

An Orientation Guide For The New Intergroup Representative

Sonoma County Intergroup Fellowship
March, 2017

I am responsible ... when anyone, anywhere,
reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A.
always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

Welcome to New Intergroup Representatives

Welcome to Intergroup. You have become the link between your group and the Sonoma County Intergroup Fellowship (SCIF). As an Intergroup Representative you now represent the voice of your A.A. group's conscience as it pertains to Sonoma County Intergroup activities.

You are the two-way link between your Group and the rest of Sonoma County A.A. You are the reporter to your group about the discussions and changes within SCIF. You've taken on an important role.

The Intergroup Representative is a key role in the unity and service of the Sonoma County Fellowship. Your job will not only maintain the right of the individual member to be heard and acknowledged, no matter how much of a minority opinion that represents, but it will ensure that any changes within SCIF come as a response to the needs of all Sonoma County A.A. and not just the few. Therefore, your voice and your participation are vital so that your Group's informed group conscience is heard.

"A.A. has no central authority, minimal organization, and a handful of Traditions instead of laws. As co-founder Bill W. noted in 1960, 'We obey [the Twelve Traditions] willingly because we ought to and because we want to. Perhaps the secret of their power lies in the fact that these life-giving communications spring out of living experience and are rooted in love.'" (A.A. Group pamphlet, pg. 8)

We hope that this service commitment will come to mean as much to you as it has to others. The Unity and Traditions of A.A. depend upon your commitment.

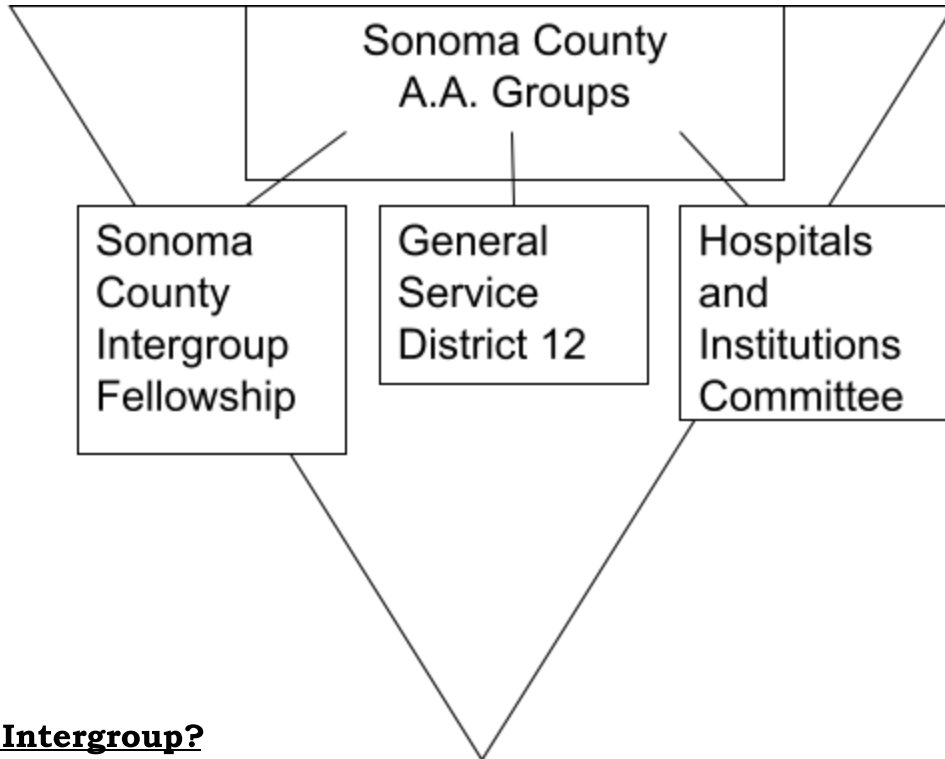
If for some reason you need to discontinue your commitment before your term ends, please let your group know and contact our Registrar so we can adjust our records.

Sonoma County Intergroup Fellowship Preamble

The Sonoma County Intergroup Fellowship is a service body directly responsible to the A.A. groups of Sonoma County. Its primary purpose is to meet the needs of the A.A. groups and to provide services as required.

In all of its proceedings, the Sonoma County Intergroup shall observe the spirit of A.A. Traditions and Concepts.

Diagram of Sonoma County Structure



What is Intergroup?

Sonoma County's Intergroup, or Central Office, is a vital A.A. service office that involves partnership among groups in Sonoma County – just as A.A. groups themselves are a partnership of individuals. The Central Office carries out certain functions common to all groups in our county – and it is maintained, supervised, and supported by these groups in their general interest.

Our Central Office exists to aid the groups in their common purpose of carrying the A.A. message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Our Intergroup responsibility is to:

- Stock and sell A.A. literature through the bookstore.
- Run the teleservice hotline.
- Update and distribute meeting directories.
- Serve as a communications center for groups through publishing the monthly newsletter and maintaining the website, to keep groups informed about county activities.
- Coordinates the efforts of Intergroup committees (Alkathons, Activities, Seminars, Outreach, etc).
- Cooperate with General Service and its subcommittees, and H&I through exchange of liaisons – keeping groups informed on ALL activities in A.A.

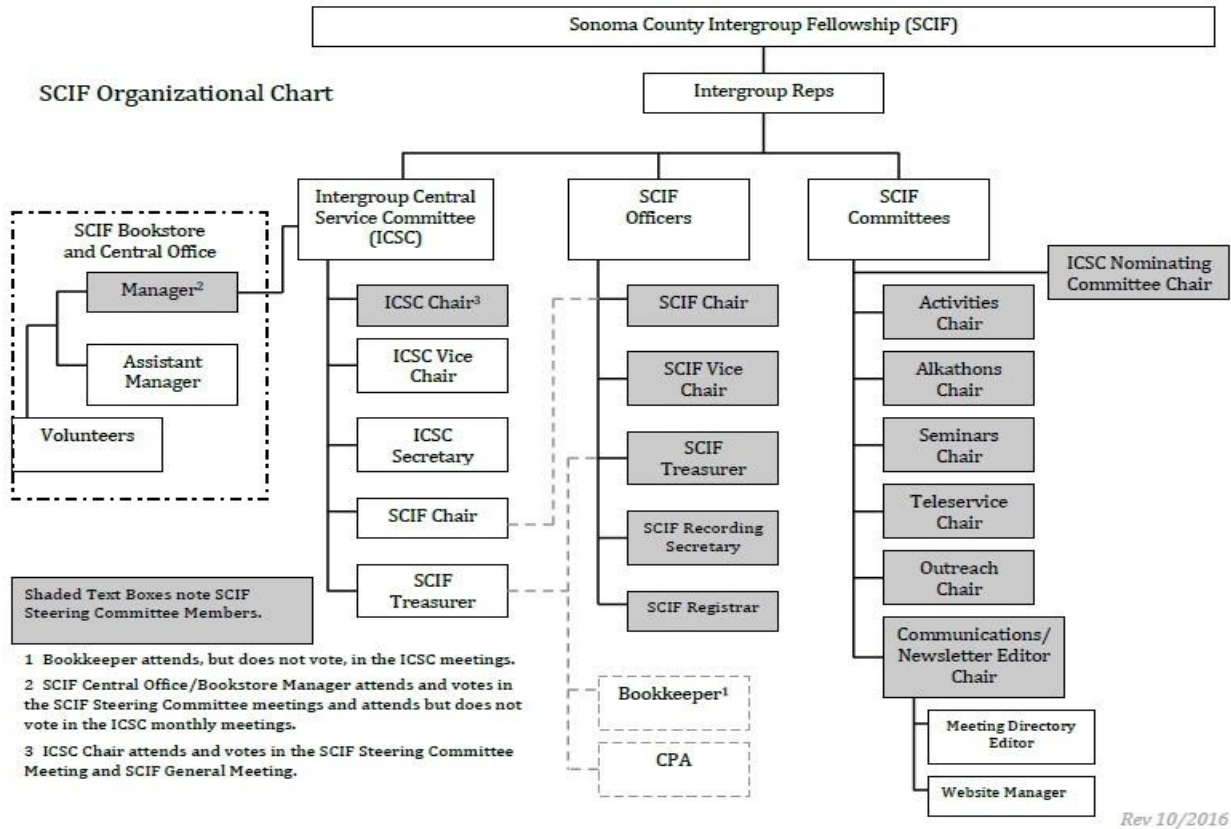
The SCIF officers are Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Treasurer, Recording Secretary, and Registrar. Committees include Activities, Alkathons, Communications/Newsletter Editor, Outreach, Seminars, Teleservice and ICSC. The Steering Committee is comprised of the officers, all chairpersons of the active committees, and the Central

Office/Bookstore Manager. These are the voting members of the Steering Committee. All these positions (excluding ICSC) are one year terms (two consecutive terms are OK) with January elections for officers and February elections for committee chairs.

Facts about ICSC

The Intergroup Central Service Committee (ICSC) is a management and oversight committee specifically charged with the responsibility to set the policy, regulate the affairs, and oversee the operation of the SCIF Central Office/Bookstore. It also advises the SCIF Steering Committee on matters affecting SCIF’s status as a non-profit corporation. ICSC is a rotating body of five members – two officers (SCIF Chair and SCIF Treasurer) and three at-large members elected by the SCIF Representatives. The composition of the ICSC committee changes several times a year, providing both continuity and fresh eyes.

Sonoma County Intergroup Structure



Roles and Responsibilities of Representatives

- Represent your Group at monthly Intergroup General Meetings
- Make regular (weekly) announcements to your group.
- Inform yourself and then your group of important issues.
- Collect informed group consciences through sharing sessions as motions come before the Representatives for group input.

- Bring that group conscience to the Intergroup General Meeting to share and ultimately vote.
- Bring questions from your group to share with Representatives as a whole or to the steering committee.

Suggested Procedure for Doing Business at SCIF

In general we use Parliamentary Procedure (*Robert's Rules*) to conduct business in A.A. However, we also use our Twelve Traditions as guidelines to seek consensus. The main influence these have on our business procedure is that we go to greater lengths than most to hear (but not necessarily to be governed by) the minority opinion.

If your group has an idea that you would like to Intergroup to consider, please bring it to the SCIF steering committee at 8:00 p.m. on the second Monday of the month. If possible, bring it in written form of a motion, together with a brief argument in favor of your idea. If you are not sure how to frame your idea in the form of a motion, the steering committee may be able to help. Or, if the idea or issue can be resolved or implemented at the steering committee level, we will do that.

By bringing your idea to the steering committee, we will be able to schedule time during the regular SCIF business meeting for you to present your motion to the other Intergroup Representatives. Also, we should be able to publish your motion, together with your argument for it, in the next newsletter issue. That way, everyone will know what the motion is and the reasons for it and will be able to present the issue accurately to their groups. If appropriate, we may wish to solicit and publish an argument against the motion, so that people can hear both sides of the proposal. Financial impact, if any, should be determined.

At the next business meeting after your presentation, the item will be placed on the agenda to be considered as an item of New Business. By this time, there should be some feedback from other groups. However, in order to allow the groups ample time to consider and gather an informed group conscience on your idea, no vote will be taken at this meeting.

At the next business meeting, your motion will be considered an item of Old Business. After everyone has shared their group's say on the matter, the Representatives will be asked if they are ready to vote on the issue. If so, it will be determined by a show of hands if they consider a simple majority (50%+1) or substantial unanimity (2/3 majority) necessary to pass the motion.

Whether it passes or fails, the minority will be given another opportunity to speak. If, after hearing the minority opinion, anyone wants to change his or her vote, another vote will be taken. In this way, the original vote is sometimes reversed, after hearing the minority opinion.

What is the A.A. Group?

Tradition Five: Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

“The entire structure of A.A. depends upon the participation and conscience of the individual groups, and how each of these groups conducts its affairs has a ripple effect

on A.A. everywhere. Thus, we are ever individually conscious of our responsibility for our own sobriety and, as a group, for carrying the A.A. message to the suffering alcoholic who reaches out for help.” (A.A. Group pamphlet, pg. 8)

“An A.A. group consists of two or more alcoholics who gather together for meetings on a regular basis. These meetings are the basic source of recovery for the alcoholic who wants to stop drinking.”

“As a group, they are fully self-supporting, have no outside affiliations, and no opinions on outside issues. Because A.A.’s public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion, the group members maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV and films.” (A.A. Service Manual, pp. 46-47)

Tradition Three: “Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.” (A.A. Group pamphlet, pg. 10)

Warranty Six, Concept 12: “...much attention has been drawn to the extraordinary liberties which the A.A. Traditions accord to the individual member and to his group: no penalties to be inflicted for nonconformity to A.A. principles; no fees or dues to be levied – voluntary contributions only; no member to be expelled from A.A. – membership always to be the choice of the individual; each A.A. group to conduct its internal affairs as it wishes – it being merely requested to abstain from acts which might injure A.A. as a whole; and finally that any group of alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.” (A.A. Service Manual, pg. 74)

The Group You Represent

As an Intergroup Representative your relationship to your Group is a fluid and open one. Your effectiveness depends on your regular attendance at all meetings of your Group. This acquaints you with the members of the Group (the people who consider it their Home Group) and their ideas. Also, it gives you some credibility when you make suggestions or offer your reports.

If your Group has a Steering Committee (or Business Meeting), the Intergroup Representative should be an active part of it, giving regular reports to your Group on service activities and brief reports on important issues discussed at the Intergroup General Meeting.

The members of your Group are the only people you need concern yourself with regarding getting an Informed Group Conscience. These are the people you serve. The Group Sharing Session and Informed Group Conscience outlines will guide you.

Some of our definitions of a Home Group include:

- Where I accept responsibility to be available to the Newcomer.
- The one group I try to never miss every week for my recovery.
- The group where I attend steering and sharing sessions.
- The group where I make my personal opinion/voice and vote in A.A.

- The group I am personally committed to “keep going” through personal service and monetary contribution.
- Remember, only one vote per person in A.A. One Home Group = One Vote.

Informed Group Conscience

As stated in Tradition Two, our sole authority is a “... *loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.*”

The late Dean K., Past Delegate from California Northern Interior Area, said there are two ways to arrive at a group conscience: “*The competitive way permits the person with the loudest voice to push his ideas across, take a vote and come up with a ‘majority’ decision. This is not informed group conscience. In the cooperative way, group members come together in mutual trust to arrive at a group decision, not one individual’s personal triumph.*” (Box 459, Vol. 35, no. 1 February/March 1989)

What is an informed group conscience and how is it achieved?

“*The group conscience is the collective conscience of the group membership and thus represents substantial unanimity on an issue before definitive action is taken.*” This “... *implies that pertinent information has been studied and all views have been heard before the group votes.*” (The A.A. Group pamphlet pp. 26-27)

Concept One states “*the final responsibility for A.A. World Services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole fellowship.*” No one person or group should make our decisions for us, no matter how persuasive they may be.” As stated in Tradition Two (short form) “... *Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.*”

How to Set Up a Sharing Session

(from the A.A. Service Manual, 2009-10 edition, pg. S40)

In a sharing session, everyone has a chance to use their experience, strength and hope to contribute ideas and opinions about the welfare of A.A. It can be set up anywhere for any group of people, but it is especially useful for assemblies and district meetings. Its format is aimed at drawing out the ideas of even the shyest participant, and keeps the more articulate from dominating the meetings. Each person offers an opinion, and never needs to defend it. The chairperson, or a leader, functions more as a timekeeper than as a participant.

Here is how it works: Let’s say that the topic is “How can we get more A.A.s interested in General Service?” The leader, armed with a loud bell and a watch or stopwatch, reads the questions and explains the rules. Each member present may talk for a specified time (a minute and a half or two minutes is typical – whatever the group agrees upon). Usually no one is permitted to speak twice on the same subject until all who wish to have spoken. The leader continues until the topic has been fully explored.

A member takes down the essence of the meeting; these notes will provide good ideas for use by committee officers, committee members and GSRs.

Hints

- Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Don't take yourself too seriously.
- Get a service sponsor and become informed.
- Attend monthly General Meeting of SCIF.
- Attend your home group's monthly steering committee.
- Read the A.A. pamphlet – *"The A.A. Group."*
- Attend a General Service sharing session.
- Remember nothing happens in Your Time ... It's God's Time.
- Just when you've figured it out, you'll rotate out.
- Be patient with yourself and others ... we're all learning.
- Remember this is a spiritual program, not a political debate.
- LISTEN

Suggested Readings

- Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions
- Twelve Concepts for World Service
- The A.A. Group pamphlet
- The A.A. Service Manual

BY-LAWS OF SONOMA COUNTY INTERGROUP FELLOWSHIP, INC.

(A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION)

PREAMBLE

The Sonoma County Intergroup Fellowship is a service body directly responsible to the A.A. groups of Sonoma County. Its primary purpose is to meet the needs of the A.A. groups and to provide services as required.

In all of its proceedings, the Sonoma County Intergroup shall observe the spirit of A.A. Traditions and Concepts.

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BY-LAWS OF SONOMA COUNTY INTERGROUP FELLOWSHIP, INC.
(A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION)

ARTICLE ONE— PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Sonoma County Intergroup Fellowship, hereinafter referred to as SCIF, shall be to carry on the intent and spirit of the A.A. Fellowship as exemplified in the books Alcoholics Anonymous, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, A.A. Comes of Age, and other A.A. Conference-approved literature.

ARTICLE TWO— PRINCIPAL OFFICE

- 2.1 Principal office of the SCIF shall be in the State of California, the County of Sonoma, and the City of Santa Rosa.

ARTICLE THREE— MEMBERSHIP

- 3.1 Membership in SCIF will consist of all Alcoholics Anonymous groups in Sonoma County desiring to participate. Each such A.A. group shall be known as a "member A.A. group."
- 3.2 Each member A.A. group may elect a Group Representative and an Alternate Group Representative to represent the member A.A. group at all regular and special meetings of SCIF. It is suggested that each representative have at least one (1) year continuous sobriety.
- 3.3 Each member A.A. group shall have one vote at all SCIF meetings. Each member A.A. group's vote shall be cast by its group representative, except in the event of the absence of the group representative, in which event said member A.A. group's vote may be cast by its Alternate Group Representative.
- 3.4 The term of office of a Representative of a group shall be one (1) year, with the option to be elected to one (1) additional term.

ARTICLE FOUR— MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

- 4.1 Regular meetings of the SCIF shall be held on the fourth (4th) Monday of each month.
- 4.2 Steering Committee meetings of SCIF shall be held on the second (2nd) Monday of each month.
- 4.3 Special meetings of SCIF may be called upon two (2) weeks written notice to member A.A. groups by the Chairperson of SCIF, by a majority of the SCIF Officers, or by ten percent (10%) of the member A.A. groups.
- 4.4 The member A.A. group representatives present at any regular or special meeting of the membership shall constitute a quorum.
- 4.5 Group representatives and Steering Committee members shall each have one vote at the regular meetings of SCIF.
- 4.6 Meetings shall be conducted by "Chairperson's Rules" —that is, by parliamentary procedure, as informed by AA's 12 Traditions.

ARTICLE FIVE— OFFICERS

- 5.1 The SCIF officers shall be a Chairperson, Vice-chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, and Registrar. They shall discharge all the duties of these offices.
- 5.2 The term of office for the Chairperson, Vice-chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, and Registrar shall be one (1) year.
- 5.3 The Chairperson, Vice-chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, and Registrar may succeed themselves to one (1) successive term in the same office.
- 5.4 In the event of death, resignation, or inability to act as an officer, the SCIF shall elect a successor in the same manner as the original officer was elected except as follows: In the event of a vacancy in the office of Chairperson, the Vice-chairperson shall succeed to that office and a vacancy shall then be created in the office of Vice-chairperson.

- 5.5 The term of sobriety suggested for the:
- a. Chairperson, Vice-chairperson, and Treasurer is a minimum of four (4) years.
 - b. Secretary and Registrar is a minimum of three (3) years.
- 5.6 The officers shall be elected by the SCIF group representatives at the regular meeting of SCIF in January of each year. Election of each officer shall be by Third Legacy Procedure.

ARTICLE SIX— COMMITTEES

- 6.1 The Steering Committee is comprised of the officers of the SCIF, all chairpersons of the active committees, and the Central Office/Bookstore Manager. These individuals shall be the voting members of the Steering Committee.
- 6.2 There shall be a standing committee of the SCIF, to be known as the Intergroup Central Service Committee, hereinafter referred to as ICSC. This Committee shall consist of the Chairperson and Treasurer of SCIF and three (3) other individuals having sound business or professional backgrounds, at least five years sobriety, and substantial A.A. service experience. These individuals need not be members of SCIF. Traditionally, the senior member, excluding the Intergroup officers, acts as a chairperson of the ICSC.
- a. The term of office shall be to eighteen (18) months, with the option to be elected to one (1) additional term. Terms of office shall be staggered so there will never be a completely new committee at any one time. A member filling an incomplete term shall be eligible for re-election if the incomplete term is six (6) months or less. Vacancies in the Intergroup Central Service Committee shall be filled by the SCIF. An ICSC member may be replaced upon failure to attend more than 2 consecutive ICSC meetings.
 - b. The three (3) Intergroup Central Service Committee members will be elected by the SCIF. The SCIF will select a nominating committee of three (3) members of the SCIF, which shall be a standing committee of SCIF, elected at the regular meeting in February of each year. In April and October of each year, the Nominating Committee will present to SCIF not less than two (2) and not more than three (3) qualified individuals available to serve on the on the ICSC. Election will be by simple majority vote at that meeting.
 - c. The responsibility of the ICSC shall be to set the policy, regulate the affairs, and oversee the operation of the Intergroup Office/Bookstore, as well as to advise the Steering Committee on matters affecting SCIF's status as a non-profit corporation. The ICSC may employ and discharge for cause all paid employees of the Intergroup Office/Bookstore. Any personnel problems shall be directed to the ICSC. The ICSC members should attend all meetings of the SCIF and may participate in all discussions.
 - d. The SCIF will be expected to afford a reliable cross section of A.A. opinion. While the ICSC should have the authority and responsibility outlined above, the SCIF may, by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the representatives present, overrule any action taken by the ICSC. Such a vote by SCIF shall be binding on the Intergroup Central Service Committee. It will be further understood that, as a matter of tradition, a two-thirds (2/3) vote of all the SCIF members present and voting at a regular SCIF meeting may bring about a reorganization of the ICSC or the Intergroup Office/Bookstore, if or when such a reorganization is deemed essential. At least forty-five (45) days' notice of any proposed reorganization shall be given to all member A.A. groups. Under such proceedings, the SCIF may request resignations, may nominate new ICSC members, and may make all other necessary arrangements. The hiring or discharge of any employee or worker at the Intergroup Office shall not be deemed to be a reorganization.
- 6.3 All other standing committees shall be created by SCIF, which shall prescribe the term, define the responsibilities, and elect the chairperson of each committee (examples: Communications, Activities, and Seminars Committees). Elections shall be at the regular meeting in February of each year. Election will be by simple majority vote.
- 6.4 All special committees shall likewise be created by the SCIF as needed (examples: By-laws and ad hoc Committees).

ARTICLE SEVEN— AMENDMENTS

7.1 The By-laws may be amended at any regular monthly meeting of the SCIF or at any special meeting, provided however that forty-five (45) days' written notice shall be given to all member A.A. groups setting forth verbatim the language of the existing By-law(s) to be amended and the language of the proposed amendment(s). Any By-law changes must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of all member A.A. group representatives present at the regular monthly meeting or the special meeting.