Al-Anon Family Groups, Area 57

A Group Representative's Guide to the Virginia Area Assembly

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Assembly

I. **Assembly Definition.** The Area Assembly is the business meeting for all Group Representatives (GRs) to elect a Delegate to the World Service Conference, and to elect all other Area Officers. In addition to these elections, GRs determine the business and functioning policies of the Area.

II. **Assembly Structure**
   a. Members
      - Area Officers
      - Area Coordinators
      - Area Liaisons
      - District Representatives (DRs)
      - Group Representatives (GRs)
      [See page 8 for current listing of Area Officers, Coordinators and Liaisons]

III. **Roles and Responsibilities**
   a. Group Representatives (GRs)
      - <u>You are an essential link for communication among</u> the Group, District, Area and World Service Office. Without you, your Group would miss out on many opportunities for growth through sharing the best Al-Anon has to offer.
      - <u>Read the Assembly Agenda and note the voting issues</u>. Background information on voting issues is given to the DRs at Virginia Area World Service Committee (VAWSC) meetings. The DRs in turn distribute this information to their respective GRs at their District meetings. Discuss these issues with the members of your Group so you can represent their thoughts and ideas during discussions at Assembly. Prepare yourself to vote on your Group's behalf by taking into consideration all the information shared on the voting issue at Assembly.
      - <u>Read the Minutes of the previous Assembly and note any errors or omissions</u>. This helps to refresh your memory of previous actions and reports, and helps to ensure that the Assembly has accurate records.
      - <u>Learn about important issues regarding the needs of Al-Anon from a broader perspective</u>. By listening, asking questions, and participating in discussions, you have the opportunity to gain valuable information to share with your Group members so they may have more tools to keep Al-Anon relevant and available to the next generation.
      - <u>Write down interesting ideas and comments</u>. You will hear from other members at Assembly who may have different perspectives or ideas or solutions about issues. Writing them down will help you share them with your Group.
      - <u>Learn about resources available to your Group members</u>. You will have access to Area Officers, Coordinators, and Service Center liaisons, all of whom have resources to help you in your role as GR. If you have feedback for them, Assembly is also a great time to have those conversations.
      - <u>Prepare a report to take to your Group</u>. It is your responsibility to share what you learn with the members of your Group at future Group meetings. There is no "one way" to do this. You will have the opportunity to talk about this at

Assembly in your Opening Sessions, and you will develop a style of sharing that works best for you and for your Group.

- Participate in a workshop or discussion topic break out session at Assembly. The topics of both the discussions and the workshops come from VAWSC and reflect the requests from DRs who respond to the needs of the Groups in their District. Officers and Coordinators, who observe Area-wide needs for training in or discussion of various aspects of the work of the Area service, also have input.
- Each Group should have funds set aside to cover the costs for you to attend Assemblies. See section VI c for information on financial assistance for groups without sufficient funds to send their GR.

b. District Representatives (DRs)
- Serve as the voice of the Groups in their District at the VAWSC, currently held in March and August each year.
- Share information or questions with the Area Officers, Coordinators, Liaisons, or the World Service Office (via the Area Delegate).
- Act as a resource to GRs to help Groups learn from each other and to help resolve any concerns that may arise in the Groups.
- Help to prepare the agenda for Assembly.

c. Area Officers
- Conduct the day-to-day business of Al-Anon at the Area level.
- Act as resources to Groups and Districts in the Area.
- The Delegate communicates with the World Service Office and attends the annual World Service Conference with Delegates from the U. S., Canada, and guests.
  - o Reports from his/her attendance at the World Service Conference to share what is happening to serve members from the World Service perspective.
  - o He/she also takes ideas or suggestions to the World Service Office that can help develop resources to serve the needs of the Groups.

d. Area Coordinators and Liaisons
- Offer resources and support to Groups.
- They are introduced at each Assembly.

IV. **Communication**
a. Communication within the Virginia Area is most effective through the respectful use of the Links of Service. [See World Service Conference Structure chart on page 171 of the 2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual for more information on the Links of Service.]
- GRs share information from their Groups with their District and share information from the District with their Group.
- DRs share information from their District with the Area and share information from the Area with the GRs in their Districts.
- The Area shares information from the Area with the World Service Office and World Service Conference via the Area Delegate and shares information from the World Service Office and World Service Conference with the Assembly as a whole.

- Each service position (GR – DR – Area Officers and Coordinators – WSO and WSC) serves as a liaison between each other in sequence.
- The active involvement of GRs at Assembly ensures each member's access to experience, strength and hope of the larger fellowship.
- GRs serve as the voice of their Group.
    - GRs attend District meetings and are the information source for their Groups.
    - GRs have the key role in connecting their Group members to the larger Al-Anon community.
    - GRs inform their Group members so that members have informed input in all Al-Anon decisions through their GR at Assemblies.
    - Without active involvement of a GR, Al-Anon can fail to serve members effectively and miss opportunities to thrive as a resource to families and friends of alcoholics.

V. **Assembly Purpose**
   a. Assembly provides the opportunity for communication from the Area, the World Service Office, and the World Service Conference to reach every Group.
   - Assemblies are held twice each year, in May and October.
   - Election of Area Officers is held at the end of each three-year term. The next election Assembly will be in October of 2024.
   - Outgoing GRs vote to elect new Officers.
   - Assembly is a time when we communicate beyond the Group level to ensure Al-Anon continues to help members "find solutions that lead to serenity."

VI. **Decisions**
   a. The Virginia Area Assembly uses an Informed Group Conscience process to make decisions.
   - First, background information on an issue is presented to the Assembly.
   - Next, members ask questions to be sure all aspects of the issue are clear and needed information is known.
   - When there are no more questions, then members may express their opinions without judgment.
   - The Informed Group Conscience process reflects the principles of:
       - Talk to each other. (Equality)
       - Reason things out. (Patience)
       - Participate in discussions. (Honesty and generosity)
       - Be open minded. (Understanding and compassion)
       - Show respect. (Acceptance and trust)
   - Once the Assembly has enough information to make a decision (usually determined by taking a consensus), the motion is ready for the actual vote to be taken.
   b. Procedures for open discussion
   - All discussion is at the microphone. This allows everyone to hear what is asked or shared.
   - When you go to the microphone, introduce yourself by your name and your District name and number.

- Each person can have one two minute turn at the microphone per discussion topic.
- When you get in line to ask a question, carry your *Service Manual* so that the Chair can recognize you first.
  - Asking a question does not count as your one time at the microphone.
- When there are no more questions, then members may share their viewpoint or opinion without judgment.
- Begin and end each discussion session on time.
- No side conversations.
- No cell phones.
- No distractions.
- No applause.
- Stay on topic.
- If someone has already expressed your opinion, do not repeat it.
- Follow the agenda.
- Be courteous.
- Agree that everyone wants what is best for Al-Anon, regardless of whether you agree or disagree with them.

VII. Election Assemblies

a. Every Three (3) years, Officers complete their terms of office.
b. The election Assembly is held in October of the third year of a panel.
c. There is ample notice prior to the Election Assembly.
d. Be familiar with the Officer Job Descriptions, which are provided in advance. (These descriptions are reviewed and updated by VAWSC at least once during each three-year panel.
e. Outgoing GRs vote for the incoming panel of Officers.

VIII. Attendance

a. It is each Group's responsibility to send a GR or an elected alternate to each Assembly.
b. Your attendance is important!
c. If your Group is not financially able to fund your attendance at Assembly, in part or in whole, go first to your District and ask for help with the costs.
d. If your District is not financially able to help, contact the Area Chair or Area Treasurer to request a scholarship for yourself and you will be able to have your expenses paid.
e. Make arrangements for this scholarship assistance at least one week BEFORE the Assembly registration deadline.
f. The Area will also fund a DR whose district is financially unable for his/her attendance. Contact the Area Chair or Area Treasurer.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will I be voting at Assembly?

Yes. Only GRs vote at Assembly. The "ultimate authority" rests with Group members. This is how Al-Anon is guided by the members rather than a governing body. [See Concept One]

Can other members who are not GRs attend Assembly?

Yes. All Al-Anon members are welcome and encouraged to participate in Assembly.

Why is it important for me to attend? Can't I just get a written report of Assembly?

There are many useful conversations that take place at Assembly. It is impossible to capture all the great ideas in a written report. By attending, you have the opportunity to discover interesting possibilities that may serve to improve your Group meetings. Fellowship is an important part of recovery. Take the opportunity to discover the wonderful experience of fellowship at Assembly.

I am not able to attend Assembly. Can I send the votes by proxy or can another GR take my place?

There are no proxy votes at Assembly because discussions often bring out additional information and/or new ways to think about issues. A GR votes for his/her Group only. To have your Group represented, the Group elects a member (who is not also an AA member) to attend Assembly in your place. He/she is considered the Alternate GR and registers as a voting member at Assembly.

If I can't find someone to share a room with, can you help me find a roommate?

If no one from another Group in your District is available to share a room with you, check with nearby DRs to see if there is anyone in their District in need of a roommate. Also, check with the Assembly Registration Committee to see if anyone else is looking for someone to share a room. (Your DR has the contact information and can do that for you.) Hotels and Area Officers do not assign roommates.

How can I find a service sponsor to help me with my service position?

There are many members who have participated in service who are happy to help you on your new journey! Check with service members in your District, or talk with current service members at Assembly. Almost everyone in the room has something to offer. This is where fellowship can be helpful in choosing the right person for you.

What are the qualifications for an Officer position?

The person standing for an office is required to have the experience as a current or past DR, be prepared to serve for three (3) years and be an active member of Al-Anon. Candidates are asked to outline their service experience which indicates their involvement in Al-Anon and familiarity with the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts of Service. Candidates may also outline their personal knowledge, skills and abilities to demonstrate they can perform the duties of the position for which they stand. [See Concept Nine]

Will there be time for fellowship at Assembly?

> Yes. Although the Area business is priority, there is a break out session planned where you may choose a workshop or focus topic to attend. This session, plus breaks, Early Bird and Night Owl meetings, Chat Rooms, and Opening Sessions, offer the opportunity to connect with other members. Then, there are mealtime opportunities to share fellowship with returning and new friends.

Will there be a Tradition Seven collection at Assembly?

> Yes. We pass the basket at Assembly for Tradition Seven contributions. Many members make personal contributions at this time. Groups often have their GR turn in their quarterly contributions and their Area semi-annual appeal contribution at this time.

New information came forward at Assembly that makes me think my Group would make a different choice if they had all the information. What should I do?

> As a trusted servant, you have the delegated authority to use your intelligence to make effective decisions. [See Concept of Service Ten] When attending Assembly, where you have access to all the facts to guide you, it is expected that you act according to your own conscience for the good of Al-Anon as a whole. [See Concept of Service Three]

Commonly Used Acronyms

AAPP	Area Alateen Process Person
AFG	Al-Anon Family Groups
AFG, Inc.	Al-Anon Family Groups, Inc.
AIS	Al-Anon Information Service
AMIAS	Al-Anon Member Involved in Alateen Service – Alateen Sponsor
ASC	Al-Anon Service Center – May be an AIS, LDC or both
CAL	Conference Approved Literature
CMA	Current Mailing Address
DR	District Representative
GR	Group Representative
LDC	Literature Distribution Center
ODAT	One Day at a Time
PO	Public Outreach
PSA	Public Service Announcement
VAWSC	Virginia Area World Service Committee
WSC	World Service Conference
WSO	World Service Office – Located in Virginia Beach

Resources

Al-Anon and Alateen Service Manual 2018-2021

www.vaalanon.org **the Virginia Area website**

www.al-anon.org the World Service Office website

www.tidewaterasc.org the Tidewater Al-Anon Service Center

www.alanonva.com the Northern Virginia Al-Anon Service Center

Conference Approved Literature (CAL)

Group Representative's Guide to the Virginia Area Assembly

Virginia Area Officers (your DR can contact each of the following Officers, Coordinators and Liaisons):

Delegate – Stacy L.

Alternate Delegate – Ellie F.

Chair – Debbie P.

Alternate Chair – Duane F.

Secretary – Deb T.

Treasurer **–** Laura L.

Alternate Secretary – Christy B.

Alternate Treasurer – Wendy R.

Virginia Area Coordinators:

Alateen –

Archives –

Area Alateen Process Person (AAPP) – Patty M.

Assembly –

Group Records – Cheryl P.

Literature/Forum –

Long Range Planning –

Public Outreach –

Website –

Virginia Area Liaisons:

ASC Tidewater – Sean M.

ASC Northern Virginia –

Convention Liaison – Ellie F., Alternate Delegate

Current Area Convention Chair – Valerie P.

Past Area Convention Chair – Christy B.

MEAC –

ESAC –

Let it Begin with Me
When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help,
let the hand of Al-Anon and Alateen always be there,and let it begin with me.