Electronic Meetings in the NY North Area Service Structure

13 September 2021 / 7:00 PM / Zoom ID: 987 0543 4513   Passcode: 341891

ATTENDEES

Betty GM, Brenda L, Carol C, Cheryl R, Ellen V, Emily K, Kathi D, Mary S, Molly C

AGENDA

Objective:
- Begin the Thought Force
- Brainstorm ideas on Including Electronic Meetings in the NY North Area Service Structure
- Name Chairs
- Set up meeting schedule

WHAT WE KNOW

- A **thought force** is a temporary unit of people established to brainstorm ideas and to develop strategies on a single defined task or activity. It uses the resources available such as perspective of members of the thought force and Staff knowledge. For example, a problem identified could be a lack of clarity regarding roles. Strategies that are suggested might include writing job descriptions (the idea, not the actual job description); components of a guideline; or adding text to a portion of the *Service Manual* to clarify. The objective is to identify the potential idea not to write the actual text itself. The thought force is not expected to have all the answers or to provide the nal solutions. If there are facts that are unknown, they can be flagged in the KBDM question, "Things we don't know but wish we did." A thought force may lay the foundation for the work of a task force. Sometimes they o er recommendations resulting from their findings. A thought force presents its information to the originating body to move forward. Thought forces are "thinkers," not "doers."
- At the 2021 WSC – World Service Conference it was decided that all the electronic Al-Anon meetings registered with WSO are now recognized as Al-Anon Family Groups and approved the creation of a non-geographic Area for these groups.
- WSO is working to support the electronic AFG to elect GRs, and a temporary Chairperson and Delegate.
- WSO geographic Areas need to discuss and decide whether to accept electronic AFGs into their service structure defining Area policies and procedures if appropriate.

Electronic Meetings in the NY North Area Service Structure

- **2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual Pg 158Miscellaneous: Renaming an Area, Changing a group/District to a new Area**
  o If an Area has voted to formally change its name to more accurately reflect its boundaries, the Area would submit the request to the WSO. The Conference Leadership Team (CLT) would review the request. If the CLT agreed, it would make a recommendation, in the form of a motion, at the next WSC.
  o **Groups or Districts located in one Area which have a contiguous boundary with another Area may, through group con- science and following Area procedures, choose to participate in the second Area and give up participation in the rst Area, as agreed upon by both Areas.**

DISCUSSION

Comments/Questions/Ideas: (From Emily K's Notes)
- *Carol:* There is a electronic meeting started with members local to Rochester Tuesday "Just for Tonight" has attracted members from outside the geographic area
- *Ellen*: Giving voice and vote. Right now electronic meeting don't have GR. If you put them in a district could you just have a district in NYN area? Would they then be on WSO meeting site? What impact would that have?
- *Kathi:* Thinking globally. Doesn't mean that some group that is strictly electronic wouldn't want to join NYN. Only disadvantage is technology. Tech is something we can work around. In early 2000s belonged to Al-Anon group e-mail. Would have been nice to have connection for those who have no other way to get to Al-Anon. E-meetings for people who live in very rural areas to connect to Al-Anon. Shouldn't be excluded from all the wonders of Al-Anon in district and area.
- *Betty:* Come comfortable. with virtual stuff. Rural county in Western NY. Sunday meeting never had enough meeting. COVID and because of zoom have between 6-10 meeting. Unless have 4 people committing to F2F, but saying they will stay virtual. Don't want to lose connection. May be other rural meetings with similar situation. Some new membership not in rural community but will participate in Hybrid meeting. About complexities. Another perspective. Anything to figure out how to make technology connect for our young people & for older people. We have isolated people everywhere. Want to do whatever we can do to make it work - Meetings to be a part of our structure. Sad to leave D23 because Sunday says we are fully electronic.
- *Brenda and Cheryl:* Questions: A group that has members have decided it makes sense to meet electronically….you are an existing group?.

Electronic Meetings in the NY North Area Service Structure

- *Betty:* also started as a bilingual meeting, with interpretation. Not everyone can have access to a car. Will be people be uncomfortable being a part of larger geographic area and would want to be a part of NYN. Some districts got smaller
- *Molly*: e-meetings have been registered but all had individual contact with WSO. Because of growth and trying to keep true to the Al-Anon program. Creating an area so it can be an AFG and can have representation and have voice in WSC. One group can petition to be a part of a geographic area. (See service manual) What kind of services can we provide an e-meeting and how can e-meetings get proper representation at assembly, District and AWSC meetings etc.
- *Carol:* If we are going to allow electronic meetings into our area, then we have to be thinking about how our assemblies can incorporate and be hybrid. Think about what technology we are going to need to have? Has come up anyway because of where we are heading.
- *Cheryl:* Hearing idea of a sense of community with a region is important and could be important if that is the members' focus. Different than global electronic meeting. If an e-meeting has that tether then the service positions would have that tether. Is there a perspective of connecting those two as an option. If community based e-meeting then theory it might be able to be able to come together because tethered together in the community. No matter where we live in NYN it's a lot of travel for most people.
- *Carol:* Have experience of setting up e-meeting. When we registered voted to make it e-meeting, now get people…have core group that are from Rochester at every meeting. Would this meeting want to be part of NYN or not? How would that work? If group wanted to be part of NYN, most of members were from in the area, the person who represents them as group rep could physically represent them at in person meeting. Do we need to consider that as part of the consideration.
- *Betty*: another level of complexity: people that joining in on meetings from the area original meetings but live out of state want to be part of the group. Being a part of a physical group vs. a broader group. Group consciousness whether to want to be part of NYN. Place of trusting people in groups, part of our spiritual principles. Can trust Al-Anon groups to decide where they belong.
- *Kathi*: My opinion, shouldn't put a lot of barriers up for this. Once we put barriers up, then we start excluding people. We don't know where people or groups are going to go. Even people popping in and out, they come in and out of physical groups all the time. Life happens, things change. If group is in NYN area, they might really want to be a part of NYN because that is what we know. But if a group has always been electronic and never been a part of service structure who knows what they are going to pick. The more people we bring in more voices we have. See this as potential to change us as the

Electronic Meetings in the NY North Area Service Structure

better. Tech barrier, would be minimal. Biggest thing would be having stable internet. Phone providers are providing more unlimited data. Even if hotel didn't have good internet, someone with unlimited data could set up a hotspot.

- *Betty:* NYN could also purchase a camera designed and speaker that we could carry around to different hotels couple times of year. Maybe 3,000-5,000 and save for it. Even having great technology is beyond our reach.
- *Molly:* Like what everybody has been saying. One of the things to help the process is restructuring of the website.   Help e-meetings have access to info for reports and such for events we are looking to share with each other. Some meetings on Al-Anon app. Are over 100, not sure how that will work with those. Carol, how has e-meeting you started growing...25 people from all over. Couple of regulars who do service not from Rochester.
- *Carol:* As listening to, what district would we attach number to. Let group decide which district they want to be a part of. Work out with DR of that district what they need to do those meetings.
- *Brenda:* wondering about impact to the district. Some may be more equipped to accommodate new groups, how does this impact the area coordinators? Someone at beginning, maybe create a new district for e-meetings. What if get so many meetings need to have more than 1 district? Opinion-if e-meetings are registered as groups and can belong to district that is electronic, that would be how they conduct their business. Is the area really equipped communication, who aren't present at AWSC meetings. We've conducted assemblies electronically but that's just with the existing districts and groups. In the area what happens when those numbers go up? If group is going to meet electronically and they don't want to connect with district or area in person, should they be a part of electronic meeting.
- *Betty:* Pre-covid, district meetings have been operating with people on cell phones for years. Other people who have had things happen have joined. We can be in-person and having used technology for a long period of time.
- *Molly:* would like clarification. All e-meetings that are registered with WSO are part of non-geographic area. If we say we will welcome any group, they will have to go through process of changing area. Any e-meeting now or wherever its up to them now to form a group and service structure that goes along with AFG. From WSO guide they would like us to have a timeline and get some time of response by May 2022.
- *Mary:* Maybe we should try a baby step. A group petitions to be a part of area, their GR is able to attend voting parts of assembly. Then, see how that works, then put them in a district.
- *Carol:* The links of service are delegate, district, GR. Can let us know what district they think is their community.
- *Mary:* maybe we need to poll districts have capability to welcome in a group. Think we have enough that are.

Electronic Meetings in the NY North Area Service Structure

- *Kathi:* Don't think have enough to really vote on anything. Think we need to bring this up and share. Finding out what districts would be willing to accept groups of an e-meeting would petition. (when did guidelines, brought up recommendations to AWSC) As an area if we were to accept e-meetings to participate would need to be a part of districts. Would be up to district to determine how to incorporate meetings.
- *Carol:* Planning the process says inform GR's and DR's about questions to be answered and decisions to be made. Made a time line. Here's some things we'd like you to consider. Think about questions and what we want them to be, come back to AWSC with their perspectives and thoughts. Plan time when GR's can bring thoughts to Assembly. Ask them to bring to next AWSC meeting. What is it we want them to bring back to their districts and then to AWSC.
- Q.) Do you have the ability as a district to accommodate an e-meeting and what format would that be in (zoom, phone, email, in person)?
- Q.) Would the GR's have to be there in person or could they use technology?
- *Emily:* consider having them answer questions from the geographic guidelines which can be found on website under Delegate report from spring 2021.
- *Carol*: Have a discussion about what if they are not part of our physical area and want to be a part of our area.
- *Cheryl:* WSO has non-geographic area forming for these meetings to be a part of. Not equivalent, not districts for those meetings.
- *Molly:* My understanding only have CMA and only has meetings with WSO.
- *Cheryl*: supporting those groups to set up service structure. Something will come along when there are expectations with that. What does it mean to the overall structure for what we are trying to do. For tech pieces, people grow and are immensely creative. What are our boundaries for welcoming people. If non-geographic, what questions….what does it mean to have something like that worldly, what does that mean to our district. Different than something that's formed within out district. To me as a group, it is to support those whose lives have been effected by alcoholism. Trying to get head around, what's the structure, format and process for incorporating something like that?
- *Kathi:* what's the difference if a group of people are going to start a physical meeting. I think its just fear, is the biggest thing. Thinking many years ago over 25 years ago person came to meeting from NY state but had different ideas, but brought in wonderful things. As long as we are speaking Al-Anon growth. We have things to offer both ways. If you've been connecting and you are global but having been able to be a part of WS structure….things we are going to learn both ways. Would like to think Al-Anon as a whole, is far more open minded because things are different. Al-Anon is Al-Anon, if we stick to

Electronic Meetings in the NY North Area Service Structure

principles doesn't really matter. People's are going to be bringing new ideas to area or district because its change.

ACTIONS TAKEN:
- Molly C and Kathi D will be Co-chairs
- Molly C will type up notes and send out with a statement for the AWSC and Assembly

FOR THE NEXT TIME:
- Discuss how to get the 5 questions in Emily K's Spring Assembly report to the GRs and get their feedback
- Set up a timeline for DR input on possible impacts to their districts and bring to AWSC.
- Set up a meeting schedule

NEXT MEETING
~~Monday   October 4, 2021   7:00PM~~ **ERROR !!!**

Monday   October 11, 2021   7:00PM

Zoom Meeting ID: 987 0543 4513   Passcode: 341891

FROM WSO:

Registered Electronic Meetings now Al-Anon Family Groups

Recommendation - 15.1   The proposed change to the Policy Digest that you are asked to approve is allowing these meetings to be reregistered as Al-Anon Family Groups that only meet electronically. These groups, like face-to-face groups, will have all the service positions identified in the *Service Manual*, including an elected GR. Everything in the *Service Manual* will apply equally to all groups whether they meet face to face or electronically.

We currently have 451 Al-Anon Family Groups which are part of the non-panel Area.

Discussion Questions as an Area

Electronic Meetings in the NY North Area Service Structure

What Do We Need to Know?

To make an informed decision at the Area level, it may be helpful to discuss the following **questions at the group level:**

Question 1   What are the potential benefits of welcoming non-geographically based groups into our geographically based Area? What are the potential risks? Are there any options for overcoming the risks?

Question 2   Groups which meet electronically often attract members who do not reside within the geographic boundaries of the Area. These members may be encouraged and willing to serve our groups, Districts, and Area as trusted servants. What impact might this have on our District and Area service structure? What impact might this have on how our Area service responsibilities are fulfilled?

Question 3   Groups which meet on electronic platforms and seek to participate in the local structure may have trusted servants who reside in different locations across the geographic Area. How would the Area determine in which District(s) these groups would participate?

These questions may be helpful to discuss at District and Area levels:

Question 4   How might Areas Assemblies and District meetings need to change to accommodate trusted servants living within and outside the Area? Would Areas need new service roles to support groups which meet electronically? Why or why not? Are our groups willing to financially support additional Area service roles and/or technology?

Question 5   Because Electronic Meetings were not a part of any service structure, some of their members may not have participated in District and Area meetings. How might our Area welcome and support them? How might we help them understand the service structure in our Districts and Area? For example, are members willing to organize service workshops? Are members willing to act as Service Sponsors? What other kinds of support could our members provide? Are there any kinds of support which it would be wise for us not to provide?

Electronic Meetings in the NY North Area Service Structure

Background and History

At the 2021 WSC – World Service Conference it was decided that all the electronic Al-Anon meetings registered with WSO are now recognized as Al-Anon Family Groups and approved the creation of a non-geographic Area for these groups.

WSO is working to support the electronic AFGs to elect GRs, and a temporary Chairperson and Delegate. .

WSO geographic Areas including NY North Area need to discuss and decide whether to accept electronic AFGs into their service structure defining Area policies and procedures if appropriate.

"Groups or Districts located in one Area which have a contiguous boundary with another Area may, through group conscience and following Area procedures, choose to participate in the second Area and give up participation in the first Area, as agreed upon by both Areas."
> *From the 2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual "Miscellaneous: Renaming an Area, Changing a group/District to a new Area (page 158)*

 "A thought force is a temporary unit of people established to brainstorm ideas and to develop strategies on a single defined task or activity. It uses the resources available such as perspective of members of the thought force and Staff knowledge. …The thought force is not expected to have all the answers or to provide the final solutions. If there are facts that are unknown, they can be flagged in the KBDM question, "Things we don't know but wish we did." A thought force may lay the foundation for the work of a task force. Sometimes they offer recommendations resulting from their findings. A thought force presents its information to the originating body to move forward. Thought forces are "thinkers," not "doers." "
> *From the 2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual Pg 70:*

Our goal is to encourage discussions in and get feedback from the districts and groups in the NY North Area keeping the Al-Anon principles, Traditions and Concepts in mind.