

Service System Questions and Answers – Oelwein, IA

1. “In respect to service apathy, creating a new sub-committee and not expecting the GSR to be the one with the most questions about group problems a realistic view.”

The GSU is more of an informal discussion based body than a “subcommittee” as we now know them. The GSU has the option of being a part of the delegation stream between the group and the LSU (the linear option) or outside the delegation stream (the two-track option). So many of our members explain that they were alienated from service because of the atmosphere or because there was so much attention to policies and debating and so little to the issues that feel important to them on a group level. We are hoping the informal group focused atmosphere of a GSU will actually attract people to service.

2. “How do we distinguish the relativity of a small meeting with 4 solid members with a meeting with 75 attendees but again only 4 or 5 with solid recovery?”

This is, of course, not a new issue, but one that we confront in our current service system as well. The principle of the Second Tradition is not about how we count single members’ votes but about how we share our experience to create a group conscience. In this way we are guided by a loving higher power and not by a vote counting process.

3. “Why 1 GSU for multiple groups?”

The GSU is intended to bring neighboring groups together to facilitate the sharing of ideas and solutions to any challenges groups may be facing in their efforts to carry the message. (See page 7 of the Structural Proposals report.)

4. “How does this help the small groups with few or no home group members?”

By bringing groups together it is hoped the GSU will create a sense of community and mutual support among neighboring groups.

5. “Why are things starting change such as titles such as motions before a vote of approval?”

Nothing has changed at this point. These are ideas for discussion, not motions for voting on. We expect to offer some “agreements in principle” or “resolutions” to be discussed and voted on in the 2012 CAR. (See page 2 of the Structural Proposals report.)

6. “Does the LSU concept better address delegation of services between rural and metro areas?”

We are not exactly sure what the intent of this question is. It is intended that the proposed structure should offer enough flexibility to provide services in both rural and urban areas. Though the GSU is intended to focus on group support, a

rural GSU has the option to provide some local services if it is more practical than an urban based LSU providing them.

7. "Why do our Zones or Regions not meet as a USA before World?" (USA has other issues than other countries.)

The section on the USSC included with the recently emailed update offers some thoughts on this topic. It is pasted below:

"We have received a number of inquiries about a United States fellowship assembly or USSC. There may be perceptions that this is either a part of the Service System Project or in response to it, but this is not the case. We are three years into the Service System Project and have only seen the same emails that most of you have. Since this event is not being coordinated by any duly elected representative or registered area, region, or zone we are not really comfortable commenting. There are issues that are raised in their material about NAWS and those questions we are happy to respond to. A United States conference is not an idea that we believe will help us better achieve our primary purpose or we would have included it in the Service System proposals. As always, we are open to your concerns, ideas, and comments."

8. "A new aspect of open forum at service meeting - GSU?"

In most cases, the GSU will be smaller than the LSU—more of a neighborhood meeting. In some rural or geographically remote areas where the LSU is very small it may be that it makes sense to consider the GSU in this way, although group needs are intended to be the sole focus of the meeting, rather than a section on the agenda. Even if the option of having the GSU provide some basic services is chosen, the GSU meeting is still intended to have group support as its primary focus. (See page 7/8 of the Structural Proposals report.)

9. "The difficulty to carry the message may or may not be the fault of the service structure. If Apathy is one of the root problems, how does revising the structure solve lack of passion?"

The response to question #1 offers some thoughts on this. Structure is part of a whole system that includes people, processes, and resources. Processes such as consensus based decision making and planning may make service a more attractive and less confrontational process. In addition forming projects to deliver services may help to attract members to service as they are designed to complete a specifically defined task and may not require monthly attendance at service meetings over an entire year. (See page 10 of the Structural Proposals report.) We have taken on the structural element of the system first, but it's our hope that revitalizing the system as a whole will help increase passion about service.

10. "How do concepts - single point of accountability apply to consensus decision making?"

The single point of accountability remains in place. In consensus based decision making individual consciences are shared and issues are discussed so that a common agreement can be reached. The point of accountability remains as the service body responsible for making the decision and carrying out any action it requires.

11. "Geographical boundaries - will profession and legislative boundaries reflect the Area/Regional to our resources - where do we accommodate the balance?"

One of the foundational ideas in the proposals is that our service body boundaries should, wherever possible and practical, agree with the boundaries found within society so that we can better interact with outside bodies that come into contact with addicts, such as correctional and health services. How the exact boundaries of local service bodies might be determined is still in question, but certainly there would need to be some flexibility to best meet the needs of different communities. (See page 15 of the Structural Proposals report.)

12. "Can Rural GSUs attend Intermediate body - bypassing the LSU?"

Intermediate bodies would be formed based on need only, so not every NA community will have a need for them. They are intended to help ease pressures of communication, population, and travel in places that are densely populated or that cover large geographic distances. In the case of rural communities, the linear option could enable groups to send one delegate through the GSU rather than each group attend the LSU. (See page 13/14 of the Structural Proposals report.)

13. "When the 12 concepts were devised in 1992, there was a working group for local services. The local service guide we have today came out after the concepts were approved. To say the structure we use today was developed before the concepts; is incorrect."

The service system project page contains a link to the 2010 CAR essay, which includes a section titled "A Brief History of the Service System," which may help answer this concern. The link for the essay is: http://www.na.org/admin/include/spaw2/uploads/pdf/servsys/CAR_2010_Service_System_essay.pdf

14. "If it took 4 years to talk about changing PR how could this take place?"

We are at the beginning of a process of change as we start to talk about ideas for improving our service system together. The Board expects this process to continue after the 2012 WSC.

15. "Does this new structure change part of autonomy?"

There is no change to a group's autonomy.

16. "How will these guidelines be enforced - by what bodies?"

Again, no decisions have yet been made and there are no “guidelines” as such to enforce. Should the fellowship decide to move forward with changes, as with any large change, we hope NA members will see the value of these ideas and decide to embrace them in their local communities. There is no authority capable of enforcing change other than that of a loving higher power as expressed in the process of forming a group conscience.

In regard to WSC seating, it is currently the responsibility of the WSC to approve seating criteria in general and specific regions as conference participants, and has been for many years. Any changes to seating criteria will be discussed at a future WSC. There is currently no definite date for a finalized set of criteria to be offered.

17. “Would the GSU & LSU be a “separate” service structure with representation at ASC/RSC to share ideas?”

The GSU and LSU would replace the ASC. They are intended to more successfully fulfill the tasks of group support and service provision currently assigned to the ASC. (See page 5 of the Structural Proposals report.)

18. “I like how GSUs will help to resolve group issues more effectively, however, will it be a group conscious? How would it not be gossip or clicks? Personality conflicts?”

The GSU is not intended to be a decision making body, but instead is intended to be a place where groups can offer ideas and experience in support of each other. Groups will be free to utilize these ideas if they wish, but will also be free not to. Group conscience does not appear to apply in a situation where there is no decision making role. If the GSU does have a decision making role then the discussion based process it uses should be in harmony with the group conscience process outlined in the Second Tradition.

19. One comment was that on the diagrams the arrows only point down, but since we carry information back and forth from level to level, they should point both up and down.

The arrows are intended to represent the delegation stream. For example the arrows show that the group sends a representative to the GSU, or that the LSU sends a representative to the state/national/province service body. Ideally, communication is a far more diverse process than the one represented in the diagram. Some of our communications do follow the delegation stream, but we are not restricted to it. For instance, many areas and regions email all interested members or distribute newsletters or pass information through websites. The service system project is another example of how communication happens on a broader spectrum than just the delegation stream. We have received input directly from individuals, groups, areas, regions, and zonal forums. We did

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struggle with how to best represent the structure in flat diagrams and it may be that we need to clarify the intention of the arrows.