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# **GSR – General Service Representative: What do they do?**

The General Service Representative (GSR) is considered one of the most important jobs in A.A. The GSR is the trusted servant responsible for linking their group to A.A. as a whole. The GSR represents the voice of the group conscience, reporting the thoughts of the group to the General Service Conference Delegate who will take the group's conscience to the General Service Conference. The GSR also brings the voice of the group conscience to the Chicago Area Service Assembly (CASA). The GSR is then responsible for bringing back the actions taken and business conducted at the Conference in New York and CASA to their group.

In order to be informed, the GSR should attend several meetings as part of their responsibilities as GSR: the group in which they are GSR, the group's business meetings, district meetings and the Chicago Area Service Assembly (CASA). At group and business meetings, the GSR will bring information from the district meeting and CASA to give the group information or to get an informed group conscience on a variety of topics. In turn, any feedback they get is brought back to the district so the group's conscience is heard. As a GSR, you will be mailed minutes from the CASA meetings as well as flyers and important information from the downtown office. It is your responsibility to read this information and bring it back to your group.

The GSR and their Alternate are selected in any way the group sees fit (e.g. election, group conscience, volunteer). They shall serve for two years, usually commencing January 1<sup>st</sup> of the odd year or when the group sees fit. (The odd year is suggested to coincide with elections of the Area/Alt. Delegate and Area/Alt. Chairperson.) It is suggested that a GSR have an Alternate in the event they are not

able to attend meetings. However, an alternate is someone who assists, supports, and participates in service responsibilities.

The GSR and Alternate should register with the Chicago Area Service Office (CASO) and the General Service Office in New York. You can get forms to register by calling CASO or downloading the form from the CASO web site ([www.ChicagoAA.org](http://www.ChicagoAA.org)). You can submit the form by mail or fax. When you register as a GSR with CASO and with the General Service Office, you will receive informational packets of literature to help guide you through the service structure. They are very useful and contain answers to many of the questions you might have.

This is done because the GSR is the primary contact between their Group and both the Area and the General Service Office in New York. The GSR should keep the downtown office informed of any new information about the group (e.g. address change, new officers, etc.). This is particularly important in making sure a group's information is correct in the directory.

If a group does not have a treasurer, the GSR may also be asked to deliver (by mail or hand) their group's 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition contributions to the District, the Area and the General Service Office. (See the pamphlet put out by the General Service Office entitled "Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix" for a detailed explanation on why this is important.)

**Below are a list of qualifications that are suggestions that one should meet:**

- It is suggested that a GSR and the alternate have at least two years of continuous sobriety and be active in their home group.
- Have the trust and confidence of their group.
- Have a basic and growing knowledge of the Twelve Traditions and willingness to read and learn about the Twelve Concepts of World Service, the A.A. Service Structure and Conference-approved Literature.
- Time available to attend district meetings and CASA.

# **The District: What Do I Do at The District Level?**

Chicago Area Alcoholics Anonymous is composed of city and suburban groups from around the Chicago metropolitan area. These groups are subdivided into districts within a common geographical or language area. Each district, as well as each group, is autonomous except in matters affecting other groups, districts and Chicago Alcoholics Anonymous or A.A. as a whole (per Tradition 4). Groups can affiliate with any district they choose; however, most groups tend to stay in the district they are assigned to because it is more convenient and they are able to get information that pertains to the area they are meeting in.

One of the GSRs primary jobs is to attend the district meetings. Find out the date and time of your district meeting. Many districts meet monthly, however some meet every other month. (A District Meeting schedule is usually furnished with the New GSR packet, however, if you don't receive it, you can call the Chicago Area Service Office for the information.) You should show up to the district meeting a few minutes early so you can introduce yourself to the District Chair (the District Chair is sometimes referred to as the DCM– District Committee Member).

The District Chair is most often a past GSR from the District who is elected by the GSRs and serves a two-year term. They chair the actual district meeting and coordinate District events or projects.

Many districts have a recording secretary who will take minutes of the meeting and distribute them as well as keep an updated mail/phone list of those who attend the district meetings.

Most districts also have a treasurer who keeps tracks of donations, 7<sup>th</sup> tradition money from the district meeting and expenditures.

Many meetings donate money to their district. A new GSR should find out where district donations should be sent and then bring those details back to their group. It is up to the group to decide whether or not they want to donate to the District but it is important to have the information.

A GSR (or the Alternate) is expected to attend the District meeting so that they can bring their group's wishes to the District and CASA. They should also inform their group of any Area actions and decisions. By attending and participating in District and Area meetings, the group conscience is heard and passed along through the GSR. Currently, the members of the fellowship allowed to vote at CASA are GSRs (or their alternate if the primary is absent).

When the District participates in or holds special forums on service, the GSR may be asked to perform service work in conjunction with these or other Area sponsored events. At the District level, the GSR or the Alternate may also be asked to serve on an Area committee.

The District elects one delegate for each standing committee to CASA. Delegates (and alternate delegates) ideally serve for two years starting January 1 of the odd year. Delegates to committees attend the meeting of which they are a member and give a short report to the district about what happened at each meeting. Most committees meet every other month.

Standing Committees: Cooperation with Professional Community, Correctional Facilities, Finance, Grapevine, Hospitals and Treatment Facilities, Public Information, Special Needs, Literature.

The District is also encouraged to send a representative to all other special committees to report back to the District. Special Committees: Archives, Committee on Conferences, Structure, 24 Hour Answering Service Committee, Website Committee.

At the district meeting you will hear reports from these committees about upcoming events or volunteer opportunities. It is the responsibility of the GSR to bring this information back to their group.

# CASA: The Chicago Area Service Assembly

CASA is the governing body of Chicago Area Alcoholics Anonymous (Area 19). CASA is composed of District Chairs, Committee Chairs, past and present Area officers and GSRs as well as the GSC Delegate and Alternate. It is imperative to the well being of the Area as a whole that everyone who is eligible to participate do so with an informed opinion.

GSRs should attend CASA as a part of their responsibilities so they have an informed opinion on the business and actions of the area. Attending CASA gives a GSR knowledge of area service structure, and allows him/her to be of better service to their group in passing along information and/or helping with the business meeting. Moreover, the GSR will be informed in matters requiring a vote.

CASA is presided over by the Area Chair, who runs the meeting and makes sure the agenda is set, business is handled in an orderly fashion and the assembly does business according to *Chicago AA: How it works for you*. The Area Chair also has many other duties and responsibilities as laid out in the aforementioned manual. This position is elected every two years, and the term starts January 1<sup>st</sup> of the odd year. The Chair also has an Alternate Chair position with the same duties and responsibilities as the Chair.

The Recording Secretary also attends every CASA. They are responsible for transcribing the minutes of each Area Assembly. This position is also elected every two years, and the term starts January 1<sup>st</sup> of the odd year and they Recording Secretary also has an Alternate.

The assembly is also responsible for electing the GSC Delegate, who carries the group conscience of CASA and of the Districts and

groups. The GSR can take its group's conscience directly to the Delegate. The Delegate is elected on the same rotation as the Area Chair.

CASA is bound by the structure set up in *Chicago AA: How it works for you*. CASA's business is conducted by way of the parliamentary system, which is commonly called "Robert's rules of order." (Basic instructions will be found in Appendix II.) In the simplest terms, motions are made and seconded, there is discussion on the motion, and a vote is called to determine what action will be taken.

Motions and other pieces of business can be voted on by the following persons: GSRs (or an Alternate if the primary is not present), Standing Committee Chairs, Elder Statesmen, the GSC Delegate and their Alternate, the Alternate Chair to CASA, the Recording Secretary, and the Alternate Recording Secretary.

***Every GSR representing a registered group is eligible to vote at CASA. According to Chicago AA: How it works for you, a registered group is a group that has a GSR registered with the Chicago Area Service Office (the central or downtown office). In order that districts get the most accurate representation possible, it is extremely important that each group register a GSR with CASO, and that they are active and participate at the district and area levels of service.***

At CASA, the GSRs responsibility is to gather information on actions that are up for a vote and to report back to their district and group. People will give reports about what is going on in the Area (e.g. events, workshops, things that need support, and ways that we as an area are carrying the message to the alcoholic that still suffers). There will be flyers available and minutes from the last meeting as well. CASA is an invaluable source of information and a great way to learn about area service and the way things are structured at the area level.

# GSC: The General Service Conference

Alcoholics Anonymous is an ever-evolving body that changes to fit the needs of its membership. As the fellowship grew, a board of trustees called the Alcoholic Foundation was established in 1938 to help guide it along (*Pass It On*, p 188). The Trustees are now called the General Service Board Inc. and they have legal control of AA. The Trustees also administer the daily affairs of AA World Services Inc., The Grapevine Inc., and the General Service Office. However, the ultimate responsibility for the guidance of the Trustees resides with the Groups.

However, Bill W. knew that “if a central headquarters and the board of trustees were to survive, they would need moral and financial support from the groups” (*Pass It On*, p 326). Bill’s idea was to create a General Service Conference. He wanted to make sure that there was a service structure that would transfer the foundation into the hands of the regional representatives after he and Dr. Bob were no longer around to guide A.A. After much debate, the first General Service Conference was held in New York in April of 1951 (*Pass It On*, p 349).

The General Service Conference represents the collective Group Conscience of A.A. The importance of the GSR in the Conference process is to provide communications between the Group and the General Service Conference. The Conference furnishes the Delegate with the agenda of items to be discussed at the next Conference, usually in the form of questions to the Groups. The Delegate gives the questions to the DCMs and they give them to their GSRs. The GSRs bring them to their Groups, and they are discussed by the Group and brought back to the district or directly to the Delegate.

The Chicago Area is one of the 93 Delegate Areas in the United States and Canada whose purpose it is to send a Delegate to the

yearly General Service Conference of A.A. The Chicago Delegate is the representative of over 75,000 AA members from over 3,000 Groups in the Chicago Area. Our Delegate is elected at CASA to represent the interests of AA groups at the General Service Conference. The Conference meets for six days each April in New York City. The voting body is made up of the 93 elected Delegates from the AA membership, 21 Trustees (14 and alcoholic, 7 non-alcoholic), the staff of the General Service Office, and the 5 non-trustee directors of the Grapevine board.

The Chicago Area and our Delegate have set up a Pre-Conference Workshop in March where our Delegate can talk with our GSRs or interested members before going to the Conference in New York City each April. This conference is called the Delegate's Forum. Issues and agenda items are discussed and mock conference sessions are held so the Delegate can go to the Conference informed with the Group Conscience of the Area and the groups. GSRs are encouraged to attend and bring their concerns and ideas to the Delegate before he/she goes to New York. As examples, two items that have been changed or brought to recent General Service Conferences by Delegates have been: the idea to have a pocket size *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and removing the line in the first printing of the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Big Book referring to "online meetings."

BOX 4-5-9 and *Here's How* are good sources of information on upcoming events to discuss with the Delegate and trusted servants. Finally, the GSRs should go to the Area events (e.g. GSR Workshop, Sponsorship Seminar, and other Area sponsored events) where they can express the ideas of their Groups directly to the Delegate.

# CASO: The Chicago Area Service Office

The Chicago Area Service Office is located at 180 N. Wabash Ave., Suite 305 in Chicago. It is easily accessible by public transportation (CTA and Metra), and there are discounted parking rates at several garages close to the office. The office is open for regular business from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM with area committee meetings held after business hours and on the weekends. There are AA meetings Monday through Friday at 12:10 PM and on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 2:30 PM.

The daily operation of the office is broken down into four main areas: Operations, Group Services, the Bookstore, and Accounting. The Office Manager oversees all four areas and supports and advises them to ensure that the fellowship's wishes and A.A. Traditions are being respected, and that the policies of CASA and the Finance Committee are being adhered to. The Finance Committee oversees the Office Manager and the rest of the office, ever maintaining the principle—rather than one person—that group conscience dictates policy.

The **Operations** department of the office, as its name suggests, keeps the Office operating – namely with the organizing and staffing of the office volunteers. Telephone volunteers are the core need of the office, as they provide the most basic and essential service of Alcoholics Anonymous: carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. Volunteers answer all kinds of calls from members and non-members who need to contact AA, and this is why the office primarily exists. When the phones aren't busy or there are extra volunteers, they are always needed for mailings and work in the bookstore. The Operations Department is also responsible for the bulk mailings that go out to the GSRs, Committee Members, and Districts several times a month.

**Group & Fellowship Services** handles communication between the office and the groups. The Group & Fellowship Services department is responsible for maintaining the database that holds all the meetings and members in the Chicagoland area (Area 19). The meeting data in the database is the foundation for what is printed in the meeting directory, which is published three times a year. The Office publishes both a City and a Suburban Directory to help accommodate the needs of the fellowship. Groups must have a group contact in order to be published in the directory. Forms can be downloaded from the website ([www.chicagoaa.org](http://www.chicagoaa.org)), obtained by e-mailing [Groupservices@chicagoaa.org](mailto:Groupservices@chicagoaa.org), or by calling the office (312-346-1475) and requesting them. Of course, we always welcome a personal visit! It is also essential that for the Office to best serve the members and groups and to keep them well informed, that a group's information remain current. If a contact or GSR changes their address, please make sure that the Office is notified. If the person is replaced, please have the replacement fill out a New Officer Registration Form.

The **Bookstore** is probably the most visible aspect of the office to the fellowship. It is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 5:30 PM. The Bookstore is a wonderful resource for AA literature, both Conference-approved and non-Conference approved. Conference-approved literature is literature that has gone through the process of being approved by the General Service Conference. The bookstore has order forms, and orders can be placed over the phone and can be shipped directly to a member's home.

The Office is also available to Committees and Districts to help facilitate communication between members, disseminate pertinent information, and notify the fellowship of upcoming events. The committees can arrange to use the Office resources to help with these activities and for the use of office space for committee

meetings. Please call the office to schedule time with Operations if you are in need of assistance with a project.

**Accounting** records and tracks all the Chicago Area fellowship's money. The Office is here to serve the fellowship and is supported with the 7<sup>th</sup> tradition monies sent to the office by your group's treasurer, or by you as a GSR. All of the office expenses – from the coffee and candy in the meeting room to the copy paper and the rent we pay on our lease – are supported by the monies received in the form of group and individual contributions. Every dollar is accounted for by our bookkeeper, and financial statements are available for any member to review. We count on the groups to remain self-supporting, and a pamphlet with GSO guidelines for group treasuries is included in this packet.

The Chicago Area Service Office is here to serve the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. We are grateful for all the many volunteers and welcome any comments, suggestions or questions you or your group members may have. You can call 312-346-1475 from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, email [Groupservices@chicagoaa.org](mailto:Groupservices@chicagoaa.org), or stop by during business hours at 180 N. Wabash Ave., Suite 305.

# Glossary

**A.A.W.S.** – Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., one of the two operating corporations of the General Service Board; oversees the operations of the General Service Office and serves as the publishing company for Conference-approved and service literature.

**All Chicago Open** – The annual celebration of the first meeting in Chicago; held in September. This event is sponsored by Chicago Area 19.

**Alternate** – A service worker who, at group, district, or area level, assists, supports, and participates in service responsibilities.

**Alternate Area Chair of CASA** – Supports Area Chair to CASA in his/her duties (see Area Chair to CASA).

**Alternate Area Delegate to General Service Conference** – Supports Area Delegate in his/her duties (see Area Delegate to General Service Conference).

**Alternate Recording Secretary** – Supports Recording Secretary to CASA in his/her duties (see Recording Secretary to CASA).

**Area Chair of CASA** – This trusted servant is responsible for running the Chicago Area Assembly (CASA) meetings. This person is elected by the Assembly to a two-year term beginning in January of the odd years.

**Area Delegate to the General Service Conference** – (Also has an Alternate Delegate position.) The trusted servant elected every other year to represent the area at the annual Conference meeting in New York and to bring back the results of that meeting to the area.

**Archives committee** – The Archives committee gathers and preserves historical data and other memorabilia pertinent to Chicago Area AA and brings displays to conferences and workshops.

**Area** – A geographical division within a state or province. A Delegate to the General Service Conference is elected from an area assembly. Normally there is one area to a state or province, except in heavily A.A.-populated places, where there may be two, three, or more areas in a state or province. Some areas include portions of more than one state or province.

\* Illinois has three Delegate areas. Chicago is Delegate Area 19. Northern Illinois is Area 20. Southern Illinois is Area 21.

***Chicago AA: How it works for you*** – The structure or service manual for Chicago and the basis for how the Chicago Area Service Assembly (CASA) operates.

**Chicago Area Service Assembly (CASA)** – This is a meeting of District Chairs, Area Committee Chairs, GSRs, and any interested parties to conduct Area business, Area elections, and to manage Area finance. Meetings are held every other month in the odd numbered month in the district that volunteers to host the Assembly.

**Chicago Area Service Office (CASO)** – CASO helps the fellowship carry the message to alcoholics who still suffer and helps the Assembly (CASA) carry out the general service tasks for the Chicago Area.

**Conference-approved literature, videos, and films** – Pamphlets, books, videos, and films, produced under the auspices of various Conference committees have reviewed and recommended to the Conference for its approval, and which have been approved by the Conference.

**Correctional Facilities Committee (CFC)** – CFC cooperates with all the correctional institutions in the Chicago Area, explaining AA’s role in assisting the inmates who seek help. The committee helps coordinate AA meetings and other activities in the facilities.

**Committee on Conferences (COC)** – COC insures proper participation of Chicago Area AA in state and local conferences. The committee assists with the All Chicago Open and performs other services as necessary to CASA.

**Cooperation with Professional Community Committee (CPC)** – CPC helps carry the message to professionals who work with alcoholics. Information is provided about what AA can and cannot do, and CPC has volunteers work booths at conventions and trade shows to represent Alcoholics Anonymous.

**Delegate** – see Area Delegate.

**District** – A division within the Area, represented by GSRs. and District Chairs (DCMs). Chicago currently has 20 Districts.

**DCM** – District committee member. **Also known as a District Chair.** An experienced GSR elected by other GSRs to represent the groups of their district in CASA meetings and to coordinate service activities in the district.

**District meetings** – Meetings of the DCMs and GSRs of groups in a district. This is the main way information is transmitted from the group conscience to the District and attending GSRs, and the way information regarding events, agenda items, and upcoming decisions are obtained so that the GSR can take these things back to his or her group.

**Finance Committee** – The Finance committee is responsible for all matters relating to office management, records, personnel, finances and expenditures of Chicago Area Alcoholics Anonymous.

**General Service Conference** –The annual meetings of Conference Delegates, Trustees and General Service Office staff each April in New York. The General Service Conference is a method by which AA’s collective group conscience can be heard.

**Grapevine** – The *AA Grapevine*, the international monthly journal of Alcoholics Anonymous. The AA Grapevine, Inc. is one of the two operating corporations of the General Service Board and is responsible for Grapevine operations and finances. The **Grapevine Committee** in the Chicago Area is responsible for acquainting the fellowship with the *Grapevine*, and presents it as a useful tool for recovery.

**GSO** – General Service Office, which provides services to groups in the U.S. and Canada and publishes AA literature.

**GSR** – General Service Representative. They are the group contact with the General Service Office and the link from the group to the District. At the District level, the GSR must stay informed on Area happenings since they have a vote at the Area Assembly. The GSR is also responsible for keeping their group informed on District and Area activities and issues.

***Here’s How* Editorial Board** – The editorial board of *Here’s How* is responsible for overseeing the publication of *Here’s How*, the Chicago Area’s newsletter. Policies regarding the newsletter (e.g. frequency of publication, subscription base, financing, and content) should be the responsibility of the board (concurrent with the Finance committee). The board is also responsible for selecting a

managing editor who will be responsible for the ongoing publication of *Here's How*.

**Hospital and Treatment Facilities (HTF)** – The HTF committee cooperates with hospitals and treatment/rehabilitation facilities regarding AA's relationship with such facilities, and helps coordinate meetings in such facilities.

***La Viña*** – Bimonthly Spanish-language magazine published by the AA Grapevine.

**Literature Committee** – The Literature Committee encourages AA Groups to provide A.A. literature, and it ensures that there is AA literature at Area events and conferences. It also recommends approval or disapproval of non-conference approved items availability in the CASO bookstore.

**Public Information (P.I)** – The PI Committee helps carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers by working with the media and public speakers (e.g. in high schools, churches, radio stations). This committee serves as the central source of information made available to the public concerning Chicago Area AA. The committee ensures the information is correct and within the 12 Traditions.

**Recording Secretary** – This trusted servant is responsible for recording the minutes of every Area Assembly. This person is elected by the Assembly to a two-year term beginning in January of the odd years.

**Region** – A group of states from which a regional Trustee is chosen. We are in the East-Central region. It consists of Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio.

**Sharing Session** – The Sharing Session is a meeting held every other month so the district and committee chairs can get together and share new ideas on how to improve Chicago Area AA and discuss any problems occurring in the districts and committees. This is a place for problem solving and as the name suggests, sharing ideas about how to make things better and keeping everyone in the Area well informed. No decisions are made at Sharing Sessions.

**Special Needs** – The Special Needs Committee provides information about AA to alcoholics who have physical disabilities or other special needs and coordinates AA meetings for people with special needs.

**Structure** – The Structure Committee reviews and suggests modification of the Chicago Area service structure as required by continuing growth and changes in the fellowship. Any suggested changes will be presented to CASA for approval.

**Trustee** – A member of the General Service Board. Of the 21 Trustees, 14 are alcoholic (Class B), and 7 are non-alcoholic (Class A).

**Twenty-four (24) Hour Answering Service Committee** – The 24 hour Answering Service Committee provides a 24-Hour answering service to be manned by volunteer members of the Chicago Area AA. The service is provided for those times that an Alcoholic is unavailable to answer the telephone in the Chicago Area Service Office.

**Website Committee** – The Website Committee is in charge of overseeing the Area website content and policy.

## Brief Parliamentary Guide

Go to a microphone and when recognized by the chairperson:

- Give your full name and service title if you have one.
- Speak clearly and briefly as possible. Your remarks must be pertinent to the business at hand or items you wish to bring to the floor.

To do this:	You Say:	When another has the floor?	Is a second Required?	Is Discussion Permitted?	Can It Be Amended?	Required Vote?
To Make a Motion	I Move That...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
To Amend a Motion	I Move That the Motion be Amended to Read	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
To Withdraw a Motion	I Wish to Withdraw My Motion	Yes	No	No	No	Majority
To End Discussion	Call The Question..	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
To Object to an Error in Procedure	Point of Order	Yes	No	No	No	The Chairperson Decides
To Table an Item	I Move We Table This...	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
To Bring Back a Tabled Item	I Move That We Take From The Table...	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
To Nominate a Person	I Would Like To Nominate	No	No	Yes	No	Majority
To Close Nominations	I Move That Nominations Be Closed	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
To Send an Item To Committee	I Move That We refer This Item to a Committee	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

**Note:** In Alcoholics Anonymous, once a vote has been taken on a motion, the minority parties in the ALWAYS have the opportunity to speak from the floor. If someone in the majority (the winning side) would like to change their vote after the minority has spoken, it becomes a motion to reconsider which needs to have a second, it is then open to further discussion (if the original motion was open to discussion) before a new vote on the original motion is taken. It is not amendable and requires the same type of vote (majority or 2/3s) as the original motion.

**The Chairperson is not required to recognize a frivolous motion.**

## Notes

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