

**INTERGROUP SERVICE HANDBOOK  
FOR DEBTORS ANONYMOUS**



**DEBTORS  
ANONYMOUS**

November 2018

## Service Material in the D.A. Fellowship

This is D.A. service material, produced in response to the needs of D.A. members for information and shared experience on specific service-related subjects. It reflects the guidance of the Twelve Traditions, the General Service Board (GSB) and the General Service Office (GSO,) and is developed from the shared experience of D.A. members throughout the Fellowship. Because service material reflects the current and ever-developing conscience of our Fellowship as a whole, it does not undergo the usual D.A. literature approval process, requiring final approval by the World Service Conference (WSC). Service material may be updated periodically under the auspices of the General Service Board to reflect current Fellowship experience.



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## ***Section 1 – Introduction to D.A. Intergroups***

### ***Introduction***

The Intergroup is a gathering of D.A. members who represent D.A. groups throughout a geographic region. An Intergroup can also serve the needs of members who attend meetings on the telephone (Debtors Anonymous Telephone Intergroup – DATIG), or on the internet. Intergroups meet usually monthly or bi-monthly, to plan and provide services for the entire region. Intergroups play a vital role in carrying the D.A. message to the still-suffering debtor and are often the first point of contact for people struggling with debt and debting.

The primary purpose of each Intergroup is to support the D.A. meetings within its regional area and to help direct newcomers to those meetings.

Beyond this basic and fundamental purpose, an Intergroup can serve as a clearinghouse for information. Groups can send representatives to general meetings of an Intergroup and share their experience, strength, and hope in carrying the message. New ideas and approaches can be exchanged. Groups can share their knowledge and experience with new or struggling groups.

Intergroups can also provide opportunities for cooperation on fellowship projects that are beyond the capacity of any one group. Thus, Intergroups develop regional meeting lists, develop and maintain websites, and sponsor events which enable debtors to come together and share their recovery.

Public information is another function that an Intergroup can perform that might be difficult for an individual group. Contacting the local media and making them aware of the existence and purpose of D.A. is sometimes hard for a small group. The same is true for contacting professionals, such as therapists and clergy, to inform them about the help available in D.A.

Intergroups can also participate in the general service structure of D.A. Each Intergroup is eligible to send an Intergroup Service Representative (ISR) to the annual World Service Conference (WSC). The ISR serves as the link between the Intergroup and the WSC, the General Service Board, and the GSO.

## ***Typical Intergroup Responsibilities and Activities***

- Maintaining and distributing a current list of D.A. meetings — days, times, and locations.
- Maintaining a website with relevant information for the regional D.A. community and for people interested in finding out more about D.A. Content an Intergroup website typically includes a list of meetings, plus information about D.A. events, free D.A. literature, meeting support materials, public information, and other resources.
- Sponsoring workshops and other special events.
- Publication of a regional newsletter, via hardcopy, internet, and/or email.
- Reaching out to and fielding inquiries about D.A. from the public, the media, and various professional communities.
- Disseminating communication to the regional D.A. membership from the General Service Office (GSO), the General Service Board (GSB), and/or the World Service Conference (WSC) committees and caucuses.
- Sponsoring an Intergroup Service Representative (ISR) to the WSC.
- Purchasing D.A. literature in bulk and selling it to groups. Some Intergroups sell D.A. literature regularly, while other sell literature only at special events, if they don't have a permanent space to store or sell it.

## ***The Personal Benefits of Intergroup Service***

We sometimes hear D.A. members say, “When I got busy, I got better.” The personal benefits we receive from giving service can be numerous: We feel useful. We experience a sense of accomplishment, which enhances our self-esteem. We gain a sense of oneness with others. Being of service to an Intergroup helps members to keep our commitment to their own recovery.

Intergroups offer the opportunity to do service beyond the individual and meeting level. Simply attending an Intergroup meeting is where most D.A. members start. This may be followed by serving as the Intergroup Representative for an individual D.A. meeting. Members may also take on additional service positions such as Secretary or Treasurer, or volunteer to help plan and conduct an event.

Some members have said that had it not been for their service positions, which required them to stay engaged in Twelfth Step work, they might have stopped attending D.A. meetings altogether, once their early financial crises had passed.

## **Section 2 – How to Start an Intergroup**

### ***How to Start an Intergroup***

To start an Intergroup in your area, the best way to begin is with a thorough review of the details in this handbook and the Debtors Anonymous Manual for Service (DAMS). Familiarize yourself with the role, components, and importance of Intergroups. Then, working with members from the D.A. groups in your region, begin to establish an Intergroup vision and action plan.

If there are fewer than a handful of D.A. groups in your area, your groups and members might be better served by aligning with and seeking support from an existing Intergroup, rather than starting your own.

The following are recommended steps for starting an Intergroup:

1. Ask groups in the region for their commitment to develop and maintain regional D.A. resources and services, and conduct a vote on whether or not to create an Intergroup.
2. If the vote is yes, have each group elect an Intergroup Representative (IR). There is a detailed IR service position description later in this handbook. As new meetings start, each group should be encouraged to elect an IR to attend the Intergroup meetings.
3. Decide if the Intergroup will meet in person, by telephone conference call, Internet, or email, or some combination thereof.
4. After the Intergroup has chosen its meeting method, time, and place, the first meeting can be arranged, and an agenda proposed. That agenda may include tasks such as defining service roles and qualifications, electing officers, and deciding if the group will use parliamentary procedures for conducting business.
5. Develop a financial plan. In addition to creating an income and spending plan, many Intergroups open a checking account and/or a savings account, and establish an amount for a prudent reserve (see the D.A. Treasurer's Manual in the DAMS for guidance.)
6. Establish a method for receiving correspondence and inquiries. This could be a physical post office box or some sort of electronic correspondence.
7. Hold elections for service positions from among the D.A. members who have committed to attending the regular Intergroup meetings. At the minimum, elected positions usually consist of a Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary. Optional service positions can be established for public information, special events, web services, or other areas of special focus or activity.
8. Register with GSO (and re-register annually), at [www.debtorsanonymous.org](http://www.debtorsanonymous.org)

A typical monthly Intergroup agenda might open with the Serenity Prayer and introductions, including have each attendee identify any specific services positions they hold at the Intergroup Level. Some groups read their Intergroup mission statement. Other groups use a format similar to a regular D.A. meeting: for example, opening with a reading from the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, Twelve Concepts, and/or the D.A. Promises.

An essential component of a D.A. Intergroup meeting is a review of the Intergroup's finances. The Treasurer generally offers a report that includes a summary of income and spending activity for the month just passed and a comparison to the Intergroup's spending plan.

Income categories may consist of donations from groups and individuals, sale of literature, and proceeds from workshops and special events.

Spending categories may include the cost of maintaining a telephone line or voicemail service, a website, and a Post Office box; rent or donation to the meeting space if applicable; donation to GSO; the cost of copying and mailing flyers and meeting lists; workshop and event expenses; a collection for an Intergroup Service Representative fund, if applicable, to send an ISR to the annual World Service Conference; and a prudent reserve. Some Intergroups also collect funds through the year and distribute them among the groups to help them send GSRs to the Conference.

Next, Intergroup committee chairs generally give reports and follow up on previous action items. Some Intergroups make time for each meeting representative to report on the status of his or her group. Finally, old business and new business are addressed, followed by a discussion of meeting concerns or other D.A. service topics. Also, many Intergroups have a 7th Tradition collection as part of their meeting.

The Secretary records minutes and action items during the meeting, then distributes those minutes to participants after the meeting. If the Intergroup meets in person, the Secretary brings copies of the minutes to the next meeting.

Below is a typical format for an Intergroup meeting:

1. Welcome and Serenity Prayer
2. Introductions, including identifying Intergroup service positions held
3. Approval of prior minutes
4. Call for agenda items
5. Treasurer's report
6. Committee reports
7. Old business
8. New business
9. Close with Serenity Prayer

## **Section 3 – Intergroup Attendees and Officers**

### ***Intergroup Attendees***

Like all of D.A., the primary purpose of members involved with Intergroup service is to carry the message of D.A. recovery to the compulsive debtor who still suffers.

Intergroups generally consist of:

- Intergroup Representatives, who represent individual D.A. meetings in the regional area
- Other interested D.A. members

The following qualifications and experience have been found to make for effective Intergroup members:

- Commitment to their own D.A. recovery and to service as part of that recovery
- Understanding the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions
- Ability to work in harmony with others, even amid controversy,
- Understanding the difference between majority rule and group conscience by substantial unanimity
- Willingness to work within the group conscience

### ***Typical Intergroup Officers***

- Chairperson
- Vice Chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasurer

### ***Other Positions Commonly Established in Intergroups***

- Public Information Chairperson
- Special Events Chairperson
- Webmaster
- Literature Coordinator



### ***Additional Positions Established in Some Intergroups***

- Email Announcement Coordinator
- Venue Booker
- Literature Storage Coordinator
- Newsletter Editor
- Phone Coordinator
- Mailbox Coordinator
- Archivist

### ***Officer and Service Position Elections***

It is recommended that Intergroups conduct elections in December of each year, for the upcoming service year. Some groups read information aloud prior to the elections about the open service positions. If a position becomes vacant during the year, the Intergroup can address re-filling the position as a regular agenda item.

### ***Rotation of Service Positions***

A common fear of D.A. members is that they will over-commit themselves, either short term or long term. One antidote for this fear is the principle of rotation of service. It is recommended that no member stay in any service position, or at Intergroup, for too long. Long-time service without rotation can lead to complacency and immobility for the individual, and stagnancy for the group. There can be a resistance to new ideas and a sense that nothing should be changed. While the phrase, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," has some validity, this thinking has sometimes been used as an excuse for inaction by those in long-term power or authority.

At the world service level, delegates are each strongly discouraged from serving more than two terms as GSR or ISR, and trustees are *prohibited* from serving more than two terms. An Intergroup might consider setting similar limitations.

## ***Section 4 – Intergroup Officer Service Descriptions***

### **Intergroup Chairperson:**

**Suggested Term of Service:** 1 or 2 years

**Suggested Qualifications:** The Chair should have volunteer leadership experience beyond the group level. ideally two or more years' experience in D.A. Intergroup or WSC service. The Chair needs a sound understanding of the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions. Communication skills, leadership qualities, and sensitivity to the wishes of Intergroup members and groups throughout the region are also important. The Chair should be actively attending a D.A. or B.D.A. meeting. Experience with parliamentary procedures is helpful.

**Responsibilities:** The Chairperson leads the Intergroup meetings. The Chair either prepares an agenda in advance or leads the group in the development of an agenda during the first part of the meeting, then encourages all attendees to participate in discussions and decision making. The Chair facilitates the discussion of issues and pending decisions. The Chair typically does not make motions or vote.

### **Intergroup Vice Chairperson:**

**Suggested Term of Service:** 1 or 2 years

**Suggested Qualifications:** Same as for the Chairperson.

**Responsibilities:** The Vice Chairperson assumes responsibilities of the Chair when they are unavailable.

### **Intergroup Secretary:**

**Suggested Term of Service:** 1 or 2 years

**Suggested Qualifications:** The Secretary should be organized and have good follow-through. Computer skills and previous service in groups or Intergroup or World Service are useful. The Secretary should be actively attending a D.A. or B.D.A. meeting.

The Secretary helps ensure that Intergroup meetings run correctly, accurately and efficiently. The Secretary may request reports from Intergroup members ahead of time when relevant. In addition, the Secretary sends multiple announcements/invitations to Intergroup meetings and events. Moreover, the Secretary types the minutes on her or his own laptop at the Intergroup meeting or writes the minutes by hand and then transcribes them later. The minutes are then emailed to Intergroup members within one week of each meeting for feedback, additions, and/or corrections.

### **Intergroup Treasurer:**

**Suggested Qualifications:** The Treasurer preferably has freedom from incurring new unsecured debt for two or more years and actively attends D.A. or B.D.A. meetings. Bookkeeping and/or financial skills are critical to fulfilling the position. Organizational capabilities to establish and maintain an accurate accounting of the Intergroup's financial records and current state are key.

**Term of Service:** 1 or 2 years

**Responsibilities:** The Treasurer is a trusted servant and guardian of the Intergroup's solvency; responsible for the Seventh Tradition and ISR Fund collections at each Intergroup meeting, balancing the bank accounts, keeping accurate records of income and expenses, paying Intergroup's expenses, and making contributions on behalf of Intergroup (per the group's conscience) to other D.A. service bodies including GSO. The Treasurer reports Intergroup's financial activities and balances at monthly meetings, explains variances from expectations, and helps Intergroup members to make financial decisions.

### **Intergroup Literature Coordinator:**

**Suggested Qualifications:** The Literature Coordinator should have familiarity with D.A. and B.D.A. literature.

**Term of Service:** 1 or 2 years

**Responsibilities:** The Literature Coordinator should be organized enough to keep good, clear inventoried records. The Literature Coordinator maintains consistent inventory levels of D.A. books, pamphlets, bookmarks, and other written materials published by D.A. and sells literature to groups, members, and/or professionals requesting the literature. Having a safe place to store the literature inventory and money received is part of the responsibility. Finally, the Literature Coordinator calculates the shipping cost and sales tax for each item and creates a pricelist, making sales, recording, and reordering easier.

### **Intergroup Public Information Representative:**

**Suggested Qualifications:** The Information (PI) Representative should be enthusiastic and passionate about D.A.'s 12th Step work. The PI Representative is best served by a few years' membership in the D.A. program. The PI Representative should be organized enough to keep good, clear records and comfortable reporting progress at monthly committee and occasional group business meetings. Delegation skills are vital to the success of this position.

**Term of Service:** 2 years

**Responsibilities:** Most importantly, the PI Representative develops outreach opportunities, whether by outreach to the media, helping professionals, the public, or other organizations. More information can be found in the DAMS under Chapter Four – Public Information Outreach.

## **Intergroup Special Events/Workshop Co-Chairs:**

**Suggested Qualifications:** The Special Events Co-Chairs should express the fun and gratitude we experience because of D.A. recovery. We recommend co-chairs for this often demanding position. Event planning and volunteer management experience are useful.

**Term of Service:** 1 or 2 years

**Responsibilities:** The Special Events Co-Chairs plan and orchestrate at least one annual fundraising event for the ISR Fund. There may be additional Special Events or workshops, sometimes as fundraisers for the ISR Fund, sometimes not. More information can be found in the DAMS.

## **Intergroup Webmaster:**

**Suggested Qualifications:** The Webmaster typically has web marketing and social media experience or is very willing to learn and develop such skills. Delegation skills are vital to the success of this position.

**Term of Service:** 1 or 2 years

**Responsibilities:** The Webmaster oversees the Intergroup website. Most importantly, the Webmaster works with Intergroup members to ensure the website functions within Intergroup's group conscience decisions and D.A.'s Traditions and Concepts. The Intergroup website is intended to support carrying the D.A. message both to those who still suffer and those who have already found and are recovering in D.A.:

**Public Outreach:** In keeping with our Eleventh Tradition, Intergroup websites are often used as the primary resource to spread the word about D.A. to regional media (TV, radio, newspapers, Internet sites, etc.). In cooperation with the Intergroup PI Committee, the website also includes information for helping professionals, as well as regional churches, libraries, crisis hotlines, and other Twelve-Step Fellowships.

**In-reach to the D.A. Fellowship and the Regional D.A. Community:** D.A. Intergroup websites are used to inform the local, regional, national, and international membership of D.A. about Intergroup activities and events. These events include retreats, workshops, meeting anniversary celebrations, days of sharing, etc. Intergroups share this information by maintaining active and accurate calendars of meetings and events, including fliers and notices provided by regional meetings and other Intergroups.

One D.A. Intergroup shared their website objectives (based directly on D.A.'s Twelve Traditions):

1. To encourage unity between groups and members throughout our region.
2. To subtly (but surely) express the spirituality of our program and to provide resources for trusted servants to allow for better and more confident service.
3. To embody D.A.'s responsibility pledge: "I pledge to extend my hand and offer the hope of recovery to anyone who reaches out to Debtors Anonymous."

Many people in our region have the desire to stop debting, but they haven't found us yet. Let's use the Intergroup website to extend our hand to them — sometimes directly, sometimes through the media and professional advocates.

4. To recognize the value of each group's autonomy, while also celebrating how much more we can accomplish when acting as a cooperating, collaborating group of groups. "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts."
5. To embody D.A.'s statement of purpose: "In D.A., our purpose is threefold: to stop incurring unsecured debt, to share our experience with the newcomer, and to reach out to other debtors." This threefold purpose provides many opportunities for service and outreach. Let's use our Intergroup website to expand and support our membership.
6. To remain free of endorsement of related facilities and enterprises outside of D.A. avoiding problems of money, property, prestige, and other diversions that distract us from our threefold purpose.
7. To maintain our self-support and to encourage our groups and members to be self-supporting, too.
8. To create a professional presentation for our Intergroup, supporting PI efforts. The website is often the first impression we make on others; let's make it a good one.
9. To provide organized, easily findable information/downloads for visitors to our website.
10. To remain free of engagement with outside issues — avoiding public controversy. Goals of unity and common welfare should lead us to avoid private controversy, too.
11. To attract new members and professional advocates while avoiding promotion and to maintain the personal anonymity of our members, new and old and in-between.
12. To maintain the spiritual foundation of our D.A. service, especially in the public arena, remaining ever mindful of the need to place principles before personalities.