

Virginia Area Boundary Policy and Procedures

Approved By: 2024 Spring Assembly
Date Approved: May 5, 2024

A. Introduction

The links of service provide a structure for effective communication in the worldwide fellowship of Al-Anon. It is important to maintain consistent boundaries to avoid confusion and breaks in communication that disrupt the links of service. Links of service include communication between WSO/WSC, the Area, District and Groups, as well as between Groups within a District or Area.

In keeping with Tradition Four, each Group is autonomous except in matters affecting another Group or Al-Anon as a whole. This policy seeks to balance Group autonomy with the responsibility to preserve clear and consistent links of service throughout the Virginia Area.

Every attempt will be made to maintain the existing VA Area boundaries to prevent any disruption in the links of service.

This policy is not intended to restrict or rigidly bind a Group or District within a boundary. Rather, it is intended to ensure that any boundary change is thoughtful, well-informed, and strengthens the fellowship as a whole.

However, the Virginia Area recognizes that there may be conditions that require a boundary change. For example:

1. A District is no longer active and may be dissolved. Existing Groups would join a contiguous District.
2. A District has grown too large and can no longer effectively support the Groups within its boundaries, or there is a commonality between Groups and an Overlay District is being proposed.
3. A Group or Groups may determine that links of service will significantly improve if aligned with a different contiguous District or Overlay District.
4. The District demonstrates that communication and links of service will significantly improve with long-term effects if aligned with a different contiguous Area.

Boundary changes are significant actions that affect our service structure as a whole. Since they affect our representation, voting structure, and communication throughout the Area, they are intentionally structured and deliberate, and are not designed to be expedited for convenience, personality conflict, or temporary challenges.

B. Background Information

In the 2022–2025 AI-Anon/Alateen Service Manual General Information for Assemblies:

“Groups or Districts located in one Area contiguous 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.”

Changes to District or Area boundaries must demonstrate that the links of service will significantly improve. The primary risk of changing boundaries is that communication will be broken.

Boundary changes will not be considered for the convenience of a member, ease of travel, temporary service difficulties, or interpersonal disagreements. The guiding consideration must always be whether the proposed change strengthens the links of service and benefits AI-Anon as a whole.

The Area is responsible for maintaining Group Records at WSO. This includes the contact information for each Group, assigning Groups to the correct District, and the District information in each Area. Boundary changes for the convenience of a member will not be considered by the Area or WSO. WSO has the final approval of any Area boundary changes.

Informed group conscience will be used when considering changes to boundaries. GRs must be given ample notice and opportunity to participate in the group conscience at both the District level and at the Group meetings before any requests are made.

In keeping with Concept Twelve, Warranty Three, “...all important decisions will be made by discussion, vote, and, wherever possible, by unanimity.”

Because boundary changes affect more than one service body, broad participation and substantial unity are essential before proceeding.

C. Dissolving a District

A District can be dissolved because it is no longer active, and GRs within the District do not attend Area Assembly. Dissolving a District may be proposed by the GRs or Area Chair.

Dissolution of a District is considered a last resort after reasonable efforts have been made to restore District participation and function.

1. The GRs or Area Chair may call a group conscience to discuss dissolving the District. The group conscience can be done in person or electronically. Minutes of the group conscience will be recorded and include the vote and minority opinion.
2. If the decision is to dissolve the District, the Groups will propose joining contiguous District(s), based on geographical considerations. Dissolving the District should be unanimous if at all possible.
3. The contiguous District(s) will be notified by the Area Chair and asked to conduct a group conscience to determine if they are willing to accept the Groups.
4. The GR(s) in the contiguous District(s) will conduct a group conscience with their respective Groups to determine if there are any objections to accepting the Group(s) from the dissolving District. Consideration will be given to the ability of the contiguous District to accommodate the needs of the requesting Groups.
5. The distribution of assets, funds, CAL, and other District items will be decided to go to either the contiguous District(s) or to the Groups that are merging.
6. The contiguous DR(s) will propose a timeline to the Area Officers for moving the Group(s) to the contiguous District(s).
7. The Area Officers will review the request and resolve any issues prior to making a motion to retain/dissolve the District to the VAWSC.
8. VAWSC will vote on the motion to retain/dissolve the District, and present the outcome to Assembly. A two-thirds majority is required to dissolve the District.
9. If the District is dissolved, changes to the District map will be made by the Area Chair, and posted on the VA AI-Anon website.
10. Area Group Records will reassign the Group(s) to the approved District(s) in the Area and WSO databases.
11. The Area Chair and Delegate will notify the Associate Director/Conference at WSO that a District has been dissolved.

D. Dividing a District

In the event that the District has grown too large based on the number of meetings, or there is a desire to create an Overlay District, the GRs or the DR may request that there be a change in the District boundaries or an Overlay District created.

The creation of a new or Overlay District must demonstrate sustainable leadership, financial viability, and improved service communication — not merely a desire for separation.

1. The DR or a GR may propose that the District boundaries be changed or an Overlay District created. The DR will then conduct a group conscience at the District level. The

group conscience can be done in person or electronically. Minutes of the group conscience will be recorded and include the vote and minority opinion.

2. Each GR will conduct a group conscience with their respective Groups to determine if their members support changing District boundaries or creating an Overlay District.
3. If the decision is to change the District boundaries and create a new District, either geographic or Overlay, a full slate of officers for both the current District and the new District is recommended, with a minimum of District Representative and Treasurer.
4. If the proposed changes to the District are geographic, they must include new boundary lines. All Groups affected by the new boundaries must agree to be associated with the appropriate District.
5. The proposal to change District boundaries or create an Overlay District will be made to the Area Officers, who will review the request and resolve any issues prior to making a motion to the VAWSC.
6. If VAWSC approves the motion, the Assembly will vote with a simple majority. The vote and minority opinion will be recorded.
7. Upon approval by the Assembly, any geographical changes to the District map will be made by the Area Chair, and posted on the VA Al-Anon website.
8. Area Group Records will reassign the Groups to the approved District(s) in the Area and WSO databases.
9. The Area Chair and Delegate will notify the Associate Director/Conference at WSO that a District has been added.

E. Groups Changing Districts

Group(s) may petition the Area to be moved to a contiguous District under the following conditions:

- The Group(s) aligns more closely geographically with another contiguous District.
- An Overlay District exists that has a commonality with the Group(s).

While Groups retain autonomy, a change in District affiliation affects representation, voting structure, financial flow, and communication beyond the individual Group. Therefore, such changes require careful review and mutual agreement among all affected service bodies.

1. The GR(s) will conduct a group conscience with their respective Groups to move to the proposed contiguous or Overlay District.
2. The decision of the Group(s) will be presented to the Group's current DR. If there is no DR, the proposal goes directly to the Area Chair.
3. If the change is geographic, the District boundary must be continuous and include all Groups within the proposed new boundary. If the petition is for a Group to move to an

Overlay District, this condition does not apply.

Changes must avoid creating fragmented or isolated service structures.

4. The current DR (or Area Chair) will conduct a group conscience at the District level to accept/deny the change. If the result is to allow the Groups to change Districts, the outcome will be presented to the Area Chair.
5. The Area Chair will contact the DR of the proposed District to present the petition of the Group(s) to move to the proposed District.
6. The DR of the proposed District will conduct a group conscience at the District Level to accept/deny the Group(s) petition and present the outcome to the Area Chair.
7. If the decision is to change the geographic boundary, changes to the District map will be made by the Area Chair, and posted on the VA Al-Anon website.
8. Area Group Records will reassign the Groups to their approved District(s) in the Area and WSO databases.

A petition initiated by a Group is not finalized until all levels of service outlined above have completed review and approval.

F. Changing Virginia Area Boundary

The Area may recommend changes; however, the final determination is made by WSO.

Every attempt should be made to accommodate the needs of all Districts within the Area to prevent changing the Area boundaries, including:

- Online VAWSC meetings, officer meetings and Assemblies
- Online District meetings
- Participation in service at the Area level

Leaving the Virginia Area is considered an extraordinary action due to its broad impact on unity, representation, and the long-term health of the service structure.

However, if a District determines that the links of service will improve significantly by moving to a contiguous Area, the procedure below must be followed:

1. The District requesting to join a contiguous Area must have an active DR who has been unable to attend VA Area meetings either in person or electronically for two Panels. Every attempt must be made to overcome an obstacle for the DR to attend VA Area meetings.
2. The Groups in the requesting District must have active GRs who have been unable to attend VA Area Assemblies either in person or electronically for two Panels. Every attempt must be made to overcome any obstacle for the GRs to attend VA Area Assemblies.

3. All Groups within the District must agree to leave the VA Area, following a group conscience within the Groups.
4. The District must unanimously agree to leave the VA Area, following a group conscience within the District. Individual Groups cannot join a contiguous Area.
5. The recommendation to leave the VA Area is presented by the DR of the requesting District to the Area Officers at the Area Officers meeting. The Area Officers will determine whether the request be added to the VAWSC agenda, or whether additional information is needed.
6. If added to the VAWSC agenda, the DR will present the request to VAWSC.
7. VAWSC will review the request and recommend or deny it with two-thirds of the vote.
8. If approved, the VA Area Assembly will review the request and recommend or deny it with two-thirds of the vote.
9. If approved, the VA Area Delegate will propose the new boundary lines to WSO for final approval.
10. Every attempt will be made to maintain the existing VA Area boundaries to prevent disruption in the links of service.

The purpose of this process is not to prevent change, but to ensure that any change reflects unity, stability, and the long-term benefit of Al-Anon as a whole.

Virginia Area Boundary Policy – Proposed Clarifications

Purpose of Revisions

- Clarify that Groups are **not “boxed in” or trapped**
 - Affirm **Tradition Four (Group autonomy)**
 - Strengthen language about responsibility to **AI-Anon as a whole**
 - Emphasize that boundary changes are **deliberate and not convenience-based**
-

What Was Added

- ✓ Explicit reference to Group autonomy balanced with Area responsibility
 - ✓ Clear statement that policy is not designed to restrict, but to protect service links
 - ✓ Language stating changes must benefit AI-Anon as a whole
 - ✓ Clarification that convenience, personality conflict, or temporary challenges are not sufficient reasons
 - ✓ Statement that dissolution or departure is a last resort
 - ✓ Emphasis on sustainability, financial viability, and long-term service health
-

What Did NOT Change

- The procedural steps
 - Voting thresholds (two-thirds where required)
 - WSO’s final authority on Area boundary changes
 - Requirement for unanimity when leaving the Area
-

Overall Impact

The revised language:

- Protects Group autonomy
- Preserves strong links of service
- Ensures unity before structural change
- Makes clear the policy is protective — not punitive

DRAFT