

Task Force: Transforming Electronic Groups to AFGs Motion
VAWSC Meeting
 March 5, 2022

This motion was approved by the VAWSC: (date)

MOTION:

Made by: Terry Woodside

Seconded by:

The Virginia Area Officers recommend that the VAWSC approve the Policy prepared by the Transforming Electronic Groups to AFGs Task Force for admitting petitioning Electronic Groups into the Virginia Area, and send it to the 2022 Spring Assembly for their approval in May 2022.

Background:

- **A motion from the Transforming Electronic Groups to AFGs Task Force was passed at the Incoming/Outgoing Officers' Meeting, Jan. 8, 2022.** The motion recommended that the Virginia Area Officers approve the Policy for admitting petitioning Electronic Groups into the Virginia Area and send it to the VAWSC for their approval in March 2022.
- **The April 2021 World Service Conference passed 2 transformative and historical motions, presented by the WSC Policy Committee.**
 - At that time there were **449 permanent electronic groups, with 700 meetings**, - phone, virtual, and Alateen Chat meetings. Those groups had only a CMA, no GR, and no representation at a District or an Area. They had no Delegate representation at WSC.
 - As of Nov. 19, 2021 WSO Group Services reports that there are **613 permanent electronic groups, with 854 meetings**.
 - The **first of the 2 transformative Motions passed** at the 2021 WSC changed the status of those **permanent electronic groups** to Al-Anon Family Groups. This means those groups were able to elect a GR and to have representation.
 - This status change was achieved administratively by amending the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* to eliminate any reference to defining an Area in geographic terms. So, after the new Electronic Area is admitted to the WSC, the new Area is not limited to a specific geographic area.
 - The **second Motion passed** allowed for all **permanent electronic groups** to form a **new Electronic Area**. All **permanent electronic groups** that became new AFGs automatically become members of the new Electronic Area, which is forming after they hold their first Electronic Area Assembly in January, 2022.
 - Now that the new Electronic Area is forming, and will petition to join the WSC at the 2022 WSC, each new AFG may decide, based on their Group Conscience, whether they want to belong to the new Electronic Area, or if they would rather petition to join a geographic Area of their choice. An AFG may only belong to one Area.
 - The new Electronic Area is considered as contiguous to every other of the 67 geographic Areas.

- At this point in the process, the Virginia Area will follow the guidelines in the *2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual, version 2*, (pages 157-158; and pages 165-166) for changing a group to a new Area.
- **The Virginia Area** will need to have a policy in place shortly after the April 2022 WSC and the admission of the new Electronic Area into the WSC.

The Task Force: Transforming Electronic Groups to AFGs

- The Task Force was formed by a motion passed at the Oct. 2021 Virginia Area Assembly.
- The Task Force members are: the Panel 59 and 62 Virginia Area Delegates - Terry W. and Stacy L.; Panel 59 and 62 Area Chairpersons – Tom S. and Debbie P.; Panel 59 and 62 Group Records Coordinators – Chris B. and Cheryl L.
- The Task Force was charged with the task of *“developing a Policy for the Virginia Area to accommodate the Transformation of Electronic Groups with no representation to Al-Anon Family Groups (AFGs) with representation.”*
- The Task Force has met 3 times since the 2022 Oct. Assembly – Oct. 28, Nov. 11, and Dec. 12, 2021.
- The Task Force held **2 Town Halls** for the Virginia Area members to attend and hear a status report from the Task Force on progress made, to hear questions for the membership from the Task Force, and to ask questions and offer their feedback to the Task Force. Those dates were **Nov. 7 (with 24 attendees) and Dec. 5, 2021 (with 35 attendees)**.
- **A third Town Hall is scheduled for March 27, 2022.** That will be after the new Policy is presented for approval to the VASWC, but before the May 14-15, 2022 Virginia Area Assembly. That timing should give DRs and GRs time to read the policy, ask questions of the Task Force, and take the new Policy to their groups and Districts for discussion in advance of voting at the Spring Assembly.
- The Task Force agreed that the new Policy should follow these Guidelines:
 - Be as broad as possible.
 - Avoid being a governing documents.
 - Be compliant with our Three Legacies.
 - Respect the autonomy of our Groups, Districts, and Area as much as possible.
 - Recognize that the Policy may need to be adjusted as implementation begins.

The Knowledge Based Decision Making Questions:

1. What do we know about the Fellowship’s needs, want, or preferences that is relevant to this discussion?

- The April 2022 World Service Conference (WSC) is planning on voting on the admission of the 68th Area, the new Electronic Area, to the WSC.
- After the admission of the new Electronic Area to the WSC, these new groups are free to petition to change their affiliation from the new Electronic Area to a geographic Area of their choice. Some of these new AFGs have expressed an interest in joining a geographic Area, so the

Virginia Area will need to be prepared with guidelines and procedures for considering these petitions.

- Some Virginia Area AFGs may be interested in leaving the Virginia Area and affiliating with the new Electronic Area, or another Area that suits its needs and preferences better. (Note the example of some of the Eastern Shore of Virginia affiliating with the MD/DC Area).
- Some Virginia Area AFGs may wish to become permanently electronic and remain affiliated with their historic District and the Virginia Area.
- Some Virginia Area AFGs may wish to become hybrids, meeting face-to-face and electronically at the same time.
- The Virginia Area will need guidelines to help groups navigate the coming changes and to maintain accurate Group Records so members and prospective members may find meetings they wish to attend.

2. What do we know about the ability of the Virginia Area to support this topic?

- The Virginia Area is capable of developing and implementing a new policy to guide the groups and to manage the administrative workload of the coming changes. This has been demonstrated by the work of the Task Force and by the Virginia Area members who attended our Town Halls and engaged in the discussion of the new Policy development.
- Members who attended our Town Halls on this topic are interested in seeing these changes develop and showed creative problem solving in how to handle potential difficulties, such as funding representatives to Area Assemblies and/or District meetings.
- Members have been asking for input from the Virginia Area as to how to manage details as their groups change from face-to-face to virtual or hybrid, and in some cases, back to face-to-face.

3. What do we know about the current and future items and trends that is relevant to this discussion?

- The growth in electronic meetings was notable even before the Covid-19 shutdown.
- Since that time that growth has been striking.
- Electronic groups are going to be an important factor in Al-Anon/Alateen's growth in the future, and certainly in the Virginia Area's growth as well.
- Electronic platforms may well be a means to increasing diversity in Al-Anon, as young people embrace electronic meetings.
- Rural and isolated geographic locations are also increasingly using electronic means of finding and attending meetings.

4. What are the ethical implications of our choices (pros and cons)?

Pros:

- Establishing a Virginia Area policy now, before the new Electronic Area is admitted to the WSC, allows us to be ready when the need first arises, shortening the process of admitting or releasing AFGs.
- Prompt response to new AFGs petitioning to join our Virginia Area will be received as welcoming and affirming.

- Establishing our policy early allows us time to anticipate and address potential problems, such as group records procedures.
- Having a policy in place will allow the Virginia Area to address District's questions and/or anxieties about whether or not to admit new electronic groups into their Districts.

Cons:

- Historically, our fellowship is slow, and sometimes resistant, to adapt to change.
- Some members may not wish to accept electronic meetings into the Virginia Area or into their Districts.

5. What do we wish we knew, but do not?

- We do not know how many groups will be petitioning to join or to leave the Virginia Area.
- We do not know if we will have enough electronic groups to form an electronic District, made up of all electronic groups.
- We do not know if some Districts will refuse to admit an electronic group when it is asked.
- We do not know if having electronic groups will pressure the Virginia Area to host electronic or hybrid Assemblies.
- We do not know what the financial impact on the groups', Districts' and Area's treasuries will be.