



STARTING AN S-ANON INTERGROUP

WHAT IS AN INTERGROUP? An Intergroup is a service body that facilitates the cooperation of S-Anon groups by coordinating information and activities in a centralized fashion. Though Intergroups are not an official part of the Traditional service structure, many groups find them a valuable tool in coordinating local activities.

Intergroups are optional and are not a governing body. They exist to facilitate communication among local groups and to support groups in their common purpose of carrying the S-Anon message of recovery. Intergroups may not make decisions that affect the autonomy of another group or S-Anon as a whole (Tradition Four) and have no fellowship-wide voting rights. Most Intergroups start with a few basic activities, as decided by the group conscience of the groups served by the Intergroup.

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 phone line, e-mail account, 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 by communicating best practices among groups.
- **Coordination of local efforts** to financially support the travel of the Area Delegate 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 activity coordination** as suggested in the Service Literature publication *Guide to Public Information and Outreach* (L-28) including carrying the message of recovery to local communities and to mental health professionals, institutions, and other organizations that may be able to refer individuals to S-Anon.
- **Event planning**, including organizing S-Anon workshops, full-day or weekend "retreats," assisting 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** by 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? Two or more S-Anon groups can create an Intergroup. This may mean locally (within the same city), state or province-wide, regionally, or virtually. S-Anon groups can gather to assess interest in forming an Intergroup, discuss the benefits of forming an Intergroup, and organize a simple Intergroup structure.

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR STARTING AN INTERGROUP

- **Determine if there is interest among S-Anon groups.**
- **Identify group representatives.** Each S-Anon group that wishes to participate in the Intergroup identifies a member who will represent their group at Intergroup meetings. S-Anon groups also determine how long the group representative's term of service will be. Groups that have no representative are encouraged to identify a contact person who will receive information about the Intergroup's activities.
- **Hold an organizing meeting for all group representatives.** This meeting can be in person or virtual. A willing member may volunteer to chair this meeting, during which it may be 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 group representative communication preferences. In addition to regular face-to-face or virtual meetings, many Intergroups use email, P. O. Boxes, and/or online message boards to communicate with group representatives (and/or contact persons). Many Intergroups use online services to store meeting minutes and other documents, and to collaborate on projects.
 - **Determine when the Intergroup will meet.** Intergroups may want to meet monthly, every other month, or quarterly.
 - **Identify leadership roles.** Intergroups are encouraged to identify key leadership roles and trusted servants

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(Page 2 of 2)

that are active S-Anon members to fill these service positions. Chairperson, co-chairperson, secretary, and treasurer roles are usually filled first. Chairperson and secretary are essential to fill as these roles 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 increase service opportunities for individuals to practice their recovery, and rotation of service roles is encouraged in keeping with Tradition Two. Terms of service and other criteria for these leadership roles are determined by Intergroup members through the group conscience process (Tradition Two).

- **Determine which members will have Intergroup voting rights.** An Intergroup may be composed of group representatives from S-Anon meetings interested in participating and members serving in leadership roles. Each Intergroup has the freedom to decide who has voting rights within the Intergroup.
- **Service Sponsors.** Members of new Intergroups often benefit from working with active 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 challenges. Having an objective person to help is a gift we can give ourselves.
- **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 participating S-Anon groups. Intergroup members are encouraged to utilize the group conscience process in making decisions regarding how the Intergroup functions. 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.
- **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 voluntary contributions of the groups they serve (Tradition Seven). Many S-Anon groups rely on the group conscience process to decide on a formula that may be used to allocate Seventh Tradition funds to an Intergroup. Another funding source can come from recovery events, projects, or activities that the Intergroup conducts.

- **Spread the word that an Intergroup is active.** 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. Registering with the WSO will help spread the word of your Intergroup's existence to trusted servants or other groups who may be interested in participating.

In summary, an Intergroup, an optional service body, functions to coordinate information and activities for the S-Anon groups it represents, as defined by the group representatives. Many Intergroups have found helpful experience, strength, and hope in determining the operating structure that best serves their groups in the S-Anon/S-Ateen Service Manual, and by studying S-Anon Twelve Traditions and S-Anon Twelve Concepts of Service.

An Intergroup does not have the authority to make decisions impacting any S-Anon group or S-Anon as a whole. It is important to note that only registered S-Anon groups may vote in Fellowship-wide Group Consciences, and in Delegate and Regional Trustee selections. However, the Intergroup can help to increase awareness of these processes for all S-Anon groups represented by the Intergroup.

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HELP IS AVAILABLE. Launching an Intergroup can be a rewarding adventure and an avenue by which we can expand our network of recovery friends. To learn more about starting an Intergroup please contact the World Service Office for referrals to established Intergroups, Area Delegates, and Regional Trustees willing to share experience, strength, and hope.



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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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