individuals who recorded their story at a "Record Your Story" workshop. For example, at ICYPAA events there have been audio get-togethers for members to gather and record.**

**The Audio Project landing page on [www.aagrapevine.org](http://www.aagrapevine.org) was created and is updated by our web development vendor as part of their monthly retainer.**

- B. Consider the list of suggested Grapevine book topics for 2017 or later.

- **Young & Sober II (working title)** Members who came into AA in their teens, 20s and 30s share their experience, from stories previously published in Grapevine magazine and/or AA Grapevine.org
- **Stories by Atheist & Agnostic AA Members? (working title)**

- A collection of stories by AA members who are atheist or agnostic, published in Grapevine magazine and/or AA Grapevine.org
- **Steps Four and Five (working title)** Members tell helpful stories about how they did Step Four and/or Step Five and how it changed their lives- published in Grapevine magazine and/or AA Grapevine.org
  - **Beginners II (working title)** Stories by members about their early days in AA, including helpful experiences for beginners – from published in Grapevine magazine and/or AA Grapevine.org.

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## **VI. Conference Committee on LITERATURE**

- A. Review progress report on the revision of the pamphlet “A.A. for the Woman.”  
**104 submissions were received**
- B. Review progress report on the revision of the pamphlet “A.A. and the Gay/Lesbian Alcoholic.”  
**55 Submissions were received**
- C. Review progress report on the development of literature for A.A.s with mental health issues and those who sponsor them.  
**157 Submissions were received. No information has been received as to how many submissions were from the US or Canada.**
- D. Consider request for revision to the pamphlet “Young People and A.A.”  
**and consider inclusion of information on young people’s conferences**
- E. Consider request to update the pamphlet “Twelve Traditions Illustrated.”  
**Last updated in 1971**
- F. When a revision is made to an existing pamphlet or a new one is considered all conference members receive a copy for review. Because these pamphlets have not been GSO approved, all conference members must sign out their copies and sign them back in after discussion and/or vote. Instructions are given that no notes or photos be taken of the draft pamphlets.

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## **VII. Conference Committee on POLICY and ADMISSIONS**

- A. Approve request for two observers from A.A. in the Ukraine to attend the 2016 General Service Conference.  
  
**The two guest observers are Mykhailo A., past World Service Meeting delegate from the Ukraine, and Yury T., a member active in General Service in the Ukraine. Yury is also G.S.O.'s primary contact for translations of A.A. literature into Ukrainian. Both observers are bilingual and will be responsible for their travel costs. G.S.O. provides hotel accommodations and meals, similar to previous guest observers.**
- B. Review progress report on plans for French and Spanish translation of all Conference background.

Recommendation from 2015 Conference Finance Committee that resulted in an Advisory Action: "The trustees Committee on the General Service Conference create a plan to translate all Conference material with a progress report given to the 2016 Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions that describes the process and costs, including options using third party translators and a proposal to change agenda submission deadlines." The costs could be anywhere between \$45,680 & \$331,200 depending on the time to translate and number of pages. This is for both languages.

Implementation of Phase 1 of the Conference Translation Project to translate pre-Conference and Conference material into Spanish and French, as described in the 2015 Advisory Action, continue with an estimated cost of \$50,000 - \$100,000.

- C. Review report from the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference regarding Conference observers from other fellowships.

The Archives Department reports there have been no requests of record from other "12 Step Fellowships" to observe the General Service Conference.

SOME QUESTIONS WERE:

- Would this constitute affiliation and/or endorsement?
- What about our Anonymity Traditions 11 & 12? If Non AA members were welcomed, policies would need to be developed to ensure the anonymity of AA members would be respected.
- The GSC is a closed business meeting. Is it appropriate to allow members from othe "12 Step Fellowships" to observe a closed business meeting?
- Is it necessary and would it open the door to large numbers of requests from other "12 Step Fellowships"?

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## VIII. Conference Committee on PUBLIC INFORMATION

- A. Public Information Comprehensive Media Plan.

1. Review the trustees' Public Information Committee report on the Public Information Comprehensive Media Plan.

A recommendation will be sent to the Public Information Committee for the implementation of both a Google-For-Non-Profits and a Twitter account for carrying the message of A.A. to the public. Another recommendation was a request to explore the feasibility and potential implementation of an official LinkedIn page for the purpose of cooperation with the Professional Community. Also, a request to explore the feasibility and potential implementation of an official A.A. Flickr page dedicated to the public display of historic A.A. photos, illustration, and other artifacts from A.A. history with links to aa.org and aagrapevine.org for additional information.

(Keep in mind that the Trustees' Committees agree whether or not to send request to the Conference Committees. It is the Conference Committees which votes as to whether to send any recommendation to the conference floor)

The platforms themselves in no way infringe on our principles of anonymity or any other Traditions. It is the actions of the individual that may cause harm to themselves, to others, or to A.A. as a whole. For that we are, each of us, individually responsible to our fellowship, to ourselves and to our personal higher powers. Using these platforms to provide information about anonymity on such platforms may actually strengthen the principle of anonymity at the public level.

Individual members can take clear steps to safeguard their own anonymity. For example, an individual or group might create an entirely anonymous social media account without use of full names or face and for sharing about recovery only. Another may choose to use their name but not photographs of them self. Both the letter and the spirit of the 11<sup>th</sup> tradition are clear guideposts for our fellowship in this respect.

#### Examples

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#### Al-Anon

- On Facebook (I checked) & Twitter (did not check)

#### Narcotics Anonymous

- Put up a Facebook page and the volume of traffic overwhelmed the office. It was taken down and there is no official social media presence.

## 2. Review 2016 Public Information Comprehensive Media Plan.

#### GOAL:

To increase awareness of what AA is and what AA can and cannot do, in ways that are Measurable and undergo regular review and revision, as appropriate, so that any Alcoholic in need can find AA

#### TARGET AUDIENCES:

- Individuals concerned about their drinking.
- Professionals who might interact with Alcoholics.
- Media professional.
- The General Public.
- AA members involved in Public Information service

#### MESSAGE:

“If alcohol is a problem for you, contact AA. It works”

## B. That a guideline be developed on “Carrying the A.A. Message Online and in Social Media”?

Most committees have guidelines in which members can follow. They can be found at [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)

C. Discuss a request to reconsider the 2011 Advisory Action regarding the “Policy on Actors Portraying A.A. Members or Potential A.A. Members in Videos Produced by the General Service Board or Its Affiliates.”

1. Should actors portraying A.A. members in public service announcements showing full faces with a disclaimer noting they are actors and not A.A. members?

The subcommittee is unanimous in its belief that with proper disclosure that actors are being used, the display of full faces of a character can have a real benefit to the effectiveness of a video without diminishing either the reality or perception of our commitment to anonymity. The issue arising from the use of full faces are fully disclosed and explored by both the Board and the Conference prior to moving forward.

2. A.A. members in public service announcements with side views of faces?

Some comments were: for the hard of hearing, they would not see the desperation and despair shown in the faces of the actors depicting alcoholics. Another was for identification purposes. Side views would not have the same impact.

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## IX. Conference Committee on REPORT and CHARTER

A. *The A.A. Service Manual, 2016-2017 Edition:*

1. Consider draft text for a section on “Local Forums” to be added to Chapter Nine. (Describes what the purpose is of a local forum.)
2. Consider removing endnote #4 in Concept Twelve of the Twelve Concepts for World Service.

The end note at the end of page 73 in the 2015-2016 Edition of the Service Manual reads: Bill here, apparently inadvertently, used the phrase “in action and spirit” instead of “in thought and action” that appears elsewhere in both the Conference and the statement of Concept 12.

This statement can be found on page 72 – under Warranty Six. (I should not have told you so curiosity might get you to look it up.)

3. Consider request to revise text in the Concept Eleven essay regarding “male/female” distinctions in the Twelve Concepts for World Service.

Read page 58 in the 2015-2016 Edition of the Service Manual for a better idea as to why this request to revise the text was made.

Some might question if Alcoholics Anonymous is an outdated and out-of-touch organization. These paragraphs are out of date and no longer reflect the policy of our General Service Office.

- B. Consider A.A.W.S. recommendation regarding an alternative publishing schedule for *The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service*.



That the A.A. Service Manual be revised per existing schedule after the 2016 General Service Conference and a new edition published biannually (every two years, instead of annually) beginning in 2017 at a savings of approximately \$45-50,000 in alternate years when a new edition is not published.

- C. Discuss A.A. Directories (Canada, Eastern U.S., Western U.S., and International.)
1. Consider that the category title "ONLINE MEETINGS" be changed to "ONLINE GROUPS/ONLINE MEETINGS" in A.A. Directories.
  2. Recommendation was made that The A.A. Service Manual be revised per existing schedule after the 2016 general Service Conference and a new edition published every two years instead of annually, beginning in 2017 at a savings of approximately \$45-50,000 in alternate years when a new edition is not published. The next edition of The A.A. Service Manual would be published in 2018 (after the conference) then 2020 and so on.

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## **X. Conference Committee on TREATMENT/SPECIAL NEEDS-ACCESSIBILITIES**

- A. Consider removing "Special Needs" from Conference Committee on Treatment/Special Needs-Accessibilities' name and throughout the committees' Composition, Scope and Procedure.

The first line in the Special Needs/Accessibilities Workbook states; "While there are no special A.A. members there are many members who have special needs". This statement contradicts itself. If there are no special members of Alcoholics Anonymous then how can our needs be special? Members of A.A. who need the services of this committee are just that, members of Alcoholics Anonymous. They are not special; they are equal to the rest of the membership.

The first line of the third paragraph on the first page in the Special Needs/Accessibilities Workbook states;

Some Special Needs/Accessibilities Committees serve parents with young children who may have limited access to A.A. meetings." This proves that the services this committee provides are quite broad and inclusive.

### **ONE COMMENT MADE WAS:**

There are no "special needs" in AA! We all need to hear and carry the message, attend meetings and work the steps, but for some, there are significant barriers. Some members are homebound or can't drive at night; others have impaired hearing, vision, learning, reading or information processing abilities, and still others use wheelchairs or have other mobility impairment. Language difficulties or lack of childcare can seriously impact the ability to maintain sobriety. Our goal is to raise awareness of these barriers and provide information and tools so that home groups can respond to them in the spirit of the Responsibility Statement: "When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that, I am responsible."

Some institutions in Deaf and Hard of Hearing noted that the term "Special Needs" was replaced with "Diverse Needs"

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## **XII. Conference Committee on ARCHIVES**

### **A. Explore ways to encourage groups to write or update their histories.**

**THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME COMMENTS I RECEIVED ON THE SURVEY**

- **Once the history is completed it should be saved somewhere and not keep asking every couple of years for the histories as is currently happening**
- **It is possible to emphasize to members of a home group that a group history is an ongoing document reflecting growth and changes. It is of particular importance to engage senior and/or founding members and to explain that their personal memories of what A.A. was like at the time of the founding of the group, or when they came to A.A., Groups may differ from that of others and that their voice is invaluable in documenting the development of their group.**
- **Explain why AA Comes of Age is an important document that records the lessons and journey of our first 20 years. Our local ongoing history is just as important to us now and for members not yet in the rooms.**
- **People have a preconceived idea of what "history" means and many rank and file members don't see it as having any relevance to recovery and service today. Our stories by archivists, GSRs and other members can inspire members to think about "history" as something others will rely on for direction ten years from now, based on the experiences and lessons being learned right now.**

### **B. Review Archives Workbook.**

**Workbooks for Archives, Cooperation with the Professional Community, Corrections, Public Information, Treatment Committee, and Special Needs/Accessibilities are reviewed by the appropriate Conference Committees during each General Service Conference.**

**Between Conferences, ideas for changes to a Workbook may be received. These may be reviewed by the appropriate trustees' Committee and implemented.**

**Alternatively, the trustees' Committee may choose to forward an idea to the Conference Committee for review. Members of the Conference Committee then have an opportunity to review proposed changes to a Workbook during the next General Service Conference.**

**There were no changes made to the Archives Workbook since the Conference Committee on Archives reviewed it at the 2015 General Service Conference.**

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## **XIII. Conference Committee on INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION and REGIONAL FORUMS**

### **A. Discuss ways to encourage interest in Regional Forums and attract first-time**

attendees.

Regional Forums began in 1975. They are weekend sharing sessions designated to improve participation among AA service members; and to improve communication in their region with the General Service Board and Staff, Grapevine & La Viña Board and staff and A.A. World Services.

**B. Discuss report on the 2015 International Convention in Atlanta, Georgia.**

This International Convention may be known as the largest International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous, with a count of 56,900 registered attendees. GSO budgeted for this Convention for an anticipated 50,000. The largest international contingent was from Mexico with 812 members registered, followed by the United Kingdom (381) and Germany (202). The most significant number was the 784 registered attendees who designated American Sign Language, which increased significantly previous Conventions.