

The Fellowship Service Manual of Co-Dependents Anonymous



Part 3 Guidelines for Intermediate Service Levels

*Copyright (c) 1998
Co-Dependents Anonymous, Inc.*

This page intentionally blank

Contents

Link to Other Parts of the FSM	4
Section 01 Introduction	5
Purpose of this Manual	5
Section 02 Service Levels Between Meetings and CoDA, Inc.....	6
Intergroup	6
Voting Entity.....	6
Excerpt from CoDA Bylaws related to Voting Entities.....	7
Voting Entity Splits	8
Section 03 Group Conscience Decision Making.....	9
Section 04 Doing Service at the VE and Intergroup Levels	10
What Are Bylaws/Guidelines?.....	10
Where and When Should an Intergroup or VE Meet?	10
Section 05 Officer Positions.....	11
Officer Positions and Terms	11
Who Are Delegates and Alternate Delegates? How Do We Select Them and What Is Their Term Lengths?	12
What Are the Expectations and Responsibilities of a Delegate?	12
Officer and Delegate Rotation and Removal from Office	12
Section 06 Service Meetings: What they Entail & How They're Conducted.....	14
Business Meetings.....	14
Special Meetings	14
VE Assembly or Conference.....	14
Using the Community Problem Solving Method (CPSM).....	14
Alternative Format Meetings (AFMs).....	15
Section 07 Other Useful Information.....	16
Phone Set-Ups.....	16
Teleconference Calls	16
Meetings Lists	16
Websites	16
How Do the Traditions Affect What We Put on a Web Site?	17
Intergroup and Voting Entity Committees.....	18
Handling a Dispute or Conflict?.....	18
Prudent Reserve	19
7 TH Tradition Donations Acknowledgement.....	20
Opening a Checking Account.....	20

Link to Other Parts of the FSM

Below are links to the other 4 parts of the Fellowship Services Manual (FSM). Suggested uses are as follows:

- Part 1 is intended for all members of CoDA, particularly those who intend to do service work
- Part 2 is the Meeting Handbook and is intended for those wanting to start or help run a meeting. It is recommended that all meetings have a copy of this part.
- Part 4 is intended for use by those currently or considering doing service at the CoDA World level. It is strongly recommended for all those who will be attending a CoDA Service Conference (CSC).
- Part 5 contains more detailed information related to the various service entities that exist at the CoDA World service level, including the CoDA Board of Trustees, the various committees and other working groups and individual positions.

Links:

[FSM Part 1 - Structure and General Information](#)

[FSM Part 2 - Meeting Handbook](#)

[FSM Part 4 - Service Conference Procedures](#)

[FSM Part 5 – World Level Service Details](#)

[CoDATeen Handbook](#)

[CLC Style Sheet](#)

[FSM Glossary](#)

[CoDA Acronyms](#)

[FSM Combined File](#)

Section 01 Introduction

Purpose of this Manual

The purpose of this document is to provide a more detailed description of our service structure between the meetings and the CoDA World level. It also includes guidelines gathered from various existing entities at these levels and other places. The Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Service Concepts are both important guidelines to use in service work at any level. Both can be found in Part 1 of the FSM, CoDA Structure and General Information Summary. It is recommended that all decisions be made using the Group Conscience Process. Information about the Group Conscience Process is available below in Section 03 as well as in Section 5 of Part 1 of the FSM, Structure and General Information Summary.

Section 02 Service Levels Between Meetings and CoDA, Inc.

Intergroup

A strong CoDA Intergroup contributes to the success of CoDA in general. A sense of community at the local level leads to success in attracting and sustaining the involvement of members of the fellowship in service work and in community building activities. The Intergroup is made up of Group Service Representatives (GSRs) from area meetings and CoDA members from the local Fellowship. The Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Service Concepts of CoDA offer guidance in establishing service boards. Intergroups typically elect officers and committee chairs.

Some things that an Intergroup might do are:

- Manage finances including the collection of a percentage of money received from the meetings' 7th tradition donations to use to provide funds for acquiring literature, running social events and office type expenses
- Obtain CoDA Conference Approved literature for purchase by meetings and individuals
- Develop and maintain a website
- Issue resolution between and among meetings
- Plan and host events and functions
- Help meetings get started by offering things like starter packs of literature, suggestions on signage and advertising of new meetings and other items as requested

Voting Entity

A Voting Entity (VE) is a level of Fellowship within CoDA that handles the business aspects for a group typically made up of two or more Intergroups and/or Meetings. An Intergroup may serve as a Voting Entity if decided by group conscience when it is the only Intergroup within a VE. The Voting Entity organization provides a bridge between Intergroups, and CoDA World.

Each state, province, territory of all Countries and those Countries who had created national Voting Entities as of the date, September 10, 2019, of this motion are established as a Voting Entity (VE) until such time as the regions or provinces have become well established and no longer need assistance from the recognized National Voting Entity and is entitled to send two (2) Delegates to the CoDA Service Conference (CSC). Sometimes two or more Voting Entities may choose to join together in order to combine resources and better serve the needs of their meetings and Intergroups. A Voting Entity may also choose to divide into two or more Voting entities according to CoDA's Bylaws.

A Voting Entity (VE)'s primary purpose is to represent the members of its communities at the CoDA Service Conference (CSC). It is made up of members who represent their communities or their meetings where there are insufficient meetings to need Intergroups. These representatives, called CSRs (Community Service Reps) or GSRs (Group Service Reps) bring the Group Conscience of their meetings to the VE for resolution or to be presented at the CSC, just as the GSRs bring issues to the Intergroup where one exists.

Many of the functions performed at the VE level for the communities are similar to those provided by a Intergroup for the meetings they represent. An additional function of VEs is to elect and send one or two Delegates to CSC each year. In addition, one or more Alternate Delegates may be sent.

The primary purpose of the Delegates is to facilitate communication between the VE and the CSC. The Delegate is a conduit between CoDA World and their local communities. An important part of this communication is the gathering and distributing by the Delegates of the CSC Motions and VE Issues to be addressed at CSC to acquire group conscience decisions from their VE membership as to how they should vote.

Excerpt from CoDA Bylaws related to Voting Entities

Article IV

Section 2. Voting Entities (Entities)

Each state, province, territory of all Countries and those Countries who had created national Voting Entities as of the date, September 10, 2019, of this motion are established as a Voting Entity (VE) until such time as the regions or provinces have become well established and no longer need assistance from the recognized National Voting Entity and entitled to send two (2) Delegates to the Service Conference. A single Voting Entity is established to represent all "Alternative Format Meetings" (AFM) and is entitled to send two (2) Delegates. AFM is defined as all meetings that do not physically meet face-to-face in a physical location.

Any Voting Entity may surrender its two (2) Delegates and request to subdivide. The governing principle is that a member of the Fellowship will only be represented by one (1) set of two (2) Delegates. An entity may request sub-divisions for reasons of geographical separation, language, or other recognizable characteristics. Each entity may request that it be split along an internally agreed upon division and each sub-division of the entity granted two (2) Delegates. Each sub-division should have enough members and meetings to support a viable service group so that all meetings are still represented.

The Issues Mediation Committee will handle requests for CoDA to recognize Voting Entities. Through the group conscience process, Voting Entities select Delegates and Alternate Delegates to carry the will of the membership of CoDA World meetings. In order to guarantee voting rights, each Voting Entity service board must be duly authorized by the Issues Mediation Committee. In the absence of a Voting Entity service board, members of that Entity shall present an alternative selection process based on group conscience decision making to the Issues Mediation Committee. This procedure ensures adherence to the program of recovery endorsed by this Fellowship.

Voting Entity Splits

Each Voting Entity may sub-divide into two Voting Entities based on specific logic and criteria. The Issues Mediation Committee (IMC) oversees this process and approves all divisions. CoDA's Bylaws offers guidance for the VE and the IMC. After the division, both VEs will have two delegates. The Fellowship Service Manual recommends the following issues and process be considered:

1. Make sure a division will solve some problem or issue with representation of the Membership and that adequate meetings exist to justify the split.
2. Consider geographical boundaries.
3. Consider division by Language.
4. Consider city, county, parish, state boundaries.
5. The division should be agreed upon by both new VE's.
6. All meetings from the current VE should be included in one of the new VE's.

Please contact the IMC at imc@coda.org for an application.

Section 03 Group Conscience Decision Making

The spiritual structure of CoDA is based on Tradition Two: "For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority: a loving Higher Power as expressed to our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." By polling our group conscience, we seek guidance from our Higher Power and make decisions affecting our groups, our service boards, and our committees.

The group conscience is the collective conscience of the group membership and this represents substantial unanimity on one issue before definitive action is taken. This is achieved by the group members through the sharing of full information, individual points of view, and the practice of CoDA's principles.

The group conscience process is also used to make decisions that affect CoDA as a whole and to elect trusted servants to carry out those decisions. The Intergroup (community, area, country, state, regional) elects delegates to represent them at CoDA meetings (see Intergroups defined in Section V.). The GSR (Group Service Representative) carries the group conscience of the home group meeting to Intergroup. Intergroup holds a group conscience and decides whether the item will proceed to CoDA, or the next level (the Voting Entity).

At the Voting Entity level (Country, State and Regional or other Voting Entity levels); group and community representatives select trusted servants to become officers to serve the members of that Voting Entity. At the same time, delegates are selected to represent the Voting Entity and carry the Voting Entity group conscience to the annual CoDA Service Conference. Delegates also work together to make decisions dealing with CoDA, and select trusted servants who will serve our Fellowship at the CoDA World level.

Decisions at all levels including the Intergroup and Voting Entity levels of CoDA are made with the guidance of our Higher Power as expressed through the Twelve Traditions. Particularly useful are Tradition One: "Our common welfare should come first. Personal recovery depends upon CoDA Unity." and Tradition Two: "For our group purpose there is but one authority—a loving Higher Power as expressed to our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." Thus, as with all our recovery, group conscience is about putting aside the "self" and looking to Higher Power for guidance.

For more guidance on the Process of Determining a Group Conscience (and Safety, Boundaries, and Respect in the Group Conscience Process), refer to Part 1 of the FSM, CoDA Structure and General Information Summary.

Section 04 Doing Service at the VE and Intergroup Levels

What Are Bylaws/Guidelines?

It is highly advisable that every Intergroup and/or Voting Entity creates and maintains either a set of written operating Guidelines or Bylaws. Guidelines/Bylaws widely vary from group to group, but they are generally operational procedures covering topics such as how officers are elected, how meetings are conducted, how often business meeting are held, what officers the organization will have and a description of officers' duties.

Bylaws, by definition, are rules and regulations (or laws) enacted by an association or a corporation to provide a framework for its operation and management. Bylaws contain the most fundamental principles and rules regarding the nature of an organization. They are often required by banks to open checking accounts.

Guidelines are statements or indications of policy or procedures by which to determine a course of action. They are not laws and their policies and procedures are never mandatory.

Some examples of existing CoDA's Fellowship Bylaws can be found on the following links:

1. Southern California CoDA Intergroup(SoCal): <https://socalcoda.org/docs/SoCalCoDABylaws-053114.pdf>
2. New England CoDA Intergroup: <https://www.necoda.org/bylaws>
3. CoDA, Inc. Bylaws: <https://coda.org/wp-content/uploads/CoDA-By-Laws.docx>

At business meetings, the members of the Voting Entity and/or Intergroup are guided by CoDA's 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and 12 Service Concepts.

Where and When Should an Intergroup or VE Meet?

Every Intergroup/VE is self-supporting, so deciding where to meet and how to pay for it should be a collective group conscience decision. Intergroup/VE members usually search churches, libraries, and/or hospital institutions for available locations to hold business meetings at a nominal fee (e.g., \$10-50/month). If you can't find a meeting room using telephone and/or video conferencing are available options. (See Teleconferencing and video conferencing sections). Special meetings may be called throughout the year outside the usual schedule (e.g., for workshop and/or convention planning, Conference motions and Voting Entities' review, etc.).

Intergroup general meetings typically either meet monthly or quarterly within the year depending on how much business they have on their agendas. A Voting Entity usually meets at least once or twice a year; large VEs may meet more often.

Section 05 Officer Positions

Officer Positions and Terms

The election, terms and duties/responsibilities of a Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer are usually outlined and maintained. Examples of how various formed committees such as an Outreach, Events, Website and/or Hospital and Institutions committees are formed and may also be included at an Intergroup level and/or at the Voting Entity level.

The Chair usually facilitates all the business meetings and sets the agenda. Sometimes the Chair does not have a vote, but serves as a tie-breaker when there is a tie vote.

The Vice Chair usually takes over the Chair's responsibilities/duties in the absence of the Chair.

The Treasurer is usually responsible for receipt, disbursement and proper accounting and documentation of all funds (7th Tradition donations) and expenses for the Intergroup/VE. Maintains proper and accurate records of all receipts and disbursements; prepares and presents a written report of the status of the Intergroup/VE account in the established meeting periods (and when requested) to the Fellowship for transparency purposes. It is highly advisable to open a checking account (in the Intergroups/VE's name) as soon as possible. It is usually suggested that there are at least two signatures on a checking account (e.g., the Treasurer's and the Chair's or/Secretary's). Please refer to Part 2 of the FSM, Meeting Handbook.

The Treasurer can accept all 7th traditions donations either through a P.O. Box (which should be opened and paid for in the name of your Intergroup and/or VE) or in person at every held business meeting. Seventh Tradition donations can be made either by check, money order or in cash at local meetings at the suggested percentages made by CoDA. Please refer to Part 2 of the FSM, "What is a 'prudent reserve', and what do we do with excess moneys collected?" under "Other Helpful Information" about the suggested percentages for dividing 7th tradition donations.

The Secretary usually records, maintains and distributes business meeting minutes and key information to attendees, officers and the local Fellowship. They also create and maintain a local contact list and handle most mass mailings.

Terms of office and/or rotation of officers is highly recommended and considered healthy in CoDA. A term office of two years is suggested unless otherwise specified by a Group conscience. If no one can fill the position after a term is up, then the same candidate may continue filling the position another year or two if the group conscience allows, until a suitable candidate is elected. Or the position can remain vacant until a candidate may fill the position. Outgoing officers are expected to attend to supply information and materials to their successors and cooperate to ensure the smoothest possible transition. This may apply to Committee Chair positions as well.

Who Are Delegates and Alternate Delegates? How Do We Select Them and What Is Their Term Lengths?

Delegates are a Voting Entity's (VE) voting representatives who are sent to CoDA's yearly CoDA Service Conference (CSC). They are selected by a VE's group conscience decision making process at the yearly VE Assembly or Conference. Every Voting Entity may send up to two Delegates to Conference.

Delegates are expected to serve as a liaison between CoDA World and its Voting Entity. Delegates serve as a communication link between CoDA World and its local Fellowship providing key information on Conference and VE updates, changes, etc. At Conference, Delegates may be asked to give a brief oral report on their local VEs. After the Conference experience, a Delegate may be asked by their VE to either prepare or present an oral and/or written report of their overall experience at Conference with detailed information on presented motions and reports. A typical Delegate's term is for 2 years.

An important goal of a Voting Entity is to be represented at Conference and to send a Delegate(s) for voting purposes. If financially possible, Delegates get reimbursed by their VE for their travel expenses.

An Alternate Delegate may serve in the absence of a Delegate at CSC. When the Delegate is not able to serve on the floor or steps out of the Conference room for a short period of time, the Delegate "passes his/her badge" to the Alternate to vote in his/her place. An Alternate may or may not be reimbursed by its local VE. An Alternate's term is usually 1-2 years. Alternate Delegates often become Delegates for a future CSC.

Some Voting Entities select a Junior and Senior Delegate to go to Conference the same year. A Senior Delegate would have gone to Conference the year prior. A Junior Delegate would have not and would be attending Conference for the first time. The reason for this method is to have a 'seasoned' Delegate 'showing the ropes' to a new Delegate at Conference.

Where possible, it is a good idea that a Delegate has served previously as an Alternate Delegate.

Effective with the conclusion of the 2019 CSC, a person can no longer simultaneously hold the position of Chair of a standing or Adhoc committee and be a Delegate for a Voting Entity at the CoDA Service Conference. No chair of a standing committee may serve as a full member on another standing committee.

What Are the Expectations and Responsibilities of a Delegate?

CoDA World's Events Committee put together "A Delegates Checklist" for all delegates at Conference. This list can be found on the coda.org website at this location:

<http://coda.org/default/assets/File/Delegate%20Checklist.pdf>

Officer and Delegate Rotation and Removal from Office

CoDA encourages rotation of officer and Delegate positions. A term period for an officer is usually 2 years. If a position cannot be filled, a group conscience may be taken and a person may either continue until another candidate is available or that individual may serve for another 2-year period, up to a total of 4 years. If no one is available or willing to serve, that position will remain vacant until a candidate is available

to be of service. A term period of a delegate is 2 years. It is suggested that new delegates be selected at each term; however, a delegate may have served as a previous alternate.

If someone is not fulfilling their assigned duties/responsibilities as outlined in their Intergroups/VE's Guidelines/Bylaws, the group may remove the individual from their perspective position. CoDA suggests caution with this action and that this action is only taken as a last resort. This should only be done with a group conscience decision and only if someone was found to have either seriously violated CoDA's Twelve Traditions and/or Twelve Service Concepts or if someone is not fulfilling their assigned duties/responsibilities. All groups are encouraged to read and follow CoDA's "Dealing with Disagreement Process Diagram" <http://coda.org/default/assets/File/IMC/IMC%20Disagreemen%20Process.pdf> and our "Disagreement, Mediation, and Resolution in Our Group Conscience Process" as outlined in Part 1 of the FSM, CoDA Structure and General Information Summary.

An Intergroup/VE may establish guidelines or Bylaws which stipulate that any officer can be removed from office by a majority vote of the Assembly or when two-thirds of the Intergroup/VE members present voting either at a quarterly meeting or a special meeting called for that purpose, provided that in any of the above cases, the officer subject to removal and all members of Intergroup/VE have been informed at least 30 days in advance.

Some Intergroups/VEs also follow additional guidelines as follows: Failure to attend two consecutive scheduled meetings of an Intergroup/VE without prior notification and/or without reasonable cause shall be sufficient grounds for immediate removal from office of any officer, or any position elected or appointed by the Intergroup/VE or the Assembly. Such removal requires a simple majority of service board members present.

Section 06 Service Meetings: What they Entail & How They're Conducted

Business Meetings

A business meeting at the Intergroup level is usually expressed by the group conscience of the selected/elected GSRs and officers. They may be held monthly, quarterly and may be bi-yearly depending on CoDA related business needs.

Business meetings at the Voting Entity (VE) level are usually expressed by the group conscience of the selected/elected Intergroup(s) GSR(s) (group service representatives) and VE officers. The date and place of business meetings are customarily rotated between major cities in the VE where there are enough volunteers to set up and operate the meeting. If an Intergroup is both an Intergroup and a Voting Entity, there may be no need for meeting rotation between major cities.

Special Meetings

During the year, a Special Meeting at either the Intergroup level may be called by its officers and/or at the Voting Entity level by the Board, or by a petition from not less than one-third (1/3) of the Group Representatives (in the case of a VE) or GSRs (in the case of an Intergroup) of all current registered group meetings. The petition is to be addressed to the Board (or Intergroup, if applicable) and shall specify the reasons that a Special Meeting is being called. It is then incumbent upon the Board, or Intergroup, to arrange the meeting as soon as possible and to notify the Fellowship.

VE Assembly or Conference

An Assembly or Conference is a Voting Entity (VE) meeting (or if an Intergroup is a combination of an Intergroup and a VE then this meeting would be an Intergroup/VE meeting) called upon once a year for the purpose of (1) members of the VE to attend and address the Assembly and submitting and voting on motions; (2) selecting and electing vacant officer positions; (3) selecting and electing delegates and alternate delegates to go to CoDA Service Conference; (4) selecting and passing on Voting Entity Motions from the Fellowship to Conference; and (5) establishing and Intergroups/VE's procedures and guidelines within the framework of CoDA's 12 Traditions, 12 Steps and 12 Service Concepts and their Bylaws or Guidelines. They may or may not decide to follow *Robert's Rules of Order*.

Using the Community Problem Solving Method (CPSM)

Although some groups may choose to use Robert's Rules of Order, a common form of parliamentary procedure, it is fairly rigid, lending itself to a more strict and governing approach. The Community Problem Solving Method (CPSM) was created in 1994 at the CoDA Service Conference and has been used at all conferences since that time. It can be adapted at all levels of CoDA to facilitate group conscience decision making. It is a friendlier and more cooperative method of decision-making than the traditional "Roberts Rules". Motions or group conscience decisions are made only after information around the problem has been gathered, solutions brainstormed and all member's viewpoints have been heard and considered.

The process has four steps:

1. *Identifying a problem*: A member puts forth an issue/ agenda item for the business meeting. The discussion would then be open for questions, clarifications, and gathering any additional information.
2. *Brainstorming*: Solutions or suggestions are put forth. A common tool used by groups is a “round robin” which is a specialized brainstorming technique in which everyone takes a turn generating and developing ideas in a group. The process relies on each team member building off previous contributions by adding clarifications, challenges, and improving upon the original idea in rounds.
3. *Crafting a “motion” or forming a group conscience decision* (local business meetings do not need to make “formal motions”): At this point, because everyone has had a chance to be heard without interruption, the formulated decisions are the combined conscience of all the members present. Compromise (finding middle ground) is often reached without extra effort. At this point, the group may ask if any further discussion is needed or another round robin is needed before finalizing the decision or to clarify what is the issue that is coming to a vote. (no need to ask for “pros” and “cons” unless desired by the group)
4. *Vote on the issue*: Unanimity is desired, but a majority is a group conscience. If the vote is not unanimous, an opportunity for a minority opinion is offered.

Thirty Second Timeout: “Occasionally, a member(s) may engage in unsafe behavior by not respecting the boundaries of others, or someone may perceive that to happen. In such a situation, any member may call for a “time out” or “thirty seconds.” During a time out or thirty seconds, everyone ceases talking and spends time seeking guidance from Higher Power. At the end of the thirty seconds, someone calls “time” and members recite the Serenity Prayer before resuming the meeting.” –[Disagreement, Mediation, and Resolution, page 1](#)

(for background and full description of CPSM in World Conference meetings see: FSM Part 4 Section 3)

[4022-Healthy-Meetings-Web.pdf \(coda.org\)](#) see this free download for more information on the Group conscience process and business meetings.

Alternative Format Meetings (AFMs)

Alternative Format Meetings (AFMs) consists of all telephone and online meetings, nationally and internationally. AFMs differ in structure from typical face-to-face meetings in that their Intergrroups and/or Voting Entities are not necessarily grouped according to their geographical local areas.

Section 07 Other Useful Information

Phone Set-Ups

An Intergroup and/or Voting Entity may or may not have a need for a phone set-up for their Fellowship and/or the outside community to reach them or to have access to their local meeting list information. This depends on a group's needs.

There are many phone **companies** whereby an Intergroup and/or Voting Entity can pay for a private line(s) at a nominal monthly service fee. Some Intergroups actually dictate their local meeting list on phone line(s) for their Fellowship in lieu of a local website listing and in addition to the coda.org website listing.

Teleconference Calls

If an Intergroup and/or a Voting Entity cannot find a meeting place to meet nor has a need for a conference call or video conferencing, there are numerous online conference call companies available free of charge. These online services provide specific accounts where you can conduct audio conference calls with countless callers anytime without reservations, plus the added benefit of managing (and recording) your live conference calls on the web, again, for free with detailed instructions. Just search the web for free conference calling.

Meetings Lists

Most Intergroups and/or Voting Entities create, maintain and distribute a local meeting list for their Fellowship either on hard copy, their website (if they have one) or both. Intergroups usually are well connected with their local communities and have the most updated contact meeting information and can report a most accurate and updated meeting list.

Intergroups not only distribute their meetings lists to their Fellowships but often also distribute them to local behaviorists and clinical institutions as part of their outreach efforts in fulfilling their 5th Tradition.

Websites

Some Intergroups and/or Voting Entities have been able to create and maintain a website for their Fellowship depending on its local resources. Usually an Intergroup and/or Voting Entity begins with starting a Website Committee and either gathers free computer web design knowledge/talent from their local community and/or usually pays for these computer services from their 7th tradition funds by taking a group conscience vote.

A typical website might include the following:

- Home page – general information about the group and CoDA
- Links to the *Preamble*, *Welcome*, *Twelve Steps*, *Twelve Traditions*, *Twelve Promises* and the *Fellowship Service Manual* on the CoDA.org website
- List of local CoDA events
- Local newsletter
- Contact information
- Meeting information / list

- Link to how to order Conference Approved Literature on the CoDA.org website
- Links to other CoDA web sites

How Do the Traditions Affect What We Put on a Web Site?

The *Twelve Traditions of Co-Dependents Anonymous* are the guiding spiritual principles our Fellowship. No matter how modest the web site, it is available to a large, diverse and growing audience. If a web site is linked to the CoDA site (www.coda.org), that link represents an endorsement by CoDA.

Possible Tradition issues are:

- Unity - deciding what goes into a web site
- Our primary purpose - carrying the CoDA message of recovery from codependency
- Endorsement - avoiding endorsement of related facilities or outside enterprises.
- Outside issues - avoiding opinions on outside issues
- Self-support - costs of development and maintenance
- Autonomy - responsibility for web site content and copyright acknowledgements
- Anonymity - the Internet as an extension of press, radio and films.

When deciding what goes in a web site It is important to remember that *“our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon CoDA unity”* (Tradition One). Keeping the information presented general allows us to reach as many codependents as possible, many of whom will be newcomers who know little about Co-Dependents Anonymous. A group conscience of the sponsoring group is the basis for deciding what goes into the website. Before putting up a website, the content should be thoroughly reviewed by the membership of the group sponsoring the site. Placing information about the site’s sponsoring group, on each page of the site, makes the message clear to the reader. As a design consideration, having a consistent “look and feel” on each page makes reading the material easier for the user.

The primary purpose for the web site should be to carry the CoDA message. Our Step 12 reads, *“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other codependents, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”* A website can be a great tool in carrying the message of recovery to codependents who still suffer by employing modern technology to implement our primary spiritual aim. Our websites rely on attraction, not promotion per Tradition 11: *“Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion...”*

Avoiding endorsement of related facilities & outside enterprises as stated in Tradition 6 is also important: *“A CoDA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the CoDA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual aim.”* Facilities that provide CoDA meetings or space for other events on-premises may include CoDA information on their web site as a service. The only time that facilities or outside enterprises should be included on CoDA websites with their name or a link to their website is to provide location information for meetings or events.

Some Internet providers insert their own addresses at the bottom of a web page to encourage viewers to contact them. Closely associated with this problem is that some of the code generators insert messages such as, *“This web site was developed using XYZ Tool.”* These are also advertisements and break CoDA’s Tradition of non-endorsement. Use of credit card or financial trademarks is acceptable in the normal course of financial transactions.

Setting up a site on the Internet has recurring costs. Many Internet Service Providers (ISP's) make space available for clients as part of their monthly fees for a "personal" web site. A member may want to donate their personal web site space as a service to the sponsoring service body. But what happens if the individual decides to change ISP's? What if they move? What if they decide that CoDA isn't for them anymore? Tradition Seven says, *"every CoDA group ought to be fully self-supporting..."* So, it's best that the group provide its own Internet presence. The important issue is that the group be responsible for the site, not an individual.

No one may publish CoDA copyrighted material without the express written permission of CoDA. Copyright infringement is one of the most common problems that have occurred with the explosion of the Internet. Using copyrighted material without permission has the potential of deeply affecting CoDA as a whole. The only CoDA materials that may be reproduced on a web site are those items on the CoDA web site and the appropriate Copyright notice must be included. Excerpted material must also be acknowledged.

Intergroup and Voting Entity Committees

Most Intergroups and Voting Entities (VEs) form and operate one or more committees within their groups to better serve their local Fellowships. Voting Entity committees are organized along the same structural lines as meetings and Intergroups (groups and community service groups).

Voting Entity Committees function through the group conscience decision making process as they carry out service work. Priorities for this work usually come from meetings and Intergroup's.

A committee usually has a Chairperson (and volunteer members) who facilitates that committee, sets the agenda and holds its meetings, etc. Some examples of committees are:

- **Outreach:** members handle correspondence from the outside public and the still suffering codependents; attend, coordinate, and give information at special outreach events that reach the still suffering codependent who is unaware of CoDA; may send local meeting list to behavioral institutions and physicians for informational purposes
- **Events:** members plan and coordinate special events like the Assembly/Conference meetings; conventions/conferences; various topic related workshops, social events, etc.
- **Website/Webpage:** members create, place key information, and continuously maintain/update website page(s) for either the local Intergroup area or entire Voting Entity
- **Hospital and Institutions:** members hold meetings at local hospitals and prisons for the still suffering codependent; answers correspondence from prisons and hospitals and other institutions; discovers ways to bring CoDA literature to these institutions at nominal fees
- **Communication:** members handle, create, maintain and distribute correspondence to facilitate incoming and outgoing communication within the Fellowship. May create periodic newsletter; banners; posters, etc.

All committees have but one purpose according to Tradition 9: "CoDA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve."

Handling a Dispute or Conflict?

During the group conscience process, it is important that we all practice our program by balancing patience with assertion. We respect the boundaries of others and expect the same consideration. We assume responsibility for our behavior and accept accountability for our actions.

However, because we are in recovery, we will still run into conflict and conflict will lead to disputes that find their way to Intergroup business meetings and to Voting Entity meetings following structural guidelines. The question then becomes, “How do an Intergroup and/or Voting Entity handle a dispute or conflict once it reaches its level?”

It is recommended that all disagreements be first dealt with by person-to-person. Then, if the issue(s) is not resolved by the individuals, a third neutral party, trusted by both parties, may be asked to help support and resolve the issue. If that doesn't work, then assistance from a meeting is recommended. If that doesn't resolve the situation; then seeking guidance and assistance from the Intergroup level is recommended. And so on. Therefore, when an Intergroup receives a dispute at their level, the Intergroup should ensure that these past steps should have already been taken before coming to the Intergroup level.

Once at the Intergroup (and then the Voting Entity level if not resolved at the Intergroup level), the group conscience, maintaining neutrality, objectivity and using specific CoDA literature as outlined in the Fellowship Service Manual (see Section Two on The Group Conscience Process, on “The Disagreement, Mediation, and Resolution in Our Group Conscience Process” and again IMC’s “Dealing with Disagreements” document above) along with Higher Power’s guidance are all key components with resolving disputes and conflict.

An example of conflict may be that an Intergroups treasurer ran off with the group’s money and the group finds itself uncertain on what to do. A possible answer (based on some group’s Experience Strength and Hope/ESH and using the above tools) may be to hold a group conscience meeting and ask questions like: Was the group careful in their selection of a responsible treasurer? Did they have more than one signatory on the account to monitor the on goings of the account? Was the treasurer helped to the understanding of his/her responsibilities of the position? Are excess funds being held? And, whether these questions were being asked or not, some groups still find it helpful to hold a group conscience meeting to review the way the group’s finances are being handled and to update procedures.

If an Intergroup and/or Voting Entity find they cannot resolve a dispute, or finds that they are just not equipped to do so, they may refer the case to CoDA’s Issues Mediation Committee at the CoDA World level which handles disputes and mediation at this next level. They may be contacted at imc@codas.org.

More information about handling disputes can be found in Section 03 above.

Prudent Reserve

An Intergroups and/or Voting Entity’s (VEs) Prudent Reserve is generally 2-3 months of average operating expenses put in “reserve” in a meeting’s budget. Its principal purpose is to provide the financial resources to continue the essential services of its Intergroup and/or VE for up to 2-3 months (or longer) in the event of unexpected and substantial reduction in the normal revenues of the meeting group(s). The prudent reserve is intended to cover expenses in the event that the group has unusually low attendance or donations.

A prudent reserve is made up of a group’s ongoing expenses such as rent, phone line(s), CoDA endorsed literature, refreshments, website fees and various miscellaneous expenses like photocopy expenses, etc.

The Voting Entity usually collects delegate funds donations from local meetings since delegates are selected and elected at this level of structure. How to distribute the money in excess of a meetings prudent reserve is discussed in Part 2 of the FSM, Meeting Handbook.

However, if an Intergroup is set-up in structure as both an Intergroup and Voting Entity, they could establish a separate “fund” within their budget or a separate account as a “delegate’s fund” so that meeting groups can donate directly to this fund, if they choose to. {In addition, the Intergroup/VE can take a group conscience to transfer funds from their operational fund to the delegate fund as needed to ensure the delegate fund is adequate to fund the elected delegate(s)’ expenses.} This way, the Intergroup/VE can separate its 7th Traditions from its delegate fund budgets. These funds are meant to be “internal” set-up accounts within the budget.

7TH Tradition Donations Acknowledgement

Most Intergroups and Voting Entities acknowledge donations by a receipt, sent to the person indicated on the contribution envelope, or to the GSR (Group Service Representative) if a name and address is not indicated. Usually, quarterly contribution statements are sent to each group’s GSR. These statements reflect year-to-date information, whether or not the group contributed.

Opening a Checking Account

Most banks are willing to work with small nonprofit organizations with opening a checking account to hold 7th Tradition funds at either the Intergroup and/or Voting Entity level. Unfortunately, CoDA cannot allow groups to use their Federal Tax ID number when opening a checking account at a bank institution.

Your own Intergroup and/or Voting Entity can apply for a Federal Tax ID number (with the IRS) or one of your officers (usually the Treasurer and/or Chair) can open a business account using your groups name on the account. It is recommended to have at least two signatories on the account. This is to avoid any misuse of funds and to ensure proper management of funds. It is also recommended not to secure a debit card. This is so that all transactions are made visible by check, taking the time to clear, and again, to discourage and avoid misuse of funds.