

OA Handbook for Members, Groups, and Service Bodies

Everything You Need to Know About OA's Structure

The Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over food—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to compulsive overeaters and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Permission to use the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous for adaptation granted by AA World Services, Inc.

The Principles in the Twelve Steps

The Overeaters Anonymous program of recovery is based on the Twelve Steps of OA. We find the solution to our common disease of compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors by working the Twelve Steps. We are helped in this by living the Spiritual Principles embodied in the Twelve Steps: honesty, hope, faith, courage, integrity, willingness, humility, self-discipline, love, perseverance, spiritual awareness, and service.

OA Preamble

Overeaters Anonymous is a Fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience, strength, and hope, are recovering from compulsive overeating. We welcome everyone who wants to stop eating compulsively. There are no dues or fees for members; we are self-supporting through our own contributions, neither soliciting nor accepting outside donations. OA is not affiliated with any public or private organization, political movement, ideology, or religious doctrine; we take no position on outside issues. Our primary purpose is to

abstain from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors and to carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer.

Preface

The *OA Handbook for Members, Groups, and Service Bodies* is a resource created to help members, groups, and service bodies understand how to function within the OA service structure. The *Handbook* explains how groups and service bodies are formed; how they operate effectively, independently, and cohesively; and how to participate in the chain of service from the group level to the world service level. The *Handbook* gives groups and service bodies a foundation by which they can expand their knowledge of our Twelve Step program, become stronger, and thus be better able to support individuals' recovery from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors.

The suggestions found here are based on guidelines that have worked over the years for members of the OA Fellowship. These guidelines do not replace the group conscience¹ of OA members in a collective setting. Ultimately, the group conscience makes determinations about how the group or service body operates. However, we strongly encourage OA groups and service bodies to consider these suggestions carefully, as they have a strong foundation of program experience.

¹ Group conscience is the collective will of the group membership and is spiritually more than a majority vote. It is often found, however, by a vote taken by a group or service body that respects Tradition Two.

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Our Program

Overeaters Anonymous is a Fellowship of people who have found recovery from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors by working the Twelve Steps of OA.

OA is not a weight-loss program, nor a diet club. We cannot emphasize strongly enough that, without working the Twelve Steps and practicing the Twelve Traditions in our daily lives, a food plan alone has proved useless in the long term for our recovery. OA's Twelve Steps are a set of actions that provide relief from the obsession with food and our compulsive food behaviors. In the past, we turned to food for the answer to our problems, but recovery gives us the means to live a life free from our compulsive behaviors with food.

Our Beginnings

The first OA meeting was held on January 19, 1960, by three compulsive overeaters. Our founder, Rozanne S., was assisted by the founder of another Twelve Step program in applying the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous to compulsive food behaviors.

Rozanne and one of OA's first members, Barbara S., were interviewed on November 1, 1960, on a US national television show. As a result, more than five hundred letters flooded in, and Overeaters Anonymous was on its way! In 1961, OA's directory listed ten meetings, and by August 1962, there were enough members that representatives from across the United States—from both Overeaters Anonymous and Gluttons Anonymous—joined together for the first national Conference.

Read more OA history in *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams: A History of Overeaters Anonymous as Seen by the Founder*, available as an e-book from selected third-party vendors.

Members/Groups/Meetings

An OA **member** is anyone who chooses to identify as a compulsive eater or as struggling with compulsive food behaviors. The only qualification for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively.

An OA **group** is formed when two or more compulsive eaters gather to share their experience, strength, and hope and practice the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, guided by the Twelve Concepts of OA Service. Within OA, the terms “group” and “meeting” are used interchangeably.

A more in-depth look at types of meetings, formats, and guidelines can be found in “Groups and Meetings” in this publication.

Newcomers

Newcomers are considered the most important people in an OA meeting and are welcomed no matter their body size or food issues. The newcomer might be surprised to hear “their story” told in meetings, but we were all once newcomers, searching for help with our compulsive eating problem. Our ability to identify with one another is the basis for our OA Fellowship.

We members enrich our personal program of recovery by helping each other. OA members *can* help; we've been through the challenges of food compulsion. Within OA, we are safe from judgment, criticism, and gossip. OA is a “we” organization. We do not succeed alone: “It is weakness, not strength, that binds us to each other.”²

More information is available at oa.org. See:

- Menu button at the top-right of the page and select Getting Started
- Find a Meeting

² “Our Invitation to You,” *Overeaters Anonymous*, 3rd ed. (Overeaters Anonymous, Inc., © 1980 ... 2014) p. 4

Anonymity

What we say at meetings is kept confidential. Anonymity is a vital part of our program that helps ensure we feel safe both being and sharing at meetings. Anonymity also assures us that only we, and no one else, have the right to make our membership known to others.

No Other Affiliations

OA is not associated with any other organization. It is modeled after Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), the original Twelve Step program, but OA is separate from AA. The Twelve Steps of OA embody Spiritual Principles, but OA is not a religious organization. While we might refer to God, Higher Power, or “my best self,” each person determines what a Power greater than themselves means to them (Step Two).

Source of Income

OA groups are “fully self-supporting” (Tradition Seven), accepting contributions only from members. OA members have the responsibility to maintain our organization so that we can continue to carry our message of recovery from compulsive eating. This practice prevents any outside interest from gaining control over OA activities. In addition, the Executive Committee of the OA Board of Trustees sets limits on the amount of monetary and in-kind contributions that can be accepted from individuals.

For information on how to make Seventh Tradition contributions, see the *Seventh Tradition of OA* pamphlet at oa.org.

Abstinence and Recovery

In Overeaters Anonymous:

Abstinence is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight. Spiritual, emotional, and physical recovery is the result of living and working the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve Step program on a daily basis.³

Within OA, the terms “compulsive overeating” and “compulsive eating” are used interchangeably, and we recognize that the disease of food addiction includes a variety of behaviors, including but not limited to anorexia, bulimia, bingeing, and overexercising.

Tools of Recovery

The OA Tools of Recovery help us work the Steps and refrain from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors. The nine Tools are: a plan of eating, sponsorship, meetings, telephone, writing, literature, action plan, anonymity, and service. For more information, see *The*

³ Business Conference Policy Manual, 1988b [amended 2002, 2009, 2011, 2019, and 2021]

Tools of Recovery pamphlet (available in print from the OA bookstore and as an e-book from third-party vendors) or the *Tools of Recovery (abridged)* in the Document Library at oa.org.

Literature

OA has many publications in which members share their experience, strength, and hope. OA publications are available in several formats: print, e-book, audio, downloadable PDF, and print-on-demand. To see the OA publications we offer, visit the OA bookstore at bookstore.oa.org. Conveniently, the bookstore's pages also have links to third-party vendors authorized to sell some of our literature. Our publications have also been translated into many languages. For translated OA literature, contact either the OA service body that translated the publication or the World Service Office. Check the *Digital Files in Translation* list in the Document Library at oa.org for a list of translated OA literature available in specific languages.

Lifeline

Lifeline, our recovery blog found at lifeline.oa.org, is OA's digital venue for members to share their stories of recovery. *Lifeline* helps OA members work the program by publishing their recovery-focused writings, images, audio recordings, and videos. When members share their stories through *Lifeline*, they carry the message both to their fellow OA members and the still-suffering compulsive eater who is searching online for a solution.

The name *Lifeline* came from OA's founder, Rozanne S., who imagined "a large ocean liner sailing near a helplessly bobbing lifeboat. Suddenly, someone from the liner tossed a strong rope to the little vessel ... a lifeline! What a perfect name for our magazine."⁴ Launched in October 1965, *Lifeline* magazine remained in circulation until November 2020.

Magazine back issues and several book collections of *Lifeline* stories, including *Taste of Lifeline* and *Seeking the Spiritual Path*, are available for purchase through the OA bookstore at bookstore.oa.org.

Events

OA events, such as workshops, retreats, marathons, and conventions are a great way to learn more about our program, connect with other OA members worldwide, and even have some fun. Events are open to anyone who has a desire to stop eating compulsively. Newcomers are welcome!

You can learn about upcoming OA events on Event Calendar at oa.org, on OA service body websites, and in newsletters. If you are unable to afford the cost of an event, ask the event organizer if assistance is available. OA service bodies will do everything they can to help you attend.

OA'S SERVICE STRUCTURE

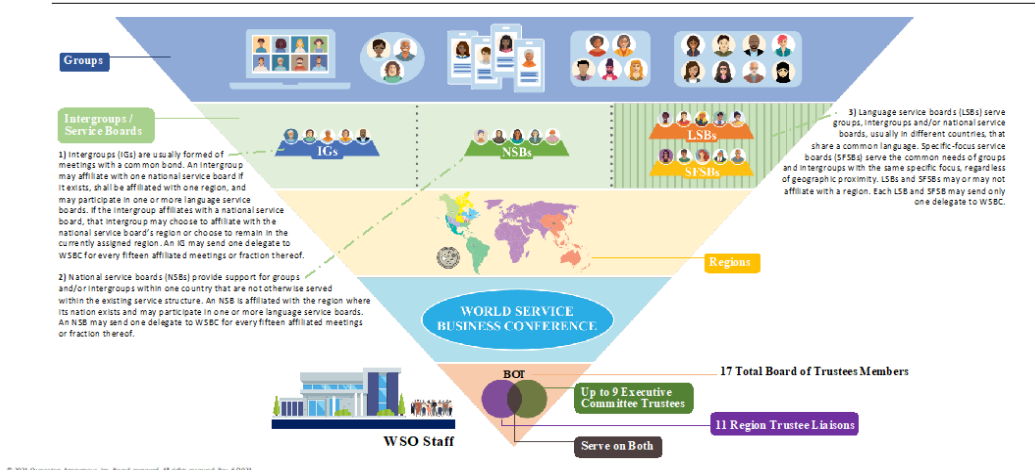
⁴ *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams* (Overeaters Anonymous, Inc., © 1996, 2005) p. 201

OA's Inverted Pyramid

The inverted pyramid describes the unique service structure of Overeaters Anonymous. Unlike a traditional business that has tiers of managers directing those who report to them, OA's Board of Trustees is accountable to and serves those at the region, service board, intergroup, and group levels. As individuals take on more responsibility in the organization, they are accountable to more members and groups. Therefore, the "higher" the position a trusted servant holds, the lower they are on the pyramid and the more people to whom they are accountable. Our service structure demonstrates that leaders serve but do not govern (Tradition Two). We are a Fellowship of equals.

This is a visual representation of OA's inverted service-structure pyramid.

OVERALL SERVICE STRUCTURE



[Update and Resize Graphic for Publication]

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS AND ANONYMITY

The Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon OA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.

5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.
6. An OA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the OA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every OA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Overeaters Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. OA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Overeaters Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence, the OA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television and other public media of communication.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all these Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Permission to use the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous for adaptation granted by AA World Services, Inc.

The Twelve Traditions Are Our Guide

While individual recovery is found in working the Twelve Steps, OA groups are guided by the Twelve Traditions and maintain their unity of purpose through practicing the Spiritual Principles embodied in the Traditions. These Principles—unity, trust, identity, autonomy, purpose, solidarity, responsibility, fellowship, structure, neutrality, anonymity, and spirituality—are critical to ensure the long-term success of a group and the survival of OA as a whole. We also apply the Traditions and Principles in our daily lives.

In OA, essential group work is done by OA members who are not paid for their service, who work in the way they think best within the spirit of the Traditions. We keep things as simple and uncomplicated as we can.

For a deeper understanding of the Twelve Traditions and how honoring them benefits individuals and groups, members can study *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, Second Edition; *The Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous* pamphlet; *The Twelve Traditions Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous*; and the AA *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Understanding Anonymity

Within the Fellowship, anonymity means that what we share with another OA member or at a meeting is respected and kept confidential. We refrain from discussing specifics with anyone, including family members. As our *Suggested Meeting Format* says, “Whom you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here.”

Anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television, and other public media of communication means we never allow our faces or last names to be used once we identify ourselves as OA members (Tradition Eleven).

As part of our Fellowship's name and the spiritual foundation of our Twelve Traditions, anonymity guarantees we place "principles before personalities" (Tradition Twelve). We work together, using the Traditions as our guide, rather than being driven by our personal likes and dislikes. With anonymity, we sacrifice personal pride in our OA recovery, placing the emphasis on our Higher Power—the source of our healing.

"Breaking anonymity" means revealing someone's participation in the OA program without their consent or revealing one's own membership with full name and/or face in public gatherings, in print, in person, and/or online. However, privately sharing one's *own* story with another person inside or outside OA allows them to understand the OA program and does not break one's anonymity. We remain anonymous in public for three primary reasons: our promise of privacy to the still-suffering compulsive eater, the spiritual rewards of humility, and to avoid presenting any one person as the representative of OA.

From experience, we have the following suggestions for safekeeping our anonymity:

- For press, radio, TV, films, and other public media of communication, including social media, we are identified only by our first names and last initials. In public visual communications, we obscure our faces (Tradition Eleven).
- Within OA, we may freely share our full names, and as individuals, we may maintain a personal list of OA names, phone numbers, email addresses, and/or online contacts so we can keep in touch with and help each other. Imagine a member being hospitalized and OA friends not being able to call or visit because they only know the member's first name. It is not a break of anonymity to enlist Twelfth Step help for members in need of support by, for example, suggesting that other members give them a call, provided we are careful to refrain from discussing any specific personal information. Many members have shared how a phone call from a caring member brought them back to meetings.
- Groups usually remind newcomers, members, and visitors (people who are not OA members attending an open meeting) to respect the anonymity of all who are present. We find it best to share intimate information one-on-one with our OA sponsor or a close OA friend.
- In one-on-one or small-group conversations with non-OA-members, we are free to say we are compulsive eaters and members of OA. These people may later refer others needing help to us. Passing on our experience, strength, and hope to other compulsive eaters is too important to let any fear or stigma stand in our way. If Rozanne S., our OA founder, had kept the message to herself, where would we compulsive overeaters be?
- Members are cautioned to be careful in online communication, including social media and email, with their own privacy and anonymity and that of others. See *Guidelines for Anonymity in the Digital World* on oa.org.

To those compulsive eaters who feel shame or guilt or are afraid others will criticize, judge, or comment, we say, “We understand because we have had the same experiences. Whatever your circumstances, we offer you the gift of acceptance, and we promise you the safety of anonymity.”

Statement on Public and Social Media

While Overeaters Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues, including social media, the delegates of the 2019 World Service Business Conference recommend that any OA member, group, or service body using social media for OA public information and public awareness maintain the personal anonymity of OA members.

Members of Overeaters Anonymous are anonymous. The Fellowship is not. Members of Overeaters Anonymous are responsible for maintaining their anonymity and respecting the anonymity of other OA members. When attending an OA meeting, whether face-to-face or virtual, members are encouraged to seek appropriate means to protect their own anonymity and that of fellow members.

All registered virtual meetings shall inform members that their anonymity is not fully protected when attending a virtual meeting.

Find options for protecting anonymity at *Guidelines for Anonymity in the Digital World*.⁵

Guidelines for Anonymity in the Digital World is at oa.org.

GROUPS AND MEETINGS

When people go to meetings, they find others who have similar struggles, who tell their stories, and who offer hope. This is where we begin our recovery. We may not find recovery instantly, but we listen and learn. We may even disagree with something we hear, so we keep in mind what we’ve heard in meetings: “Take what you like and leave the rest.”

Members who describe their meetings as strong frequently credit the presence of committed fellow members who identify the meeting as their “home group” (a meeting they regularly attend). These committed members may have long-term abstinence and are at or working toward a healthy body weight while working the Twelve Steps of OA. The meetings follow a specific format, with an emphasis on working the Twelve Steps while honoring the Twelve Traditions of OA. Decisions are made by group conscience and not by an individual or individuals dictating policies and procedures.

Becoming a Member

⁵ Business Conference Policy Manual, 2011a [amended 2016 and 2019]

Tradition Three says, “The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively.” You are a member once you identify with this definition; only you can decide if you are a member of Overeaters Anonymous.

To join a group, you attend its meetings; groups do not have a formal procedure for joining. All OA members are welcome at all OA meetings, though members often consider one specific meeting their home group. Meetings are important: They are where we find support as we recover from this crippling disease. As members, we have a responsibility to help others who are suffering from this disease. We do this in meetings.

We welcome all who share our compulsion.

OA’s “Unity with Diversity” Policy

THE FELLOWSHIP of Overeaters Anonymous encourages and promotes acceptance and inclusivity. All are welcome to join OA and are not excluded because of race, creed, nationality, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, or any other attribute. We welcome all who share our compulsion. Everyone with the desire to stop eating compulsively is welcome in Overeaters Anonymous.

THE FELLOWSHIP recognizes the existence of individual approaches and different structured concepts to working our Twelve Step program of recovery; that the Fellowship is united by our disease and our common purpose; and that individual differences in approaches to recovery within our Fellowship need not divide us.

THE FELLOWSHIP respects the rights of members, groups, and service bodies to follow a particular concept of recovery within Overeaters Anonymous and encourages each member, group, and service body to respect those rights as they extend the hand of fellowship to those who still suffer.

THE FELLOWSHIP encourages each duly registered group and service body to affirm and maintain the Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous by allowing members to share their experience, strength, and hope in meetings regardless of the individual approach or specific concept that member may follow. Duly registered is defined as being in full compliance with Bylaws, Subpart B, Article V.⁶

Definition of a Group

To be identified as an OA group, a gathering of members must follow requirements listed in OA, Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B:

⁶ Business Conference Policy Manual, 1992a [amended 2013, 2021, and 2023]

- As a group, they meet to practice the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, guided by the Twelve Concepts of OA Service.
- All who have the desire to stop eating compulsively are welcome in the group.
- No member is required to practice any actions in order to remain a member or to have a voice (share at a meeting).
- As a group they have no affiliation other than Overeaters Anonymous.
- It has affiliated as an Overeaters Anonymous group by registering with the World Service Office.⁷

Within OA, members may say either “group” or “meeting” to refer to a gathering of members. (Usage may vary by geographical location.)

Individual OA groups rarely use written bylaws, although agreed-upon bylaws are considered *essential* at the service body level (intergroup, service board, and region). Documenting policies and procedures helps maintain stability and orient the next set of trusted servants. Few differences or criticisms remain unresolved if well-informed members are willing to participate in group conscience decisions, working together by following agreed-upon guidelines.

Attending Meetings

Meeting details, such as time, location, and login, may be found on Find a Meeting at oa.org. There are five types of meetings:

- **Face-to-face** meetings are conducted in person in a physical space. It is helpful for the group to post signage that directs members to the meeting room’s location. Some meeting spaces may offer storage for OA material.
- **Online** (videoconference) meetings are conducted by members who connect by computer or mobile app. Different online meetings have different sign-in instructions. The meeting’s description on Find a Meeting includes the meeting’s URL and login procedure. Some online meetings are recorded (with members’ consent) and are available for playback at a later time.
- **Telephone** meetings are conducted by members who connect by phone. The meeting’s description on Find a Meeting includes the meeting’s phone number and access code.
- **Non-real-time** meetings do not meet in real time or are meetings that do not occur immediately and are instead conducted online or by mobile phone, taking place over a period of hours or days. Non-real-time meetings take place on email or bulletin loops, social media pages, bulletin boards or forums, and mobile applications.
- **Hybrid** meetings are single meetings where all can hear and share but may attend in person, online, *or* by phone. Hybrid meetings are either a combination of face-to-face plus online technology or face-to-face plus telephone. If a meeting is hybrid, the meeting’s description on Find a Meeting lists “Hybrid” under the day and time of the meeting with the two ways to attend.

Meetings with and without Visitors (Open and Closed)

⁷ OA, Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B, Article V – Overeaters Anonymous Groups

- **Meetings with Visitors (Open):** These meetings are open to anyone, whether they think they have a problem with food or not. All meetings are considered open to visitors unless otherwise indicated.
- **Meetings without Visitors (Closed):** These meetings are open only to those who desire to stop eating compulsively. (This includes newcomers, OA members, and others who think they have a problem with food.)⁸

Types of OA Meetings

Our Fourth Tradition says, “Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.” Group autonomy allows for a variety of OA meeting formats and practices. Thus, a meeting’s listing on Find a Meeting at oa.org may note the meeting’s type. There are four common types of meetings, though some meetings vary and combine elements of all four:

- **Speaker:** An abstinent OA member shares their experience, strength, and hope with the group. This is sometimes called a “qualifier” meeting because the speaker is telling *their* story rather than sharing experience on a particular subject (such as a specific Step or recovery topic). A speaker meeting is an excellent opportunity to introduce family, friends, and interested professionals to the OA Twelve Step program of recovery. A speaker may tell their OA story and then suggest a topic for sharing by group members.
- **Steps and Traditions Study:** These groups typically read a Step or Tradition from the OA or AA *Twelve and Twelve* books and then open the meeting for individual sharing. Some meetings have a leader share their experience before inviting attendees to share, while other meetings may have members read a Step or Tradition passage, then share about how they relate to it.
- **Literature Study:** Some groups study other OA-approved literature using the abovementioned Steps and Traditions Study format. Literature examples include *Overeaters Anonymous, Third Edition*; *Abstinence, Second Edition*; *Body Image, Relationships, and Sexuality*; *A New Beginning*; *Seeking the Spiritual Path*; *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams*; and OA’s daily readers *For Today* and *Voices of Recovery, Second Edition*. The two daily readers can be useful for a subject discussion because of their indexes and their companion workbooks, which feature a question for each daily reading. Some groups study OA pamphlets such as *A New Plan of Eating*, *A Lifetime of Abstinence*, or *In OA, Recovery Is Possible*. Groups may also study OA-approved AA literature such as *Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition* (the Big Book). See “Literature Considerations within Meetings” in this publication.
- **Newcomers:** Some meetings focus exclusively on answering questions and explaining OA basics to newcomers, such as identifying sponsors, introducing the Tools of Recovery, and describing what happens at a typical meeting. Some OA meetings establish a dedicated newcomer meeting before or after their scheduled meetings. Other groups might devote one meeting a month to newcomers.



⁸ Business Conference Policy Manual, 1982c [amended 1989, 2018, and 2023]

- **Varies:** This is the most common meeting type found on an OA meeting list. The focus changes from week to week. For example, week one may be newcomers/speaker; week two may be Step study; week three may be Tradition study; and week four may be speaker or OA-approved literature study.

Specific Topic Meetings

Specific-topic meetings are open to any OA member and are designed for a specific subject matter or format. The specific topic indicates what members share about, what a speaker talks about, the literature read, or the specific way members work their program. Examples include, but are not limited to, literature, speaker, Tools, and recovery from relapse. Specific-topic meetings are listed on Find a Meeting at oa.org under “Additional search options.”

Specific Focus Meetings

Specific-focus meetings are open to any OA member and are designed for individuals who may feel they can more readily identify with fellow members of OA with similar attributes, including 100-Pounders; Anorexia/Bulimia; Asian Pacific Islander Desi; Atheist/Agnostic/Secular; Bariatric Surgery; Black, Indigenous, and People of Color; Health Issues; LGBTQ+; Men; Women; and Young People. Meetings with a specific focus are listed on Find a Meeting at oa.org under “Additional search options.”

Meeting Formats

A meeting format is a written guide for conducting the meeting, as determined by the group conscience. A group’s customs, including the way it formats its meetings, can help develop solidarity and provide a reassuring feeling of continuity for members. OA provides several suggested meeting formats at oa.org, found in the Document Library under “Meeting Formats.”

The group leader for the meeting usually opens with the Serenity Prayer and conducts the meeting using the group’s chosen format. The Steps are read, and at most meetings the Traditions are also read. The meeting’s members are often asked to read other passages, such as OA’s “Our Invitation to You,” OA’s *Tools of Recovery (abridged)* (both linked in the *Suggested Meeting Format* at oa.org), “Introduction to the Twelve Steps,”⁹ and/or “How it Works”¹⁰ from the Big Book. Most meetings dedicate time for individual sharing, ask for Seventh Tradition contributions, and include time for announcements and reports from the group’s secretary, treasurer, literature representative, and/or intergroup/service board representative. It is recommended that meetings start and end on time.

Speakers, readers, and those who share generally introduce themselves by saying, “Hi, my name is [first name only], and I’m a _____.” Members fill in the blank with a word or phrase that best describes their particular identifier, including but not limited to “compulsive overeater,”

⁹ *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, 2nd ed. (Overeaters Anonymous, Inc., © 2018) p. 1

¹⁰ *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th ed. (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., © 2001) pp. 58–71

“bulimic,” “restrictor,” “sugar addict,” and/or “compulsive exerciser.” Others in the meeting usually respond with “Hi, [name],” which encourages people to participate. Remember: All are welcome. We are more than our “labels,” and we can find recovery in Overeaters Anonymous regardless of our individual conditions.

Most meetings conclude with the leader suggesting one of the closings below by saying, “Will those of you who wish, please join me in [*name of the chosen closing*]”:

- Serenity Prayer
- **Third** Step Prayer¹¹
- Seventh Step Prayer¹²
- OA Promise (“I put my hand in yours”)¹³

Many meetings end with everyone joining in to say a slogan, such as “Keep coming back!” or “It works if you work it!”

Participating at a Meeting

Several terms are used to describe talking in an OA meeting and can be used almost interchangeably. These terms vary from area to area and from group to group. Generally, these four terms are heard most:

- **“To qualify”** means to describe what brought a member into the room and the recovery they have found by working the Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous. A featured speaker at a meeting or an OA event often “qualifies” by sharing their personal recovery journey.
- **“To pitch”** means to discuss a program concept. The member talks about or shares their thoughts about a specific topic or what was read during the meeting.
- **“To share”** means to talk in a meeting. We share with our fellow members the experience, strength, and hope we have gained from being in this program. Newcomers might share about their feelings or an incident that brought them to the meeting and how they hope OA will help them. Sharing may be done by going around the room with each member participating in turn; by the meeting’s leader calling on people who raise their hand, in person or virtually; or by having the member who just shared choose the next member to share (sometimes called “tag sharing”). When sharing, members serve the group by telling how they apply the Tools of Recovery, Steps and Traditions, and Spiritual Principles to improve their lives or manage a negative incident without eating compulsively or acting compulsively with food. Our experience suggests that, instead of simply describing the events of the day, members share *how* they are working their program.
- **“To speak”** at a meeting means to share at length about one’s recovery story or a particular topic.

¹¹ *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th ed. (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., © 2001) p. 63

¹² *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th ed. (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., © 2001) p. 76

¹³ *I Put My Hand in Yours* (Overeaters Anonymous, Inc., © 1968 ... 1995)

Cross Talk

Cross talk during an OA meeting means giving advice or feedback, commenting, speaking directly to a member who has shared, and/or questioning or interrupting the person speaking at the time. We avoid cross talk so that everyone feels safe to share their thoughts during their recovery journey. Even the lightest remark or gesture may discourage a person from being open.

Cross talk may be verbal or written. Members should use care in commenting on or talking directly to a member in the chat feature during an online meeting.

Further discussion of cross talk may be found on the What is Cross Talk? page at oa.org.

Literature Considerations within Meetings

Meetings should keep the following in mind when reading or sharing literature:

Alcoholics Anonymous has requested in writing that passages from its literature, such as the Big Book, be read *directly from the literature rather than from a copy*, without changing any words, such as “alcohol” to “food” and “alcoholic” to “compulsive eater.” From AA’s Intellectual Property Administrator:

We have no objection to your O.A. meeting reprinting brief excerpts from the Big Book for use in its meetings. Of course, we would ask that this material not be adapted, that is, this material should be read (or reprinted) directly from the actual Big Book.¹⁴

We would prefer that A.A. material is not photocopied or retyped, particularly large segments of A.A. material.¹⁵

OA’s Policy Statement on Approved Literature

In accordance with our Traditions, we suggest that OA groups maintain unity and honor our Traditions by using, selling, and displaying only approved books and pamphlets at their meetings. This includes OA Conference- and board-approved literature; AA Conference-approved books, booklets, and all future editions thereof, with original edition copyright 2010 or earlier; and locally produced OA literature. Although groups may choose to focus on only one piece of OA-approved literature, individuals and groups are encouraged to use any and all OA-approved literature. Locally produced literature must be developed according to *OA Guidelines for Locally Produced Literature*, and should be used with the greatest discretion. Local literature should be

¹⁴ Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc., email to Overeaters Anonymous, Inc., September 2014

¹⁵ Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc., email to Overeaters Anonymous, Inc., February 2015

considered temporary and discontinued when OA literature approved for general use is available to cover the topic.¹⁶

All OA literature and materials, including digital media, are protected under United States copyright law, and OA has determined guidelines for how its literature can be shared:

- All registered OA groups and service bodies have permission to reprint OA print material currently on the OA website (downloadable PDF files or text) without having to submit a written request to the World Service Office (WSO). All registered OA groups also have permission to translate and reprint OA print material currently on the OA website.
- Registered OA groups that meet using a videoconferencing platform may screen share or audio share *limited* OA-copyright material without written permission.
- OA groups that meet electronically using other digital platforms, such as by mobile messaging app, social media, website, app, or blog, must request written permission from OA by submitting a request to the WSO. To request reprint permission, use the Reprint Request form at oa.org.
- Reprints of OA material, including printed material on the OA website, must include the citation “[Source of material], Copyright Overeaters Anonymous, Inc. All rights reserved.”
- In no case should OA-approved literature be amended or modified.
- OA does not grant permission to registered OA groups or others to reproduce OA-owned literature for sale in whole or page by page, entry by entry, over time, in effect reproducing the entire publication.

For further information, see the documents *OA Copyright Requests* and *Sharing OA-Copyright Material Electronically*, both found in the Document Library at oa.org.

OA-owned literature and materials are held in trust for the OA Fellowship as a whole. These guidelines enable meetings to reach newcomers while respecting OA’s copyrights and help ensure our message stays consistent throughout our global Fellowship.

THE TWELVE CONCEPTS OF OA SERVICE

The Twelve Concepts of OA Service are a set of service principles that define and guide the practices of the service structures that conduct the business of OA.

The Twelve Concepts of OA Service

1. The ultimate responsibility and authority for OA world services reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.
2. The OA groups have delegated to World Service Business Conference the active maintenance of our world services; thus, World Service Business Conference is the voice, authority and effective conscience of OA as a whole.

¹⁶ Business Conference Policy Manual, 2010a [amended 2012 and 2023]

3. The right of decision, based on trust, makes effective leadership possible.
4. The right of participation ensures equality of opportunity for all in the decision-making process.
5. Individuals have the right of appeal and petition in order to ensure that their opinions and personal grievances will be carefully considered.
6. The World Service Business Conference has entrusted the Board of Trustees with the primary responsibility for the administration of Overeaters Anonymous.
7. The Board of Trustees has legal rights and responsibilities accorded to them by OA Bylaws, Subpart A; the rights and responsibilities of the World Service Business Conference are accorded to it by tradition and by OA Bylaws, Subpart B.
8. The Board of Trustees has delegated to its Executive Committee the responsibility to administer the OA World Service Office.
9. Able, trusted servants, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are indispensable for effective functioning at all service levels.
10. Service responsibility is balanced by carefully defined service authority; therefore, duplication of efforts is avoided.
11. Trustee administration of the World Service Office should always be assisted by the best standing committees, executives, staffs and consultants.
12. The spiritual foundation for OA service ensures that:
 - a. no OA committee or service body shall ever become the seat of perilous wealth or power;
 - b. sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, shall be OA's prudent financial principle;
 - c. no OA member shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority;
 - d. all important decisions shall be reached by discussion, vote and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity;
 - e. no service action shall ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; and
 - f. no OA service committee or service board shall ever perform any acts of government, and each shall always remain democratic in thought and action.

The Spiritual Principles of the Twelve Concepts of OA Service are unity, conscience, trust, equality, consideration, responsibility, balance, delegation, ability, clarity, humility, guidelines, selflessness, realism, representation, dialogue, compassion, and respect. The Concepts and their Spiritual Principles apply to all levels of OA service, from the group to the world service levels.

SERVICE AT THE GROUP LEVEL

The Importance of Service Positions

It takes many people to complete group tasks. Officers are usually chosen by the group for limited terms of service. They are, in fact, not officers, but service volunteers, since our Second Tradition reminds us that, "Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." Giving service is an honor and a privilege. As OA's Responsibility Pledge states:

757 “Always to extend the hand and heart of OA
758 to all who share my compulsion;
759 for this I am responsible.”¹⁷
760

761 Taking a service position is critical to recovery. We often hear OA members say they first felt
762 they belonged when they were asked to help another member with a task. For many of us, being
763 called upon to help becomes our first contribution of OA service. Soon, we find that doing group
764 service is an excellent way to strengthen our recovery, connect with others, and work the Twelfth
765 Step: “Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this
766 message to compulsive overeaters and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”
767

768 In OA, we practice *rotation of service*, which means that jobs get passed around and we each
769 take our turn. In this way, no one feels taken advantage of and no one begins to feel either “in
770 charge” or left out. The more service positions there are, the more members are allowed to
771 “rotate in” and have the opportunity to contribute to the Fellowship, our OA program, and their
772 own recovery.
773

774 Each of us has a right and a responsibility to do what we can, when we can, giving back some of
775 what we have been so freely given by the Fellowship and other recovering members. As our
776 Seventh Tradition asserts: we are “to be fully self-supporting” through our own contributions of
777 time, effort, and money.
778

779 **How Service Positions Are Filled**

780

781 Group officers are usually chosen by the group’s members, with a simple majority of votes
782 deciding the election. Larger groups might form a steering committee¹⁸ or nominating committee
783 to select new officers. In some groups, members volunteer to give service as an officer. The
784 officers’ terms of service are determined by group conscience and are limited, for example, to
785 three months, six months, or a year.
786

787 Some groups have alternates or assistant positions. If a service volunteer cannot fulfill the
788 position’s commitments, another volunteer may be solicited. When it is time to rotate service
789 positions, it is helpful to emphasize the benefits experienced by filling a service position. An
790 enthusiastic, positive approach is more likely to bring someone forward who is willing to follow
791 through on the service commitments.
792

793 **Service Positions**

794

795 Most groups ask that their service volunteers have continuous commitment to the OA program,
796 current abstinence, and availability to give dependable service. The group’s welfare should be of
797 primary concern in choosing members to fill service positions. A review of Traditions One and
798 Two is helpful at election time.

¹⁷ Business Conference Policy Manual, 1977b

¹⁸ A steering committee is formed by a smaller number of the group’s members who meet to manage group business that would take too much meeting time to accomplish in the larger meeting. A steering committee may be temporary.

Service volunteers should realize that giving service may require doing tasks whether convenient or not. We remember that service is its own reward; sharing group responsibilities keeps both groups and individuals healthy, since we do not recover in isolation. If we keep the Twelve Traditions in mind and stay aware of our Spiritual Principles, we find our own welfare flourishing along with that of the group.

Primary Service Responsibilities

Positions and responsibilities vary widely among meetings, and groups should create and define positions to best serve the group. Three positions are common to almost all meetings, whether face-to-face, virtual, or non-real-time:

- secretary
- treasurer
- intergroup or service board representative

Groups often require a member to have a period of abstinence, such as six continuous months, to be eligible to serve as secretary or treasurer.

Other Service Responsibilities

Other positions and responsibilities vary, based on needs specific to that meeting. The titles of the positions vary as well. A larger group may need additional service volunteers, such as steering committee members, to keep the meeting running smoothly. In smaller meetings, if necessary, a member may hold more than one service position. Meetings are autonomous in these matters as long as they adhere to the Traditions. The important thing is that all the work gets done to maintain and enhance the meeting. A group may have these positions:

- contact list person
- designated downloader
- greeter/newcomer coordinator
- literature representative
- point of contact
- public outreach representative
- recorder
- recovery medallion person
- speaker recruiter/program chair
- virtual host/key holder

Descriptions of Service Responsibilities

Secretary

In most groups, the secretary is the principal service volunteer and is elected for a period of time determined by the group. The secretary should be abstinent and actively working the OA Twelve Step program of recovery. This service position supports the smooth functioning of the group by taking responsibility for these tasks:

- acting as the leader and point person responsible for the group's meetings,
- leading the meeting using the group's agreed-upon format,
- maintaining the group's information with service bodies and on Find a Meeting at oa.org,
- facilitating elections and leading business and group conscience meetings, and
- maintaining records of business and group conscience meetings—electronic or paper—for a time period determined by the group.

In some meetings, the secretary's role is divided between two positions: secretary and meeting leader. The group may choose a specific member as leader to read the meeting format and select the topic for the meeting, for instance. The secretary (or leader) may ask for announcements and inform the group of upcoming events, such as conventions, retreats, and workshops. In face-to-face meetings, the secretary may provide copies of event flyers or share how flyers can be found online, while in virtual meetings, the secretary may post announcements onscreen or in the chat.

Many groups have found it helpful for an outgoing secretary to remain as co-secretary for a few weeks to assist a newly elected person. An incoming secretary should be made aware of the following facts and resources:

- The secretary should know the official group number as registered with the World Service Office (WSO). This number is issued to every group that registers with the WSO and should be clearly written or typed on all literature orders and correspondence with the WSO.
- The secretary has the responsibility of keeping group registration information up to date. It is necessary to inform the WSO, intergroup/service board, and region of any meeting changes, such as time and place of the meeting and phone numbers of the point of contact person and/or secretary. Group secretaries can register, edit, or cancel their meetings on Find a Meeting at oa.org. Accurate records ensure that those who inquire about meetings get up-to-date information and that the WSO can keep the group informed on OA issues.
- There are six sources of help available:
 - the appropriate intergroup or national service board,
 - the appropriate language service board or specific-focus service board,
 - the region,
 - the trustee liaison assigned to the region,
 - the World Service Office (WSO), and
 - the OA website at oa.org.

Treasurer

The treasurer manages the group's financial business and, in general, is responsible for the following:

- collecting and disbursing the group's funds,
- knowing the official group number as registered with the World Service Office (WSO) and using the number when making contributions to services bodies and the WSO,
- maintaining clear financial records, including bank accounts, if applicable,
- making regular financial reports to the group, and
- budgeting funds for meeting expenses (e.g., rent, electronic platform, literature).

The Seventh Tradition is collected through members' voluntary contributions. At face-to-face meetings, the Seventh Tradition is usually collected by passing around a basket or envelope. Virtual meetings usually set up electronic means of collecting contributions.

It is recommended that a group does not accumulate large sums in excess of what is needed to maintain the group. A prudent reserve of one to three months of operating expenses and/or anticipated literature purchases is all that is necessary. After expenses are paid, it is suggested that the treasurer disburse the excess funds to the group's intergroup/service board (60 percent), the group's region (10 percent), and world service (30 percent). By sending these funds to service bodies and world service, the meeting is contributing its fair share to support OA.

Contributions to world service may be mailed to the World Service Office or sent via an online payment platform. See "7th Tradition Contribution" at oa.org.

Groups may choose instead to contribute all excess funds to their intergroup/service board, if that service board forwards appropriate shares to the region and world service. This may be especially relevant for non-US-based groups that might incur bank fees when sending contributions.

See the *Seventh Tradition of OA* pamphlet for an explanation of both how to give and what contributions are used for, from the group level to the WSO. This pamphlet can be downloaded for free at oa.org, and several translated versions are also available on the OA website.

The treasurer may also manage other financial business for the group, including the following tasks:

- receiving money to pay for literature,
- making records available at business meetings for members to review, and
- asking for instructions from the group or steering committee on how to disburse excess funds.

Each meeting makes its own decisions on how the treasurer holds its money. Large meetings may use a bank account for group funds. Smaller meetings may combine literature and treasurer positions to facilitate the handling of payments.

Treasurers can find helpful materials, including *Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for OA Group, Intergroup, and Service Board Treasurers*, at oa.org.

Intergroup or service board representative

Intergroups (IGs) and service boards (SBs) are composed of two or more groups that have formed a service body for the purpose of supporting and representing the groups associated with it. IGs and SBs can provide services to individual groups to help them be more effective than they can be on their own. IGs and SBs also act as guardians of OA's Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of OA Service. Intergroups, service boards, and regions are all "service bodies."

When an intergroup or service board has been formed, each group usually elects a representative to attend IG/SB meetings on behalf of the group. This is a way to keep groups connected to OA's worldwide network of recovering compulsive overeaters so that all members are aware of information and have a voice and a vote at the region and world service levels. It also enables individuals to volunteer at various levels of service.

Along with keeping their group informed about the activities of the IG/SB or of other groups represented at the meeting, the representative usually participates in service actions undertaken by the IG/SB, such as recovery marathons or workshops that serve its associated meetings or OA as a whole. Intergroup/service board representatives may, in the course of their service, meet abstinent members who are available as speakers and sponsors and/or hear from other representatives how their group has resolved a problem.

Some IGs/SBs meet virtually. Contact the IG/SB for meeting information and/or to make the IG/SB aware of any changes affecting it. Most IGs/SBs have websites with information specific to their associated groups, but the best way to get this information is for the group's representative to attend the IG's/SB's meetings.

Further, an IG/SB representative may be selected by that IG/SB to serve as its region representative or World Service Business Conference delegate. If a meeting is not affiliated with an IG/SB, it may still participate in region meetings and events. In this way, group members contribute to the group conscience of OA as a whole and find out what is happening at the region and world service levels.

For more information about the types of service boards and their functions, see "Service Beyond the Group Level: Intergroups and Service Boards" in this publication.

Contact list person

This member maintains a contact list of the group's regular attendees for program and outreach phone calls, sponsorship service, and other Twelfth Step work.

Designated downloader

Some members of the OA Fellowship may not have access to computers. Any member with computer skills, internet access, and a printer can keep group members informed of new information posted on the OA website and region and intergroup/service board websites by being the designated downloader. This person can provide copies of OA online documents, the *WSO*

News Bulletin, service body newsletters, service opportunity information, the OA literature order form, meeting lists, public information materials, flyers, and announcements of OA events.

Designated downloaders fluent in languages other than English can also translate and share that same material, creating much-needed bridges to those who speak languages other than English.

Greeter/newcomer coordinator

The greeter/newcomer coordinator welcomes and follows up with any new or returning members. Larger meetings may have a welcoming committee composed of several members who are willing to serve as greeters. This gives more members the chance both to meet and greet newcomers and returning members and to make follow-up calls in the week(s) after the initial meeting. All members are encouraged to welcome newcomers and returning members regardless of the size of the meeting.

Literature representative

The literature representative orders, displays, and sells literature on behalf of the group, ensuring that an adequate supply of OA-approved literature is available. Most face-to-face meetings have the following books: *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*; the AA *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition*; *For Today*; and *Voices of Recovery, Second Edition*. It is important that the most current literature be available so all members hear the same message. In addition, it is recommended that meetings offer *The Tools of Recovery*, *Where Do I Start?*, and other pamphlets exploring various aspects of our program of recovery.

Some meetings use OA-approved literature as their meeting's focus, and face-to-face meetings might purchase copies of that literature for members to use during the meeting. The librarian—who may or may not be the same individual who is in charge of ordering and selling literature—keeps track of the meeting's literature, sees that there are enough copies on hand, and ensures that all are returned at the end of the meeting to be safely stored.

Virtual meetings might share a link to the book's product page on the OA bookstore so members can buy the literature from an authorized seller. The literature representative may also be able to assist newcomers and returning members in acquiring digital OA books and pamphlets. For further information about sharing OA literature at a virtual meeting, see *Videoconference Meeting Training and Security/Preventive Measures* at oa.org.

Most groups sell literature for the same price they pay (including shipping), but some give pamphlets to new and returning members for free. This is a matter for the group conscience to determine.

Our Sixth Tradition prevents us from using, displaying, or selling non-OA-approved literature. (See the *OA-Approved Literature List* at oa.org.)

The income from literature sales helps to support world service, offsets the costs incurred in creating our literature, and enables OA to carry our message of recovery around the world.

Point of contact

This group member serves as the group's contact on Find a Meeting at oa.org and on meeting lists published by intergroups/service boards.

Public outreach representative

This group member leads such outreach projects for meetings as posting on or developing a public bulletin board. The person with this position may also participate in the intergroup's/service board's outreach projects.

Recorder

This group member records speaker shares (where applicable). This task may also be done by the virtual host.

Recovery medallion person

This group member gives anniversary medallions (sometimes called "coins" or "chips") to group members to acknowledge abstinence milestones. Recovery medallions are available at bookstore.oa.org.

Speaker recruiter/program chair

This person recruits and handles all aspects of scheduling leaders and speakers for each meeting, including the following:

- maintaining a calendar with scheduled speakers and open dates,
- confirming the speaker's attendance in advance, and
- obtaining written consent from speakers if the meeting intends to record the speaker.

Virtual host/key holder

In virtual meetings, the host opens the videoconference meeting and monitors attendees to ensure meeting guidelines are followed. The host is also responsible for maintaining the online safety of the meeting to protect it from those who would disrupt it. The virtual host may ask for volunteers to act as meeting co-hosts to assist in this duty. At the end of the meeting, the virtual host closes the meeting on the online platform by ending the videoconference.

In face-to-face meetings, the key holder opens the door, prepares the room, and cleans the room up after the meeting.

For further information about online meeting security, see *Videoconference Meeting Training and Security/Preventive Measures* at oa.org.

Rotation of Service Is Important

As a term of service ends, the member who has fulfilled the position's responsibilities "rotates" out of the service position and a new member "rotates" in. The member leaving the position may then also rotate into a new service position. In this way, personality issues are minimized, power and prestige are curtailed, and no one stagnates or is imposed upon. Rotation of service also ensures that more members can share in the rewards of giving service.

To step out of a service position one loves can be difficult. If we have been doing a good job; if our OA fellows agree; and if there doesn't appear to be anyone else willing, qualified, or available to do it, it's especially hard. But letting go and trusting can be a step forward in personal growth—a step into the humility that is the spiritual essence of anonymity.

Anonymity in OA means, among other things, that we forgo the personal prestige that may come with any OA work we do to help other compulsive overeaters. With no OA "status" at stake, we are free to serve as we are needed. Rotation brings spiritual rewards far more enduring than any fame, title, or praise.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Business or Group Conscience Meeting

A business or "group conscience" meeting takes place when members discuss the business of the group, allowing members to work together and agree how best to proceed in the interests of OA as a whole. Group conscience describes the way in which individuals are inspired to reach a decision and is spiritually more than a simple majority vote. Essentially, group conscience means the *collective will* of an OA group.

How Business Group Conscience Meetings Are Organized

Once an OA group is established, regularly scheduled business meetings ensure that group issues are discussed. Changes in meeting format, allocation of group funds, election of officers, abstinence and program requirements for service positions, service reports, and other important business matters are always decided by a group conscience. Regular meetings of this kind can help resolve group issues before they become problems.

How a group finds its group conscience often depends on whether the group views a particular issue as serious. During a meeting, consensus may simply develop, and a process is changed or implemented as a result. The decision is usually recorded in the meeting's minutes.

For complex issues, however, or where members appear to be passionately divided, a group often adopts more formal decision-making methods, such as making, discussing, amending, and voting on a motion. Often the group sets a date for decision-making a few weeks or months

ahead to provide adequate notice of the discussion. Sometimes members are asked to do research and bring information to the scheduled meeting. The decision is recorded and communicated to members of the group.

Any member of the group may request that an issue be added to the business meeting's agenda, and all group members are welcome to attend. Business meetings may be held before, during, after, or separately from the group's regular meeting.

Guidelines for a Group Conscience Meeting is available at oa.org.

Applying the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts of OA Service Through Group Conscience

Concept Twelve (d) says: "All important decisions shall be reached by discussion, vote and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity."

A group finds "substantial unanimity" by appealing to the concept of a Higher Power in which we as individuals have placed our will and our lives. Finding substantial unanimity is a spiritually rewarding process of discovery in which OA group members practice freeing themselves of self-will for the benefit of OA.

OA groups have found that it is vitally important for the group to seek as wide a consensus as possible, and they work hard to find a way to reconcile differing opinions. They find that these efforts are rewarded by creative ideas, and a consensus by group conscience ultimately results in decisions far better than what any one individual may have suggested.

A close vote is usually an indication that a group conscience has not yet been reached. Many groups have found it advisable not to act on a close vote, but rather to appoint a small committee of supporters and critics of the idea to try to develop consensus and report back to the group. This way, even those members who might ultimately disagree with the group conscience can still feel that their participation was worthwhile and accept the group conscience in a spirit of recovery and goodwill.

Of course, no decision is truly final. We are always capable of learning from our decisions. An OA group might develop a group conscience on one day, or during several consecutive meetings, and discover a better idea six months after that. Change is part of the process of recovery.

Resolving Group Issues

Sometimes a potential group problem becomes a group blessing because of the wisdom gained in discussing the issue. Group issues are often evidence of a healthy diversity of opinion among the members. Facing group issues gives us an opportunity to learn how to "practice these principles in all our affairs" (Step Twelve).

Sometimes problems involve honest disagreement between members. Group problems might be simple misunderstandings easily resolved in discussion, or they may involve members trying to

change other members' behaviors or opinions. Perhaps two people use the same words to mean different things, or members may agree on a goal but have different opinions on how to attain it.

Common issues that merit a group conscience discussion may include:

- ensuring that all members feel heard in discussions (not just longtime members),
- retaining newcomers in the group,
- increasing attendance at the meeting,
- handling inappropriate behavior, and/or
- getting more volunteers to help with group tasks.

Many groups have faced (and solved!) problems like these and more using the *Guidelines for a Group Conscience Meeting*.

Focusing on the following Spiritual Principles seems to lead groups away from trouble and toward growth:

- unity—unity within the group,
- solidarity—harmony with OA groups and our OA Fellowship as a whole,
- consideration—listening to all points of view, and
- trust—trust that what we share is not open to comment or debate—in other words, no cross talk.

Moreover, a sense of humor, patience, and courtesy; willingness to sit still and listen; a need for fairness; and trust in a Higher Power have been found far more useful than legalistic arguments or personal accusations. OA experience also shows that goodwill, honesty, selflessness, and a spirit of love and service prevails if we make an honest effort to “place principles before personalities” (Tradition Twelve).

In most cases, groups can find harmony by studying OA's Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts of OA Service, along with this *Handbook*. The result can be an even better group than before. Groups might also consider contacting the intergroup/service board chair, region chair, or trustee liaison assigned to their region.

Group Inventories

Most groups occasionally take a “group inventory,” often using an entire meeting for an honest and fearless discussion of the group's strengths and weaknesses. A group inventory and the discourse it inspires often revitalize a group's health. Discussion topics for a Tenth Step inventory meeting can include the following questions:

- What is the purpose of the group?
- Can the group do more to carry the message?
- Is the group reaching compulsive overeaters in the community?
- Does the group offer an online way to attend meetings?

- Does the group keep meeting and contact information current on their intergroup's/service board's websites and on Find a Meeting at oa.org?
- Has the group done any recent outreach activities to carry the OA message to health care providers, clergy, teachers, or other professionals who can be helpful in reaching those who need OA?
- Is the group attracting a representational cross section of the community?
- Does the group use various media resources to let people know about the meeting?
- Do newcomers to the meeting return? If not, why not?
- How can sponsorship opportunities be improved?
- Has the group done all it can to provide an attractive, accessible, safe meeting space?
- Do all group members understand the value to their own recovery of doing service?
- Are opportunities to participate in group activities given to every member?
- Are service people chosen with care and consideration, placing principles before personalities, for the welfare of the group as a whole?
- Does the group do its fair share to support the intergroup/service board? Region? World service?
- Are all members periodically informed about the service structure of OA and the international reach of OA?
- Is the Principle of anonymity maintained? Do members of the group avoid gossip, remembering, "What you hear here, let it stay here"?

Groups are encouraged to add questions that are meaningful to them. For more suggestions, see the *Strong Meeting Checklist*, the *OA Group Inventory* guideline, and the *Service, Traditions, and Concepts Workshop Manual* at oa.org. See also the *Twelfth-Step-Within Handbook*, available at bookstore.oa.org.

Small Group Challenges

Small meetings or meetings in small towns face their own particular challenges. There may be few or no people with long-term abstinence or experience in the OA program who can share their strength and hope. Over time, overfamiliarity with each other's stories can make the group's sharing feel stale or repetitive. Sponsors may also be hard to find, especially if members avoid sponsoring personal friends.

The size of a meeting does not, however, determine its quality. Smaller meetings and meetings in small or isolated towns may be more intimate and provide more time for members to share. Members may make personal connections more quickly, and it may be easier to see and hear fellow members in a small meeting. These meetings can prosper, and newcomers can find inspiration if members focus their shares on how working the Twelve Steps can lead to recovery.

There are thousands of recovering OA members around the world who have access to only one or two small face-to-face meetings. In fact, many members have long-term recovery precisely because they have been willing to go to any length to get it. Members in small meetings or a small town can find abstinence and support their recovery by:

- working OA's Twelve Step program of recovery, one day at a time;

- traveling to visit other meetings, inviting members from groups in nearby towns to visit, and going to OA events, such as workshops, retreats, and marathons (See the “Group and Service Body Events” section in this publication for more information. For event listings, see the Event Calendar at oa.org and OA intergroup/service board websites.);
- attending OA conventions and listening to convention recordings (For scheduled conventions, see the Event Calendar at oa.org and look for announcements on OA intergroup/service board websites. To obtain OA World Service Convention recordings, see the World Service Convention page at oa.org.);
- sponsoring, even on a temporary basis (See *Temporary Sponsors: Newcomers’ First Twelve Days* in the Document Library at oa.org for a helpful guide to sponsoring newcomers temporarily while a long-term sponsor can be found.);
- looking to non-local or virtual meetings for experienced, abstinent sponsors;
- inviting speakers to attend meetings virtually by videoconference or phone;
- suggesting that fellow members attend additional OA phone or online meetings to hear experience, strength, and hope from members around the world;
- listening to OA recordings or podcasts;
- taking on a higher level of responsibility, such as being the meeting treasurer, secretary, leader, or service body representative;
- maintaining a supply of OA-approved literature available to members to buy or borrow;
- studying and practicing the Traditions to strengthen the meeting;
- showing up to meetings, even if only one person attends for weeks or months, to ensure newcomers have a chance at recovery;
- setting up a public information booth at community events; or
- visiting an intergroup/service board meeting or a region assembly or inviting someone from the intergroup, service board, or region or the region’s trustee liaison to speak at a meeting, so the group may be informed about its part in OA’s overall service structure.

Going to “ninety meetings in ninety days” (one suggestion for accelerating recovery) is now available to everyone via virtual meetings. Lists of virtual meetings can be found on Find a Meeting at oa.org.

The Strength of Meetings of All Sizes

Tradition Five makes clear that the primary purpose of every OA group is to carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps to those who still suffer. Meetings that grow and thrive stay focused on abstinence and recovery from compulsive eating and offer help to those who are struggling to get abstinent. Flourishing groups go out of their way to make everyone—newcomers, longtimers, and members in relapse—feel welcome. Healthy meetings do strong Twelfth Step work, welcome newcomers, establish service opportunities, have members who have sponsors and are willing to sponsor, and make a sincere effort to contact those who haven’t been at meetings for a while.

Hope is the greatest gift we give to all members. The message is clear around the world: “Together we can. We are not alone.”

1332 **Outreach**

1333
1334 Compulsive overeaters who are still suffering cannot be helped by OA unless they know the
1335 Fellowship exists and where to find it. Groups and service bodies can publicize meetings many
1336 ways. Whether print or digital, announcements should include the following information:
1337 meeting name, place and time, location and/or how to sign in, and a phone and/or email contact.
1338

1339 Many people visit Find a Meeting at oa.org seeking information about virtual meetings and/or
1340 meetings in their area. It is vital that groups register and keep meeting information current with
1341 the World Service Office and their intergroup/service board.
1342

1343 Groups may also want to reach out to health care professionals who can refer their patients and
1344 clients to OA. Flyers can be given to hospitals and clinics, doctors and nurses, social and health
1345 agencies, and businesses. When contacting professionals, we can assure them that the OA
1346 program is available to enhance—not replace— existing treatment programs for those already
1347 under medical supervision.
1348

1349 For more outreach materials, see the Public Information and Professional Outreach (PIPO) page
1350 at oa.org. The *Public Information and Professional Service Manual* and *When Should I Refer*
1351 *Someone to Overeaters Anonymous?* pamphlet, available at bookstore.oa.org, are also useful.
1352

1353 **Keep Them Coming Back**

1354
1355 Newcomers are more likely to return if they see and hear recovery in action and if someone in
1356 the group gives them personal attention and encouragement. For instance:
1357

- 1358 • The group might ask a recovering member to serve as the greeter at each meeting. This
1359 person is responsible for letting newcomers know they are important to the meeting and
1360 that they are not alone. The greeter can get newcomers' names and contact information
1361 and then call them the next week to invite them back and answer questions.
- 1362 • If it is common for group members to gather or stay online for fellowship after meetings,
1363 the group can invite newcomers to join.
- 1364 • Members of the group might offer transportation or technical help, if needed.
- 1365 • The group can help newcomers get involved as soon as possible. Let them know how
1366 they can contribute to the group and OA as a whole.
1367

1368 For more suggestions, see the *Guidelines for Membership Retention* at oa.org.
1369

1370 **Twelfth Step Within (Help for Members Experiencing Relapse)**

1371
1372 Receiving a warm welcome at meetings is one of the most important factors contributing to a
1373 member's recovery from relapse. Many members have found such acceptance essential to their
1374 eventually finding abstinence.
1375

1376 In addition to using the *Suggested Recovery-from-Relapse Meeting Format*, some meetings read
1377 the following:

We all need to be loved and accepted, not because we are abstinent, not because we are at goal weight, but just for who we are. This is especially true of OA members who are still suffering. They have been in program for some time, perhaps for months, maybe even years, but either they have not yet attained abstinence or they are in relapse. When asked what helped them most, people who have gone through this painful experience agree on one thing: being loved and accepted—even when they were compulsively overeating, even when they were falling apart emotionally, even when they felt hopeless and unlovable—was the key to their eventually loving and accepting themselves and, from there, getting abstinent.¹⁹

For more suggestions how individuals, groups, and service bodies can support members in relapse, see the *Twelfth-Step-Within Handbook*, available at bookstore.aa.org.

Ensuring Meetings Feel Safe

For recovery to progress, members need to feel safe and comfortable when attending and sharing in their meetings. Attendees trust the group leader, secretary, and/or virtual-meeting host to ensure the meeting feels nonthreatening and is free from disruptions, which can sometimes mean muting or removing a disruptive person.

Clear guidelines in the group's meeting format, based on group-conscience decisions, can help groups maintain a safe meeting space. The following guidelines are recommended:

- Read the statement discouraging cross talk from the *Suggested Meeting Format*.
- Use a timekeeper or other agreed-upon method to gently remind members to wrap up their share.
- State the group's decisions regarding specific distracting behaviors, such as smoking, eating, mentioning specific foods, the presence of children and pets, and more.
- Outline steps to be taken to deal with potential or actual disruptions.

While anyone with the “desire to stop eating compulsively” is welcome in OA (Tradition Three), *no* member should feel unsafe. Most situations can be resolved within the group. For suggestions on how to proceed in difficult situations within the group, see OA's *Guidelines for Addressing Disruptive Behavior Affecting Overeaters Anonymous* at oa.org.

For more recommendations on how to conduct a safe meeting, see [Videoconference Meeting Training and Security/Preventive Measures](#) at oa.org.

Security Considerations for Virtual Meetings

¹⁹ *Members in Relapse* (Overeaters Anonymous, Inc., © 1985) p. 1

Online groups face their own specific safety challenges. Videoconference and hybrid meetings are susceptible to disruptions, intrusion attempts, and deepfake threats, which can erode members' sense of security and willingness to seek recovery through sharing their experience. It is important to have a plan in place for addressing those who want to detract from and disrupt meetings. For guidelines for how to ensure your meeting's security and how to respond to threats, see OA's *Videoconference Meeting Training and Security/Preventive Measures* in the Document Library at oa.org.

STARTING NEW MEETINGS

New meetings are started by two or more individuals who meet to practice the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, guided by the Twelve Concepts of OA Service. Nearly every meeting starts small, and some meetings grow to have many members, but all meetings contain the basis of our program structure.

A good place to begin is by determining the location and/or digital platform, the day and time (or neither, as in non-real-time meetings), and the specific topic or focus for the meeting, if any. "Specific topic" includes literature, recovery from relapse, and welcoming newcomers, while "specific focus" includes anorexia/bulimia, health issues, and LGBTQ+. For more examples of meetings with a specific topic or focus, go to Find a Meeting at oa.org and click "Additional search options."

Houses of worship, hospitals, community rooms, and libraries are good places to inquire about hosting a face-to-face meeting. Looking at where other Twelve Step fellowships meet may also help. When selecting a space, consider if it is conveniently located, near parking and public transportation, well-lit and safe, accessible, comfortable, and furnished with seating that will accommodate all sizes. It's best to host a meeting in a neutral place, as opposed to a member's home. Groups can flourish, however, even when an ideal meeting site is not available.

Virtual meetings can pick a digital platform and should become familiar with the platform's terms and conditions. When setting up the meeting, consider anonymity, security, and how or if members' shares will be recorded, archived, or deleted.

Both face-to-face and virtual meetings may consider if the group wants to be a hybrid meeting, so that members can attend by either method. Whatever the meeting format, it's essential that at least one person attends the meeting on the day and time designated in order to be present and welcoming when another compulsive eater arrives.

A new group becomes an official OA meeting by registering with the World Service Office and receiving a group number. It is important that new groups also notify their local or virtual intergroup or service board to be listed in their meeting directory. Notifying neighboring OA groups can also be helpful.

How will one know if there is a need for a new group? Are there compulsive overeaters in the area who need OA but who don't know help is available? Is there a specific focus that a new meeting could support? Millions of people have never heard of OA. Many others misunderstand

the program, including still-suffering compulsive overeaters and referring professionals, such as doctors, nurses, hospital workers, nutritionists, counselors, social workers, members of the clergy, crisis-intervention staffs, and others. When starting a new meeting, talk to people and explain what OA is—and especially what it is not. Tell them about the new OA meeting and give them OA literature, such as *About OA*, *In OA*, *Recovery Is Possible*, and *When Should I Refer Someone to Overeaters Anonymous?*, all available at bookstore.oa.org.

Here are the steps a single member in a geographical area with no OA groups took to establish a new meeting.

1. The member ordered a *New Group Starter Kit* at bookstore.oa.org.
2. The member arranged a meeting place and set the day and time for the meeting.
3. The member ran a small ad in the local newspaper with the meeting place and time. (Some newspapers provide free announcements for nonprofit organizations, or the cost may be reimbursed from the Seventh Tradition collection after the group is established.)
4. The member contacted the local radio station for a public service announcement. (See the *Public Information and Professional Outreach Service Manual* for suggestions, available at bookstore.oa.org.)
5. The member registered the group at oa.org.
6. The member affiliated with the nearest intergroup/national service board when registering at oa.org.

Now dozens of groups are flourishing in the region.

To become established and grow, a group can:

- directly notify the local or virtual intergroup/service board of the new meeting,
- post OA outreach materials in community directories, on bulletin boards (physical and virtual), and on social media (Members can find public information posters at oa.org and bookstore.oa.org),
- set up a public information booth at community events, and
- place signage outside the face-to-face meeting to increase awareness.

More meeting resources are available at oa.org, including *How to Start a Meeting of Overeaters Anonymous*.

Getting Started in a Small Community

Members starting an OA group in a small town can overcome the challenge of establishing a meeting if they are willing to make themselves known to the community as OA members. Remember: It is not a break of anonymity to talk to people about our personal OA membership. In fact, carrying the message to compulsive overeaters is part of the recovery process (Step Twelve). We can disclose our own membership but not the membership of anyone else, and not at the level of public media (Tradition Eleven).

A small meeting or a meeting in a small community can be a beacon of hope for the still-suffering compulsive eater. Tips to help these types of meetings succeed include the following actions:

- Rotate leaders each week.
- As soon as the group is established, plan a meeting with visitors (open) and invite community members, such as the mayor or another city official, doctors, nurses, teachers, members of the clergy, and health and social workers, to attend. Arrange for one or two OA members to talk about the OA program and its availability locally and worldwide. It's important to explain the Principle of anonymity to those not familiar with our Traditions.
- Ask a well-established OA group to "adopt" the new group, such as by exchanging recorded meetings and corresponding with group members.
- Keep a supply of OA-approved books and pamphlets available for sale or to borrow.
- Once the group has started, it is essential to provide continuity for the meeting, that at least one person is at the meeting on the day and time designated.

When starting a new meeting in a small town, the local service body can be a good source for additional resources.

Insurance Requirements for a Group or Service Body

To protect the autonomy of OA meeting groups and service bodies, the Board of Trustees has decided not to purchase liability insurance coverage for any entity other than Overeaters Anonymous, Inc. However, the information below may assist groups and service bodies when the need for liability insurance arises.

Meetings that require a certificate of insurance for their meeting location might try these options:

- A meeting member should contact the location's manager and ask if the group can be placed on the location's policy as an additional insured. It is possible that, once it is understood that the OA meeting can be considered a low risk, the certificate of insurance requirement might be waived. Otherwise, the cost would be much less than for a separate liability policy.
- Service bodies can contact a local or online business insurance company and request information and pricing for liability insurance that covers the service body and includes proof of insurance for its affiliated OA meeting groups.

Service bodies that require a certificate of insurance for an event might try these options:

- The service body should have their liability insurance agent add events to the definition of general service body operations. In this way, the event(s) would be covered under their general liability policy.
- The service body can contact the insurer of the event location and request to be placed on the location's policy as an additional insured.

- Separate event insurance can be purchased. Costs will vary significantly, depending on the length of event, number of attendees and type of event. Contact a business insurance agent and request event insurance.

OA FELLOWSHIP BEYOND REGULAR MEETINGS

Many OA members report that they gain almost as much from getting together before or after the meeting as they do from the meeting itself. Many groups schedule a break during the meeting, which is an ideal time to talk with newcomers, returning members, and members seeking sponsors. Sometimes members gather for informal fellowship after the meeting, either virtually or in person. Members should take care that people don't feel excluded by inviting everyone, especially newcomers, to join.

Organized OA events also give members opportunities to expand their program knowledge and gather for fun and fellowship.

Group and Service Body Events

OA events, such as conventions, assemblies, retreats, workshops, and marathons (defined below), are frequently held virtually and in person around the world. You can learn about upcoming OA events on Event Calendar at oa.org, on OA service body websites, and in newsletters. Attending OA events is an excellent way to strengthen personal recovery and meet abstinent members who may make good speakers or sponsors. Gathering a group of OA members to travel together to face-to-face events can turn the journey itself into a valuable recovery encounter as members share their experience, strength, and hope along the way. Volunteer opportunities, such as helping plan or staff an event, are also available.

If the event is sponsored by a registered OA group or service body, it is bound by the Twelve Traditions and may use the Overeaters Anonymous name and OA mailing lists. Both the Overeaters Anonymous and OA names and the OA trademarks (logos) must be shown with the registration mark (®) and must be customized by printing the name of the registered OA group or service body sponsoring the event beneath the OA trademarks. For permission to use the OA name and trademarks, groups and service bodies must submit a Logo Request form, available at oa.org.

OA-owned trademarks are held in trust for the OA Fellowship as a whole. Receiving written permission to use the trademarks allows a group or service body to identify itself as an officially registered OA group or service body while respecting OA's trademarks.

Events not sponsored by a registered OA group or service body may not use the OA name, trademarks, or mailing lists.

Activities held under the auspices of religious or other outside enterprises are not OA events (Tradition Six). While some OA members may attend as individuals, there is no relationship between OA and any religious or secular organization.

OA events may be held face-to-face, virtually, or as a hybrid gathering, allowing attendance by either method. Virtual or hybrid recovery events allow more members to attend from around the world. These are the mostly commonly held events:

- **Workshops** are gatherings intended to expand members' program as well as provide opportunities to socialize. Workshops are commonly sponsored by a service body. They give access to speakers, information for gaining or improving recovery, and the joy of being with other compulsive eaters.
- **Marathons** are a succession of individual meetings, such as a meeting held every hour from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. These are often held during "food-focused" holidays to provide additional support for members.
- **Retreats** are gatherings for the purpose of being immersed in recovery in a relaxed, fun, inspirational, and distraction-free environment. These are often held over a weekend in a quiet location different from the usual meeting places. An experienced member often serves as the retreat leader, guiding participants through a program of reflection.
- **Conventions** are celebratory events sponsored by service bodies or at the world service level, held periodically. Conventions provide a forum for experiencing fellowship, hearing speakers from all over the world, and participating in workshops on various OA topics. These are recovery events, open to all members. Some conventions are also open to guests.
- **Assemblies** are gatherings of service body representatives who meet at least once a year to discuss, vote on, and conduct the business of their region. Sometimes regions hold their assembly and convention at the same time.

World Service Events

There are five annual world service events established by World Service Business Conference and recognized by OA's worldwide Fellowship. Celebrations held in conjunction with these events, such as retreats and workshops, are most commonly presented by groups and service bodies. The OA-recognized events are the following:

- **OA Birthday** is recognized the third full weekend (Friday included) of January as the celebration of the January 19, 1960, founding of Overeaters Anonymous.
- **Unity Day** is recognized the last Saturday in February in even years and the last Sunday in February in odd years at 11:30 a.m. local time. Unity Day celebrates the connection of all members and groups of OA to one another and affirms the love and understanding shared by members of our Fellowship. The celebration emphasizes Tradition One: "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on OA unity." To strengthen our collective bond, all OA members are encouraged to take a moment of silence to express their gratitude for the OA program at 11:30 a.m. wherever they may be.
- **Sponsorship Day** is recognized the third full weekend (Friday included) in August. It was established to acknowledge that sponsoring is vital to recovery and to encourage all members to participate in sponsoring.
- **International Day Experiencing Abstinence (IDEA)** is recognized the third full weekend (Friday included) in November. It was established to encourage members to

reaffirm or begin their abstinence from compulsive overeating and compulsive food behaviors—even if only for one day.

- **International Twelfth Step Within Day** is recognized on December 12 (12/12). The purpose is to encourage OA service bodies, meetings, and individual members to reach out to those within the Fellowship who are still suffering from compulsive eating behaviors. A service body or group might host a special meeting or marathon on relapse and recovery and encourage attendees to contact members they haven't seen in a while.

For OA event guidelines, materials, and workshops and to publish your event on OA's Event Calendar, see oa.org.

SERVICE BEYOND THE GROUP LEVEL: INTERGROUPS AND SERVICE BOARDS

Groups have often found that carrying the message is more successful if they and neighboring groups pool their efforts, especially in area-wide or virtual projects. This can lead to the formation of an intergroup or a national service board, which acts as the liaison between groups and the region. The intergroup or national service board may then affiliate with its region, which acts as the liaison between its affiliated groups and world service.

We use the term “service boards” when referring collectively to national service boards, language service boards, and specific-focus service boards. We use the term “service bodies” to refer to intergroups, service boards, and regions.

Introduction to Service Bodies

Service bodies are formed to support groups in matters a group would find difficult to accomplish on its own. They provide support and represent the groups from which they are formed and act as guardians of OA's Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of OA Service.

There are five types of OA service bodies:

- **Intergroups (IGs)** are composed of two or more groups that have formed a service body for the purpose of supporting and representing the groups affiliated with it. Each state/province/country may have at least one service body (intergroup or national service board). In a state/province/country having only one group, that group may function as an intergroup. Each affiliated group selects a member to represent it at its intergroup.
- **National Service Boards (NSBs)** are composed of groups and intergroups that share a common purpose. NSBs deal with issues that require the combination of membership and financial resources of intergroups and groups established within a single country. NSBs may be a legal entity. Not all countries have national service boards.
- **Language Service Boards (LSBs)** are composed of groups, intergroups, and national service boards to serve the common needs of a language group, regardless of geographic proximity.

- **Specific Focus Service Boards (SFSBs)** are composed of two or more groups or intergroups to serve the common needs of groups and intergroups with the same specific focus, regardless of geographic proximity.
- **Regions:** There are eleven regions: one virtual region and ten geographic regions, each composed of intergroups, groups, and service boards that fall within its region. Subject to region and Board of Trustees approval, language or specific-focus service boards that span more than one region may choose to affiliate with any single region or choose not to be affiliated with a region. See “Regions” in this publication.

Each intergroup/service board has the autonomy to determine, as guided by the OA Traditions and Concepts of Service, which groups and intergroups may affiliate with it, and is accountable to these groups and intergroups. To be recognized by OA, an intergroup/service board must register with the World Service Office and receive a registration number. To register, go to Find a Meeting at oa.org.

Affiliation and Participation

In OA, there is a difference between “affiliation” and “participation,” which can be confusing. The purpose of **affiliation** is to help OA count groups and service bodies for fair representation and to encourage the flow of support and information to intergroups, national service boards, and regions. The purpose of **participation** is to facilitate the support and flow of information within groups and service bodies that have a common need: language and specific-focus service boards.

A group may choose to affiliate with one intergroup. An intergroup may affiliate with a national service board if it exists and may choose to affiliate with the national service board’s region or choose to remain in the currently assigned region. If a group is not affiliated with either an intergroup or a national service board, it is counted as an **unaffiliated** group within the region where the group exists (geographically or virtually). A virtual group may choose to affiliate with either a geographic or virtual intergroup or national service board.

Any group or service body may *with permission* participate in the activities (including voting) of another intergroup, national service board, language service board, and/or specific-focus service board, and region. Although a group or service body may participate in a language or specific-focus service board, its original affiliation remains the same. For example, an intergroup in South America might participate in a Spanish-language service board, but based on its geographic location, it would remain affiliated with Region Eight. A virtual intergroup might participate in a Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) specific-focus service board, but it would remain affiliated with the Virtual Region.

An intergroup may *affiliate* with one national service board if it exists, shall be *affiliated* with one region, and may *participate* in one or more language service boards. A national service board is *affiliated* with the region where its nation exists and may *participate* in one or more language service boards.

A language or specific-focus service board may affiliate with only one region. If the language or specific-focus service board spans more than one region, it may choose with which region to

affiliate. If the service board does not choose, the Board of Trustee chair assigns a trustee to serve as liaison to the service board.

See oa.org for the *Affiliation and Participation Flow Chart*.

Intergroups and National Service Boards

Intergroups and national service boards (IGs and NSBs) function similarly, except that an NSB represents an entire country, so they are primarily land-based. Land-based IGs are established primarily by geographic location. Virtual IGs are composed primarily of virtual groups regardless of geographic proximity. Hybrid meetings may choose to participate with any land-based service body.

Functions of Intergroups and National Service Boards

While the primary purpose for intergroups and national service boards (IGs and NSBs) is the same as every OA group and service body—“to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers” (Tradition Five)—they also provide group representation at their region assemblies and the World Service Business Conference, OA’s annual business meeting. They may also manage administrative functions, such as the following:

- create and maintain IG/NSB websites; most people coming to OA find their way to a meeting through Find a Meeting at oa.org or an IG’s/NSB’s website;
- maintain meeting lists in local and online directories, distribute meeting lists, and respond to phone, email, and mail inquiries;
- maintain a presence on social media;
- provide meeting space and platforms for its groups;
- sponsor and arrange workshops, marathons, and other special events aimed at educating, informing, and helping members to strengthen their personal recovery;
- record event speakers and make the recordings available as podcasts;
- publish newsletters or bulletins regularly to keep groups informed about each other and upcoming OA events;
- develop campaigns to spread awareness of OA, including creating flyers, transportation ads, and online ads;
- respond to public information requests from news media, including arranging radio, TV, and online public service announcements and programs about OA and furnishing OA speakers for outside organizations;
- contact health care and other referring professionals to share information about OA that may support their clients’ recovery from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors;
- share literature with libraries, eating disorder treatment centers, and public health agencies;
- keep a list of abstinent OA speakers available to groups;
- help new members find sponsors;
- provide OA-approved literature for use and sale;
- pay sales tax for literature, if applicable; and/or

- maintain an office if there is a need and groups can support it financially.

National service boards may also have responsibilities associated with banking regulations, tax authorities, leases, insurance, translations, and literature production and sales not normally handled by intergroups.

Group Participation in Intergroups and National Service Boards

Intergroups and national service boards (IGs and NSBs) are in a unique position to help those still suffering within OA, as well as those outside of OA. A few representatives working together on an IG/NSB committee can accomplish more than groups operating independently. These service boards depend on active participation by groups and members, who can take on the following responsibilities:

- send a representative from the group to the IG's/NSB's meetings (When selecting a representative, groups will want to review the service body's abstinence requirements.);
- make time in the group meeting to hear the report their representative made to the service body;
- attend IG/NSB meetings and/or serve on an IG/NSB committee (A member does not need to be an IG/NSB representative to do this service.);
- sign up to receive information directly from the IG/NSB;
- volunteer to be the contact for newcomer, general, or after-hours calls if the IG/NSB has an office;
- put one's name on the IG/NSB speakers' or sponsors' list;
- plan and host an OA recovery event;
- send a portion of the meeting's Seventh Tradition contributions to the IG/NSB; financial support for the IG/NSB comes from the groups that comprise it; and
- ensure members understand that the service body's effectiveness is only possible if members and groups contribute their time and financial resources to it.

The Intergroup/National Service Board Administrative Board

An intergroup/national service board (IG/NSB) administrative board may consist of the following service positions:

- **Chair:** leads the meetings
- **Vice chair:** supports the chair as needed, leads meetings when needed, and may maintain the service body's bylaws
- **Treasurer:** maintains the finances for the IG/NSB
- **Secretary:** maintains the meeting minutes and checks the service body's digital or physical mailbox
- **Recording secretary:** may take some of the secretary's roles, such as maintaining the minutes and/or correspondence

- **Region representative/World Service delegate:** serves as the IG/NSB representative to region assemblies and/or WSBC, bringing back reports from those meetings to the IG/NSB

IGs/NSBs may have committees, each with a chair, that focus on a particular kind of outreach, such as public information and professional outreach; newcomer; sponsorship; Twelfth Step within; anorexic, bulimic, and compulsive exerciser; e-media (website, social media, and/or podcasts); special events; and more. A national service board may also have a committee responsible for translating and distributing OA literature.

IGs/NSBs also elect one or more of the following:

- region representative who represents the IG/NSB at region assemblies, and
- World Service Business Conference (WSBC) delegate who is an IG/NSB member elected to attend and vote at the annual World Service Business Conference.

Region representatives and WSBC delegates must comply with the abstinence and length-of-service requirements specified in that body's bylaws. See "World Service Business Conference" in this publication.

The number of region assembly representatives and WSBC delegates an IG/NSB may have is based on the number of groups affiliated with it. A member may serve as an IG/NSB board member, region representative, and WSBC delegate at the same time. However, if the region representative/WSBC delegate is elected as a voting member of the IG/NSB board, they may not serve as a group representative to the IG/NSB at the same time.

Language Service Boards

Language service boards (LSBs) are composed of groups, intergroups, and national service boards to serve the common needs of a language group, such as translation of literature, regardless of geographic proximity. Each LSB composed of at least two groups may send one delegate to the World Service Business Conference.

Many LSBs form around providing translations of OA-approved literature. Translating literature is an important service to our fellow compulsive eaters, and through LSBs, members who share a language can work together regardless of location to translate, validate, and distribute OA literature. OA grows in countries where compulsive eaters can read program literature in their own language.

Translating can be done by groups or service bodies. All registered OA groups and service bodies have permission to translate and reprint any OA material currently on the OA website (downloadable PDF files or text) without written permission. The translated manuscript must include the following in the language of the translation: "This is a translation of OA-approved literature. © [date of translation] Copyrights Overeater Anonymous, Inc. All rights reserved." The translating group then sends a digital copy of the translation to the World Service Office to be placed in archives.

To translate and distribute other OA material, the groups or service bodies must submit license requests to the World Service Office. License 1 grants permission to translate a particular piece of literature and to circulate the translation for the purpose of validating its accuracy. License 2 grants permission to publish and distribute the approved translation. Both license agreements are found at oa.org.

Groups and service bodies may also apply for funds to assist with the translation process. The application, as well as *Guidelines for Translation of OA Literature and Materials*, can be found at oa.org.

Specific Focus Service Boards

Specific-focus service boards (SFSBs) are composed of two or more groups or intergroups to serve the common needs of groups and intergroups with the same specific focus, regardless of geographic proximity. Examples might be anorexia, bulimia, men, or Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) groups that want to join with other groups with the same focus. Specific-focus service boards can be partially or wholly composed of virtual groups. A specific-focus service board may have its own website where it can list in one place all OA meetings with a similar specific focus.

Each specific-focus service board composed of at least two groups may send one delegate to the World Service Business Conference.

Considerations for an Intergroup/Service Board

Intergroups and service boards register with the World Service Office (WSO) by completing a registration form on the OA website. For the registration to be recognized, the service board must submit its bylaws and/or summary of purpose and operating procedures to the WSO, each of which must not conflict with OA, Inc. Bylaws, as ascertained by review by the trustee liaison to the service board's region.

The Twelve Concepts of OA Service, available at bookstore.oa.org, contains valuable information for every intergroup/service board. Some also find the latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* helpful in conducting meetings.

The WSO sends a periodic **Service Body Bulletin** to the contact given in the registration form above.

It is recommended that intergroups and service boards keep accurate financial records from the start of their existence. In countries where intergroups/service boards seek to register as a nonprofit entity, complete, detailed financial records are required.

Intergroups/service boards registered as nonprofit organizations may qualify for benefits, such as being recognized as tax exempt. Depending on the laws of the country in which the group is located, a registered nonprofit may be exempt from some taxes. For example, the

intergroup/service board might not have to pay sales tax on literature purchases.

Intergroups/service boards with nonprofit status could also save money when holding events or sending mailers. Additionally, in the US, member contributions to a registered tax-exempt organization may be tax deductible for the individual contributor.

Creating a nonprofit corporation and/or obtaining tax-exempt status can be a complex process.

The intergroup/service board should determine whether any received benefits are worth the effort required to maintain the necessary detailed records and the obligation to submit annual filings to maintain their status.

Intergroups/Service Boards Bylaws, Summary of Purpose, Policies and Procedures

An intergroup's/service board's bylaws or summary of purpose establishes the group's function and the structure by which it conducts business. It dictates the responsibilities and liabilities of the organization and defines its rules. The document contains specific information, such as titles and descriptions of officers and their duties, abstinence requirements for officers and representatives, ongoing committees, financial policies, and more.

A policies and procedures document defines the actions needed to carry out the bylaws. This document clarifies how the intergroup/service board operates on a day-to-day basis and provides specific instructions on the tasks that need to be accomplished, such as how the work gets done and who is responsible. Usually, policies and procedures are easier to amend than bylaws, so any operational methods likely to change belong in this document.

An intergroup's/service board's bylaws, summary of purpose, and/or policies and procedures pass on the history and wisdom of the group conscience. They give trusted servants an understanding of the structure of the intergroup/service board. Our tradition of rotation of service makes it important that this information is correct and current.

Many intergroups/service boards use one or all of these documents. Regardless of which document the intergroup/service board uses, the documents must conform with OA Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B and state that the service board's purpose is to aid with the problem of compulsive overeating using the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, guided by the Twelve Concepts of OA Service.

Sample intergroup/service board bylaws can be found at oa.org.

The Importance of Public Information through Service Bodies

The goal of OA public information is to carry our message of recovery to the compulsive eater who still suffers, and this can be done more easily when groups work together as part of a service board. While outreach activities are often coordinated by an intergroup or service board, the more groups that participate, the more successful the outreach is likely to be. It is individual members who carry the message by putting up bulletin board meeting notices, distributing flyers and newcomer information, and leaving the pamphlet *When Should I Refer Someone to Overeaters Anonymous?* at the office of their health care professional.

OA has a Public Communications Policy and offers literature; video, audio, and print/PDF resources; social media content; and a Professional Exhibits Fund to support public information and professional outreach (PIPO) efforts locally and online.

Outreach activities can be done within the scope of Tradition Eleven: “Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television and other public media of communication.” Remember: As members, we are anonymous. Overeaters Anonymous is not.

Public Communications Policy

It is proposed that Overeaters Anonymous adopt a Public Communications Policy. The purpose of the public communications policy is to assist Overeaters Anonymous to continue to grow the Fellowship and to carry its message to the compulsive eater who still suffers.

We fulfill our primary purpose most effectively by attraction and cooperation—not promotion or affiliation.

Overeaters Anonymous is attracting when it tells people why we are, what we are, what we do, and how; we let them know that we are available if and when help is needed. We state the facts, which are communicated via all available forms of public media, always stressing personal anonymity at the public level. Overeaters Anonymous is cooperating when it works with others, rather than alone. Working with others broadens our scope and contacts, and we reach more of those in need.

Overeaters Anonymous and registered service bodies may purchase ads or send press releases and public service announcements, including those in relation to special events and promotions, in all forms of public media, provided personal anonymity is maintained for members of Overeaters Anonymous (contact names on media communication can include any special worker associated with public communications, as well as the first names of individual members).

For more information on the implementation of this policy, see Overeaters Anonymous board-approved guidelines.²⁰

Find *When Should I Refer Someone to Overeaters Anonymous?*, *Bulletin Board Attraction Sticky Notes*, and the *Public Information and Professional Outreach Service Manual*, and other public outreach literature at bookstore.oa.org. The *Manual* is an invaluable “how-to” aid packed with ideas. For more outreach materials, see the Public Information and Professional Outreach page at oa.org.

Establishing Online Security Measures

²⁰ Business Conference Policy Manual, 2023b

Intergroups and service boards often manage websites with meeting lists, public information and professional outreach material, a method for collecting Seventh Tradition contributions, and other OA resources. With the ongoing increase in website hacking incidents, it's essential that IGs/SBs establish safety measures. It is strongly recommended that all individuals with access to your website use a strong, complex password and enable two-factor or multi-factor authentication for login purposes.

For more security recommendations, see *Security Tips for OA Websites*, which supplements *Website Development Guidelines*. Both are in the Document Library at oa.org.

In addition to establishing security measures, IGs/SBs should also ensure compliance with relevant data privacy regulations and laws, including the European Union General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Groups and Service Bodies in Institutions

OA members have been able to help many compulsive eaters at clinics, schools, hospitals, prisons, military bases, and other public, governmental, educational, and charitable establishments. The most successful OA groups formed in institutions such as these use the *Suggested Meeting Format*, available at oa.org, adapting it to the institution's policies when necessary while maintaining OA Principles.

OA groups in institutions, like OA groups everywhere, are guided by the Twelve Traditions; they do not endorse or dispense health or nutritional advice or make professional recommendations or referrals. An attitude of "we're the experts" can cause institutional personnel and professionals who might refer their patients and clients to OA to become wary of us, which could deprive compulsive eaters of their chance at recovery through the OA program. We cooperate, but do not affiliate, with institutions seeking to help compulsive eaters. Attraction, not promotion, is best.

Groups or service bodies can help compulsive eaters in institutions by:

- working with an institution's representative to coordinate the OA group's activities with the institution's other groups;
- furnishing OA literature;
- supplying abstinent speakers and leaders for OA meetings;
- attending OA meetings in institutions as listeners to encourage the group's members;
- urging members to participate in Twelfth Step work in the facilities;
- arranging for OA members to call on compulsive eaters in hospitals, rehabilitation facilities, and at home after they're released;
- recruiting sponsors for military personnel, patients, or students; and
- using the *OA C.A.R.E.S. Correspondence Program Guidelines*, available at oa.org to carry the message of OA's recovery program to prison inmates.

For more ideas and assistance in working with institutions see the *Public Information and Professional Outreach Service Manual*, available at bookstore.oa.org.

REGIONS

Regions are another tier in OA's service structure. They provide support and represent the unaffiliated groups, intergroups, and service boards from which they are formed, and act as guardians of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of OA Service. Regions can only be proposed by the Board of Trustees and be approved by vote of the World Service Business Conference.

OA is divided into eleven regions. Regions are composed of unaffiliated groups, intergroups, and service boards within specified geographic boundaries and the virtual community. All intergroups, national service boards, languages service boards, and specific-focus service boards can participate in a region with that region's permission.

A map showing the eleven regions may be found at oa.org.

Regions Cover the World

- **Region One** includes the Pacific Northwest Region composed of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming, Alberta, British Columbia, Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan, and Yukon.
- **Region Two** includes the Pacific Southwest Region composed of California, Hawaii, Reno/Tahoe area of Nevada, and Mexico.
- **Region Three** includes the Southwest Region composed of Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah.
- **Region Four** includes the West Central Region composed of Illinois (except the Greater Chicago area and Central Illinois Intergroup), Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Manitoba, Northwestern Ontario, and the territory of Nunavut.
- **Region Five** includes the Central Region composed of the Greater Chicago area and Central Illinois Intergroup, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Southwestern Ontario.
- **Region Six** includes the Northeast Region composed of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Bermuda.
- **Region Seven** includes the Eastern Region composed of Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia.
- **Region Eight** includes the Southeast Region composed of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, the US Virgin Islands, the Caribbean Islands, Central America, and South America.
- **Region Nine** includes countries and territories in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and Western Asia, including all of Russia.
- **Region Ten** includes countries and territories in Australia, East Asia, New Zealand, South East Asia, and the Western Pacific Basin.
- **Virtual Region** is nongeographic and is composed of virtual groups and virtual intergroups.

Importance of OA Regions

As part of OA's service structure, regions are important to coordinating Twelfth Step work within the wider reach of the area (geographic and/or virtual) they serve. Each region is assigned one Board of Trustees member who serves as liaison between that region and the board.

Each region holds an assembly quarterly, semiannually, or annually. Region assemblies nominate individuals to be presented to the World Service Business Conference, where they may be elected as a trustee. Once elected, the trustee assigned as liaison to the region brings input from the region's membership (gathered at the region assemblies) to the Board of Trustees and communicates board information to the region's groups and service bodies.

Region assemblies elect their own board of trusted servants, which may include a chair, vice-chair(s), treasurer, secretary, and other officers to administer the region's business in accordance with the region's bylaws. Region committees work with region officers to plan and provide public information campaigns, professional outreach, newsletters, bylaws reviews, ways and means, financial oversight, the region's convention, and other services and activities to assist the region's unaffiliated groups, intergroups, and service boards in carrying the message. Regions may grant funds to assist unaffiliated groups, intergroups, and service boards that would not otherwise be able to send a representative to the region's assemblies and/or the World Service Business Conferences. Regions may also provide travel funds for its officers to give workshops for unaffiliated groups, intergroups, and service boards on topics such as service, the Traditions, and the Concepts.

Regions carry the message of OA recovery through region websites and conventions, preserving the connections between groups, intergroups/service boards, and world service.

Region Administrative Board

Service positions vary among regions, but the first three listed here are essential.

- **Chair:** sets dates/times for and leads the meetings and assemblies; participates in the Region Chairs Committee's task of helping put together a Forum at World Service Business Conference (WSBC) when requested by the Board of Trustees; works with the trustee liaison to answer member and group queries; attends WSBC as a delegate representing the region
- **Vice chair:** supports the chair as needed, leads meetings when needed, and may serve as the region liaison to IGs hosting assemblies and/or conventions
- **Treasurer:** maintains the finances for the region and oversees regular audits of region finances; prepares a region budget annually and distributes funds as determined by the Assembly
- **Digital content coordinator/webmaster:** creates and/or maintains content for the region website, working with a committee or outside vendor as needed; posts documents, event information, and other relevant items as needed

- **Recording secretary:** takes minutes and/or records the proceedings of region meetings and is responsible for correspondence within the region

Region Representative

Each intergroup/service board selects a member or members to represent it at the region's assemblies, based on the intergroup/service board and/or region's requirements for representatives as defined in the service bodies' bylaws. A region representative requirement might address length of service beyond the meeting level or the length of a candidate's abstinence. A proven commitment to service is also an important consideration in choosing these trusted servants.

Each intergroup/national service board (IG/NSB) is encouraged to send at least one region representative to the region's assemblies. The number of region representatives afforded to an IG or NSB depends on the region's bylaws. Generally, an IG may send one region representative for every ten groups or portion thereof, except in service bodies where region representatives are elected to also serve as World Service Business Conference delegates. OA Bylaws, Subpart B states, "Each intergroup or national service board shall be entitled to have one qualified delegate for up to the first fifteen groups it represents and one for each additional fifteen groups or any fraction thereof..."²¹ An NSB's number of region representatives depends on whether its affiliated groups are already represented by an IG. Each language service board and specific-focus service board that participates with a region may have up to one region representative.

Region Assemblies

Region assemblies are business meetings where intergroups and service boards conduct important tasks, including:

- communicating with each other about any region committee activities since the previous assembly,
- preparing for the next term's committee work,
- reviewing and discussing board member reports,
- reviewing and discussing financial reports and approving budgets,
- holding elections for the region board,
- approving nominations for the Board of Trustees,
- discussing and voting on region bylaw and policy amendments,
- authorizing any additional region delegates to the World Service Business Conference,
- sharing challenges, successes, and recovery resources with each other, and
- communicating with the region's trustee liaison to the Board of Trustees.

WORLD SERVICE

This level of OA service consists of the World Service Business Conference (WSBC), the Board of Trustees, the board's Executive Committee, and OA's World Service Office (WSO).

²¹ OA, Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B, Article VIII – Meeting of Delegates

World Service Business Conference

OA's annual formal business meeting brings together delegates from service bodies around the world to vote on business matters that affect the entire OA Fellowship. The World Service Business Conference serves as the group conscience of OA as a whole.²²

Each year, motions to amend current OA policies and bylaws or create new ones are proposed by registered service bodies, trustees, the Region Chairs Committee, or the Conference Bylaws Committee. Motions and amendments are submitted to the chair of the Board of Trustees via delivery to the World Service Office by an annual deadline.

Properly submitted proposed motions and amendments are then sent to all delegates and service bodies to determine whether they are deemed to have merit for discussion and vote at the upcoming WSBC. Proposals that receive a 50 percent approval by responding intergroups/service boards are placed on the WSBC agenda. If a motion or amendment is adopted at Conference, it goes into effect for the entirety of Overeaters Anonymous immediately after that WSBC.

World Service Business Conference Delegates

A World Service Business Conference (WSBC) delegate is an OA member elected by their service body to represent it at Conference. Trustees and region chairs are also recognized as delegates for purposes of participation at Conference.

WSBC delegates must comply with the requirements specified in their service body's bylaws, provided that each delegate has at least one year of current abstinence and at least two years of service beyond the group level.²³ When electing delegates, service bodies will also want to consider their representative's judgment, experience, stability, willingness, and faithful adherence to the program of OA.

Often a member represents their group at region first, to gain an understanding of service beyond the intergroup/service board level, and then progresses to be the group's WSBC delegate. Many intergroup/service board members serve as both the group's region representative and Conference delegate, especially if the group is small. If an intergroup/service board is large enough to have several delegates, continuity can be maintained by having staggered terms.

A WSBC delegate may serve a maximum of six consecutive years as a Conference delegate, whether or not there is another group member to send. Serving longer requires a waiver from the Board of Trustees.

Service Body Representation at World Service Business Conference

²² OA, Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B, Article VIII – Meeting of Delegates

²³ OA, Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B, Article VIII – Meeting of Delegates

An intergroup (IG) or national service board (NSB) may send one delegate to the World Service Business Conference (WSBC) for each fifteen groups (or fraction thereof) that is affiliated with that intergroup/service board. However, an NSB cannot represent groups already represented by an IG. The group count for this purpose is determined by the January Service Body Information Report from the World Service Office.

Each language service board (LSB) or specific-focus service board (SFSB) composed of at least two groups may send one delegate to WSBC, regardless of the number of groups or service bodies that compose the LSB or SFSB.

Countries without intergroups or national service boards that seek representation at World Service Business Conference may send one delegate. Larger representation is determined by the Board of Trustees, with delegate qualification and approval in accordance with the number of groups in that country.

Each region is entitled to one vote through its duly elected region chair or alternate.

Thus, through representation, each OA member, each OA group, and each OA service body becomes a part of the group conscience of OA as a whole.

Responsibilities of World Service Business Conference Delegates

Delegates represent their service bodies at OA's annual World Service Business Conference (WSBC) and serve the OA Fellowship throughout the following year. To be effective, the delegate should prepare before Conference to be an attentive, responsible delegate and diligently carry out their year-long responsibilities.

To prepare for WSBC, the delegate should do the following:

- register for Conference and select committee preference;
- be aware of and respond to deadlines;
- present upcoming business motions to the service body and get input from their affiliated meetings;
- review proposed literature and get input from service body, if possible; and
- read the WSBC Delegate Binder to become knowledgeable about the motions and reports.

At WSBC, the delegate should do the following:

- attend all Conference business meetings and consider the benefit to OA as a whole when voting,
- attend all workshops,
- consider attending Reference Subcommittee meetings,
- be prepared to speak and/or be willing to amend motions, if necessary,
- connect with other delegates to share recovery and service resources,

- attend assigned committee meeting (Conference committees have an annual meeting at WSBC), and
- have a good time! Conference is intense but rewarding.

After WSBC, the delegate should do the following:

- report the experience of the worldwide Fellowship to their service body,
- report revised policies and newly approved OA literature to their service body,
- make the service body aware of any amendments to their bylaws made necessary by changes to OA's overarching bylaws,
- share the WSBC Delegate Binder with members of the service body,
- encourage others to step up to this service when the delegate's term is complete,
- be an active member of the Conference committee, which is a year-long commitment.
- receive, review, and distribute post-WSBC reports distributed by the World Service Office (WSO),
- serve as the point of contact for the WSO until the next annual Conference,
- keep the service body informed about worldwide OA activities and events, and
- be available to help the service body address questions considered at Conference.

The Difference Between an OA "Conference" and an OA "Convention"

The World Service Business Conference of Overeaters Anonymous (WSBC) meets annually in Albuquerque, New Mexico USA, to conduct the business of OA. It is attended by elected OA members, the Board of Trustees, and World Service Office staff. Interpreters for individual non-English speaking delegates and those with other needs may also be present. The Conference is not open to the public.

The World Service Convention, hosted by OA and the Board of Trustees, is our international celebration of recovery, abstinence, and fellowship. The frequency and location of Convention is chosen by the Board of Trustees.

Convention attendees convene from around the world to participate in an opening ceremony; workshops; a banquet with a program speaker, entertainment, and dance; and most of all, to share with each other the experience, strength, and hope they've found in the OA program. All OA members are welcome, as well as the public; there is no selection process to determine who may attend.

The Board of Trustees

OA's Board of Trustees is comprised of up to seventeen experienced OA members who are elected at World Service Business Conference (WSBC) to serve and represent Overeaters Anonymous as a whole. Board members act as guardians of OA's Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of OA Service, as well as manage OA's business affairs, publications, and attraction efforts. Delegates to the WSBC have the considerable responsibility of electing trustees to these vital positions. OA's trustees answer directly to WSBC delegates and are responsible for carrying out the directives they receive at each Conference.

To apply to join OA's Board of Trustees, a member must meet the qualifications stated in OA, Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B²⁴ and submit an application to the region in which they regularly attend meetings. From the applicants, the region may select up to three nominees. To be eligible for election, nominees must appear before the delegates at Conference and address those assembled.

Of the elected trustees, eleven are assigned as liaisons to the membership within OA's eleven geographic and virtual regions. Four trustees are elected by the board to serve on the board's Executive Committee, including the board's chair, two vice chairs, and treasurer. Up to five additional trustees may be elected to service on the Executive Committee. Some trustees may serve both on the Executive Committee and as a liaison to a region. The board's Executive Committee has general authority over the routine conduct of OA's business affairs.

World Service Office

The World Service Office (WSO), located in Rio Rancho, New Mexico USA, is OA's business office, where OA's legal and professional work is conducted. The WSO is the repository for information of OA experience from around the world.

One of the trustees' functions is to serve OA groups by directing the work of the WSO. The WSO is staffed by paid professional personnel who are considered "special workers" (Tradition Eight) and may or may not be members of OA.

How did the World Service Office start?

From its founding in 1960 until 1965, OA conducted business activities in our founder Rozanne S.'s home in Los Angeles, California USA. As OA's membership and services grew, responsibilities were divided and shared by four additional members who also worked from their homes. Eventually, OA needed more space and help, and in 1972, the World Service Office (WSO) moved to a small office in Los Angeles. OA then hired its first full-time professional, the world service secretary. As OA kept growing, it became clear that larger, permanent space was needed.

In 1994, after a business-relocation study, the WSO moved to its current location, an OA-owned building in Rio Rancho, New Mexico USA. The WSO and its services are funded by member contributions and literature sales. The building has office space for the WSO staff and a warehouse that allows for the efficient storage and shipping of OA print literature.

How does the World Service Office work?

The World Service Office (WSO) supports OA as a whole, from its largest service body to the isolated individual seeking relief from compulsive eating. The WSO does not make policy but does inform and educate the Fellowship about the World Service Business Conference and Board of Trustee decisions that affect the organization.

²⁴ OA, Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B, Article VII – Board of Trustees

The Purpose of the World Service Office

The World Service Office (WSO) is entrusted with the responsibility for furnishing the entire Fellowship with many services. There are five departments.

The Accounting Department performs the following functions:

- fulfills literature orders and coordinates Reduced Cost Literature program;
- records contributions and mails receipts;
- manages financial operations, including monthly financial statements, annual audit, and Delegate Support, Professional Exhibits, and Translation Assistance Funds;
- maintains employee and payroll records and coordinates employee benefits;
- pays bills and maintains the physical structure of the WSO; and
- prepares the annual contribution report.

The Digital Communications Department performs the following functions:

- maintains OA websites: oa.org, bookstore.oa.org, and lifeline.oa.org;
- maintains OA social media channels;
- maintains standards for images used by OA;
- publishes online content, including news, events, and members' stories of recovery, and the *WSO News Bulletin* email; and
- supports OA public information programs, including search engine marketing and production of public service announcements.

The Executive Department performs the following functions:

- oversees WSO operations, including budget administration, staff supervision, Board of Trustee support, organizational planning, special project direction, and World Service Business Conference and World Service Convention support;
- maintains OA, Inc. Bylaws and Business Conference Policy Manual;
- serves as media liaison and OA spokesperson at the level of press, radio, films, television, and other public media of communication, as well as liaison to other Twelve Step fellowships and national organizations interested in obesity and compulsive eating; and
- oversees all OA, Inc. websites.

The Member Services Department performs the following functions:

- provides customer service for all groups and members, including new groups, newcomers, and individuals with restricted access—for example, those in the military or incarcerated; responds to mail and email inquiries; directs program inquiries to the appropriate trustee;
- processes meeting/service body registrations, cancellations, and other changes to OA's meeting database; updates and maintains Find a Meeting at oa.org, including face-to-face, online, telephone, non-real-time, hybrid, and service body meetings;

- supports Conference and board committees, including Twelfth Step Within, Bylaws, Young People's, and Unity with Diversity;
- provides professional trade shows support and coordinates the Professional Exhibits Fund applications, materials, and support;
- maintains the WSO's computer network and coordinates technology projects;
- produces the World Service Convention and annual World Service Business Conference; and
- provides recordings of OA Convention panels, speakers, and workshops.

The Publications Department performs the following functions:

- coordinates Conference literature proposals and literature reviews;
- coordinates the development, editing, design, and publication of Conference- and board-approved literature;
- produces and distributes OA-approved literature in multiple formats, including PDF, print, e-book, and audiobook, and oversees distribution, prices, and inventory;
- supports Conference and board committees, including Conference-Approved Literature, Board-Approved Literature, Literature Review, and International Publications and Translations;
- assists members, groups, and service bodies seeking rights to translate and distribute OA-owned materials;
- registers and maintains OA copyrights and trademarks and assists groups, service bodies, and outside enterprises seeking approval to use OA materials and trademarks; addresses copyright and trademark infringements;
- coordinates Translation Assistance Fund applications, materials, and support; tracks royalty payments; and maintains digital database of OA literature, materials, translations, and an archive of OA publications and historical items.

Supporting OA World Service

OA and the World Service Office (WSO) expenses are met by individual, group, and service body contributions and literature sales. It is important for each group to make regular contributions, no matter how small. Groups may contribute according to their informed group conscience. Groups frequently choose to send 30 percent of funds after expenses to the WSO for OA's general fund.

Each year, the Board of Trustees sends the Annual Appeal letter, asking members to make a special contribution in response to the request.

Disproportionately large sums from a single member are not in keeping with the spirit of the Twelve Traditions. Per year, a member may contribute up to US\$7,500 to OA's general fund, up to US\$7,500 to any designated fund, and up to US\$7,500 to honor the memory of a deceased member. OA, Inc. will accept a bequest in any amount from the will of a deceased member.

The Overeaters Anonymous Fellowship worldwide needs contributions from members and groups. Our contributions support the WSO and OA world services in achieving our primary

purpose: to carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer. In summary, to further the mission of Overeaters Anonymous, we can:

- purchase OA literature from the OA bookstore,
- practice the Seventh Tradition in groups and service bodies,
- set up an automatic recurring contribution (ARC) on the 7th Tradition Contribution page at oa.org,
- make an additional contribution in response to the Board of Trustee's Annual Appeal, and
- sign up for the *WSO News Bulletin* by entering your email address on the oa.org home page and keep members informed about World Service Office activities.

HANDBOOK QUIZ

There is a lot of information to absorb in this *Handbook*. The following is a short quiz for the reader to have some fun with. Enjoy!

1. How do you resolve issues in a meeting?
 - a) Tell everyone you've been attending longer, and you know the answer.
 - b) If everyone else in the meeting agrees, and you don't, tell them to leave.
 - c) Conduct a group conscience.
2. What are the Spiritual Principles of the program?
 - a) Eat, drink, and be merry.
 - b) Do what you want, when you want.
 - c) Embedded in the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts, they guide the program.
3. Who is OA's founder?
 - a) Rozanne S.
 - b) Bill W.
 - c) Humpty Dumpty
4. Which of these statements are true about the World Service Business Conference and World Service Convention?
 - a) The World Service Business Conference focuses on the business of OA, where members discuss policies, bylaw changes, and literature motions.
 - b) The World Service Business Conference has elected delegates from service bodies.
 - c) The World Service Convention is open to all, with meetings, workshops, and activities focused on celebrating and strengthening recovery.
 - d) All of the above
5. What are the different types of meetings?
 - a) Anonymous
 - b) Standing or sitting
 - c) Face-to-face, virtual, telephone, non-real-time, and hybrid

- 2507 6. What is an example of cross talk?
- 2508 a) Talking as you cross the street
- 2509 b) Angry language
- 2510 c) When you comment on another person's share
- 2511
- 2512 7. What are the suggested closings for a meeting?
- 2513 a) The anthem of the country in which the meeting is located
- 2514 b) The Serenity Prayer, OA Promise ("I put my hand in yours"),²⁵ Third Step Prayer,²⁶
- 2515 and/or Seventh Step Prayer²⁷
- 2516 c) Join hands and dance
- 2517
- 2518 8. Why is anonymity important?
- 2519 a) So that people feel safe to be and to share at meetings
- 2520 b) If you're famous, other people get to brag about seeing you at their meeting.
- 2521 c) Because it is hard to pronounce, it makes the program sound special.
- 2522
- 2523 9. What are common meeting formats?
- 2524 a) Sitting around a table, classroom-style, or in a circle
- 2525 b) Reciting prayers out of a prayer book
- 2526 c) Speaker, Steps and Traditions study, literature, and newcomers
- 2527
- 2528 10. Why is service important?
- 2529 a) Because someone has to work in customer service
- 2530 b) Without service, the program would disappear
- 2531 c) Because you can add up points and win prizes for doing it
- 2532
- 2533 11. What is the Overeaters Anonymous program modeled after?
- 2534 a) Robert's Rules of Order
- 2535 b) Alcoholics Anonymous
- 2536 c) The manual that came with your car
- 2537
- 2538 12. What is the aim of sharing at a meeting?
- 2539 a) To tell stories
- 2540 b) To share your experience, strength, and hope
- 2541 c) To unburden yourself about your difficulty with relatives
- 2542
- 2543 13. How do we make meetings safe so everyone feels comfortable and welcomed to speak?
- 2544 a) We ask attendees to correctly answer three OA history or trivia questions in order to
- 2545 be let into the meeting.
- 2546 b) As a group, we agree on and use a meeting format with clear guidelines.
- 2547 c) We make everyone promise not to tell anyone else about the program.
- 2548
- 2549 14. In a small town, it is recommended that members do the following:

²⁵ *I Put My Hand in Yours* (Overeaters Anonymous, Inc., © 1968 ... 1995)

²⁶ *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th ed. (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., © 2001) p. 63

²⁷ *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th ed. (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., © 2001) p. 76

- 2550 a) Recruit people from outside the meeting to perform functions
2551 b) Take on multiple service roles
2552 c) Have no assigned tasks—just show up
2553

2554 Answers:

- 2555
2556 (1) C
2557 (2) C
2558 (3) A
2559 (4) D
2560 (5) C
2561 (6) C
2562 (7) B
2563 (8) A
2564 (9) C
2565 (10) B
2566 (11) B
2567 (12) B
2568 (13) B
2569 (14) B

2570

2571 **[PUT UPDATED INDEX HERE.]**

2572

2573 **[Back Cover: Twelve Traditions]**

2574

2575 **[PUT OA CONFERENCE-APPROVED LITERATURE TM HERE.]**

2576

2577 **How to find OA**

2578 Visit the OA website at oa.org, or contact the World Service Office at 1-505-891-2664.

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2580 **Overeaters Anonymous®**

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