

Virginia Area Committee

DCM Handbook

Information to help DCMs

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VAC DCM Handbook

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Introduction

The District Committee Member (DCM) is the district's member of the Virginia Area Committee. Their job is a dual path: to lead their district in A.A. service and to serve as a conduit for information with the Area and the General Service Office (GSO). This manual was written to help DCMs find the answers to questions they did not know they had. It covers all of the things we wish we knew when we were DCMs.

Virginia Area Service Manual

The Virginia Area Service Manual was created and approved in October 1996. Since its inception, it has continued to be a living document that reflects the service structure and guidelines for Area 71 - Virginia. As a DCM, you are a member of the Area Committee as well as the Area Assembly. It is therefore recommended that you take time to read the entire [Virginia Area Service Manual](#) in order to become familiar with its contents. The information within the manual describes the responsibilities that have been defined by the VAC for the Area Officers, the Standing Committee Chairs, and the Special Assignment Coordinators as well as the purpose and function of the standing committees.

Now that you are a DCM, you will get a lot of questions from your GSRs about how things function in the VAC. Knowing the “right” answer is important, but knowing where to go if you don’t have it is even more important. Knowing the Virginia Area Service Manual will help you in referring members to the right person to address their questions. Below are some highlights of things it is important for you to know.

1. The Virginia Area Service Manual is in two major sections with different procedures for amendment.
 - a. VAC Service Structure is often referred to as the “front of the manual” and describes our structure. The amendment procedure calls for changes to this section to go on the next open agenda of the Assembly. Often this is referred to as “putting it in the newsletter” before it can be voted on. The point of this amendment procedure is to allow the groups to have ample time and information to discuss and send their conscience on these items. Changes to this section affect the structure of the VAC. Therefore, changes require careful consideration and require a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote to be accepted. Publishing in the newsletter is currently the accepted way the VAC communicates with the groups in between Assemblies.

10. AMENDMENT PROCEDURES

- 10.1. Any proposed amendments to the Virginia Area Service Structure shall be submitted in writing to the Chairperson.
- 10.2. The Chairperson shall include the proposed amendment on the next open agenda of the Area Assembly and a 2/3 majority vote of the Area Assembly is needed to adopt the amendment.

- b. Virginia Area Guidelines are often referred to as the “back of the manual” and describe the purpose and processes for each individual standing committee and special assignment coordinator position. Amendments to this section can be made at the Assembly during which they are proposed. The presumption is that they are less impactful because they will only alter the operations of a single committee or coordinator rather than changing our entire structure.

21. AMENDMENT PROCEDURES

- 21.1. Any amendments to these Guidelines shall be approved by majority vote of the Area Assembly.
- 2. The Virginia Area Service Manual has a section that describes the responsibilities of all committees and coordinators (including the District Committees and the DCMs). There are two sections that each servant should read and fully understand.
 - a. In the front of the manual, the Service Structure is explained. There is a section for Standing Committee Chairs and another section for Special Assignment Coordinators. This section lists all the committees and coordinators and lists the duties for each, such as writing a committee report for each newsletter. This section also explains other important information concerning these roles, such as the membership of the committees and the term of the service commitment.
 - b. In the back of the manual, the Guidelines Section provides an explanation for each committee and its purpose and duties.
 - 3. The Parliamentary Procedures utilized by the Virginia Area are located in the Appendix. These procedures are often referred to as adapted parliamentary procedures.
 - a. As elected representatives of local A.A. groups in the Virginia Area, one of our responsibilities is to strive to provide the voice of the group conscience of the Virginia Area. The function of the procedures listed in the Appendix of the VAC Service Manual is to make it possible for us to discharge this responsibility effectively in a limited period of time.
 - b. The Virginia Area Assembly operates under as few rules as possible, but some procedural rules mixed with our usual informality can help to get our business done in an orderly fashion. The procedures used by the VAC are derived from excerpts from “Special Conference Rules” of the General Service Conference and specific Robert’s Rules, plus several of our own that we often use.

Assemblies and Meetings

The Virginia Area has two Meetings (winter and summer) and two Assemblies (spring and fall) annually.

Members of the Area Assembly attend Spring and Fall Assemblies. They consist of the Delegate, Alternate Delegate, Chair, Alternate Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Standing Committee Chairs, Special Assignment Coordinators, District Committee Members (DCMs) and

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General Service Representatives (GSRs). This is defined in Section 1 of the VAC Service Structure.

Members of the Virginia Area Committee (VAC) attend the Winter and Summer Meetings. They consist of the Delegate, Alternate Delegate, Chair, Alternate Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Standing Committee Chairs, Special Assignment Coordinators, and DCMS. This is defined in Section 2 of the Virginia Area Service Structure. In short, they are the members of the Assembly minus the GSRs. The VAC meetings do not perform any business or make any decisions aside from setting the agenda for the upcoming Assembly. As a DCM, you are the VAC member from your district. That is where the term District Committee Member comes from.

Preparing for a Winter or Summer Meeting

Winter and Summer Meetings are where VAC members set the agenda for the following Assembly. An important part of setting that agenda is the selection of the workshop topics for the Assembly. Prior to the Winter or Summer Meeting, the Chair will request you to send three workshop topics to offer for vote at the Meeting. It is suggested that each DCM work with their GSRs to pick three topics that they will submit. These topics will be voted on during the afternoon session at the Meeting.

Preparing for a Spring or Fall Assembly

In the one or two district meetings before the Assembly, make sure that your GSRs are prepared. Ask who will attend the Assembly and encourage those who cannot attend to get an alternate GSR to attend. It is important that they understand attendance is important. The group typically funds the GSR to attend Assemblies. Consider encouraging them to sit together in the main room and to have at least one meal as a group. This helps to create a bond between the GSRs. If a group doesn't have sufficient funds for a GSR to travel, the GSR should ask the District/DCM if there are travel funds available. If not, the VAC has a GSR Travel line item in the budget to fund up to \$200 to attend an Assembly. The GSR should try to buddy up for rides and share a room to keep expenses down. The same funds are available for a DCM if the district cannot afford to fund their travel. Ten VAC scholarships are available per year.

To help them prepare, point them to the items in the Early Bird Highlights from the preceding meeting and the VAC newsletter and ask them to talk with their groups about the items that are expected to be discussed in the committee meetings. This will get them interested in understanding the items on the agenda. You can expect that some questions will come up about the items, so take the time to prepare yourself.

Some districts try to assign GSRs to attend specific committee meetings and then they meet over breakfast to discuss what happened in all of the committees. By doing that, all of the GSRs should be fairly well informed for the business session.

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Delegate Communications

The DCMs meet with the Delegate at both Assemblies and Meetings. At Meetings, this happens early in the morning on Saturday, as the first session of the day. All DCMs are urged to attend so that the Delegate can give you updated information about what is going on and answer any questions you might have before everyone gets too busy.

At Assemblies, the DCMs meet with the Delegate in one of two standing workshops titled “DCM/Delegate Sharing Session.” It is recommended that you pick either the Saturday or the Sunday session to attend the DCM/Delegate Sharing Session and in the other slot you can attend another workshop that interests you.

Throughout the year, the Delegate will share information about the General Service Conference, the Board and the General Service office on the [Delegate's Corner](#) of the [aavirginia.org](#) site. Use the same password as the Area Newsletter to access it.

Assembly Workshops

DCMs in their second year of service may be asked by the Alternate Delegate to participate on the panel of a workshop at the Spring and Fall Assemblies. They will normally be asked to participate in only one instance of the workshop because, as stated above, they will be meeting with the Delegate at the DCM Delegate Sharing Session for the other instance.

DCMs are paired with others (usually past delegates) on the panel. Participation on the workshop panel means that you are expected to research the topic and have prepared remarks to start the discussion. You will have approximately five minutes to share. The contact information for the other person or people on your panel will be shared ahead of time in case you would like to discuss how things will flow.

Assembly Handouts

There is a lot of information that comes to you from different sources. Much of it will come to you now in an email as an attachment or a link and printouts. This information is given to you so that you can take some action. Knowing what to do with it is the key.

Contribution Handouts

You will get information from two sources related to contributions from your groups.

1. The Delegate gets information from GSO about contributions sent from your groups. That information will be passed along to you, either in person, or by email, by the Treasurer or Finance & Budget Chair. You should pass this information on to your GSRs. Some DCMs let each GSR know how much their group contributed, but most send the entire list to all of the groups in the district. It is entirely up to the DCM how they want to handle the information. It is important that this information not be posted on publicly accessible areas of the internet, including district and intergroup websites.
2. The Treasurer or Finance & Budget Committee Chair will provide a listing of all of the contributions to the VAC by the groups in your district. Again, you can provide each group with their information or provide the entire list to all of the groups. Again, it is

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important that this information not be posted on publicly accessible areas of the internet, including district and intergroup websites.

Group Information Handouts

The Mailing List Coordinator will provide listings of all of the groups in your district. You can also log in to Fellowship Connection and run reports if you want to check in between Meetings and Assemblies. It is very important that you review all of the groups listed as active in your district. Ensure that the day and time of the meeting is correct and that the GSR listing is up to date. If there are problems with any listing, please let the Mailing List Coordinator know as soon as possible.

In addition to reviewing these listings, it is also good to check, or to have someone else check, the listings on the Area website. It is suggested that you not only look at the meetings you are aware of, but also search by city and by district and look for meetings you may not have thought of, some that may be shut down. We want the information on the website, and with GSO, to be as accurate as possible.

Early Bird Highlights

The Early Bird Highlights are full of very valuable information. When we meet in person, they are printed and handed out after the closing prayer. These are great tools to help groups stay informed. It is helpful to pass these along to groups that were not represented. Printed copies are for those people who are in attendance, as the Secretary prints enough copies for everyone who registered. The Secretary also emails the Early Bird Highlights within a day or two of the Meeting or Assembly, so you can forward them to groups that are not present.

Area Service Manuals

The VAC Service Manual is managed, updated, and printed by the VAC Growth Committee. If we are at a Meeting or Assembly in person and you have some GSRs who may need hard copies of the manual, you can stop by the table for the Growth Committee and get some copies. You can also [download it as a PDF](#) from the aavirginia.org site, under Member Services.

Flyers and other Information

Near the registration table at Assemblies, you will normally see flyers for events in the Virginia Area and across A.A. These flyers are there for the taking, and DCMs are encouraged to take some back with them for groups that are not represented.

Updating Group information

As DCM, you will need to encourage your GSRs to update their mailing information as needed with the Mailing List Coordinator. This ensures that they receive communications from the VAC and GSO. It is also important that they update key group information, such as when they meet and where, and how many home group members they have.

To assist the GSRs with this work, you will receive a listing from the Mailing List Coordinator periodically – normally at each Assembly – and you should review this to see if changes are needed. Sometimes you may notice a group that has “gone dark” (stopped meeting) but is still listed. You should take the time to make sure that information gets updated. If a group is still meeting but has no GSR, they can name a group contact to receive correspondence. If there is no GSR or group contact person designated, the group is moved to inactive status.

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Meeting Information on the Website

The VAC website is often the first stop for someone looking for a meeting in Virginia. It is therefore really important that this information is as up to date as possible. Nobody wants someone to show up at a meeting place and find there is no meeting.

If a group provides the Mailing List Coordinator with changes to its meeting information, there is a process by which that information is shared with the Website Coordinator and vice versa. However, it is still a good idea for the DCM (or someone assigned by the DCM) to review all of the meetings listed on the website for the district to ensure that no old information remains.

Communicating With the Area

One of the most important ways you can carry the message in recovery and in service is by sharing information. In the previous section, the website was discussed as a way to make information accessible. In addition to the website, the VAC Secretary is available as a communication resource. Announcements, event details, flyers – information that is useful to the Area overall – can be circulated through the VAC Secretary's centralized email. Simply email the information you want shared to the Secretary and request distribution. It will be emailed as requested within 24 to 48 hours.

Committee Assignment

Each DCM is assigned to a Standing Committee by the Area Chair, in a similar way to how Delegates are assigned to a committee at the General Service Conference. You will be a member of that committee for the entirety of your two-year term as DCM.

Committee meetings happen on Friday night of Assemblies and Meetings in two shifts. The first shift happens at 7 p.m. and the second shift is at 9 p.m. The only exception is that in the fall, Finance and Budget meets at 8 p.m. because they have a lot to do to set the proposed budget. It also allows committees in both shifts to attend some portion of the Finance and Budget meeting if they need to add things to the budget.

You are expected to attend and participate in your assigned committee. You are also expected to attend another committee meeting, of your choosing, during the opposite committee time. Any member of A.A. in Virginia may attend committee meetings as voting members. Please make sure that any A.A. member in your district who would like to attend the committee meetings understands that they are eligible to vote in those meetings. Any member of an A.A. group in Virginia may vote in the committee meetings.

As an assigned member of the committee, the committee chair may ask you to serve in a more formal way. You could be asked to lead or serve on a subcommittee, for instance. Sometimes a committee chair is unable to attend the meeting for a variety of reasons, and often one of the assigned DCMs is asked to step in and chair the meeting and deliver the report. Also, many committee chairs ask the assigned DCMs to help with presenting General Service Conference Concerns (addressed in more detail in a later section) and help with discussion in committee. Some DCMs encourage their district to become involved in the work of their assigned committee.

Take the time to participate fully. Remember to have fun. As a side note, the next committee chair is often chosen from among DCMs who served on the committee. If you are interested in

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serving as the committee chair in the next rotation, talk to the person doing the job and see if it is a good fit for you and let them know you are interested.

Writing and Delivering Your DCM Report

Roughly half of the DCMs give a report from the podium at each Assembly. The DCMs who are scheduled to give reports are listed in the agenda. If you are scheduled to give a report, take the time to write something and prepare to speak to the audience by practicing your report. Tell the Assembly what is going on in your district and what events you have coming up. Many DCMs have drawn inspiration from the ideas shared in DCM reports at the Assembly.

You will have two minutes to give your report. That is about half a page typed. Once you have given your report from the podium, give your written report to the Secretary for inclusion in the minutes. The Secretary would likely also be grateful for an email containing your report.

Writing Your Newsletter Article

The newsletter is published three times a year – prior to the Spring and Fall Assemblies, and the Summer Meeting. There is no newsletter before the Winter Meeting. The newsletter is full of important information including a list of upcoming events and the agenda for the next Assembly or Meeting. Listen to the report from the Newsletter Editor at each event to get the deadline for submission for the next newsletter. That deadline is also listed in the Early Bird Highlights and in the final minutes.

Each DCM should provide a submission for each edition of the Newsletter. Your article should be entirely service related. Your newsletter article should not congratulate Bob R. for 40 years of sobriety, but could discuss a group anniversary meeting for the oldest group in your district, as an example. You can thank the officers of the district for participating in a New GSR Workshop, or talk about what your Corrections Committee is doing.

DCMs often talk about workshops and picnics; these are great things to have in your article. Try to think about the publishing date when you are writing about your events. It will not make sense to invite people to your Concepts workshop if the workshop happens before the newsletter is published. It is great to write in the past tense about successful events, especially if there were unique ideas that worked really well. Many DCMs talk about getting great ideas from the reports of other DCMs.

Many DCMs share their district's work on outreach and talk about what their committees are doing. Some DCMs discuss filling their service positions and share how they were able to build enthusiasm. As long as it is service related, it is fine to put in the newsletter. Remember that you will be given approximately one quarter of a page.

Election Assembly

The Fall Assembly of every even-numbered year is an election Assembly. This is where the Assembly will elect the Delegate, Alternate Delegate, and the four Area Officers who will serve for the following two years, beginning January 1 of the following year.

The election is conducted using the Third Legacy Procedure which is detailed in Chapter 1 of [The A.A. Service Manual](#). If you are not familiar with how that procedure works, you should

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read it and ask questions beforehand. It is likely that your GSRs will have questions and you will want to be able to answer those.

The first order of business for the election is to determine the number of voting members present. When preparing for the election, DCMs should encourage their GSRs to sit together so it is easier to count them. Each DCM will be polled for the number of voting members from their district. The DCM should include themselves in this total. So, if you have 10 GSRs you would report 11 voting members. We use electronic voting and there is also someone available for anyone who needs to vote with a paper ballot.

During nominations, the DCMs are also polled for their willingness to serve. If you are qualified and wish to be considered for election, you can accept the nomination when you are polled. If you do not wish to be considered, you would decline.

Conference Concerns (General Service Conference Agenda Items)

Each year in February, the Delegate receives the final agenda and background material for the upcoming General Service Conference (GSC). The main business for the Spring Assembly is to discuss the items from that agenda in committees and share thoughts with the Delegate relative to those items.

Each Delegate is assigned to one committee (and occasionally two) at Conference. The Delegate will have the most input on items related to that committee because they will be able to engage in committee discussion. For items that are not in their committee, they will only have input if those things come out onto the floor from a committee. Additionally, there are items that are related to draft literature, as an example, where there will not be enough information in the background material to discuss these items in committee, because they would not have been allowed to see the draft item. For these and other reasons, each Delegate decides which items they will choose for discussion by the Area, and assigns those things to the committees they choose. Many items on the Conference agenda may not be discussed at our Spring Assembly.

Once the Delegate chooses and creates the list of items they will want to discuss, the Alternate Delegate publishes that list along with all of the Conference agenda background material on the VAC's Google Drive. Access is given to all DCMs using their aavirginia.org accounts using the *Shared with me* option.

This information is available for download in case you want to get it on your computer or iPad. This information should not be posted in publicly accessible areas of the internet.. There are groups that will be interested in seeing all of this information. Getting their feedback on these items is good for the fellowship, but you will have to remind them that this material is confidential and for discussion only by A.A. members.

The important thing is to know where to get help. If you have questions about the items on the agenda, ask the Delegate. If you have questions about how to share the data and whether it is okay to post it somewhere, ask the Alternate Delegate.

If the committee you are assigned to gets a list of items to discuss, you may be asked by the committee chair to present an item to the committee for discussion. It is important that you

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read the background material related to that item and be prepared to answer questions after you present.

Important Reading list

1. **Virginia Area Service Manual** - Some helpful information about this publication is laid out in section a. below.
 - a. It is available in print from the Growth Committee Chair, or you can [download a PDF version](#) from the Member Services section of our aavirginia.org website. Familiarize yourself with the entire manual. Some of the most important concepts are described in the next section. You may find it helpful to read the next section of this document before reading the VAC Service Manual. The Parliamentary Procedures that are used by the VAC are listed in the Appendix in the back of the manual.
2. **The A.A. Service Manual** - The whole manual will be useful to you (we recommend using the hard copy but it is [available as a PDF](#) on the aa.org website. The most important sections to read for a new DCM are
 - a. Chapter 1 - Introduction to General Service
 - b. Chapter 2 - The Group and Its GSR
 - c. Chapter 3 - The District and the DCM
 - d. An essay called “Leadership in A.A.: Ever a Vital Need” is part of the Concept IX essay.
3. [The A.A. Group](#) pamphlet
4. The [Questions & Answers on Sponsorship](#) pamphlet, especially the section on service sponsorship

Things to Remember

Event	Activities
Spring Assembly	Before: • Share GSC agenda items as appropriate in your district and help/encourage GSRs to have conversations with their groups. • Remind GSRs of the agenda items for the Area Standing Committee meetings and encourage them to get feedback. • Encourage your GSRs to attend the committee meetings on Friday night and fully participate. • Prepare for your assigned committee meeting. • Remind GSRs to stay until noon on Sunday. During: • Be available to help your GSRs understand what is happening. • Participate in Workshops and Committee Meetings. After: • Prepare a report to provide to your district in addition to any handouts you picked up at the assembly. • Share the Early Bird Highlights with the groups that were not in attendance. • Write and submit your newsletter article on time.
Winter Meeting	Before: • Work with your district to select up to three workshop topics that you will be able to offer for the upcoming Assembly and submit them when requested. During: • Introduce yourself to the Area Officers if you have not met them. • Introduce yourself to other DCMs. This is an important time for new DCMs to get connected to others. • Take notes during committee reports, specifically about the agenda items they plan to have at the Spring Assembly to share with your GSRs. After: • Prepare a report to provide to your district in addition to any handouts you picked up at the meeting. • Share the Early Bird Highlights with GSRs and other members of your district. • Write and submit your newsletter article.

Event	Activities
Summer Meeting	Before: • Work with your district to select up to three workshop topics that you will be able to offer for the upcoming Assembly. During: • Take notes during committee reports specifically about the agenda items they plan to have at the Spring Assembly to share with your GSRs. • In even-numbered years, if you are considering making yourself available to serve, speak to the person doing the job to get an understanding of the work. After: • Prepare a report to provide to your district in addition to any handouts you picked up at the meeting. • Share the Early Bird Highlights with GSRs and other members of your district.. • Write and submit your newsletter article.
Fall Assembly	Before: • Remind GSRs of the agenda items for the Area Standing Committee meetings and encourage them to get feedback. • The Proposed Budget is usually in the newsletter. Make sure GSRs know that they should discuss with their group. • Encourage your GSRs to attend the committee meetings on Friday night and fully participate. • In even-numbered years, review the Third Legacy Procedure from the A.A. Service Manual with your GSRs and help them understand the election process. • Prepare for your assigned committee meeting. During: • Be available to help your GSRs understand what is happening. • Participate in Workshops and Committee Meetings. • In even numbered years, know the number of GSRs you have in attendance. After: • Prepare a report to provide to your district in addition to any handouts you picked up at the assembly. • Share the Early Bird Highlights with the groups that were not in attendance.