

Concepts Checklist

Service Material from the General Service Office

A service piece for home groups, districts, areas

Some of these discussion points were originally developed by an A.A. group and further developed by the trustees' Literature Committee to be distributed by the General Service Office. While this checklist is intended as a starting point for discussion by groups, districts or areas, individual A.A. members may find it useful along with our co-founder Bill W.'s writings, a service sponsor if you have one and reflection on your own service experience. Additional information about the Concepts can be found in The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service and "The Twelve Concepts Illustrated" pamphlet. (The Concepts stated here are in the short form.)

Concept I: Final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

Does our group have a general service representative (G.S.R.)? Do we feel that our home group is part of A.A. as a whole and do our group's decisions and actions reflect that?

Do we hold regular group conscience meetings encouraging everyone to participate? Do we pass that conscience on to the district, and the area?

Is the "collective conscience" of Alcoholics Anonymous at work in my home group? In my area?

Where do we fit in the upside-down triangle of A.A.?

Are we willing to do what it takes to insure that our democracy of world service will work under all conditions?

Concept II: The General Service Conference of A.A. has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society in its world affairs.

Do we have an understanding of the history of the General Service Conference (the "Conference")?

What is a Conference Advisory Action? Does our home group's G.S.R., D.C.M., area delegate report back to the group on the highlights of the Conference and Conference Advisory Actions?

Is our group meeting its wider Seventh Tradition responsibilities?

Concept III: To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of A.A. —the Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees, and executives—with a traditional "Right of Decision."

Do we understand what is meant by the "Right of Decision"? Do we grant it at all levels of service or do we "instruct"?

Do we trust our trusted servants — G.S.R., D.C.M., area delegate, the Conference itself?

Concept IV: At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional “Right of Participation,” allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

Do we understand the spiritual principles underlying the “Right of Participation”?

What does “in reasonable proportion” mean? Do we understand when it is appropriate for A.A. paid staff to have a vote at the General Service Conference or in our local service structure?

Do we expect that, because we are A.A. members, we should be allowed to vote at any group, even if we are not active members of that group?

Concept V: Throughout our structure, a traditional “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.

Do we encourage the minority opinion, the “Right of Appeal”, to be heard at our home group, district committee meetings, area assemblies and the Conference?

What does our group accept as “substantial unanimity”?

Has our group experienced the “tyranny of the majority” or the “tyranny of the minority”?

Does our group understand the importance of all points of view being heard before a vote is taken?

Concept VI: The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the General Service Board.

Are we familiar with how our General Service Board (G.S.B.) Class A and Class B trustees serve A.A.? Are we familiar with how our other trusted servants serve A.A.?

Are we clear about the terms, “chief initiative” and “active responsibility”? Can we see a direct link to our home group?

Concept VII: The Charter and Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the A.A. purse for final effectiveness.

Do we act responsibly regarding the “power of the purse”?

Do we realize that the practical and spiritual power of the Conference will nearly always be superior to the legal power of the G.S.B.?

Concept VIII: The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.

Do we understand the relationship between the two corporate service entities (A.A. World Services, Inc., the A.A. Grapevine) and the General Service Board?

How can the business term “custodial oversight” apply to the trustees’ relationship to the two corporate service entities?

Does my home group subscribe to G.S.O.'s bimonthly newsletter Box 4-5-9? The A.A.Grapevine? Do I?

Concept IX: Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.

Do we discuss how we can best strengthen the composition and leadership of our future trusted servants?

Do we recognize the need for group officers? What is our criteria for election? Do we sometimes give a position to someone "because it would be good for them?"

Do I set a positive leadership example?

Concept X: Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.

Do we understand "authority" and "responsibility" as they relate to group conscience decisions by G.S.R.s, D.C.M.s and our area delegates?

Why is delegation of "authority" so important to the overall effectiveness of A.A.? Do we use this concept to define the scope of "authority?"

Concept XI: The trustees should always have the best possible committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction procedures, and rights and duties will always be matters of serious concern.

Do we understand how the roles of nontrustee directors and nontrustee appointed committee members help serve and strengthen the committee system?

How do we encourage our special paid workers to exercise their traditional "Right of Participation?"

Do we practice rotation in all our service positions?

Concept XII: The Conference shall observe the spirit of A.A. tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government, and that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

How do we guard against becoming a "seat of perilous wealth or power?"

How do we practice prudent use of our Seventh Tradition contributions and literature revenue?

Do we insure the spiritual liberties of all A.A. members by not placing any member in the position of absolute authority over others?

Do we try to reach important decisions by thorough discussion, vote and, where possible, substantial unanimity?

As guardians of A.A.'s traditions, are we ever justified in being personally punitive?

Are we careful to avoid public controversy?

Do we always try to treat each other with mutual respect and love?

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