

topics

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news

from the 2019

World Service Conference

Al-Anon's largest representative group conscience, the World Service Conference (WSC), met in Virginia Beach, Virginia, April 13–17. The Conference theme was "Action Is Attraction—There Is No Growth in the Comfort Zone." This 59th annual Conference brought together Delegates from 67 Areas in the US (including Puerto Rico), Canada, and Bermuda. Although Delegates are elected by the Al-Anon members in their Areas, their purpose at the WSC is to represent Al-Anon as a whole.

Other participants in the Conference include members of Al-Anon's Board of Trustees and Executive Committee, voting members of the World Service Office (WSO) administrative Staff, and other WSO office personnel. In 1985, the WSC voted to make the Conference member ratio two-thirds elected Delegates to one-third WSO Volunteers and Staff.

The 2019 Conference had 94 voting members. More information about how the Conference works is available in the *2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27), beginning on page 160. ([Click here.](#))

Policy Work Group Discussion—Electronic Meetings

The Electronic Meetings Work Group responsible for this presentation used a variety of methods to engage the Conference attendees and give them a better understanding of those Al-Anon members who participate in electronic meetings. They also discussed how these meetings fit into our current service structure.

The Work Group presented useful information about electronic meetings and their members in creative ways: with a skit, a pre-recorded telephone meeting, and a PowerPoint presentation. Some members mentioned that, prior to their involvement in the Work Group, they were "leery of electronic meetings, perceiving them as a threat to face-to-face meetings." When they joined electronic meetings as part of their research, they gained a more accurate understanding of these meetings. They reported that the members of such meetings shared their "experience, strength, and hope; protected anonymity; followed the Traditions; and frequently urged members, especially newcomers, to also attend face-to-face meetings."

As for being a part of the current service structure, it was shared that the members of electronic meetings can always reach out through the links of service to their Area Delegate or other Area Officer, General Service Office, or other international structure representative with questions and concerns.

Chosen Agenda Item Discussion—Meditation Meetings

Conference members shared the pros and cons of meetings that incorporated time for meditation as part of their format. Positive aspects included providing members with a specific time to quiet their bodies and their minds, to discuss and practice Step Eleven, and to communicate with a Higher Power. Welcoming the newcomer was a key negative concern. This is because a meeting that devotes a significant amount of time to meditating can leave a newcomer confused about

Al-Anon's purpose and meeting format. Meetings based upon only one or a few members' interpretation of meditation could involve an outside issue. Conference members shared that Al-Anon as a whole does not endorse or recommend a specific type of meditation. Many Conference members expressed that while discussion of Step Eleven at meetings is important, like prayer, meditation is preferably practiced by members on an individual basis.

Public Service Announcements

This year, we are testing a new approach to our Public Service Announcements (PSAs), as well as incorporating, for the first time, the means of capturing quantifiable data on to the appeal of each PSA.

Our "champion" version PSA follows the traditional storyline based on the most common newcomer demographic (according to the 2018 Membership Survey): 40-year-old white females concerned about their spouse's drinking. The "challenger" PSA is based on Al-Anon's 20 questions; it uses questions from *Are You Troubled by Someone's Drinking?* (S-17), *Has Your*

Life Been Affected by Someone Else's Drinking? (S-20), and *Did You Grow Up with a Problem Drinker?* (S-25).

We have created special web addresses for each PSA to direct people to the newcomers page; this will allow us to capture the number of visits generated by each PSA. We are also using two separate phone numbers so we can see which PSA is more effective at generating calls to our toll-free meeting line.

The PSAs are available in English, Spanish, and French. Their success depends on members reaching out to their local TV and radio stations to ask them to play our PSAs.

Approval of Changes to the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*

The Conference was presented with several revised text changes to the *2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27). The changes were provided to the Delegates prior to the Conference so that they could review and comment. All text changes were approved.

The policy for Alateen that begins on page 93 of the “Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies” was amended. The revised language provides clarity and utilizes terms in relation to Alateen service that are in keeping with our spiritual principles. A major addition was the decision to add the 2003 Alateen Motion from the Board of Trustees to the appendix of the *Service Manual*.

The current Concept Five descriptive text appearing on pages 186 and 187 of the *Service Manual* has left some members of the fellowship with the understanding that any disagreement or

dissatisfaction can or should be appealed directly to the Board of Trustees. The revised descriptive text clarifies that members can appeal to the Board for consideration of an issue once all avenues of mediation with the service arm that made the original decision are exhausted.

As a result of organizational changes at the WSO, a task force was created to update the text in the “World Service Handbook” to improve clarity about which Staff members are voting members of the Conference. The text changes impact sections on pages 139 through 140, 168, and 171.

After extensive research in the WSO Archives, the battle of the comma in Warranty Three of Concept Twelve and in the Al-Anon World Service Conference Charter is now resolved, and the comma is restored! This will be reflected in all publications moving forward.

Thought Force Report: Welcoming Potential Members

Comprised of Delegates, Trustees, and WSO Staff, the Thought Force on Welcoming Potential Members presented a classic “Al-Anon Business Meeting” skit. The topic: the thoughts and feelings that arise when newcomers share about a problem of drug addiction in a family member or friend instead of alcoholism. The players in the skit voiced facts about the Traditions and our most recent membership survey as well as feelings about our primary purpose, change, conflict, compassion, unconditional love, and acceptance.

One Thought Force member summed it up by saying, “It doesn’t hurt to understand and share about the Traditions, but it’s also okay to be

welcoming and allow people to determine whether or not they belong.” The best way to ensure a newcomer will have the opportunity to determine whether Al-Anon is right for them is to allow all members to share their own experience, strength, and hope about living with alcoholism. Current members with concerns about this at their own groups are encouraged to participate in group inventories; chair meeting using topics from the “Al-Anon Focus/Declaration” Table Card (S-24); and identify members, ahead of time, who are willing to meet with newcomers to discuss questions and concerns about membership.

Upcoming Events

Road Trip! You and Your Board Connect will be held on October 19, 2019 in Seattle, Washington. Enjoy a full, fast-moving agenda, packed with presentations on how the Executive Committee, the Board, and its different committees work.

Join us in Detroit, Michigan for **A.A.'s International Convention with Al-Anon Participation** July 2–5, 2020. Online registration opens September 9, 2019.

We look forward to celebrating recovery with you June 29–July 2, 2023 in Albuquerque, New Mexico at **Al-Anon's International Convention with A.A. Participation**.

Based on the Task Force recommendation, the Board of Trustees has decided to discontinue TEAM events and to begin looking at options for a new way of interacting with members. Stay tuned.

MORE INFORMATION

For more details on the 2019 World Service Conference, see the *2019 World Service Conference Summary* (P-46), available in August 2019, [here](#).

You can also order a copy of the *Conference Summary* (for \$5 shipping and handling) [here](#).