

SUPPORTING GROUPS AND
SERVICE BODIES

**OA Handbook for
Members, Groups,
and Service Bodies:
*Recovery Opportunities***



The Twelve Steps

1. We admitted we were powerless over food—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to compulsive over-eaters and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Preamble

Overeaters Anonymous is a Fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience, strength, and hope, are recovering from compulsive overeating.

We welcome everyone who wants to stop eating compulsively. There are no dues or fees for members; we are self-supporting through our own contributions, neither soliciting nor accepting outside donations. OA is not affiliated with any public or private organization, political movement, ideology, or religious doctrine; we take no position on outside issues.

Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors and to carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer.

You are invited to share your group experience or ask for help with any group problem by contacting:

Overeaters Anonymous[®], Inc.
World Service Office
P.O. Box 44727
Rio Rancho, NM 87174-4727 USA
1-505-891-2664
info@oa.org
www.oa.org

Table of Contents

Definition of Terms	1
The Twelve Traditions Are Our Guide	6
How do new groups get started?	6
Getting started in a small community	8
How to Keep Them Coming Back	11
How do you become a group member?	12
Getting Things Done in Your OA Group	13
1. Do groups have officers?	13
2. What about insurance requirements for a group?	14
3. What service positions do we need?	14
4. How do steering committee/business/ group conscience meetings work?	15
5. What does the secretary do?	15
6. What does the treasurer do?	18
7. What does the program chair do?	20
8. What does the literature chair do?	20
9. What does the intergroup/service board representative do?	21
10. What is a greeter or welcoming committee?	22
11. What does a designated downloader do?	22
12. How are service volunteers elected?	22
13. What are some good qualifications for service volunteers?	23
14. Why is rotation of service important?	23
15. What kinds of meetings can an OA group have?	24
16. What is the typical meeting procedure?	26
17. What about getting together socially before or after the meeting?	26
18. How do group issues get resolved?	27
19. How do we apply the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts of OA Service through the group conscience?	29
20. How do groups become stronger?	30
21. How can we get help from other groups?	31

How Things Get Done in Your Intergroup or Service Board	32
1. How do intergroups/service boards start?	32
2. What functions do intergroups/service boards have?	32
3. How do intergroups/service boards work?	33
4. What are service boards?	35
5. What is the value of bylaws, policies, and procedures for intergroups/service boards?	35
6. What can groups and members do for intergroups/service boards?	36
Things to Know about Public Information	37
1. Why is public information important?	37
2. How do newcomers get help?	38
3. When is “breaking my anonymity” not an anonymity break?	38
4. Does OA have a policy for how to use public and social media?	40
How about OA in Institutions?	42
How Conference Delegates and Region Representatives Serve	43
1. What does a World Service Business Conference delegate do?	43
2. What is a region?	44
3. Why is the region important?	44
4. What is the makeup of the regional assembly?	45
5. What are the requirements for a region representative?	45
How Things Get Done in Your World Service Office (WSO)	46
1. How did WSO start?	46
2. How does WSO work?	46
3. What does WSO do for you?	47
4. How is WSO supported?	48
5. How can you help WSO?	49
6. What is <i>Lifeline</i> , and how can you help?	49

7. How can you benefit from service to your group, intergroup/service board, region, and WSO?	49
Questions and Answers about OA	50
1. How and when did OA start?	50
2. Is OA a religious organization?	50
3. Why do I need the Twelve Steps? I only want to lose weight.	50
4. Should get-togethers of OA members, outside of group meetings, be called OA events?	50
5. What is Unity Day? IDEA Day? Twelfth Step Within Day?	51
6. What is the difference between an OA “Conference” and “Convention”?	52
7. Is OA affiliated with Alcoholics Anonymous or any other anonymous fellowship or medical group interested in obesity and/or other eating problems?	52
Index	53
OA’s Service Structure	62
The Twelve Concepts of OA Service	63

A Note on Information Sources

Since this *Handbook* was first published in 1979, OA has matured in many ways, including an expansion of its website: oa.org. The website features a large library of information, guidelines, and suggestions for members, groups, and service bodies. This *Handbook* and the website, taken together, may answer many questions you have about OA. The subjects introduced in the *Handbook* and further discussed on the website present a wide range of member experiences on subjects such as attracting and retaining newcomers, creating strong meetings, developing or adapting meeting formats, reaching out to health care professionals, and distributing information to the local community. Add to these sources the more than one hundred books and pamphlets developed and published by OA, and there is a wealth of information available to help members, groups, and service bodies.

Definition of Terms

Below are definitions of some commonly used terms in Overeaters Anonymous. Many of these are addressed at greater length later in this *Handbook*.

Abstinence and Recovery: “1) Abstinence: The act of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight. 2) Recovery: Removal of the need to engage in compulsive eating behaviors. Spiritual, emotional, and physical recovery is achieved through working and living the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve Step program.” (Business Conference Policy Manual, 1988 [amended in 2002, 2009, 2011, and 2019])

Anonymity: As part of the spiritual foundation of OA, anonymity guarantees we place principles before personalities. It assures us that only we have the right to make our membership known within our community. Anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television, and other public media of communication means that we never allow our faces or last names to be used once we identify ourselves as OA members. Within the Fellowship, anonymity means that whatever we share with another OA member will be held in respect and confidence. What we hear at meetings should remain there.

Board of Trustees: Seventeen members are elected at the World Service Business Conference to represent the interests of OA as a whole. Board members act as guardians of the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts as well as manage the business affairs of OA.

Cross Talk: Cross talk during an OA meeting means giving advice to others who have already shared, speaking directly to another person rather than to the group, and questioning or interrupting the person speaking/sharing at the time. (See OA’s *Suggested Meeting Format* on oa.org.)

Delegate: An OA member who is elected to represent a service body at the World Service Business Conference, OA’s annual business meeting, which serves as the group conscience of OA as a whole.

General Service Trustees: The general service trustees are six members of the Board of Trustees who oversee the business affairs of the Overeaters Anonymous World Service Office.

Group Conscience Meeting: A meeting to discuss the business of the group, allowing members to work together to consider and agree on how best to proceed in the interests of OA as a whole. Group conscience describes the way in which the individuals are inspired to reach a decision. Sometimes simply called a business meeting. (See OA's *Guidelines for a Group Conscience Meeting* on oa.org.)

Intergroup (IG): Land-based intergroups are composed primarily of groups within their region or groups within their geographical proximity. Virtual intergroups are composed primarily of virtual groups. Intergroups can provide services to the individual groups more efficiently than groups by themselves. Intergroups also act as guardians of OA's Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of OA Service.

Intergroup/Service Board Representative (IR/SBR): A group member who is chosen to represent the group at intergroup/service board meetings.

Meetings/Groups (used interchangeably): Two or more compulsive eaters gathered together to share their experience, strength, and hope within the framework of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of OA Service.

Qualify/Pitch/Share: In an earlier version of this *Handbook*, these three terms were described separately. Today, the meaning of the terms often depends on the geographic location of a meeting. Sometimes they are almost interchangeable. At one time the meaning of “qualify” was for members to begin their sharing by “qualifying”—telling the group the length of time they have been in OA, the length of their abstinence, and the results of their weight recovery, whether loss or gain. This practice is often still followed. However, the term “qualify” has also grown to mean members telling their stories—what they were like before OA; what they have done in OA; and the physical, emotional, and spiritual recovery they have

experienced as a result of abstaining and working the Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous. This is often a twenty- to thirty-minute talk within a meeting.

The term “pitch” is used less often, but it usually means a brief talk—either on the member’s experience, strength, and hope or on a specific topic chosen by the member or related to the subject of the meeting.

The term “share” in current use is a general term for any time a member talks in the meeting. Often, particularly in large meetings, qualifications or shares are given from the front of the room, with chairs set up in rows, theater-style. In other groups, sharing may be done by going around the room with each member participating in turn, by the leader calling on people who raise their hands, or by having the member who just shared choose the next member to share (sometimes called “tag sharing”).

Regional Assembly: A gathering of representatives from the intergroups and service boards within a region at least once per year.

Regional Trustees: Eleven members of the Board of Trustees who serve as liaisons between their regions and the rest of the Board of Trustees of Overeaters Anonymous.

Region Representative (RR): An intergroup/service board representative who is elected to represent the intergroup/service board at regional assemblies.

Regions: OA is divided into ten geographic regions and one virtual region. Regions are composed of groups, intergroups, and service boards within the geographic boundaries and those within the virtual community.

Service Board: Service boards are service bodies that support groups and/or intergroups that are not otherwise served within the existing service structure. This includes national service boards (NSBs) and language service boards (LSBs). NSBs may be registered in countries outside the US and Canada, in which an intergroup or service board serves the entire country. If there are common needs that exceed the boundaries of one country, the NSB may serve more than one country. LSBs serve groups and/or intergroups/service boards, usually in different countries that share a common language.

Service Body: A term that encompasses intergroups, service boards, and regions.

Tools: There are nine Tools members can use any time of the day or night to help achieve and maintain abstinence while working the Twelve Step program of recovery. They are a plan of eating, sponsorship, meetings, telephone, writing, literature, action plan, anonymity, and service.

Twelfth Step Work: Step Twelve, in part, reads, “we tried to carry this message to compulsive overeaters . . .” An integral part of achieving and sustaining recovery in OA is trying to pass on the solution we have found to others who suffer from the disease. While it is suggested that the Steps be worked in order, even new members can often carry a message of hope to those who still suffer.

Twelve Concepts of OA Service: The Twelve Concepts of OA Service are a set of service principles that define and guide the practices of the service structures for conducting the business of OA. The spiritual Principles of the Twelve Concepts are unity, conscience, trust, equality, consideration, responsibility, balance, delegation, ability, clarity, humility, guidelines, selflessness, realism, representation, dialogue, compassion, and respect.

Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous: A Twelve Step process, based on spiritual principles, to achieve and maintain recovery from compulsive eating. The spiritual Principles of the Twelve Steps are honesty, hope, faith, courage, integrity, willingness, humility, self-discipline, love, perseverance, spiritual awareness, and service.

Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous: While individual recovery is based on the Twelve Steps, OA meetings maintain unity of purpose through the spiritual Principles found in the Twelve Traditions. These Principles—unity, trust, identity, autonomy, purpose, solidarity, responsibility, fellowship, structure, neutrality, anonymity, and spirituality—are critical to ensure the long-term success of a meeting.

Virtual Meetings: Meetings conducted via electronic media. This includes telephone, online, and non-real-time meetings.

World Service Business Conference (WSBC): This is the annual business meeting of OA, which brings together delegates from service bodies around the world. Conference decisions represent the group conscience of OA as a whole.

World Service Convention: A celebratory event sponsored by the World Service Office and the Board of Trustees, held periodically at different locations and attended by members from all regions. This provides a forum for fellowship, hearing speakers from all over the world, and workshops on different OA topics.

World Service Office (WSO): OA's business office in Rio Rancho, New Mexico USA. The legal and official business of OA is conducted by paid professional staff, working together with the Board of Trustees.

The Twelve Traditions Are Our Guide

OA has no firm rules or regulations and no central authority. Instead, OA groups are guided by the Twelve Traditions listed on the inside back cover of this pamphlet. These Traditions, adapted from the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, embody some of the spiritual Principles that ensure the survival of OA, just as the Twelve Steps are based on spiritual Principles that promote individual recovery.

In OA, the essential group work is done by OA members who are unpaid for their service. Members do their OA jobs in the way they think best and within the spirit of the Traditions. We keep things as simple and uncomplicated as we can. As OA grows, we try to find ways of doing whatever has to be done without getting too organized.

Rarely does an OA group use written bylaws, although they are considered essential at the service body level. Often the more written rules and laws a group passes, the more problems they create. Group autonomy (Tradition Four) does allow for a wide variety of OA meeting formats and practices.

Few differences, criticisms, and problems arise if well-informed members are willing to participate in decisions of the group. Group members can become informed by studying *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*; the OA pamphlet *The Twelve Traditions of OA*; and the AA book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Recovery from compulsive overeating is not and cannot be a gift that is clutched selfishly to oneself. Sharing what we have found with others is essential to our own continued abstinence, day by day, year by year. Being willing to give away what we have been freely given helps us keep what we have received.

How do new groups get started?

New meetings are started by two or more individuals seeking recovery who know the vital importance to their own recovery of carrying the message to others.

Sometimes a new group is formed to fill a specific

need, either based on place or time or a desire for a particular kind of meeting, such as a Step-study or newcomer meeting. Sometimes a new group may form by breaking off from a larger group.

Our own interests and those of other compulsive overeaters who haven't yet come to OA are best served if we do not let physical comfort, personality factors, or other elements keep us from starting new groups when the time is right for such action. Reluctance to start a new group where it may prove helpful could deny the opportunity for a new life to a compulsive eater who has lost hope.

Carrying the OA message to other compulsive overeaters who need and want help is our primary purpose and the chief way we maintain our own abstinence. The more healthy groups there are to carry the message, the better we can help ourselves and others.

Groups flourish even when ideal meeting quarters are not available. If the group provides a needed service for compulsive overeaters, follows the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, and has abstaining members, it attracts and receives the support it needs to grow and prosper.

How will you know if there is a need for a new group? Ask yourself if there are compulsive overeaters in your area who need OA but who don't know help is available. Millions of people have never heard of OA, and many others misunderstand it. This includes many suffering compulsive overeaters and the various support people who come in contact with them: doctors, nurses, hospital workers, nutritionists, counselors, social workers, members of the clergy, staffs of crisis hotlines and information centers, and others.

It is usually helpful to talk to some of these people to explain what OA is, and especially what it is not, and to tell them that you are starting an OA meeting. Giving them OA literature, especially a copy of *When Should I Refer Someone to Overeaters Anonymous?* and a copy of *Lifeline*, sometimes works wonders.

To register a new group with the World Service Office, the group must meet the definition of an OA meeting specified in Subpart B, Article V of OA's By-laws listed below. Your group is strongly encouraged to join your local intergroup or service board, which will add your group to their meeting list. Notifying

neighboring OA groups can also be very helpful; much support and assistance can come from these sources.

Article V, Section 1 - Definition:

These points shall define an Overeaters Anonymous group:

- a) As a group, they meet to practice the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, guided by the Twelve Concepts of OA Service.
- b) All who have the desire to stop eating compulsively are welcome in the group.
- c) No member is required to practice any actions in order to remain a member or to have a voice (share at a meeting).
- d) As a group they have no affiliation other than Overeaters Anonymous.
- e) It has affiliated as an Overeaters Anonymous group by registering with the World Service Office.

Getting started in a small community

Those of you who are starting an OA group in a small town can overcome problems if you are willing to make yourselves known to the community as OA members. Remember that it is not a break of anonymity to talk to people about your personal OA membership. In fact, carrying the message to those who still suffer is part of the recovery process as explained in Step Twelve. We can disclose our own membership but not the membership of anyone else, and not at the public media level (Tradition Eleven). In a small community, many people will already be aware of your problem and will probably be delighted to know of the possibility of recovery.

Letting key members of the community, such as doctors, teachers, clergy, lawyers, employers, and counselors, know of the availability of OA—and our willingness to help any compulsive overeater who is willing to accept help—will aid you in getting started.

A single member in a state with no OA groups took the following steps, and now dozens of groups

are flourishing in that region. You, too, can start a group by:

- Ordering a *New Group Starter Kit* from bookstore.oa.org.
- Obtaining a meeting place and setting a day and time for the meeting.
- Running a small ad in the local newspaper with the meeting time and place. Some newspapers provide free announcements for nonprofit organizations, or the cost may be reimbursed from the Seventh Tradition collection after the group is functioning.
- Contacting the local radio station for a public service announcement; see the *Public Information Service Manual* for suggestions.
- Registering the group information with the WSO. (This can be done on OA's website at oa.org.) It is vital to keep the meeting and contact information current with the WSO so those who call or check the website for meetings in their areas receive accurate information.
- Contacting the nearest intergroup/service board and asking to join. You can locate the closest intergroup/service board by using the "Find Service Body" function in the Find a Meeting section of the OA website.

To continue to attract new members, you might list Overeaters Anonymous in the phone book, put notices about OA in church bulletins, post OA *Attraction Sticky Notes* or *New Prospect Cards* on community bulletin boards (to order, go to bookstore.oa.org), and arrange to have information or a story about OA placed in the local paper. To help you, the WSO has prepared a *Public Information Service Manual*, which is available at a nominal charge at bookstore.oa.org.

It is particularly helpful to talk to the local newspaper editor and to the management of local radio and television stations in order to establish from the beginning the importance of the OA Principle of public anonymity, thus helping to avoid embarrassing anonymity breaks later. (See Tradition Eleven in *The Twelve Traditions of OA* on oa.org.)

Usually a group in a small town has only a few members. What often happens is that the OA mem-

bers come to a group meeting once a week to share their experience, strength, and hope in working the Twelve Step program. Over time, however, overfamiliarity with each other's stories can take the life out of the group. Here are some ideas to help keep a small once-a-week meeting a beacon of hope for the still suffering:

- Schedule two meetings a week. Make one the regular meeting and the other a Step-study or some other format, such as literature-study or writing. Or, change the regular meeting to a varying format that alternates week to week.
- If the distance is not too great, plan exchange meetings with groups in nearby towns.
- Invite someone from your intergroup, service board, or region to speak at a meeting occasionally, so the group may be informed of its part in the overall service structure.
- If your group is too isolated to allow for visiting groups and speakers, try for a meeting or two devoted to listening to recorded talks from OA conventions or special events. Recordings and podcasts can be found on oa.org and many OA intergroup/service board websites. (For information on how to obtain OA Convention recordings, contact the WSO or check the World Service Events page on OA's website.) OA speakers can also attend meetings virtually through a cell phone or an online service.
- Devote some meetings to a study of OA books, such as *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*; OA pamphlets; and *Lifeline*, as well as *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Big Book) and other OA-approved AA literature. (See the *OA Approved Literature List* on oa.org.) Try rotating leaders each week.
- Suggest that members attend OA phone or online meetings to hear experience, strength, and hope from members in different areas.
- As soon as a group is established, plan an open meeting for the community and invite civic leaders, such as the mayor, as well as doctors, nurses, teachers, members of the clergy, and health and social workers to attend. One or two

OA members may then talk about the OA program and its availability locally and worldwide.

- Ask a well-established OA group to “adopt” your group, exchanging recorded meetings and corresponding with your members.
- Consider having a speaker qualify at your meeting using some form of electronic communication.
- Keep a supply of all available OA books and pamphlets, and OA-approved AA books and booklets.

Once a group has been started, it is essential to provide continuity for the meeting. Make sure that at least one person is at the meeting place every week on the day and at the time designated, even if it takes a long time for another compulsive overeater to show up.

Gratitude and enthusiasm about our own recovery in OA gives hope and can do a lot to make the group flourish and be understood and accepted in the community. We need to share with the community what we are doing.

How to Keep Them Coming Back

Newcomers are more likely to return if they see and hear recovery in action and if someone in the group gives them personal attention and encouragement. Here are some ways to do this:

- See the *OA Guidelines for Membership Retention* on oa.org.
- Appoint a recovering member as newcomer greeter for each meeting. This person is responsible for taking the names of the newcomers, calling them sometime during the next week, letting them know that they are important to the meeting and that they are not alone, and asking if they have any questions.
- If it is common in your area for members to go out for fellowship after meetings, invite the newcomers to join you.
- Offer transportation help, if needed.
- Talk to newcomers at meetings and call them to share your recovery. Ask if they have any ques-

tions. Nothing gives greater hope to a newcomer than stories of personal recovery.

- Help newcomers get involved as soon as possible. Let them know they can help.
- If people ask you to sponsor them, remember this may be the first attempt they have made to begin to break their isolation and establish contact with someone in the program. If you are truly too busy, consider temporarily sponsoring them and take the time to introduce them to other qualified sponsors. If a newcomer does not follow through, don't take it personally. Be realistic about the times you want the person to call. If you are never available at night, don't tell someone, "Oh, you can call me anytime." If the person calling you stops calling, find out why. Don't ever give the impression, "You blew it." It's much better to focus on the positive: "Okay, let's go forward, one day at a time."

How do you become a group member?

You are a member of OA if you say so. Tradition Three says, "The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively," and none of us can judge the desire in another's heart.

To join a group one simply attends its meetings; groups do not have a formal procedure for joining. Group officers have an obligation to keep confidential the lists of names of members who wish to be notified of steering committee meetings or other OA events and who are available for Twelfth Step work. Some groups maintain phone lists of regular members.

Most members have a special affinity for one particular group and consider it their home group, where they accept responsibilities and try to sustain friendships. Members are encouraged not to meddle in the business or policies of groups that they visit only occasionally, or where they do not accept service responsibilities. (Tradition Four reminds us that all groups are autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.)

OA is not intended to promote individual or group competition to see which group is biggest, who keeps abstinence the longest, which group contributes the most service, or who is the most popular speaker. Therefore, all OA members are welcome at all OA

meetings and hopefully will feel as much a part of the Fellowship in another group as in their own.

Getting Things Done in Your OA Group

1. Do groups have officers?

It takes people to get the group's chores done. In OA groups, those people may be called "officers," but our Second Tradition reminds us that, "Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." Officers are usually chosen by the group for limited terms of service and are, in fact, not officers but service volunteers.

Titles in OA do not bring authority or honor; they describe services and responsibilities. These are forms of Twelfth Step work OA members do to carry the message of recovery. As OA's Responsibility Pledge states: "Always to extend the hand and heart of OA to all who share my compulsion; for this I am responsible."

You often hear OA members say they first felt they belonged when they began helping with the chairs or putting out literature. Many of us are shy and are grateful to be asked. Some newcomers find such activity relieves their timidity and makes it easier to meet and talk to other members. For many of us, this experience is our first contribution of OA service.

It seems only fair, of course, that such jobs get passed around so no one feels taken advantage of and no one begins to feel in charge or left out.

It is said that learning to accept responsibility in the group is a privilege. Handled properly, it can be helpful in recovery. Many OA members have found group service an excellent way to strengthen their recovery.

Typically, it is through the work of group members that:

- A meeting place is provided, made ready, and cleaned up after meetings.
- Programs are arranged for meetings.
- Literature is on hand.
- Seventh Tradition contributions are collected and properly distributed.

- Group problems are solved.
- Compulsive overeaters in the community learn that OA is available and where to find it.
- Necessary contact is made with other meetings or the rest of OA through the local intergroup/service board.

2. What about insurance requirements for a group?

The need for liability insurance for a meeting varies. If your meeting place requires it, contact your local intergroup/service board to see if they have liability insurance that covers your group. If not, contact a local insurance agent or broker about this matter.

If your group meets in a community meeting facility, it is wise to consider the purchase of a liability policy in the name of your local group. In addition to premises liability, coverage to be considered might include personal injury coverage (libel, slander, etc.), products liability (if your group serves any refreshments), and automobile nonownership liability.

Whether your group decides to purchase a liability policy, whoever is acting as the group's representative in obtaining a meeting place will want to read carefully and seek clarification on any lease or rental agreement before signing and assuming responsibility.

3. What service positions do we need?

A typical OA group might have all or some combination of the following service opportunities (see definitions below):

- steering committee
- secretary
- treasurer
- program chair
- literature chair
- intergroup/service board representative and alternate
- newcomer greeter or welcoming committee
- designated downloader

Sometimes a larger group may need other service volunteers to keep the meeting running smoothly. Titles may vary, but the important thing is that all of the work gets done to maintain and enhance the meeting.

4. How do steering committee/business/group conscience meetings work?

Some groups have a steering committee made up of officers and other members whom the group empowers to handle much of the week-to-week administration of the meeting on behalf of the entire group. Many groups do not have a steering committee and deal with these matters through periodic business meetings (sometimes called group conscience meetings), where all members are invited to participate.

Changes in meeting format, allocation of group funds, election of officers, abstinence and program requirements for service positions, and all important business matters are always discussed and decided in group conscience meetings open to all regularly attending members. (Refer to the *Guidelines for a Group Conscience Meeting* on oa.org.)

5. What does the secretary do?

In most groups, the secretary is the principal service volunteer and is elected or appointed for a stated period of time. Like other group servants, the secretary should be actively working the OA Twelve Step program of recovery and be abstinent. Other group-service experience is also a plus.

The secretary coordinates group activities and may substitute for other officers occasionally. The secretary may call steering committee/business/group conscience meetings and preside at them.

Unless other officers or committees have some of the following specific jobs to do, or the secretary delegates them to other group members, these may be typical responsibilities of the secretary at some meetings:

- Seeing that the meeting place is unlocked and set up for the meeting by the scheduled time.
- Making announcements about important OA activities and informing the full group of steering-committee decisions.
- Keeping the weekly sign-in sheets of names, cities, telephone numbers, and/or email addresses of group members showing which persons are sponsors and which are newcomers who should receive a friendly call the following week.
- Allowing time for the World Service Business Conference delegate, region representative,

and/or intergroup/service board representative to make a report during the meeting.

- Arranging for a literature chair to keep up literature supplies.
- Seeing that the meeting place is left in order after each meeting.
- Conducting all necessary elections.
- Assigning telephone calls for newcomers and calls for Twelfth Step help (unless there is a Twelfth Step chair for this particular duty).
- Making sure rent is paid on the group's post office box. Groups have found this a much safer, easier, and more reliable mailing address than a member's home or the meeting place. Note: the WSO does not send literature orders to a post office box.
- Organizing the celebrations of abstinence milestones, if the group wishes.
- Helping the treasurer count and keep a record of each meeting's collection and cosigning the group's checks.
- Maintaining a bulletin board for posting OA bulletins and announcements and notices of related activities.
- Sharing with group members mail from the World Service Office, the region, and the intergroup/service board (unless designated representatives do this).
- Providing safekeeping for group records—electronic or paper—for a reasonable time.
- Making sure the local intergroup/service board, region, and World Service Office know about any changes of address, the meeting place, new officers, and other group information. Meeting information updates may be submitted via the OA website at oa.org. (The world service delegate, region representative, and intergroup/service board representative may do this, but the secretary will make sure it is being done.)
- Doing whatever else needs to be done to keep the group functioning smoothly.

Many groups have found it helpful for the outgoing secretary to remain as cosecretary for a few weeks

to assist the newly elected secretary. The incoming secretary should be made aware of the following:

- The WSO group number. This number is issued to every group that registers with the World Service Office and should be clearly written or typed on all literature orders and correspondence with the WSO. It's a good idea to have this number imprinted on your group checks.
- Keeping group registration information up to date. It is necessary to inform the WSO, the region, and your intergroup/service board of any meeting changes (always using your group number), such as time, place, and telephone number of contact person and secretary. Groups can register, edit, or cancel their meetings through the OA website at oa.org. Accurate records ensure that those who inquire about meetings in your area get up-to-date information and that the WSO can keep your group informed on OA issues.
- The importance of reading this *Handbook*. Many group problems may be resolved by studying this *Handbook* and the Traditions sections of the *OA Twelve and Twelve, Second Edition* and the *AA Twelve and Twelve*. Also consult the two OA pamphlets *The Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous* and *The Twelve Concepts of OA Service*.
- Business transactions such as banking and ordering literature, if the group has no treasurer or literature chair yet.
- The availability of six sources of help:
 - 1) the nearest intergroup/service board.
 - 2) the national or language service board.
 - 3) the region.
 - 4) the regional trustees.
 - 5) the World Service Office.
 - 6) the OA website at oa.org, specifically the "Group Secretary Materials" page in the Group Support section.

The secretary contributes greatly toward the smooth functioning of the group. Although it doesn't really matter which service volunteer does a particular job, it is very important for everybody to understand who is to do what.

6. What does the treasurer do?

OA groups are self-supporting (Tradition Seven), accepting money only from members to keep carrying the message.

Passing the basket at meetings usually takes care of the group's financial needs, as well as provides extra funds, so the group can contribute its fair share to support the local intergroup/service board, region, and World Service Office.

There is no requirement for any member to contribute, although most do. Those who can are usually willing to give generously to make up for those unable to give at present.

Group funds may provide for the following:

- Rent for the meeting place.
- Coffee, tea, water, and necessary supplies.
- Equipment and miscellaneous expenses, such as OA signs, postage, and telephone.
- OA books and other OA-approved literature (including AA Conference-approved books and booklets originally copyrighted 2010 or earlier) for group use as well as to sell. (See the *OA Approved Literature List* on oa.org.)
- Copies of *A Step Ahead* and other materials downloaded from the OA website.
- Local meeting directories downloaded from the OA website.
- Support for the intergroup/service board.
- Support for the region.
- Support for the World Service Office, which provides support and services to the worldwide OA Fellowship. While groups may contribute according to their informed group conscience, they frequently choose to send 60 percent of funds left over after expenses to their intergroup/service board, 10 percent to their region, and 30 percent to the WSO. Groups may also choose to contribute all excess funds to their intergroup/service board and allow the service body to contribute to the region and WSO. This may be especially relevant for non-US based groups, which may incur bank fee charges for contributions. (See the *Seventh Tradition of OA* pamphlet for an explanation of how each service office spends its money.

This pamphlet can be downloaded from oa.org, and a number of translated versions are also available on oa.org. Many service bodies also offer a translated version.)

The treasurer keeps clear, simple records and keeps the group informed about how much is taken in and how it is spent. The treasurer makes a brief monthly report to the group and/or steering committee. Treasurers can find a compilation of helpful materials on the “Group Treasurer Materials” page in the Group Support section on oa.org.

The treasurer may also have these responsibilities:

- At the election, the outgoing treasurer needs to make arrangements to go to the bank with the new account signatories to complete the signature cards. Proper identification will be needed.
- Bring the checkbook to all meetings.
- Maintain the checkbook and issue checks for all group expenses.
- Receive and count collections at meetings, assisted by the group secretary or other member.
- Receive money in payment for literature.
- Make deposits weekly, as soon as possible following meetings.
- At each business meeting, make records available for any interested member.
- At business or steering committee meetings, ask for instructions regarding disbursement of surplus funds.

Experience has shown that problems can be avoided by electing, if possible, a treasurer with a minimum of six months of abstinence, a committed involvement in program, and some familiarity with bank statements. It is also a good idea to keep group funds in a separate bank account that requires two signatures on each check. Many banks provide checking accounts with no service charge to nonprofit organizations.

Most group steering committees find it makes good sense to budget all expenses in advance, setting aside sums from each collection in order to meet monthly expenses.

It is not a good idea for a group to accumulate large sums in excess of what is needed. A prudent reserve (three to six months of operating expenses) is all that is required. Excess funds should be sent to the

area service bodies—the intergroup/service board and region—and to the World Service Office to support their vital work. Group problems often arise when large donations, in money or goods or services, are accepted from any one member. Group treasuries may be used for all group expenses, but not for individual members' expenses in Twelfth Step work.

7. What does the program chair do?

The program chair obtains leaders and speakers for each meeting. Written schedules of meeting programs are often the best way to avoid slipups. Telephone calls, emails, texts, or notes are suggested to confirm engagements. A word or note of thanks after the meeting is always appreciated. It is strongly recommended that the length of abstinence required for leaders and speakers be determined by group conscience.

8. What does the literature chair do?

The literature chair sees that an adequate supply of OA-approved literature, including OA-approved AA books and booklets, is available. The OA literature should include our individual pamphlets *The Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, available on oa.org, and *The Twelve Concepts of OA Service*, available at bookstore.oa.org, as well as this *Handbook* for the reference of group officers and the intergroup/service board representative. Selling literature not on OA's approved list (see the *OA Approved Literature List* on oa.org) fails to uphold Tradition Six and the group conscience of OA.*

The literature chair receives a check in advance from the treasurer for the purchase of literature from the local OA intergroup/service board office or the World Service Office, or is reimbursed after the purchase from the Seventh Tradition collection.

Most groups sell literature for the same price they pay (including shipping), but some give directories, pamphlets, and/or the *Where Do I Start* pamphlet for newcomers, free to first-timers, or *Welcome Back, We Care!* packets to returning members. This is a matter for the group conscience to decide. It is important that the most current literature be available so that all members hear the same message.

The income from literature sales helps to support the World Service Office cost of carrying OA's message of recovery to those who still suffer.

9. What does the intergroup/service board representative (IR/SBR) do?

In areas where an intergroup or service board has been formed, each group usually elects an intergroup/service board representative. Representatives from the various groups meet periodically at intergroup/service board gatherings.

In addition to keeping his/her group informed about things going on at the intergroup/service board or in other groups that attend the intergroup/service board gathering, the representative is expected to fully participate in service activities undertaken by the intergroup/service board; for example, marathons or workshops that serve OA meetings in the area or OA as a whole.

Many group problems can be resolved by sharing experiences at intergroup/service board meetings with representatives from other groups.

From its ranks of officers and intergroup/service board representatives, each intergroup/service board selects representatives to attend regional assemblies and delegates to attend the World Service Business Conference. These positions have abstinence and service requirements.

*** Statement on Approved Literature, adopted by Conference 2010a (amended 2012)**

In accordance with our Traditions, we suggest that OA groups maintain unity and honor our Traditions by using, selling and displaying only approved books and pamphlets at their meetings. This includes OA Conference- and board-approved literature; AA Conference-approved books, booklets, and all future editions thereof, with original edition copyright 2010 or earlier; and locally produced OA literature. Locally produced literature must be developed according to the *OA Guidelines for Locally Produced Literature*, and should be used with the greatest discretion. Local literature should be considered temporary and discontinued when OA literature approved for general use is available to cover the topic.

Policy statement on literature that is not OA-approved, adopted by Conference 1993b (amended 2010)

It is the group conscience of the 1993 World Service Business Conference that the sale or display of literature other than OA-approved literature and AA conference-approved literature (as described in WSBC Policy 2010a) is an implied endorsement of outside enterprises, and therefore in violation with Tradition Six.

10. What is a greeter or welcoming committee?

The greeter is someone who greets members as they enter the meeting. This person especially welcomes newcomers and returning members, trying to help them feel comfortable and at ease. The greeter may also direct the newcomer to various sponsors or other members who can informally offer them an orientation.

The welcoming committee is comprised of several members who are willing to serve as greeters. This gives many different members the chance to meet and greet newcomers as well as make follow-up calls in the week(s) after their first attendance. All members are encouraged to welcome newcomers and returning members.

11. What does a designated downloader do?

Members of the OA Fellowship may not have access to computers. Any member with computer skills and Internet access can keep group members informed of new information posted on the OA website and region and intergroup/service board sites by being the designated downloader. A designated downloader can provide copies of OA newsletters such as *A Step Ahead* and the *Courier*, intergroup/service board and region newsletters, service opportunity information, group registration/change forms, the OA literature order form, public information materials, flyers, announcements, and world service event information.

12. How are service volunteers elected?

Group officers are usually chosen by the group membership for limited terms of service (six months, a year—it varies according to the group conscience). In some groups, a steering committee simply names the new group-service persons periodically; in others, regular elections are held. A nominating committee (perhaps the steering committee) may name persons who might make good volunteers, or volunteers may come forward, and a simple majority decides the election.

Some groups have alternates or assistant positions. If a service volunteer doesn't fulfill the service commitments, another volunteer may be solicited at the monthly steering committee meeting, or as needed. When it is time to rotate, it is helpful to emphasize the benefits you experienced by fulfilling a service position. An enthusiastic, positive approach will be

more apt to bring someone willing to follow through with the job you have been doing.

13. What are some good qualifications for service volunteers?

Most groups make sure that their service volunteers have some continuous program involvement, are currently abstinent, and are available and willing to give dependable service. Members who attend meetings regularly usually fill these positions more effectively, of course, than absentees. The group's welfare should be of primary concern in choosing members to fill service positions. A review of Traditions One and Two is helpful at election time.

Service volunteers should realize that giving service to a group may sometimes involve doing tasks whether they feel like it or not. Most members serving OA agree it's a good idea not to expect lots of praise. Service is its own reward, and this seems to be particularly true in OA. Since most members cannot recover in isolation, sharing group responsibilities keeps the group healthy, and as a byproduct, strengthens the recovery of every group member. If we keep the Twelve Traditions in mind and help the group keep aware of these Principles, we will generally find our own welfare flourishing along with that of the group.

Volunteers who have a thorough familiarity with all OA literature and OA-approved AA books and booklets are often more prepared for service positions.

14. Why is rotation of service important?

Traditionally, rotation keeps OA service volunteers from becoming frozen in their jobs. Like everything else in OA, jobs get passed around for all to share. After one or two terms in any service position, members move on to other kinds of OA service. Some groups have alternates or assistants ready to step into the jobs, and new members can take the slots they just left. In this way, problems based on personalities are kept to a minimum, no power or prestige gets built up, no individual gets taken advantage of or imposed upon, and the rewards of giving service are shared by more and more members.

To step out of an OA office you love can be difficult. If you have been doing a good job; if you honestly don't see anyone else around willing, qualified,

or with the time to do it; and if your friends agree, it's especially hard. But letting go can be a real step forward in personal growth—a step into the humility that is the spiritual essence of anonymity and the primary aim of each of the Twelve Steps.

Anonymity in OA means, among other things, that we forego personal prestige that may come with any OA work we do to help other compulsive overeaters. Rotation brings spiritual rewards far more enduring than any fame. With no OA “status” at stake, we are free to serve as we are needed, and we don't have to compete for any titles or praise.

15. What kinds of meetings can an OA group have?

Our Fourth Tradition says, “Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.” A group can hold practically any kind of meeting it chooses.

Go to OA's website and you will see nearly thirty types of meetings listed, plus another ten or so types of special-focus meetings. There are open meetings (meetings open to anyone) and closed meetings (meetings closed to anyone who is not a compulsive eater). The most common types of meetings are speaker meetings, Step-study meetings, literature-study meetings, and newcomer meetings. Some meetings combine elements of all of the above. Recommended formats for various types of meetings are available on the OA website (oa.org).

Speaker: An abstinent speaker shares his/her experience, strength, and hope with the group. This is sometimes called a qualifier meeting because the speaker is telling his/her story rather than sharing experience on a particular subject, such as a Step or recovery-related topic. A speaker meeting is an excellent way to introduce family members, friends, and interested professionals to OA Principles. Often a meeting is part newcomer, part speaker, and part topic. A speaker may tell his/her OA story and then suggest a topic for sharing by group members.

Steps and Traditions Study: These groups will typically read a particular Step/Tradition from the OA or AA *Twelve and Twelve*, then open the floor for sharing. Sometimes the leader will share his/her experi-

ence before opening the meeting for sharing. At some meetings, the sharing will occur as the paragraphs are read. At other meetings, sharing does not begin until after the entire Step/Tradition is read. Often these meetings alternate between the Steps and Traditions.

Literature-study: Some groups study other OA literature, using the same format noted above. Literature examples include *Overeaters Anonymous, Third Edition*; *Abstinence, Second Edition*; *A New Beginning*; *Seeking the Spiritual Path*; *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams*; *Lifeline* magazine; *For Today*; and *Voices of Recovery*. The latter two can be useful for a subject discussion because of their indexes and their companion workbooks, which contain questions about each daily reading. Sometimes groups study OA pamphlets such as *Dignity of Choice*, *A Plan of Eating, Before You Take That First Compulsive Bite*, and *A Guide for Sponsors*. Groups may also study OA-approved AA literature such as *Alcoholics Anonymous (Big Book)*.

Newcomers: Some meetings are set up exclusively to focus on explaining the basics to newcomers, identifying sponsors, sharing on the Tools, describing what happens at a regular meeting, and answering questions. Regular meetings will sometimes establish a special newcomers meeting before or after their scheduled meetings. Some groups might devote one meeting a month to newcomers.

Varies: This is the moststep common classification found on an OA meeting list. The focus changes week to week. For example, week one may be newcomer/speaker; week two may be a Step-study; week three may be a Traditions study; week four may be a *Lifeline* meeting.

Special-Focus Meetings: These are regular OA meetings open to any member, but the focus is on certain groups. Examples include men, women, anorexics, bulimics, gays, lesbians, and people who have lost or need to lose more than 100 pounds (45 kg).

Virtual Meetings: OA meetings are available almost anywhere and anytime through the use of technology. OA's Find a Meeting Web page lists hundreds of virtual meetings, which include telephone and online

meetings. Some of these meetings are recorded and available for playback at any time. They offer a variety of formats and focuses.

16. What is the typical meeting procedure?

No one format is the best for an OA meeting, but some work better than others. Several suggested meeting formats are available for download at oa.org.

The group leader usually opens the meeting and follows a printed format. Most leaders ask the group to join in the Serenity Prayer. “Our Invitation to You” from the introduction to *Overeaters Anonymous, Third Edition* or “How It Works” from chapter five of *Alcoholics Anonymous* may be read. (AA has requested that when reading from AA literature, we read directly from the book rather than a typed sheet and that we don’t change any words.)

Both readings above include the Twelve Steps. The Steps are customarily read separately if these readings are not used. The Twelve Traditions are also read during most meetings. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions are the program of recovery. The *Tools of Recovery* pamphlet may be read.

Asking different members to read helps people get acquainted and feel they are sharing in group life. Speakers and readers generally introduce themselves by saying, “Hi, my name is _____, and I’m a compulsive eater [overeater, bulimic, anorexic, food addict].” Responding to these members with “Hi, [name],” encourages people to participate.

Most meetings close with the members saying the Serenity Prayer, the Seventh Step Prayer, the Third Step Prayer, or the OA Promise (“I put my hand in yours...”), followed by the slogan “Keep coming back!” It is suggested that the leader preface the prayer by saying, “Will those of you who wish, please join in [name of prayer or Promise].”

A group’s customs can help it develop solidarity and provide a reassuring feeling of continuity for the members.

17. What about getting together socially before or after the meeting?

Many OA members report they get almost as much good out of getting together before or after the meeting as they do out of the meeting itself. It is important to take care that people don’t feel excluded.

Many groups have a scheduled break during the meeting. This is an ideal time to talk with newcomers, returning members, and members seeking sponsors.

18. How do group issues get resolved?

Sometimes a potential group problem becomes a group blessing as time passes because of the wisdom gained in dealing with the issue.

Group issues are usually a sign the group is meeting the challenges of life. They are often evidence of a healthy diversity of opinion among the members. They give us an opportunity to learn how to “practice these principles in all our affairs” (Step Twelve). Regular group conscience meetings can help resolve group issues before they become problems.

Four principles seem to lead away from trouble and toward growth: (1) unity within the group; (2) harmony among the members of the group, with other OA groups, and with the rest of the community; (3) a hearing for all points of view; and (4) understanding that speakers’ talks and pitches are not open to comment or debate—in other words, there is no cross talk.

Listed below are some common OA issues:

- How can we increase attendance at our meeting?
- How can we increase Seventh Tradition contributions to support OA at all levels?
- How can we get more volunteers to help with group chores?
- How can we raise money for more literature?
- How can we get out from under the rule of longtimers who insist they know what’s best for the group?
- Why can’t we get more longtimers to share their experience and help solve group problems?
- Should we celebrate individuals’ OA birthdays, or does this foster an “ego trip”?
- What can be done about vulgar language and profanity at meetings?
- Should we accept free meeting space offered by a church?
- Why can’t we retain newcomers in our group?
- Is loyalty to a home group a good thing or not?
- What can be done about an anonymity-breaker?

- What do we do about a promoter of outside enterprises or issues?
- What do we do about members who insist on pushing their personal religion at meetings?
- How do we handle inappropriate sexual behavior?

Often, group problems are simply misunderstandings easily resolved in open discussion. Or they may involve members trying to change other members' behavior or opinions. Perhaps two people mean different things by the same words. Or members may agree on a goal but have different opinions on how to attain it.

Sometimes group (or even intergroup/service board) problems concern honest disagreement between two sincere, well-meaning sets of members. They may be of equally good hearts and intentions but feel differently as to which crowd performs certain OA services better, or which methods to use, or which approach to abstinence and sponsoring works best. In most cases, OA's Twelve Traditions, the Twelve Concepts of OA Service, and past experience have guided the way to harmony in such matters, and the result can be even better service than either had dreamed possible.

No problem has to lead to serious trouble for any group, since OA experience shows that goodwill, honesty, selflessness, and a spirit of love and service will prevail if we make an honest effort to "place principles before personalities" (Tradition Twelve).

A sense of humor, patience, and courtesy; a willingness to sit still and listen; a need for fairness; and a trust in a Higher Power have been found far more useful than legalistic arguments or personal accusations.

The most important thing any group can do to prevent problems is to study OA's Twelve Traditions. Another valuable resource is *The Twelve Concepts of OA Service* pamphlet.

You may not find all the answers here. No one can set down the law for OA, but most groups have faced and solved problems like these and more by applying the Twelve Traditions through the group conscience. Groups may also consider contacting their intergroup/service board chair, region chair, or region trustee.

19. How do we apply the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts of OA Service through the group conscience?

Tradition Two says: “For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.” Concept Twelve (d) says: “All important decisions shall be reached by discussion, vote and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity.”

A group must find its group conscience. An OA group is a collection of individuals, each one of whom may have a good idea or a valid viewpoint. Group conscience, however, is a collective effort in which the OA group tries to understand a problem and develop a solution.

It does this by appealing to the concept of the Higher Power in whom we, as individuals, have placed our will and our lives through Step Three, and for knowledge of whom we pray in Step Eleven. This is a process of discovery in which OA group members practice freeing themselves of self-will for the benefit of OA. They find this to be a spiritually rewarding experience and an essential part of their recovery. It ultimately results in decisions that are far better than anything one individual may have suggested.

How a group finds its group conscience often depends on how seriously the group views a particular issue. In the middle of a meeting, a consensus may simply develop among all the members of the group, so something is simply changed or implemented as a result. This is usually recorded in the group’s minutes or on the attendance sheet for that day.

For complex issues or where members appear to be passionately divided about an issue, however, a group will often adopt more traditional decision-making methods, such as formal motions, discussion on motions, amendments to motions, and finally voting. Often the group will set a date a few weeks or months ahead in order to provide adequate notice of the discussion. Sometimes members will be asked to do research and bring information to the scheduled meeting. The decision is recorded carefully and communicated to members of the group.

OA groups have found that it is vitally important for the group to seek as wide a consensus as possible. As our pamphlet on the Concepts says, “OA groups are best served when they diligently listen to the minority and do not decide on matters by a close vote. A close vote is usually an indication that group conscience has not yet been reached” (*The Twelve Concepts of OA Service*, p. 15).

Groups work hard to find a way to reconcile differing opinions. They find that those efforts are rewarded by more creative ideas than existed before. If a vote is quite close, many groups have even found it advisable not to act on that vote, but rather to appoint a small committee of supporters and critics of the idea to try to develop consensus and report back to the group.

The key to finding group conscience is always to remember Tradition Five: “Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.”

A group that respects Tradition Five, and that places “principles before personalities” (Tradition Twelve) cannot help but develop a group conscience that achieves the ideal of substantial unanimity on most issues.

Even those members who might ultimately disagree with the group conscience will still feel that their participation was worthwhile and will be able to accept the group conscience in a spirit of recovery and goodwill.

Of course, no decision is really final. We are always capable of learning from our decisions. An OA group might develop a group conscience on one day, or during a portion of several consecutive meetings, and discover a better idea six months after that. Change is part of the process of recovery.

20. How do groups become stronger?

Some groups occasionally take a “group inventory,” using an entire meeting for an honest and fearless discussion of the group’s weaknesses and strengths. The *Strong Meeting Checklist* and *Group Inventory* formats are available for download from OA’s website.

Here are some suggested discussion topics for a Tenth Step meeting that may revitalize group health:

- What is the purpose of the group?

- Can the group do more to carry the message?
- Are we reaching the compulsive overeaters in our community?
- Has the group done anything lately to bring the OA message to the attention of physicians, clergy, teachers, and others who can be helpful in reaching persons who need OA?
- Is the group attracting a good cross section of our community?
- Are we losing most of the newcomers who come through our doors? If so, why?
- How can our sponsorship be improved?
- Have we done all that we can to provide an attractive meeting place?
- Do all members understand the value to their own recovery of doing service for the group?
- Is an opportunity given to each and every member to participate in group activities?
- Are service people chosen with care and consideration, placing principles before personalities, for the welfare of the group as a whole?
- Does the group do its fair share to support the intergroup/service board? Region? WSO?
- Are all members periodically informed about the worldwide Fellowship and service structure of OA?
- Is the Principle of anonymity maintained? Do members of the group avoid the deadly enemy—gossip, remembering, “what you hear here, stays here”?

You'll probably think of additional questions of your own. You may also refer to OA's website; the *Service, Traditions, and Concepts Workshop Manual*; and the *Twelfth-Step-Within Handbook* for additional guidance.

21. How can we get help from other groups?

Groups have often found that “carrying the message” is done better if they and neighboring groups pool their efforts, especially in areawide projects. This leads to the formation of intergroups/service boards.

Your group can benefit from the experience of faraway members by corresponding with groups and individuals in areas where OA has enjoyed long-term

growth and by exchanging newsletters. Technology offers various ways for members, groups, and service bodies to share their experience, strength, and hope. Longtime groups can be revitalized by “adopting” a new struggling group. *Lifeline* provides encouragement to new and longtime groups as well as individual members.

How Things Get Done in Your Intergroup or Service Board

1. How do intergroups/service boards start?

When several groups exist in a geographic area or in the virtual community, they eventually realize there are functions they can perform better together than separately. Typically, intergroups/service boards form simply because they are the easiest, most efficient way of getting certain OA jobs done. They provide needed services with a minimum of organization. These intergroups/service boards, composed of representatives from interested meetings, are directly responsible to those they serve.

Intergroups/service boards may manage administrative functions, such as meeting lists, hotlines, and websites, but their primary purpose remains the same as every other group or service body in OA—to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers (Tradition Five). This includes those still suffering both inside and outside of OA. Intergroups are in a unique position to help those still suffering within OA. A few representatives working together on an intergroup/service board committee can organize recovery events, such as Unity Day, IDEA, Sponsorship Day, retreats, and conventions, which may benefit large numbers of members.

2. What functions do intergroups/service boards have?

Intergroups/service boards often handle such responsibilities as:

- Acting as guardians of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of OA Service as specified in the Bylaws of Overeaters Anonymous, Inc.

- Creating and maintaining intergroup/service board websites. A majority of people coming to OA now find their way to a meeting through oa.org or a local intergroup/service board website.
- Maintaining OA listings in local directories and handling telephone and mail inquiries.
- Sponsoring and arranging workshops, marathons, and other special events aimed at educating, informing, and helping members strengthen their personal recovery, since everything in OA begins with personal recovery.
- Publishing regular newsletters or bulletins to keep groups informed about each other and about upcoming OA events, distributing up-to-date directories of all nearby meetings, and providing other necessary information.
- Handling public information requests from local news media, arranging radio or TV public service announcements or programs about OA, and furnishing OA speakers for outside organizations.
- Maintaining contact with health care professionals in fields related to OA.
- Arranging a system for groups to obtain abstaining OA speakers.
- Helping to find sponsors for new members.
- Maintaining a stock of OA literature and OA-approved AA literature for sale. Some groups and individuals also purchase literature for themselves directly from bookstore.oa.org.
- Sending representatives to regional assemblies and delegates to the World Service Business Conference, OA's annual business meeting.
- Maintaining an office, if there is a need and local groups can support it financially.

3. How do intergroups/service boards work?

In most areas, any group may, if it chooses, belong to the intergroup/service board that provides services for all groups in its area. Each group usually elects an intergroup/service board representative to represent the group. Financial support to a service body by its groups is voluntary and not a requirement for membership. Most members realize, however,

that they cannot expect good service unless they contribute their share for it.

In areas where it may not be practical to open an office, intergroups/service boards sometimes use an answering service and stock literature for several groups in the home or garage of a member. Sometimes a carefully briefed, central telephone answering service is effective for referring calls from newcomers. Many intergroups/service boards now have websites.

Intergroups/service boards must register with the WSO by completing a registration form on the Find a Meeting page of the OA website. For an intergroup's/service board's registration to be officially recognized, it must submit its bylaws and/or a summary of its purpose and operating procedures to the WSO, each of which must be in conformity with OA, Inc. Bylaws. Sample intergroup/service board bylaws can be found on the Service Body Support page of the OA website. Contact the WSO for further information.

The Twelve Concepts of OA Service contains valuable information for every intergroup/service board. Some also find the book *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* helpful in conducting meetings.

It is most important to keep accurate financial records from the very beginning of the intergroup's/service board's existence. In countries where an intergroup/service board seeks tax-exempt status from the government, complete, detailed financial records from the beginning are required.

Obtaining the nonprofit tax-exempt status could be beneficial in a number of ways. Depending on your location, if you qualify for a government tax exemption, your organization may also be exempt from other taxes. This can make a difference for an intergroup/service board that makes lots of copies or purchases other materials in an area where there are sales tax on these items. It may make a difference when renting space for events because venues often have lower prices for nonprofits. Other advantages are that member contributions to a tax-exempt organization may be tax deductible for the contributor, and individual members may not be personally liable for a nonprofit's debts.

On the other hand, it may be complicated to obtain nonprofit tax-exempt status. It can be costly and

a lawyer may be needed. Nonprofits also must keep detailed records and may need to submit annual tax filings in order to keep their tax-exempt status.

4. What are service boards?

Service boards are service bodies that support groups and/or intergroups that are not otherwise served within the existing service structure. This includes national service boards (NSBs) and language service boards (LSBs).

NSBs and LSBs were officially added to the OA service structure at the 1995 World Service Business Conference.

National service boards may be registered outside the United States and Canada in countries in which the service board serves the entire country. They may also be registered where the groups/intergroups within a country may benefit from having a common service board. In cases in which there are common needs that exceed the boundaries of one country, the national service board may serve more than one country.

Language service boards may be registered to serve the common needs of a language group, regardless of geographic proximity.

5. What is the value of bylaws, policies, and procedures for intergroups/service boards?

These documents pass on the history and wisdom of the intergroup's/service board's group conscience. They allow trusted servants to understand the structure of the intergroup/service board, what it does, and how to do it. Our tradition of rotation of service makes it very important that this information is correct and current. Many OA intergroups/service boards use some or all of these documents. The following descriptions are general guidelines.

Bylaws establish the purpose of the corporation and the organizational structure needed to conduct business. This is often the legal document required to establish a nonprofit corporation and contains specific information that dictates the responsibilities and liabilities of the organization.

Policies help define the actions the intergroup/service board plans to perform. These are usually not in the bylaws and clarify how the intergroup/service board operates.

Procedures provide specific instructions for how the work gets done, the tasks that need to be accomplished, and who is responsible for them. Policies and procedures are often combined into a single document.

When proposing new policies, members often attempt to decide the actual procedures needed to accomplish a task as well. It is often more efficient to develop the procedures once the policy is in place.

6. What can groups and members do for intergroups/service boards?

Groups and members can:

- Ideally, send an abstinent representative from the group to intergroup/service board meetings.
- Get involved in helping the intergroup/service board. (Think, “How can I be of service?”)
- Serve on an intergroup/service board committee.
- Invite sponsees to join you at intergroup/service board meetings or events.
- Make time in meetings to hear an intergroup/service board report from the group’s representative.
- Put your name on the intergroup/service board mailing or email list if there is one.
- Volunteer to take hotline calls.
- Put your name on the intergroup/service board speakers’ list if there is one.
- Put your name on the intergroup/service board sponsors’ list if there is one.
- Attend intergroup/service board meetings even if you’re not an official representative.
- Make sure the group sends Seventh Tradition contributions to its intergroup/service board. (Note: members and groups should check with their intergroup/service board to find out what the local policy is about sending contributions to the World Service Office.)

Things to Know about Public Information

1. Why is public information important?

The goal of OA public information is to carry our message of recovery to the compulsive eater who still suffers. People need to know Overeaters Anonymous exists as a Twelve Step program of recovery! OA is not anonymous. Mindful that OA is a program of attraction, not promotion, we attract newcomers to OA when we inform the general public about our program and tell professionals and others who work with compulsive eaters about OA. OA's *Public Information Service Manual* and *Professional Outreach Manual* (both available for order from bookstore.oa.org) are invaluable "how-to" aids, packed full of ideas.

In addition to carrying the message one-on-one as outlined in Step Twelve, we need to inform the public about our existence and where to find our meetings, as well as where to find us on the Web or reach us by phone. There are many public information channels: newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, podcasts, websites, and phone directories. Posting on bulletin boards in public places, such as stores, libraries, gyms, and colleges is an easy way to inform the public. Some service bodies have purchased billboard space or spots on diner placemats. Some have held public information nights. We can also participate in community health fairs and make sure we're listed on local hotlines.

Perhaps one of the most important things we can do is provide information to health care professionals in our communities: doctors, nurses, counselors, social workers, nutritionists, and others who may refer people to us. We can sometimes furnish speakers to civic groups or community service organizations. All these things can be done within the scope of our Traditions while maintaining anonymity at the public media level.

Many of these activities are coordinated by the intergroup/service board, but require the participation of every group to be successful. It is often individual members putting up the bulletin board meeting notices, taking OA literature to their counselors, or leav-

ing old copies of *Lifeline* in their doctors' offices that makes a difference.

2. How do newcomers get help?

Compulsive overeaters who are still suffering cannot be helped by OA unless they know the Fellowship exists and where to find it. So it is a good idea for a group to print announcements of its name, its meeting place and time, and a telephone contact. These notices can be given to hospitals or clinics, doctors, clergy and churches, social and health agencies, and business firms in the community. *Attraction Sticky Notes* and the *New Prospect Card*, available from bookstore.oa.org, may be placed on bulletin boards in supermarkets and other places.

In areas with an intergroup or a service board, the meeting hours of all groups can be used, along with the intergroup/service board address and telephone number.

In addition to the notices, it is a good idea to distribute the public information flyer *About OA*, as well as the pamphlets *A Program of Recovery*, *To the Newcomer*, and *Is Food a Problem for You?* (These three pamphlets contain OA's Fifteen Questions.)

3. When is "breaking my anonymity" not an anonymity break?

When you tell your story to a newcomer who has asked for OA help, that certainly is not an anonymity break. When you stand before OA groups and say, "My name is _____, and I am a compulsive overeater," that is not breaking your anonymity. Certainly when you explain your mission in taking Step Nine, you may reveal your OA membership.

But getting your full name and/or picture with your OA story printed or broadcast is not consistent with Traditions Eleven and Twelve.

Difficult borderline cases sometimes arise; each one is different. OA makes no judgments of right or wrong in questionable cases. Experience, however, suggests the following guidelines:

- The word "anonymous" in our name implies a promise of privacy. To those compulsive eaters who feel ashamed and guilty and who are afraid friends, family, or employers will criticize, we say, "Welcome. We understand, because we have gone the same route. We'll try to help, and

we promise you the haven of anonymity.”

- By keeping strict anonymity at the public level for ourselves and everyone else in OA, we prove our commitment to the humbling Principles of Traditions Eleven and Twelve. For press, radio, TV, films, and other public media of communication, we never reveal last names or any other identifying facts about any OA member. In notices to be posted on OA bulletin boards or printed in OA programs that the general public might see and on OA-related websites, we omit last names and identifying titles of all members. Television shows and news photographs obscure members’ faces or use rear views. We are identified only by our first names and last initials in newspapers or magazine articles.
- Within OA itself, we may freely exchange our full names. The Traditions specify protecting anonymity at the public level. We maintain address books of OA names, telephone numbers, and/or email addresses so we can keep in touch with and help each other. Imagine a member being hospitalized and OA friends not being able to call or visit because they know only a first name!
- In personal, private, face-to-face relationships with non-OA members, we may feel free to say we are compulsive overeaters and members of OA. These people may later refer others needing help to us. Our Tradition of public anonymity is not broken when we tell the facts about ourselves privately. Passing on our experience, strength, and hope to other compulsive eaters is too important to let any fear or stigma stand in our way. If Rozanne, our OA founder, had kept the message to herself, where would we compulsive overeaters be? In Alcoholics Anonymous, if Bill W. or Dr. Bob had said, “People wouldn’t understand” and hadn’t passed on their message, where would we all be?
- We do not hide our membership in OA out of fear and shame. That would actually strengthen the stigma of our disease. We remain anonymous in public for two primary reasons: our promise of privacy to the still-suffering com-

pulsive overeater and the spiritual rewards of humility.

- With anonymity, we sacrifice personal pride in our OA recovery, working for and placing the emphasis on our Higher Power, which in reality is responsible for our healing.
- It is not a break of anonymity to enlist Twelfth Step help for members in need of support by, for example, suggesting that other members give a member in need a call, provided we are careful to refrain from discussing any specific personal information. Many members share in their stories how a phone call from a caring member brought them back to meetings.
- Open meetings are open to all. Anything at an open meeting may be subject to scrutiny, discussion, and outside study. One should be prudent concerning what is shared at an open meeting. Our Traditions exist to protect our anonymity. The group may choose to remind newcomers and visitors to respect the anonymity of all who are present. All compulsive eaters are welcome at closed meetings, but non-compulsive eaters may attend only by special invitation based on a group conscience. We may find it best to share intimate information one-on-one with our OA sponsor or a close OA friend.

4. Does OA have a policy for how to use public and social media?

Delegates to the 2019 World Service Business Conference, representing the group conscience of worldwide Fellowship, adopted the following policy:

Statement on Public and Social Media

While Overeaters Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues, including social media, the delegates of the 2019 World Service Business Conference recommend that any OA member, group, or service body using social media for OA public information and public awareness maintain the personal anonymity of OA members.

Members of Overeaters Anonymous are any-

mous. the Fellowship is not. Members of Overeaters Anonymous are responsible for maintaining their anonymity and respecting the anonymity of other OA members. When attending an OA meeting, whether face-to-face or virtual, members are encouraged to seek appropriate means to protect their own anonymity and that of fellow members.

All registered virtual meetings shall inform members that their anonymity is not fully protected when attending a virtual meeting.

Find options for protecting anonymity at Guidelines for Anonymity in the Digital World (<https://oa.org/groupsservice-bodies/guidelines/>) (Business Conference Policy Manual, 2011a [amended 2016 and 2019]).

How about OA in Institutions?

OA members have been able to help many compulsive eaters at clinics, schools, hospitals, prisons, and military bases. The most successful OA groups in institutions follow the *Suggested Meeting Formats*, adapting when necessary to the institution's policies while maintaining OA Principles.

An OA attitude of “we’re the experts” can cause institutional personnel to become wary of OA, and this can deprive some compulsive overeaters of their chance at the OA recovery program. However, OA groups in institutions, like OA groups everywhere, are guided by the Twelve Traditions; they do not endorse or dispense medical or nutritional advice or make professional recommendations or referrals.

Attraction, not promotion, is best for OA. We cooperate but do not affiliate with others seeking to help compulsive eaters.

Here are some of the ways groups or service bodies have helped compulsive overeaters in institutions:

- Choosing an institution representative who coordinates the group's activities in institutions with those of other groups and encourages members to participate in Twelfth Step work in those facilities.
- Furnishing OA literature for compulsive eaters in institutions (special packets of OA pamphlets and copies of OA books).
- Supplying literature and abstinent speakers and leaders for OA meetings held in institutions.
- Attending OA meetings in institutions as listeners—just to encourage the members.
- Arranging for OA visitors to call on shut-in compulsive overeaters in hospitals and at home.
- Making sure that military personnel, patients, or students who join have OA sponsors. For sponsoring prison inmates, refer to the *OA CARES Inmate Correspondence Program Guidelines* on oa.org.
- Furnishing OA speakers and literature for the staffs of institutions as well as for the inmates and patients.

For more ideas and assistance in working with institutions and conducting OA group meetings in such facilities, contact the WSO. You can also refer to the *Professional Outreach Manual*, available at bookstore.oa.org.

How Conference Delegates and Region Representatives Serve

1. What does a World Service Business Conference delegate do?

Delegates represent their service bodies at the annual World Service Business Conference, sharing experiences with other world service delegates. This Conference represents the collective group conscience of OA as a whole and makes decisions and recommendations on OA business and policy matters. The delegate is chosen on the basis of judgment, experience, stability, abstinence, willingness, and faithful adherence to the program of OA. (See OA Bylaws Subpart B, Article X, Section 3 on oa.org for more information on delegate requirements.)

The delegate's job is to:

- Keep the service body informed about what is happening with OA throughout the world and keep the WSO informed about the service body's problems and progress, needs and wishes.
- Receive and share with the service body all mail from the WSO, the yearly Conference Report, and other information and ideas from WSBC, including workshop subjects and any new or changed OA policies decided at WSBC.
- Inform the service body of any new or revised literature published by OA.
- Remind the service body about group registration and the importance of keeping the meetings database current.
- Keep fellow members informed about world service activities, such as public information campaigns and notifications from the WSO of articles and broadcasts about OA that may attract newcomers or generate inquiries.
- Be the WSO's area contact person, often to

guide prospective members to a meeting and to carry the message as needed. A good delegate wholeheartedly abides by the spirit of our Twelve Traditions, especially the commitment to give service freely.

- Help the service body solve problems and assist in keeping the service body bylaws in compliance with OA Bylaws. To do this, the delegate may draw on the resources of the World Service Office, where the staff is ready to relay helpful OA experience from all over the world.

It is suggested that at least one of the delegates also serve as the region representative.

2. What is a region?

Regions are composed of groups, intergroups, and service boards within specified geographic boundaries and the virtual community. OA is divided into eleven regions. There are eight regions within North America. Mexico is in Region Two; Bermuda is in Region Six; the Virgin Islands, Central America, and South America are in Region Eight. Region Nine encompasses Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Western Asia. Region Ten encompasses the Far East, Southeast Asia, Western Pacific Basin, Australia, and New Zealand. The Virtual Region encompasses the virtual groups and virtual intergroups. A world map of the eleven regions is on oa.org.

3. Why is the region important?

As part of OA's service structure, the region is important in coordinating Twelfth Step work on a broad scale. Each region has a regional trustee. Regional assemblies choose trustee nominees to be presented to the World Service Business Conference. Once elected, the regional trustee brings input from the region-wide membership (gathered at the regional assemblies) to the Board of Trustees and communicates Board of Trustees information to the region.

Regional assemblies also elect their own board of trusted servants, which may include a regional chair, a vice-chair, a treasurer, and a secretary, to administer the region's business in accordance with the region bylaws. Regional committees work with the regional officers to plan and provide public information, professional outreach, convention planning, bylaws re-

views, ways and means, newsletters, financial oversight, and other services and activities to assist the region's intergroups/service boards in carrying the message. Regions may provide funding assistance to help intergroups/service boards that would not otherwise be able to send a representative to regional assemblies or World Service Business Conference. They also provide travel funds for regional officers to give workshops on topics such as service, Concepts, and Traditions for intergroups/service boards that would like to have them.

Regions are an important resource for information, intergroup/service board and group support, and recovery. They carry the message of OA recovery through regional websites and regional conventions, continuing the connection between the group, the intergroup/service board, and world service.

4. What is the makeup of the regional assembly?

Each intergroup/service board is encouraged to send at least one (or more, depending on size) representative to the regional assembly. The assembly is an important business meeting. It is also an opportunity for intergroups/service boards to share experiences. The regional trustee attends to learn about matters of interest to the region and present world service concerns that need regional input. The trustee may ask for specific feedback to bring to a future Board of Trustees meeting.

Since attendance at every intergroup/service board meeting is unrealistic for trustees, the regional assembly provides a forum for the exchange of ideas between the region and OA as a whole. It also gives intergroups/service boards an opportunity to share experience, strength, and hope.

5. What are the requirements for a region representative?

Each intergroup/service board decides this on its own. Some regions have instituted special requirements, such as length of service or length of abstinence, so it is best to check with your region. A proven commitment to service is also an important consideration in choosing a region representative.

How Things Get Done in Your World Service Office (WSO)

1. How did WSO start?

From its founding in 1960 until 1965, OA business activities were conducted from our founder's home. Then part-time paid workers were employed. In 1971, the WSO moved to an office with an expanded staff to serve the rapidly increasing number of OA groups. In 1994, WSO moved to its current location in Rio Rancho, New Mexico USA. This building includes office space for the WSO staff and warehouse space that allows for efficient storage and shipping of OA literature.

The World Service Office is a repository for OA experience and know-how from all over the world. OA's trustees have been elected by the Conference delegates to be "trusted servants." One of their functions is to serve the groups by directing the work of the WSO.

2. How does WSO work?

The WSO serves OA as a whole, from its largest service group to the isolated individual seeking relief from compulsive overeating. Like other service offices, it is "responsible to those they serve" (Tradition Nine). In this case, the World Service Office is responsible to OA as a whole, which speaks through the group conscience of delegates at World Service Business Conference. The WSO does not make policy, but does inform and educate the Fellowship about Conference and board decisions that affect the organization.

The Conference elects the trustees: eleven regional trustees and six general service trustees. The seventeen trustees form the Board of Trustees of Overeaters Anonymous, Inc., our legal entity. The general service trustees comprise the Executive Committee of the board. They guide the management of the World Service Office and report to the Board of Trustees. The regional trustees assist as needed in the organization and operation of service structures within their respective regions and act as liaison between the Board of Trustees and the regionwide membership. All trustees serve Overeaters Anonymous as a whole.

(See OA's Bylaws, section IX for more on trustee qualifications and duties.)

3. What does WSO do for you?

WSO is entrusted with the responsibility for furnishing all of us with many services. The office is staffed by professionals who perform the following functions.

Executive Department

- Oversees WSO operations, including budget administration, staff supervision, Board of Trustee support, organizational planning, special project direction, archives, Conference and Convention support, and bylaw or policy updates.
- Maintains a comprehensive website (oa.org).
- Handles public information at the national and international levels for OA as a whole through newspapers, magazines, radio, TV networks, and movie producers, as well as other national organizations interested in obesity and compulsive eating.
- Provides public information films and public service announcements for groups and service bodies to use on local radio and TV stations.

Accounting Department

- Fulfills literature orders and maintains an inventory of materials.
- Records contributions and mails receipts.
- Manages the WSO financial operations, including monthly financial statements and annual audits.
- Maintains employee and payroll records and coordinates employee benefits.
- Maintains the physical structure of the WSO and coordinates repairs.

Member Services Department

- Answers inquiries from compulsive eaters who ask for help.
- Processes meeting registrations, cancellations, and other changes in the meeting database.
- Updates and maintains the Find a Meeting feature on the OA website, including face-to-face meetings, online and telephone meetings, and service body information.

- Shares the experience of other groups when OA members ask for help with group problems and refers members to trustees for additional guidance.
- Works with compulsive overeaters outside meeting areas, groups overseas, and those in the military or in prison.
- Produces the World Service Conventions and annual Business Conferences.
- Provides recordings of OA Convention panels, speakers, and workshops.
- Provides Professional Tradeshows Support and coordinates the Professional Exhibits Fund.
- Oversees the WSO's information technology equipment and services.

Publications Department

- Coordinates the development and publication of literature (such as this pamphlet).
- Publishes *A Step Ahead* newsletter online.
- Publishes the annual *Courier* newsletter for professionals.
- Administers the licensing process for service bodies that translate OA literature into local languages.
- Maintains copyrights and trademarks and assists groups and service bodies seeking approval for use of OA materials and logo.

4. How is WSO supported?

WSO expenses are met principally by group and individual contributions and literature sales. It is important for each group to make regular contributions, no matter how small. Groups may contribute according to the informed group conscience. Groups frequently choose to send 30 percent of funds after expenses to the WSO. Individuals are encouraged to give to the WSO through the "Birthday Plan," giving a dollar or more for each year in the program. Large sums from a single member, however, would not be in keeping with the spirit of the Twelve Traditions. Per year, a member may contribute up to \$5,000 to the general fund, up to \$5,000 to any special fund, and up to \$5,000 to honor the memory of a deceased member. OA, Inc. will accept a bequest in any amount from the will of a deceased member.

5. How can you help WSO?

Keep the WSO informed of the time and place of your meeting and the contact information. This information is essential for accurate directories.

What gets done by the WSO depends as much on you as on any other member. You have the final responsibility and, therefore, receive the ultimate dividends.

WSO needs your help. If you want OA to stay viable, available, simple, and effective for all compulsive overeaters, keep informed and ask questions. Take action. For example, collect an extra Seventh Tradition contribution for world service, buy literature, share the successes of your intergroup/service board and region, or hold public information/professional outreach events. If you have served your service body as a delegate or volunteered during the World Service Business Conference, share your positive service experience with your service body. Talk about it. Write about it in your service body newsletter. Encourage and mentor others to serve as service body representatives and World Service Business Conference delegates. Carry the message of what the WSO does to support our Fellowship.

6. What is *Lifeline*, and how can you help?

Lifeline magazine is Overeaters Anonymous' international "Meeting on the Go." The personal stories, articles, and other features in each issue make the reader feel a part of the wider Fellowship of OA. It is also an excellent way of carrying the message of recovery. It's your magazine.

7. How can you benefit from service to your group, intergroup/service board, region, and WSO?

Simply by giving. Each of us has a right and a responsibility to do what we can when we can, giving back some of what we have been so freely given by the Fellowship and other recovering members.

Any member who is recovering can be considered an heir to the rewards of the OA program. You have a right to take as much—or as little—benefit from the Fellowship as you choose. There are enough areas of service and sharing for everyone if each of us gives of our hearts, mind, and time. As we give, we will surely receive.

Questions and Answers about OA

1. How and when did OA start?

The first OA meeting, held on January 19, 1960, was attended by three compulsive overeaters. The founder of Gamblers Anonymous assisted our founder, Rozanne S., in applying the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous to our particular compulsion.

Rozanne and one of OA's first members, Barbara S., were interviewed on November 1, 1960, on a syndicated television show. Five hundred letters flooded in, and Overeaters Anonymous was on its way!

OA's directory in 1961 listed ten meetings. Representatives from anonymous groups dealing with overeating in other parts of the United States joined with the Southern California groups for the first national Conference, held in August 1962. The celebrated advice columnist "Dear Abby" has published letters from grateful members since the spring of 1965, and this publicity has resulted in thousands of new members. For more on OA's history, see *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams: A History of Overeaters Anonymous as Seen by the Founder*.

2. Is OA a religious organization?

No. OA is founded on spiritual Principles. It is not affiliated with any other organization, religious or otherwise.

3. Why do I need the Twelve Steps? I only want to lose weight.

We cannot emphasize strongly enough our experience that for a compulsive eater a food plan alone has proved useless over a long period of time without the practice of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in our daily lives. OA's Twelve Steps are a set of actions that provide relief from the obsession with food.

4. Should get-togethers of OA members, outside of group meetings, be called OA events?

If conventions, marathons, retreats, and other such gatherings are sponsored by a registered OA service body, they are bound by the Twelve Traditions and may use the name Overeaters Anonymous and the

OA mailing lists. Events that are not sponsored by a registered OA service body may not use the OA name or mailing lists.

Retreats held under the auspices of religious or other outside groups are not OA events. While some OA members may attend as individuals, there is no relationship between OA and any church or secular society holding such events. OA retreats are usually held over a weekend in quiet, secluded areas. An experienced member often serves as retreat leader, guiding participants through a program of reflection, meditation, and sharing based on the Twelve Step program of recovery.

5. What is Unity Day? Sponsorship Day? IDEA? Twelfth Step Within Day?

Celebrated annually in OA worldwide on the last Saturday in February in even years, and on the last Sunday in February in odd years, Unity Day was created to reaffirm the love and understanding shared by members of our Fellowship—with an emphasis on Tradition One: “Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on OA unity.” In order to strengthen their common bond, groups at the local, intergroup/service board, and region levels hold special meetings and events about unity, observing a moment of silence at 11:30 a.m.

Sponsorship Day takes place annually on the third weekend in August. It was established in recognition that sponsorship is important to recovery and to encourage members to participate in sponsorship.

International Day Experiencing Abstinence (IDEA) takes place annually on the third weekend in November. It was established to encourage still-suffering members to experience abstinence—even if only for one day. OA groups and service bodies worldwide have special events addressing questions related to abstinence. For abstinent members, it is a time to share gratitude with others.

December 12 (12/12) each year is designated as OA’s International Twelfth Step Within Day. The purpose is to encourage OA service bodies, meetings, and individual members to reach out to those within the Fellowship who are still suffering from compulsive eating behaviors. A service body or group might host a special meeting or marathon on relapse and re-

covery and encourage attendees to contact members they haven't seen in a while.

6. What is the difference between an OA "Conference" and "Convention"?

The World Service Business Conference of Overeaters Anonymous meets annually to conduct the business of OA. Each intergroup/service board is entitled to delegates in proportion to the number of groups belonging to that intergroup/service board. Thus each individual member of OA, each group, and each intergroup/service board become a part of the collective group conscience of OA as a whole.

The World Service Convention, sponsored by the World Service Office and the Board of Trustees, is held periodically and is attended by OA members from all over the world. Its purpose is to provide a forum for OA sharing on a national and international scale. The frequency and location of World Service Conventions is chosen by the Board of Trustees.

In addition to these two events, there are local and regional conventions and other affairs such as marathons, workshops, and meetings to which a full day or a whole weekend may be devoted. Check the Event Calendar page on oa.org, as well as your service body's website, for dates and details.

7. Is OA affiliated with Alcoholics Anonymous or any other anonymous fellowship or medical group interested in obesity and/or other eating problems?

No. OA is not affiliated with any other organization of any sort. Our policy is "cooperation but not affiliation."

Index

A

AA. *See* **Alcoholics Anonymous**

About OA (flyer), 38

abstinence, 2, 4, 7, 19, 20, 21, 28, 42, 43, 51

continued, 6, 12

described, 1

service and, 45

Abstinence, Second Edition, 25

Accounting Department (WSO), role of, 47

affiliation, 8, 42, 52

Alcoholics Anonymous (Big Book), 10, 25, 26

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), 6, 39, 50

cooperation with, 52

anonymity

breaking, 8, 27, 38, 40

described, 1, 24

maintaining, 31, 37, 40, 41

public, 9, 39, 40

spiritual essence of, 24

anorexics, 25, 26

Article V, Section 1: 7

text of, 8

attendance, 22, 27, 31, 45

Attraction Sticky Notes, 9, 38

B

banking, 18, 19, 17, 20

Before You Take That First Compulsive Bite, 25

Beyond Our Wildest Dreams: A History of Overeaters

Anonymous as Seen by the Founder, 25, 50

Birthday Plan, 48

Board of Trustees, 2, 3, 44, 45, 46, 62

described, 1

service structure and, 63

World Service Convention and, 5

WSO and, 5, 47, 52

books, iv, 27

AA, 6, 11, 20, 23, 25

AA-approved, 18

OA, 10, 11, 18, 42

OA-approved, 11, 20, 21, 25

bulimics, 25, 26

Business Conferences, 1, 5, 15, 21, 33, 35, 40, 43-45, 46, 48, 49, 52, 62

business meetings, 1, 2, 5, 19, 33, 45

described, 15

Bylaws of Overeaters Anonymous, Inc., 32, 34, 35, 44, 47

Subpart B, Article V of, 7, 43, 63

C

change, 28-29

recovery and, 30

chores, group, 13, 27

community, 8-11, 31, 37-38

community health fairs, presence at, 37

compulsive overeaters, helping, 4, 7, 8, 11, 14, 30-32, 38, 39, 42, 47, 49, 50, 51

compulsive overeating, 1, 8, 13, 46, 47

abstaining from, 1

recovering from, i, 1, 6

Concept One, 63

Concept Two, 63

Concept Three, 63

Concept Four, 63

Concept Five, 63

Concept Six, 63

Concept Seven, 63

Concept Eight, 63

Concept Nine, 63

Concept Ten, 64

Concept Eleven, 64

Concept Twelve, 64

Conference Report, 43

consensus, seeking, 29-30

conventions, 5, 10, 32, 48, 50, 52

conferences and, 52

local, 52

regional, 45, 52

Courier (newsletter), 22, 48

cross talk, 27

described, 1

D

delegates, 5, 15, 16, 21, 33, 52

conference, 40, 43-45, 46, 49

described, 1

designated downloader, 14

role of, 22

Dignity of Choice, 25

directories, 18, 20, 33, 37, 49

E

Executive Committee, 46, 62, 63

Executive Department (WSO), role of, 47

F

fellowship, i, 1, 4, 5, 11, 13, 31, 38, 40-41, 46, 49-52, 63

support for, 18, 49

For Today, 25

G

Gamblers Anonymous, 50

general service trustee, 46

described, 2

gratitude, 11, 51

group conscience, 5, 18, 20, 21, 22, 28, 35, 40, 46, 48

collective, 43, 52

finding, 29, 30

meetings, 2, 15, 27

group health, 23, 30-31

Group Inventory, 30

group problems, resolving, 14, 17, 21, 27-28, 48

groups, 21, 23, 24, 27-28, 36

autonomy of, 6, 24

consensus by, 29-31

described, 2

help from other, 31-32

joining, 12

officers of, 13-14, 15-20

problem solving by, 28, 29, 30

in small communities, 8-11

starting, 6-7, 8-11

strengthening, 30-31

virtual, 2, 4, 25

visiting, 10

Guide for Sponsors, A, 25

Guidelines for a Group Conscience Meeting, 2, 15

Guidelines for Locally Produced Literature, 21

H

health care professionals, information for, iv, 7, 33, 37

Higher Power, 28, 29, 40

I

IDEA Day. *See* **International Day Experiencing Abstinence**

insurance, liability, 14

intergroup (IG), 3

described, 2

Intergroup/Service Board Representative (IR/SBR), 14, 15,

16, 20, 32-36

described, 2

role of, 21

intergroup/service boards, 7, 10, 16, 17, 18, 20-21, 38, 44,

45, 51, 52, 62

contacting, 9

described, 3-4

getting things done in, 32-36

insurance and, 14

problems for, 28

service to, 22, 31

supporting, 18, 32, 36

tax-exempt status of, 34-35

WSO and, 49

International Day Experiencing Abstinence (IDEA), 32, 51

IR/SBR. *See* **Intergroup/Service Board Representative**
Is Food a Problem for You?, 38

L

language service boards (LSBs), 35

described, 3

leaders, 3, 13, 20, 24, 26, 42

rotating, 10

Lifeline, 7, 10, 25, 32, 38

described, 49

meeting, 25

literature, 4, 10, 13, 17, 19, 34, 37, 42, 43, 48, 49

AA, 11, 20, 24, 25, 26, 34

OA, 7, 20, 22, 23, 24, 33, 38, 42, 46, 48

OA-approved, 11, 18, 20, 21, 24, 34

raising money for, 27

selling, 20, 33

studying, 24, 25, 26

supplying, 42, 46, 47

literature chair, 14, 16

role of, 20

LSBs. *See* **language service boards**

M

media, 33, 40-41

electronic, 4, 8

public, 1, 8, 33, 37, 39, 40-41

meeting places, 11, 13, 16, 31, 38

obtaining, 9, 14-15, 18

meetings

business, 1, 2, 5, 15, 19, 33, 45

community, 14

continuity for, 11

described, 2

exchange, 10

group conscience, 2, 15, 27

literature-study, 10, 25

newcomer, 7, 24, 25

open/closed, 24, 40

procedures for, 26

scheduling, 10

social times before/after, 26-27

speaker, 24

special-focus, 25

steering committee, 12, 14, 15, 19, 22

Steps and Traditions Study, 24-25

Step-study, 10, 24, 25

types of, 24-26

virtual, 4, 10, 25, 41, 44

Member Services Department (WSO), role of, 47-48

membership, 1, 8, 38

anonymity and, 38-41
requirement for, 8, 12-13, 18, 33
retaining, iv, 11, 27
message, carrying, i, 4, 6-7, 8, 13, 18, 20, 30, 31, 32, 37, 44,
45, 49
moment of silence, observing, 51

N

national service boards (NSBs), 35
described, 3
New Beginning, A, 25
New Group Starter Kit, 9
New Prospect Card, 9, 38
newcomer greeters, 11, 14
newcomers, 34, 40
attracting, 37, 43
help for, 20, 38
losing, 31
meetings for, 7, 24, 25
retaining, iv, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 27
welcoming, 11, 12, 22, 27
nonprofit organizations, 9, 19
NSBs. *See* **national service boards**

O

OA. *See* **Overeaters Anonymous**
OA Approved Literature List, 10, 18, 20
OA CARES Inmate Correspondence Program Guidelines, 42
OA Conference, 21, 47
OA Convention, 10
OA Promise I Put My Hand In Yours, 26
“Our Invitation to You,” 26
Overeaters Anonymous (OA), 50
contact information for, i
Preamble of, i
questions/answers about, 50-52
service structure of, 3, 4, 32, 44, 46, 47, 62
terms used by, 1-5
Overeaters Anonymous, Third Edition, 26

P

personalities, principles and, 1, 23, 28, 30, 31
pitch, 27
described, 2-3
Plan of Eating, A, 25
principles, 24, 27, 39, 50
maintaining, 42
personalities and, 1, 23, 28, 30, 31
spiritual, 4, 6, 50
privacy, promise of, 38, 39

Professional Exhibits Fund, 48
Professional Tradeshows Support, 48
program chair, 14
 role of, 20
Program of Recovery, A (pamphlet), 38
public information, 43, 44, 47
 materials, 22
 requests/handling, 33
 things to know about, 37-41
Public information/professional outreach events, 49
Public Information Service Manual (WSO), 9, 37
Public service announcements, 9, 33, 47
Publications Department (WSO), role of, 48

Q

qualify, described, 2-3

R

recommendations/referrals, professional, 42-43
records, 16, 17, 19, 47
 financial, 34-35
recovery, 11, 13, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30, 32, 33, 40, 42, 45, 62
 change and, 31
 individual, 4, 6
 message of, 1, 20, 37, 49
 possibility of, 8
 program of, 15, 26, 31, 51
 sharing, 12
 spiritual, 2, 31
region, 4, 5, 9, 10, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 49
 described, 3, 44
 importance of, 44-45
 service to, 49
 supporting, 20, 31, 33
region chair, 28
region representatives (RR), 15
 choosing, 44, 45
 described, 3
 service by, 43-45
regional assemblies, 21, 33, 44, 45
 described, 3
regional structure, 3, 44
regional trustee, 44, 45, 46
 described, 3
religion, 28
responsibility, 4, 15, 19, 23, 32, 47, 49
 accepting, 12, 13, 14
 service, 63, 64
Responsibility Pledge, text of, 13
retreats, 32, 50
Robert's Rules of Order, 34
RR. See region representatives

S

- secretary, 14, 19, 44
 - role of, 15-17
- Seeking the Spiritual Path*, 25
- self-discipline, 4
- self-will, 29
- selflessness, 4, 28
- Serenity Prayer, 26
- service, abstinence and, 21, 45
- service boards, 7, 9, 10, 14, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 28, 31, 37, 38, 44, 45, 49, 51, 52, 62
 - described, 3
 - getting things done with, 32-36
- service body, 1, 6, 19, 32, 33, 34, 40, 43, 44, 47, 49, 50, 51, 52, 64
 - described, 4
- service structure, 3, 4, 10, 31, 35, 44, 46
 - described, 62
- Service, Traditions, and Concepts Workshop Manual*, 31
- service volunteers, 13, 14, 15, 17
 - election of, 22
 - qualifications for, 23
- Seventh Step Prayer, 26
- share, 10, 11, 13, 24, 27, 32, 40
 - described, 2-3
- speakers, 5, 10, 20, 24, 26, 27, 36
 - supplying, 33, 37, 42, 48
- spiritual Principles, 4, 6, 50
- spirituality, 4
- sponsors, 12, 15, 22, 25, 27, 31, 33, 36, 40, 42
- Statement on Approved Literature, text of, 21
- steering committee, 12, 14, 15, 19, 22
- Step Ahead*, A (newsletter), 18, 22
 - online version of, 48
- Step Three, 26, 29
- Step Seven, 26
- Step Nine, 38
- Step Ten, 30
- Step Eleven, 29
- Step Twelve, 4, 8, 12, 13, 16, 20, 27, 37, 40, 42, 44
- Steps, 4, 26
 - following, 8
 - studying, 24-25

- Strong Meeting Checklist, The*, 30
- Suggested Meeting Formats*, 1, 26, 42

T

- tax-exempt status, seeking, 34-35
- Third Step Prayer, 26
- To the Newcomer*, 38
- Tools, 26
 - described, 4

Tools of Recovery, 26
Tradition One, 23, 51
Tradition Two, 13, 23, 29
Tradition Three, 12-13
Tradition Four, 6, 12, 24
Tradition Five, 30, 32
Tradition Six, 20, 21
Tradition Seven, 9, 13, 18, 20, 27, 36, 49
Tradition Nine, 46
Tradition Eleven, 8, 9, 38
Tradition Twelve, 28, 30, 38
Traditions, 21, 28, 29, 45
 anonymity and, 38-41
 scope of, 39
 spirit of, 6
 studying, 24
transportation, 11
treasurer, 14, 16, 17, 44
 role of, 18-20
trust, 4, 28, 63
Twelfth Step Within Day, 51-52
Twelfth-Step-Within Handbook, 31
Twelfth Step work, 12, 13, 20, 42, 44
 described, 4
Twelve Concepts of OA Service, 2, 28, 29, 32, 63
 applying, 29-30
 described, 4
 guidance from, 8
 spiritual Principles of, 4
Twelve Concepts of OA Service, The (pamphlet), 17, 20, 28, 30, 34
Twelve Steps, 1, 24-25, 26
 described, 4
 following, 7
 need for, 50
 practicing, 8
 spiritual Principles of, 4, 6
 working, 2-3
Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (AA book), 6
Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, The, 6, 10
Twelve Traditions, 2, 32, 42
 practicing, 6-8, 23, 26, 28, 29, 50
 spirit of, 44, 48
Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, 6
Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, 7, 8
 applying, 29
 described, 4
 spiritual Principles of, 4
 studying, 28
Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, The (pamphlet), 6, 17

U

unity, 4, 21, 27, 51

Unity Day, 32, 51

V

virtual groups, 2, 44

virtual meetings, 4, 25, 41

Voices of Recovery, 25

W

Welcome Back, We Care! Packet, 20

welcoming committee, 14, 22

workshops, 5, 21, 33, 43, 45, 52

recordings of, 48

World Service Business Conference (WSBC), 35, 45, 62

delegates, 1, 5, 15, 21, 33, 43, 46, 49, 52

described, 5

IR/SBR and, 21

meetings of, 52

World Service Convention, 48, 52

described, 5

World Service Events, 10, 22

World Service Office (WSO), 2, 18, 52, 62, 63

administration of, 64

contact information for, i

contacting, 10, 34, 43

described, 5

getting things done in, 46-50

group number for, 17

helping, 44, 49

intergroup/service boards and, 48, 49

literature and, 16, 20, 21

registering with, 7-8, 9, 17, 34

start of, 46

support for, 18, 20, 31, 36, 48-49

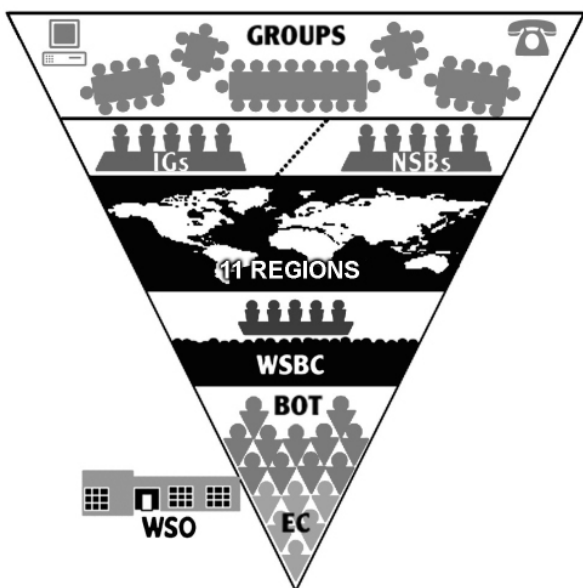
work of, 46-48

WSBC. *See* **World Service Business Conference**

WSO. *See* **World Service Office**

OA's Service Structure

OA's "Inverted Pyramid" describes our unique service structure. Unlike a traditional business that has tiers of managers directing those "below" them, OA's Board of Trustees is accountable to those at the region, intergroup/service board, and group levels. Therefore, the "higher" the position a trusted servant holds, the more people to whom the trusted servant is accountable. Our primary goal is to serve those in the Fellowship as we progress in the recovery process.



Abbreviations

IGs – Intergroups

SBs – Service Boards

WSBC – World Service Business Conference

BOT – Board of Trustees

EC – Executive Committee

WSO – World Service Office

The Twelve Concepts of OA Service

1. The ultimate responsibility and authority for OA world services reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.
2. The OA groups have delegated to the World Service Business Conference the active maintenance of our world services; thus, the World Service Business Conference is the voice, authority and effective conscience of OA as a whole.
3. The right of decision, based on trust, makes effective leadership possible.
4. The right of participation ensures equality of opportunity for all in the decision-making process.
5. Individuals have the right of appeal and petition in order to ensure that their opinions and personal grievances will be carefully considered.
6. The World Service Business Conference has entrusted the Board of Trustees with the primary responsibility for the administration of Overeaters Anonymous.
7. The Board of Trustees has legal rights and responsibilities accorded to them by OA Bylaws, Subpart A; the rights and responsibilities of the World Service Business Conference are accorded to it by tradition and by OA Bylaws, Subpart B.
8. The Board of Trustees has delegated to its Executive Committee the responsibility to administer the OA World Service Office.
9. Able, trusted servants, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are indispensable for effective functioning at all service levels.

10. Service responsibility is balanced by carefully defined service authority; therefore, duplication of efforts is avoided.
11. Trustee administration of the World Service Office should always be assisted by the best standing committees, executives, staffs and consultants.
12. The spiritual foundation for OA service ensures that:
 - (a) no OA committee or service body shall ever become the seat of perilous wealth or power;
 - (b) sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, shall be OA's prudent financial principle;
 - (c) no OA member shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority;
 - (d) all important decisions shall be reached by discussion, by vote and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity;
 - (e) no service action shall ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; and
 - (f) no OA service committee or service board shall ever perform any acts of government, and each shall always remain democratic in thought and action.

The Twelve Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon OA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.
6. An OA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the OA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every OA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Overeaters Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. OA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Overeaters Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the OA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television and other public media of communication.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all these Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Permission to use the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous for adaptation granted by AA World Services, Inc.



How to find OA

Visit the OA website at www.oa.org,
or contact the World Service Office at 505-891-2664.
Many local telephone directories also include listings
for Overeaters Anonymous.

Overeaters Anonymous®

World Service Office
6075 Zenith Court NE
Rio Rancho, NM 87144-6424 USA
Mailing address: PO Box 44727
Rio Rancho, NM 87174-4727 USA
Tel: 1-505-891-2664 • Fax: 1-505-891-4320
info@oa.org
www.oa.org

©1979 . . . 2015 Overeaters Anonymous, Inc.
All rights reserved

#120 Rev. 8/2019