

A District Structure Manual – What, Why, and How

When referring to a structure manual, it's easiest to think of it as the framework around which your District is organized and what keeps it functioning. A structure manual is a kind of operating manual that outlines procedures that have become traditional as well as effective ways in which the business of the district is conducted. It describes various service roles, how members are chosen to fulfill those roles, and how decisions are made. It provides an orientation to local service work within the district. It is an essential tool that conveys best practices and standards; it's really all about good communication!

A structure manual should adhere to the principles and traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. It should provide guidelines about general service within Area 59, and give identity to the specific District. The EPGSA Area Structure Manual is an excellent resource for anyone who is creating or modifying a district manual. In fact, many districts choose to "mirror" the format found in that manual.

A suggested method for creating/modifying a structure manual:

- 1) Form a small committee of interested persons, preferably with knowledge of AA literature and English composition. Service manual knowledge and experience is a definite plus!
- 2) Review manuals from other districts, as well as the EPGSA Area Structure Manual to get an idea of a format that would work best to suit the needs of your district.
- 3) Create the format (a Table of Contents outline may be helpful) including a District Business Meeting Agenda template (one already being used and acceptable) and a VERY SIMPLE parliamentary process - the GSC Conference Procedure chart and AA's Voting Procedure flow chart have been included in this packet.
- 4) A description of GSR and District Officer roles/duties, and terms/eligibility for service is essential.
- 5) Officer replacement guidelines should also be included; by so doing, there will be a clear-cut guide to follow when there is a vacancy due to resignation or other reason.
- 6) A process for review and changes to the manual should also be included. Many districts review their manuals on a yearly basis.
- 7) It is helpful to include Contact Information for District Officers, EPGSA and/or local websites.
- 8) Share committee's progress with GSR's on a regular basis, asking for feedback as work continues. Give plenty of time for the final draft to be read and shared with home groups prior to formal adoption of the manual.
- 9) As work progresses, be mindful of our Three Legacies, and ask for each component of the manual, "Are we following the spirit of Recovery, Unity, and Service in the way we draft this?"
- 10) Don't hesitate to call on resources that are available to you, whether they be Area Officers (present or past), members of the Area Structure Committee or fellow DCM's and GSR's. They can offer great advice and/or act as sounding boards, if necessary.