



## STARTING AN S-ANON INTERGROUP

**WHAT IS AN INTERGROUP?** An Intergroup, sometimes referred to as an Information Service Group, is the cooperation of representatives from S-Anon groups in a geographic area. An Intergroup's primary function is to coordinate information and activities in a centralized fashion. An Intergroup is not a governing body; it exists to assist groups in their common purpose of carrying the S-Anon message to those who still suffer.

**WHAT DOES AN INTERGROUP DO?** Members of the Intergroup determine by group conscience how the Intergroup will assist area S-Anon groups (Tradition Two). Listed below are examples of what Intergroups have done to help groups carry the message.

- **Newcomer outreach initiatives** such as maintaining a local information line and/or a website for inquirers who are looking for meetings.
- **Group services** such as compiling, distributing, and updating group listings, as well as distributing information to S-Anon groups in the area.
- **Group support** such as being available for group questions. Intergroups may also help to resolve group problems by offering suggestions in keeping with the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts of Service.
- **Identifying and supporting Delegates and Regional Trustees**, including assisting in the election process for these service positions, as well as coordinating local efforts to financially support their travel to the annual World Service Conference.
- **Stocking a supply of Conference Approved Literature** and serving as a central distribution point for groups served by the Intergroup.
- **Outreach activities** targeting mental health professionals, institutions, and other organizations that may be able to refer individuals to S-Anon. This may include activities such as sending a paper or electronic communication to local organizations or renting a booth at an industry event to distribute information about S-Anon.
- **Event planning**, including organizing S-Anon workshops (on service, sponsorship, and other topics), full-day or weekend "retreats," overseeing committees charged with planning such S-Anon events, and participating in the organizing of open meetings, one-day marathons, and other events held in cooperation with other Twelve-Step groups.
- **Organizing and Planning the S-Anon portion of Regional and/or International Conventions**, including supporting the efforts of local International Convention planning teams.

Most Intergroups start with a few basic activities. As S-Anon groups grow and more members are involved in service, Intergroup activities may expand to include items listed above – and more.

**WHEN CAN AN INTERGROUP BE FORMED?** As soon as there are two or more S-Anon groups in relatively close proximity, an Intergroup can be created. This may mean locally (within the same city) state or province-wide, or regionally. Members of local S-Anon groups are encouraged to meet together, possibly at a convention or marathon, to assess interest in forming an Intergroup, to discuss the benefits of forming an Intergroup, and to organize a simple Intergroup structure.

### STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS FOR STARTING AN INTERGROUP

- 1. Determine if there is interest among S-Anon groups.**
- 2. Identify Group Service Representatives (GSRs).** Each S-Anon group that wishes to participate in the Intergroup identifies a GSR who will represent their group at Intergroup meetings. S-Anon groups also determine how long the term of service will be. Groups that have no GSR are encouraged to identify a contact person who will receive information about the Intergroup's activities.
- 3. Hold an organizing meeting for all GSRs.** This meeting can be in person or by conference call. A willing member may volunteer to chair the first organizational meeting. During the organizing meeting, it is helpful to discuss the following topics:
  - **Set up communication channels.** Clear lines of communication are essential for the health of the Intergroup. The organizing meeting can discuss GSR communication preferences. In addition to regular face-to-face meetings or conference calls, many Intergroups use email, P. O. Boxes and/or online message boards to communicate with GSRs (and/or contact persons). Many Intergroups use online services to store meeting minutes and other documents, and to collaborate on projects. In order to accommodate the realities of rotation of service, some Intergroups set up contact methods that can be passed from one GSR or Intergroup officer to the next.
  - **Determine when the Intergroup will meet.** Intergroups may want to meet monthly, every other month, or quarterly. Most Intergroup meetings are open to any S-Anon member who would like to attend, though only GSRs (or their Alternates) vote.
  - **Determine which GSRs will have voting rights.** An Intergroup may be composed of GSRs from both Registered and non-registered groups. Each Intergroup has the freedom to decide to what extent GSRs from non-registered groups are permitted to participate in Intergroup business (Tradition Four). Some Intergroups allow GSRs from non-registered meetings to participate with both a voice and a vote while others limit participation to a voice but no vote.
  - **Identify leadership roles.** In order to maximize effectiveness, Intergroups are encouraged to identify trusted servants for key leadership roles. Each Intergroup has the autonomy to

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determine what those key leadership roles will be. During the launch of many Intergroups, member volunteers lead the first few meetings until officers are elected. Chairperson, co-chairperson, secretary, and treasurer roles are usually filled first. Chairperson and secretary are essential roles to fill since members are needed to lead the meetings and document decisions. As the Intergroup grows, other leadership roles may be added. Meeting list coordinator, message line coordinator, and website coordinator are just a few of the many possibilities. More leadership roles mean more service opportunities for individuals to practice their recovery. Terms of service and other criteria for these leadership roles are determined by Intergroup members through the group conscience process (Tradition Two).

- **Service Sponsors.** Members of new Intergroups often benefit from working with S-Anon members who are willing to share their experiences regarding service work beyond the group level. Service sponsors are often helpful when personalities or issues become challenging. Personal progress and growth in our recovery are evident when we can work through the challenges. Having an objective person to help is a gift we can give ourselves.

**4. Develop an operating structure.** When developing an operating structure, it is important to remember that an Intergroup is not a governing body. Its purpose is to serve the S-Anon groups in the area it covers. Intergroup members are encouraged to determine the Intergroup's group conscience regarding who can participate and vote in the Intergroup. For example, some Intergroups invite Registered and non-registered groups to attend and discuss topics, and then allow only Registered groups to vote. A clear operating structure will facilitate other decisions such as what services and projects the Intergroup will work on, how leadership roles will be defined and rotated, and other matters. Some Intergroups develop a formal set of By-Laws to document their operating structure while others are more loosely organized.

**5. Determine how the Intergroup will be funded.** Intergroups frequently launch without a plan for funding. As an Intergroup evolves, especially if it desires to provide services to groups, members usually find it necessary to develop a funding plan. As with individual S-Anon groups, Intergroups are self-supporting, relying on the contributions of the groups they serve (Tradition Seven). Many S-Anon groups rely on the group conscience process to decide on a formula that will be used to allocate Seventh Tradition funds to supporting an Intergroup. The S-Anon/S-Ateen Service Manual suggests that ten percent of a group's Seventh Tradition contributions be allocated to support the Intergroup. Groups may also elect to pass the basket on designated days to collect contributions to fund the Intergroup. Another funding source is income derived from events, projects, or activities that the Intergroup conducts.

**6. Spread the word that an Intergroup is active in the geographic area.** If S-Anon groups in the area are not aware of Intergroup services and activities, they may be unwilling to provide financial or service support to the Intergroup because they do not recognize the benefits to their group. Some Intergroups have developed simple brochures to inform members and groups about what the Intergroup is, what it does, and how individuals can get involved. This material can be updated periodically and re-distributed by the GSRs. It is also important to register your Intergroup with the WSO so they can let the appropriate Regional Trustee, the Delegate, and new groups know of its existence.

It is important to note that registered S-Anon groups, not the Intergroup, vote in Fellowship-wide Group Consciences, Delegate selection, or Regional Trustee selection. The Intergroup, however, can do much to facilitate the voting process and privileges of its member groups.

Please be aware that an Intergroup may not use the S-Anon logo or reproduce copyrighted S-Anon literature without prior permission from the WSO.

**Help is Available.** Launching an Intergroup can be a rewarding adventure and an avenue by which we can expand our network of recovery friends. The World Service Office offers a wealth of resources to S-Anon members interested in launching an Intergroup, including:

- Referrals to established Intergroups willing to share practices on a variety of issues including the use of telephone conference calls to conduct Intergroup meetings and online collaboration tools
- Copies of By-Laws and other Intergroup organizing documents, including position descriptions for GSRs and various leadership roles
- Contact information for State/Province Delegate and Regional Trustee
- Links to Intergroups willing to offer help and support to members interested in forming new Intergroups
- Samples of brochures describing Intergroup activities

To learn more about starting an Intergroup or to speak with members who can offer support during the process, please contact the World Service Office.



© S-Anon International  
Family Groups, Inc. 2013  
World Service Office (WSO)  
P.O. Box 17294  
Nashville, TN 37217  
615-833-3152 or 800-210-8141  
email: sanon@sanon.org  
Website: www.sanon.org

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