

Date: December 17th 2005
To: P.A.S.C Members
From: Metro AdHoc Subcommittee
Subject: Overview of work and recommendations of Ad Hoc Subcommittee on MSC

Overview

We would like to thank the Portland Area NA for the opportunity to serve on the Ad Hoc sub-committee for studying and recommending whether or not our area should consider going to a Metropolitan Services Committee (MSC) structure. This has been a rewarding experience. The committee met monthly from Aug-05 until Dec-05. We were composed of two types of members: 1) 'core' sub-committee members who attended every month (and several planning meetings); 2) 'transient' sub-committee members who dropped in on 1 or 2 meetings. Both types of attendees contributed heavily.

The purpose of the Ad Hoc sub-committee was to study and recommend whether or not our area should consider going to a Metropolitan Services Committee structure. We studied pages 70-86 of The Guide to Local Services in NA. These are the main sections dealing with area division and the MSC. We also studied a report from the Sydney area on their experience moving to an MSC. This was recommended by the World Service Office (WSO).

Several fears, concerns and questions were brought to this committee. Most of them have been addressed. However, we will never have all of the questions answered. We should not use that as a reason to not proceed. If we have faith in a loving God and allow him to express himself in true area conscience we will grow as an area and a fellowship.

Current status of UKCANA

The UKCANA is currently composed of 38 groups hosting 135+ meetings a week. We are in 2 states and 11 counties (some served by other areas/regions). The general population is over 1.8 million people in a 5,500 square mile geography. The table below summarizes the current meetings comprising UKCANA, by county:

Area division

Our Guide to Local Services (GTLS) tells us that an ASC provides two functions: 1) group support, and 2) direct service administration. The GTLS also states that, “An especially large ASC may have plenty of money and manpower for direct service administration, but be too large to accommodate the kind of sharing that our groups need to support one another.” Many of us believe that the has grown too large to provide the support our groups need.

It was not this committee’s purpose to divide the area. However, a MSC implies more than one area. We discussed at great length dividing an Area Service Committee. We believe that dividing the Portland Area would be a positive growth step for NA as a whole. The list below contains some of the reasons (not comprehensive) why we believe our area would divide:

We’re too large

This is true for the size of our geography, meetings, groups, and ASC’s. We have groups that travel 45 minutes (one-way) for an ASC. The Tualitan Valley Area is more appropriate for a group that meets in Forest Grove to attend than to drive all the way to Portland once a month. Our recent ASCs have had between 50-80 people in attendance and last 3+ hours. During the past 12 months, group attendance (at roll call) has been between 30-40 groups. This is approximately 30-40% of our groups. The Portland Area has considerably more meetings per week than any other area in our region.

The motivation is growth

This is not based out of resentment. The desire for new areas is to further our 5th tradition. We believe that by dividing there will be more opportunities for service and the areas will benefit in regards to activities and other NA resources.

Different geographies have different needs.

Our rural communities have significantly different service and meeting needs than our urban and sub-urban communities. A bus bench at 10th and main is great for the inner city, but has little effect on meetings in Sandy for members needing to participate in and Area service meeting..

Better utilization of resources

A smaller geography will allow ASC’s to better focus on service needs in that locality.

Group Sharing

A smaller ASC will allow GSRs to better communicate their group’s needs and receive input from local groups. Our current ASC has difficulty addressing these needs as our ASC focus is usually on services. Another benefit would be that the ASC would be attended with the people they frequently see in recovery meetings.

Regardless of what we believe, an Area division will occur one way or another. This brings us to the question that the committee spent most of its time on, “Should services be shared between areas and how would it be done?”

Current services being provided by PASC

The list below contains the current services that are performed by the PASC:

- Public Information (PI)
 - Maintains and prints accurate meeting schedules
 - Maintains area website
 - Administers and supports Phonenumber,
 - Is responsible for general public information to our community
 - Facilitates Public Service announcements, newspaper listings, etc.
- Hospitals and Institutions
 - Carries the message of NA to those who cannot attend our regular recovery meetings
- Literature
 - Distributes literature and maintains a sufficient inventory to facilitate the primary purpose.
- Outreach
 - Provides support to new or struggling groups.
- Activities
 - Plans and administers functions to promote fun, education, socialization, and fund-raising.

What are the options of Shared Services?

There are several options for sharing services between areas. Some of the primary options are:

1. No sharing of any services.
2. Full blown MSC – all services are shared between areas at the Metro Level
3. Some mix of shared services and some administered by area.
4. Co-op: A set of groups within an area form a co-op and send a rep to the ASC

A cooperative council is used in rural districts where travel to the ASC is burdensome. In a co-op groups join to support each other locally and send a representative carrying the co-op’s conscience to the ASC. Further information can be found on p. 65 of the GTLS.

Recommendations

“Everything that occurs in the course of NA service must be motivated by the desire to more successfully carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers.” P. xvi
Basic Text

We need to fully remember that an addict seeking help looking for their first NA meeting could care less about ASC's or MSC's. They want to make it to a meeting as simply as possible. Our goal in service is to facilitate that need. We believe the following recommendations will help the Portland Area further the 5th tradition of Narcotics Anonymous:

1. Portland Area needs clear area boundaries.
2. If we have new areas, we need to share services, if possible.
3. A mix of some shared and some not appears to be best.
4. Communicate closely within our area.
5. Communicate closely within our region.
6. Be patient but expedient with the process.
7. Develop a true area conscience.
8. Approach this process with atmosphere of service not of governance.

A discussion of each recommendation follows:

1. Portland Area NA needs clear area boundaries.

Our Guide to Local Services tells us we need clear area boundaries. The reason we need clear boundaries is to know what area we are providing services to and where we should focus on starting new groups. Our current status allows any group to join Portland Area NA. If they are from a long distance away from Portland Area, this puts a strain on our ability to provide vital services and to support the recovery meetings in our own area. We suggest geographic boundaries. This is not to exclude a group from our area and 'kick them out', but to have boundaries on the services that we can adequately provide.

2. If we have new areas, we need to share services, if possible.

This will help optimize our vital NA resources, save money, and provide unity for our existing groups. It may not be feasible to share services in some cases (i.e. cost of phoneline, distance, area preference, etc).

3. A mix of some shared and some not appears to be best.

Our large geography makes a full-blown MSC (with all services shared) appear impractical at this time. Not all of our current services appear to be a good fit to share. It makes sense to share the cost of meeting schedules, website, and phoneline. However, it makes sense to have separate H&I and Activities subcommittees within each geographic area.

4. Communicate closely within our area.

We need continually close communications within our area. This can be difficult for several of the reasons compelling the area to consider division. An area division and subsequent sharing of services will require more effort at first. We will need our

experienced members who have backed away from service to come back and provide their experience, strength and hope.

5. Communicate closely within our region.

Our Region has no stated position on area boundaries, forming of MSC's, and sharing services. This leaves us with the responsibility to communicate with the RSC on our efforts. Fortunately, our Regional Committee Member (RCM) has been a core member of our subcommittee and has communicated with our RSC. We have also had several discussions with other areas and need to continue to do this.

6. Be patient but expedient with the process.

Our guide to local services suggests inventory of current resources and services. We need to continually look at our service structure and resources to determine how to optimize them. However, we must also be willing to move past the inventory process and grow. Our basic text reminds us that, "true spiritual principles are never in conflict; they complement each other". p. 61.

7. Develop a true area conscience.

The aforementioned recommendations will help with this. We need to remember to allow the groups to have the final authority and responsibility with all decisions. The decisions to divide our area and share services should not be made by a sub-committee or ASC. It should be made by our groups.

8. Approach this process with atmosphere of service not of governance.

Our basic text tells us that, "proper service is best exemplified by doing the right thing for the right reason." p. ix

Benefits of recommendations

Below is a list of the major spiritual benefits of our recommendations:

- Help us further our primary purpose of carrying the message to the addict who still suffers (Tradition 5)
- Provide a more attractive forum for our groups to participate in ASC's (Tradition 11)
- Promote unity (Tradition 1)
- Provide clarity (Tradition 5, concept 5),
- Allow our NA funds and resources to be used responsibly (Concept 11)
- Strengthen our groups, and possibly add more, in outlying areas (Tradition 5)
- Strengthen our groups, and possibly add more, in Portland Area (Tradition 5)
- Have our services committees more directly responsible to the groups (Tradition 9)
- Allow groups more authority and responsibility for our NA services (Concept 2)

Next Steps

Below is a list of the next steps we believe the Portland Area should take:

1. Each group needs to study and discuss this report.
2. Inventory current services and resources.
3. Develop proposals.
4. Develop a Metro plan.

2. Inventory of current services and resources.

A full functional analysis of what services we provide well and not so well is necessary to determine how to improve our services. We also need to be aware of our resources. For example, if we have 5 groups that provide all of the area donations, having all 5 of these groups in one new area may leave the other groups incapable of funding services.

The functional analysis will include the following factors:

- Service: what are the services being provided?
- Location: where is this operation being carried out?
- Frequency: How often should this function be performed?
- Time: How much time does it take to perform this duty?
- Cost: What are the expenses?
- Personnel: How many people and what skills are required?

3. Develop proposals.

The proposals will come from the functional analysis. There are several ways that this can be done. Some of the ways discussed were:

- We can form another committee to do this work.
- We can do a Request for Proposal process
- Groups can develop proposals when they see fit

A valid proposal should have a plan for division of our area. It should provide clear area boundaries. The plan should be based on the functional analysis of services outlined above. Once this is done, subcommittees, work plans, budgets, and guidelines can be formed for a new area. Constant communication within the current area is vital as this does affect NA as a whole.

4. Develop a Metro plan.

This will be a plan for shared services provided by a MSC. It should include:

- Guidelines: What are the basic guidelines for the MSC? How often should it meet? Where should it meet? etc.
- Goals: What are the performance targets of the MSC? What services will be shared?
- Work plans: step-by-step description of how the goals will be met.
- Budgets: Linked to the goals and work plans. This will show how much the areas will need to invest for the service provided by the MSC.

Most importantly we need to keep it practical. If it isn't practical, it isn't spiritual.

In loving Service,

Tim D. – Chair Ad hoc Subcommittee on MSC