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Memorandum

To: World Service Conference Delegates
CC: Area Archives Coordinators
From: World Service Office Archives Coordinator
Date: March 10, 2006
Re: Dual Members in Al-Anon Service Overview

Historical Information

The attached historic overview of "Dual Members in Service" was previously sent to Archives Coordinators.

We are providing this as background for any questions on this topic that may arise at your assemblies.

Dual Members and Al-Anon Service Policy Timeline

Current Policy

Because of the unique nature of both programs, Al-Anon/Alateen members who are also AA members do not hold office beyond the group level, as these positions could lead to membership in the World Service Conference (WSC). The need to focus on the Al-Anon program, and the possibility of a conflict of interest at assembly and world service levels, led the WSC to its decision not to seat Al-Anon/Alateen members who are also members of AA. For these reasons AA members do not serve as group representatives (GRs), district representatives (DRs), area coordinators, newsletter editors, delegates and/or any of their alternates, nor do they sit on the WSO in-town or standing committees, whose chairpersons can be Conference members." (1998-2000 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual, pp. 63-64)

The History

1967 "...those registered at the Al-Anon World Service Office must be considered Al-Anon Family Groups and only non-alcoholics should aspire to hold office in them..." (Report of meeting between Al-Anon and AA re: Al-Anon's "Guidelines for Separation of AA and Al-Anon")

1970 Policy rewording "AAs who are Al-Anon members can hold office, with the exception of the office of GR" revised to read: "It is preferable that AA members not hold office in an Al-Anon group, and definitely not the office of GR." (1970 WSC Summary, p.7)

1976 Policy rewording "Al-Anon/Alateen members who are also members of AA are eligible to hold office within the Al-Anon/Alateen groups. Because of the unique nature of the Al-Anon/Alateen and AA programs, AA members may not serve as Al-Anon/Alateen group representatives (GR), district representatives (DR) or delegates. The need to focus at all times on the Al-Anon/Alateen interpretation of the program would of necessity bring about a conflict of interest at assembly and world service levels." (Policy Committee Minutes 3/26/76)

1977 Policy Committee asks the Conference Admissions Committee whether it would seat an AFG/AA member as delegate if elected by an area structure. The Conference Admissions Committee unanimously voted no. (1977 WSC Summary, p.28)

1978 Policy rewording "Because of the unique nature of the Al-Anon/Alateen and AA programs our group experience has shown that on the service level it is wise for Al-Anon/Alateen members who are not also AA, to serve in the following categories: Al-Anon/Alateen group representatives (GR), District Representatives (DR), Delegates, Alternate Delegates and WSO in-Town committee members. The need to focus at all times and retain emphasis on the Al-Anon/Alateen interpretation of the program would of necessity bring about a conflict of interest at Assembly and World Service levels." (Policy Committee Minutes 10/23/78)

1979 Lois Remembers published. "We sent a memorandum to AA asking permission to use its Twelve Steps in our fellowship. AA agreed unofficially, but its members felt strongly Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.

that we should be a separate society and not a subsidiary of Alcoholics Anonymous and not include 'AA' in our name. In addition, Bill felt AAs should hold no office in our structure. He often said 'Keep us drunks out of it.'" (p. 176)

1980 Policy rewording The Policy Committee voted unanimously to amend the policy: "MEMBERSHIP, item c., as follows: "Dual Membership in Al-Anon and AA Al-Anon/Alateen members who are also members of AA are eligible to hold office within the Al-Anon/Alateen groups. AAs who also belong to Al-Anon may serve as the sponsor of Alateen groups by virtue of their Al-Anon membership, instead of being limited to co-sponsorship. All these are vital services at the group level. Emphasis should be placed on the Al-Anon/Alateen interpretation of the program at all times. Because of the unique nature of the Al-Anon/Alateen and AA programs our group experience has shown that on the world service level it is not wise for Al-Anon/Alateen members, who are also AA members to serve in the following categories: Al-Anon/Alateen group representatives (GR), district representatives (DR), delegates, alternate delegates and WSO in-town committee members. The need to focus at all times and retain emphasis on the Al-Anon/Alateen interpretation of the program would of necessity bring about a conflict of interest at assembly and world service levels." (Policy Committee Minutes 1/21/80; approved by 1980 WSC)

1981 WSC approves Policy Committee question and answer sheet on "Cooperation Between Al-Anon and AA." These were published later in the guideline "Cooperation Between Al-Anon and AA" (G-3) to which the question and answer to "What offices can Al-Anon/AA members hold" was added. (1981 WSC Summary, pp.26-27,48)

1983 WSC approves Policy Committee revision that the WSO cannot register any group that is solely for dual AFG/AA members because they do not qualify to have a group representative. (1983 WSC Summary, p.48)

1984 Handbook revised as follows: "The election of the DR and alternate DR, from among the new and re-elected GRs, neither of whom are members of AA..." and "The Committee asks the GRs who have the right to vote to elect a delegate,

who is not also a member of AA..." (1984 WSC Summary, p.47)

1985 Long Range Study Panel reviews results of Questionnaire on Dual Membership and Service at the area level sent to 71 past Conference members; 43 responded. 35 believe the policy on dual membership should remain as it is; 6 believe the time has come to change the policy; 2 believe the policy should be changed in the future. (LRSP Minutes 11/18/85)

1987 Handbook revision under Area World Service Committee: "An Al-Anon/Alateen member, who is not a member of AA, is eligible to serve as area coordinator..." (1987 WSC Summary, pp.34, 53)

1991 WSC denies "request that the Policy Committee reconsider interpretation of the policy." (21 yes; 76 no) (1991 WSC Summary, pp.19,23,47)

1994 WSC denies a motion to eliminate restrictions to service. (21 yes; 77 no) (1994 WSC Summary, pp.17-18, 47)

1996 WSC denies motions "to declare a three-year moratorium on any Conference action/discussion regarding dual membership;" (52 yes; 42 no); and to request "the Policy Committee and fellowship reflect and consider what is best for Al-Anon in accordance with our Traditions;" (56 yes; 38 no) (1996 WSC Summary, p.56)

Other Discussions:

Also discussed at Policy Committee meetings and WSC Workshops in '76, '81, '84, '86, '89, '92, '93, '98, '99; no changes suggested.

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. Can an alcoholic not in AA serve as GR?**
Yes, any member, who is not also a member of AA, may serve as GR.
- 2. Can a member of AA serve as a district chairperson?**
The policy states that dual members cannot serve in positions that could lead to membership at the WSC.
- 3. Can AA members have voice and vote on matters at a district meeting?**
Many districts hold open meetings for all interested members, who would attend with voice and without vote. Only group representatives vote at district meetings.
- 4. What will happen if a group decides to elect a GR who is a dual member?**
The assembly could choose not to seat the GR.
- 5. What offices can Al-Anon/AA members hold?**
These dual members are, by virtue of their Al-Anon membership, eligible to hold office in their Al-Anon or Alateen group; this is service at the group level. Because of the unique natures of the Al-Anon and AA fellowships, experience has shown that service positions beyond the group level, such as group representative (GR), should not be filled by Al-Anon/AA members. The need to focus at all times on the Al-Anon interpretation of the program could produce a conflict of interest at assembly and world service levels. (Guideline G-3)
- 6. Why are members of other Twelve Step programs allowed to serve above the group level, but not AA members?**
Al-Anon has a special relationship with AA that it doesn't have with other Twelve Step programs. For example, Al-Anon Traditions only mention AA, not any other program.
- 7. What is some of the rationale given for the dual member policy?**
Discussions over many years at World Service Conferences refer to: the uniqueness of each program; a possible conflict of interest; a need to retain the Al-Anon perspective; to avoid dilution of the Al-Anon program; the primary purpose of each program is different; and that the member is eligible to serve at both Al-Anon and AA Conferences.

COURTESY OF
AL-ANON WSO ARCHIVES

Location
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September 15, 1971

Mrs. Mike R. [REDACTED],
P.O. Box 248
Cordell, Oklahoma 73632

Dear Mary Alice,

Thank you for your letter with reference to the selection of an Institutions Committee chairman.

Your letter will be brought to the attention of the Committee when it meets later on, but in the interim, I have discussed this with Lois and Henrietta, and we all agreed that there would be no objection to carrying out your suggestion on the appointment of a chairman for this particular committee, who would have voice but no vote in your Assembly meetings.

I will only add one thought to your sentence about our decision on AA's serving as GR for Al-Anon in which you "agree that this is not desirable usually." Change the "usually" to "never desirable." The reasoning behind this decision, of course, was that they would then become eligible to be elected as a delegate to our Al-Anon Conference, which, of course, would not be at all proper, and yet they would be in line for such.

Thank you so much for keeping us in mind on decisions such as this one, and with all good wishes for the great success of your new project, and we'll be looking forward to hearing about it as it progresses, or at the Conference next spring.

Love in Al-Anon,

Chairman, Policy Committee

COURTESY OF
AL-ANON WSO ARCHIVES

October 16, 1968

Top O' Texas Al-Anon Group
1301 T. Taylor
Amarillo, Texas 79101

Attention John H., Group Representative

Dear John,

Sorry not to have answered your letter before this. We appreciate your concern for Al-Anon.

I hope by now, however, that you have re-read the paragraph in the Aug.-Sept. issue of Box 4-5-9 that so disturbed you. A casual reading could give the impression that Al-Anon is just another "friend of AA". But note carefully the sentences in the middle of the piece.

AA has always been generous to Al-Anon. It invites us to hold meetings at their conventions and often pays our expenses for speakers and facilities.

As you know Al-Anon's Steps and Traditions are slightly modified copies of those of AA. From the earliest days AA has given us permission to use the very wording of their principles and has encouraged the development of Al-Anon in every way. (This does not mean, to be sure, that every AA member even now is in favor of Al-Anon.)

Al-Anon members in turn assist AAs by changing attitudes and improving the atmosphere in their homes. The two fellowships walk hand in hand. It is a most unique relationship.

However, for organizational and psychological reasons AA and Al-Anon have to be two separate entities. In 1966 the world offices of both fellowships held a joint meeting to discuss forming guidelines for group separation. The enclosed sheet is the result and is self-explanatory.

The questionable sentence in "Box 4-5-9" means that only AAs should speak at closed AA meetings. It was meant for clarification, not as a slap at Al-Anon.

I hope this explanation lifts the cloud from your mind and that you will have reason to believe, as we have, that AAs and Al-Anons will continue to draw closer as their mutual need of each other becomes apparent to more and more individuals.

All good wishes,

Sincerely,

Lois B. Wilson, Policy Committee

P.S. Just a word about Al-Anon helping remodel the AA clubhouse. Every group is of course autonomous but it has been often observed that Al-Anon groups which give too much time to such activities run the chance of diverting from their primary purpose. You might find the pamphlet, "AA Tradition and How It Developed" by Bill W. useful.

Copied from Lois Remembers, Page 176:

"We sent a memo to AA asking permission to use its Twelve Steps in our Fellowship. AA agreed unofficially, but its members felt strongly that we should be a separate society and not a subsidiary of Alcoholics Anonymous, and that we should not include "AA" in our name. In addition Bill felt AAs should hold no office in our structure. He often said, "Keep us drunks out of it."