

DISCUSSIONS, PRESENTATIONS, AND WORKSHOPS

Alateen Electronic Group Feasibility

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The Director of Programs, as Chair of this Strategy project, welcomed Conference members to the presentation on the continuation of their work. She noted that since the World Service Conference is being held in Virginia Beach, they were fortunate to be able to also welcome the other members of the Project Team as guests.

The Director started her presentation by stating, "Today, we will start by reviewing part of the presentation we shared with the 2022 World Service Conference. This part of the presentation identifies the origin of this conversation as well as what we worked to complete over the past year, which ultimately led to identification of the conceptual process we shared with you on AFG Connects to allow electronic Alateen meetings to become Al-Anon Family Groups.

"Last year at 2022 World Service Conference, we ended our train-themed presentation with a stop at a 'refueling station.' At this stop, we shared with you that we were going to explore many unanswered questions regarding the possibility of creating a process to accept electronic Alateen meetings as Al-Anon Family Groups. The Project Team has been hard at work the last year and we are ready to continue the next leg of our journey."

As the presentation started, members were asked to think about

As the presentation started, members were asked to think about the following:

- Physical Alateen meetings vs. electronic Alateen meetings—What are our current realities?
- What are the legal implications related to hosting electronic Alateen meetings safely?
- Are the minimum requirements from the 2003 Alateen Motion from the Board of Trustees sufficient for ensuring the safety of Alateens and Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service participating in electronic meetings?

"Within the WSC Structure, physical Alateen meetings are supported by processes created by Areas, guided by the 2003 Alateen Motion from the Board of Trustees, the Alateen policy, and local legal requirements. Each Area has its own process to train and certify Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS) and to determine how many certified AMIAS are required to be in attendance in order for the Alateen group to hold its meeting. These unique processes and requirements are captured in each Area's Alateen Safety & Behavioral Requirements.

"The only electronic Alateen meetings in the WSC Structure are the six *Al-Anon Family Groups Mobile App* electronic Alateen meeting pilots. The *Mobile App* meetings are hosted by certified AMIAS from Areas in the World Service Conference Structure, and one meeting is hosted by Poland, which trains their AMIAS in accordance with the 2003 Alateen Motion and their local processes. Unlike with the physical meetings, WSO Staff provide training sessions and host quarterly meetings for the AMIAS supporting these meetings. The WSO also requires a minimum of two AMIAS be present to host the electronic Alateen meetings held on this platform, although three are recommended to ensure Alateen safety given the complexities of the *Mobile App* platform and navigation."

The Director went on to explain, "As in its efforts to explore the question about current realities, the Project Team began its research into legal implications by reflecting on what we knew about our own WSC Structure.

"We knew from experience that laws related to minors vary significantly within our Structure. Not only do they vary between the three countries within the WSC Structure, but they even vary between jurisdictions within these countries. Our International & Legal Specialist consulted with AFG, Inc. legal counsel to understand WSO's overall legal responsibility as it pertains to minors participating on electronic formats according to current legislation. We discovered that although the United States does not currently have a federal safety requirement for laws regarding interacting with minors on the internet, its Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (referred to as "COPPA") establishes a minimum age limit of 13 years old for businesses engaging with minors through electronic media. Our counsel also alerted us that the United States Congress is currently proposing an update to the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act law that would increase the minimum age from 13 to 16 years.

"The convergence of insights gained from the Project Team's first two explorations placed us in a good position to explore the third question from the refueling station, which is:

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- Are the minimum requirements from the 2003 Alateen Motion from the Board of Trustees sufficient for ensuring the safety of Alateens and Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service participating in electronic meetings?

"In addition, the Team realized it was necessary to evaluate another question in parallel, as it relates directly to the feasibility of global acceptance of higher minimums:

- How stringent can the minimum requirements be to support Alateen safety while encouraging adoption?

"In order to do so, the Project Team requested [help](#) from you! We identified 20 Areas within the WSC Structure that had the most stringent requirements. We reached out to a subset of these Areas to gather additional information that may not have originally been provided in the Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements review, such as required criminal background checks, mandated reporting, additional training, etc. Thank you to all Areas who answered the request and provided information.

"Thanks to your willingness to answer our calls for help and to share your experience, strength, hope, and feedback, the Project Team has now completed its first 'good estimate' of a vision for answering the Board of Trustees charge of making online platform(s) available for all Alateen members who wish to participate while ensuring the safety of Alateens and Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service.

The presentation concluded: "Today, we will answer some of the questions that are related to the conceptual process. Before we end this session, we will provide you with a link to a survey in the *Mobile App*. This is the same survey we asked the international structures to complete.

“The Project Team will review all the information we receive from an International Town Hall Meeting along with what we learn today from you as representatives of the WSC Structure. The Project Team will prepare a presentation that includes recommended suggestions and amendments to the Electronic Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements. At the July Board meeting, we will share the presentation with the Board of Trustees and seek their guidance as to the next steps in the process. Once we have a clear direction, we will communicate with the WSC members and international structures about the next leg of the journey.

“On behalf of the Project Team, we appreciate you taking a journey with us through the Feasibility of Alateen Electronic Groups. The goal of this project was to make online platforms available for all Alateen members who wish to participate- while ensuring the safety of Alateen and Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service. Exploring the feasibility of Alateen Electronic Groups has afforded us the opportunity to work with our international partners and WSC Areas to ensure we collectively agree on a solution that could be supported by members globally. When this project began in 2021, we couldn't have projected that in a few short years we would be having a conversation about Alateen members having the possibility to attend electronic Alateen groups globally. But here we are in 2023, at the World Service Conference, asking for feedback about the feasibility of Alateen electronic groups. So, let's continue the journey, stop at necessary checkpoints to ensure we are on track, and, ultimately, we will reach our final destination.”

Conference members were given the opportunity for questions and feedback:

- Are Alateen groups within the World Service Conference Structure considered Al-Anon groups?

Yes, they are.

- I have some concerns about Alateen because of age requirements for Al-Anon meetings. We have young people who attend our young adult meetings. How do we as an Area (GEA) stay within the legal requirements of age?

That is a great question and one that we are going to have to look at as things expand and as we work with all geographic areas to make sure we are aware of our responsibilities. Let's continue the conversations!

- I am concerned about the level of functionality with conventions, etc. with all of the requirements. You mentioned conceivably having three AMAIS working with the groups? Is this something we should be doing?

We have thought about requiring three, but remember, the Area can incorporate as you want to, and increase that number to three instead of two if that works for you.

- You mentioned something about parental approval, but I do not remember what you said. In a global environment, are there repercussions in having minors participating in an international group? Can that be monitored?

With international structures, laws vary regarding working with minors. An international structure may have more stringent guidelines than the WSC Structure. Our conceptual process does not require parental permission, but international ones might. If a teen from an international structure attends a WSC Structure event, then we are taking on the legal responsibility; if an Alateen from the WSC Structure attends an international event, then the

Alateen will have to meet their requirements. In the conceptual design, each meeting will require an ID and an interview. Through that process, they will know who is attending and, more importantly, the group will be following the requirements.

Chosen Agenda Items

Fifty-seven Chosen Agenda Items (CAI) were submitted by the deadline. Prior to Conference, members were invited to vote for the top 18 topics that were most important to them. This approach is designed to identify the natural grouping of overall priorities. Conference members discussed the two topics that had the most votes.

Topic:

This CAI is an open discussion on attracting members into service. What works? What doesn't work? What are the barriers to service participation?

Rationale:

It has become increasingly difficult to attract newer members into service positions. We know we are a fellowship of attraction rather than promotion. What are some methods to use to attract others into service? It is important because as our service positions go unfilled, those serving become overwhelmed with the amount of work required.

Comments:

- Personal contact and encouraging others to serve is important. We may have groups and Districts that are inactive, but we do have lots of new people in service and that came about due to one-on-one contact.
- I am concerned about fewer members having a Sponsor. My Sponsor got me into service. Without Sponsors, is service being shared?
- What encourages people is enthusiasm. We need enthusiasm, even at Conference. We need people to participate and have fun being of service. We need Service Sponsors. What isn't appealing is being "voluntold" to do something.
- What we have done as a committee is to share a Joy of Service workshop. We did this at one of the Districts that had trouble getting people to serve. We shared information from the WSO and some people who have served shared what they have done and how they enjoyed it. We want to continue to use this at the Area level.
- Little bits of success have occurred when we go to individuals and say, "You have been nominated to serve as [blank]. If elected, are you willing to serve?"
- I have watched A.A. and have seen how they do this well; they stress service to their fellows. We have a close relationship with A.A., we can watch how they do service. We need to connect service to recovery.
- We work the Traditions and Concepts and present workshops on service. We get members interested and help members who want to serve.
- At my Area, I asked everyone under 60 to stand. I told them that if they want Al-Anon around for their children, we need to be involved in service. I present fun workshops on service as I travel around the Area. One day my seat will be empty, and we will need those members under 60 to stand up and keep this program going.

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ELECTRONIC ALATEEN VALIDATION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING

The process of expanding Alateen meeting availability to electronic platforms began with the creation of the Electronic Alateen Group Feasibility Strategy in 2021. At the 2022 World Service Conference, the Project Team provided an update on their pilot project involving Alateen meetings on the *Al-Anon Family Groups Mobile App* and communication with international structures about electronic Alateen feasibility; that report can be found on page 31 of the *2022 World Service Conference Summary (P-46)*.

The results of the work on the pilot project, feedback from 2022 and 2023 WSC members, and input from our international partners were presented to the Board of Trustees in October 2023. They approved the suggestions of the Electronic Alateen Group Feasibility team which prompted creation of a new strategy: Electronic Alateen Validation & Implementation Planning. The Team reached out to Conference members to invite them to gather and share feedback from their Areas at the 2024 WSC about the new strategy.

During the Conference session, the Team introduced two new terms which will be used in future discussions regarding electronic Alateen: **Global Electronic Alateen Safety Minimums (Global EASM)** and **WSC Structure Electronic Alateen Safety & Behavioral Requirements (WSC EASBR)**. The Global EASM represents the minimum safety requirements which must be incorporated in Alateen Safety & Behavioral Requirements created by all national

Al-Anon service structures before electronic Alateen groups can be registered and meetings held. It offers the flexibility necessary to meet international laws. The WSC EASBR represents the *proposed* Alateen Safety & Behavioral Requirements for supporting electronic Alateen meetings within the WSC Structure. The WSC EASBR has been drafted considering the current legal requirements of the United States, Canada, and Bermuda.

In future, these global minimums and WSC requirements could allow electronic Alateen groups to be recognized as Al-Anon Family Groups and be connected to their service structure with vote and voice. WSC Areas and international structures would retain the autonomy to decide whether they wanted to host electronic Alateen groups.

The Team brought the WSC EASBR to the 2024 WSC members to gather feedback on the following questions:

- Do you understand the minimum requirements and duties described in the WSC EASBR? Is it clear?
- What questions does the WSC EASBR raise about the possibility of electronic Alateen groups taking place in your Area?

The most positive feedback came from Areas with state laws similar to those laid out in the WSC EASBR. States and provinces that had already instituted mandatory reporting and background checks for Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS) reported enthusiasm from members about implementing electronic Alateen groups. Some Delegates reported that their Areas had less interest in electronic Alateen groups and preferred physical meetings. There were many questions from Areas about the possible new requirements for AMIAS; the WSO clarified that

existing requirements for in-person AMIAS would not change, but that AMIAS would have the opportunity to opt into the Al-Anon Member Involved in Electronic Alateen Service (AMIAS-E) role if desired. Opting in would require them to adhere to the WSC EASBR in addition to their Area's ASBR requirements. The WSO also confirmed the WSC EASBR would not require major changes to existing Area Safety and Behavioral Requirements (ASBRs), only the addition of a section on AMIAS-E certification requirements for Areas that chose to support electronic Alateen groups.

Another frequently discussed question was the pre-screening requirement for electronic Alateen meetings. The Project Team addressed concerns about anonymity and described the work they had done to ensure AMIAS-E requirements help maintain Alateens' anonymity while also weighing the increased potential for harm and legal risk inherent to online spaces. Some Areas also expressed concern about the requirement for Alateens to show identification before participating in electronic Alateen meetings and the possibility that this requirement might pose a barrier to younger members who might not have access to IDs.

Conference members also had the following questions:

- If our Area opts into the WSC EASBR, can Alateens from other Areas join our electronic Alateen meetings?

Because the WSC EASBR ensures consistent requirements, teens from any Area can join a WSC Structure electronic Alateen meeting. If a teen located in the WSC Structure wants to attend an

meeting which occurs in the WSC Structure must adhere to the requirements of that structure's EASBR.

- Can Areas decide on the specifics of their pre-interview process?

The WSO will provide suggested guidelines for Area pre-screening processes as part of training that will be developed, but Areas have autonomy about the specifics of the process.

- Since mandatory reporting is part of the WSC EASBR, will the WSO provide training for mandated reporters?

The current training modules for AMIAS already include some information on mandatory reporting. If the WSC EASBR is approved, training for AMIAS-E will be expanded to include more comprehensive mandated reporting training and will invite Areas to consider including free state or province developed mandated reporting training in their AMIAS-E certification process as well.

- The chat feature is a safety concern for some interested in electronic Alateen meetings; are there safeguards in place for text communications?

The WSC EASBR requires a minimum of two AMIAS-E to be present at all electronic Alateen meetings; one reason for this requirement is to ensure one AMIAS-E will be available to monitor the chat feature. Once developed, training for AMIAS-E would likely incorporate the need for Alateen Group Sponsors and the group's Alateens to decide on the use of the chat during electronic Alateen meetings, since AMIAS-E cannot monitor "private" chats taking place between individual participants.

