

## **Area Task Force on Active Past Delegates 2020**

(Final Report combined with notes accumulated from members)

**Background:** The Active Past Delegate Defined Task Force has been formed to address the many ongoing issues regarding what role a Past Delegate should have in the Area-- from members feeling some Past Delegates have not been involved enough to warrant paying their Area expenses all the way to the opposite extreme of some being too overly involved. Discussions on the amount of participation they should have at the Area level, both minimum and maximum, along with limits to their term of service as a Past Delegate have been raised for several years now.

**Charge:** The Task Force is charged with establishing recommendations of what role a Past Delegate has in the Area including, but not limited to, the definition of what it means to be an Active Past Delegate, and do they hold a position in the Area service structure. To determine if they should have such things as a job description, duties, and an attendance policy; if so, what those should be. And recommend how that all ties into their being eligible to be a member of the AWSC and reimbursed their Area expenses.

Use Knowledge-Based Decision-Making (KBDM) to begin the process and refer to the Area Policy Manual, Al-Anon/ Alateen Service Manual & published guidelines as well as practices in other Areas.

**Task Force Members:** The task force was comprised of a chair and 4 members initially and ended with the chair and 3 members:

Don B. Chair, Jan C., Brenda M., and Arla P.

The Task Force included both majority and minority voices in considering the topic.

**Process:** Our Task Force reached out to other Al-Anon regions within the USA requesting information and practices they might have had regarding Active Past Delegates, their functions within the Area and the expectations of them. The Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual and Area 61 WIUPMI Policy Manual were used as resources. Knowledge-Based Decision Making format was used in directing our research. Finally the experience, strength and hope of the Task Force members were used in defining our recommendations to the charge presented to us. Following completing our task to the charge, the recommendations were presented to AWSC and the Area 61 Spring Assembly for their consideration and approval.

### **“Final Report”**

#### **1. Definition of what it means to be an Active Past Delegate:**

It is recommended that in order to be a Past Delegate, one must be elected as Delegate to serve a full three-year term in office. If a minimum of two thirds of their term is served, they would be considered a Past Delegate. If a Delegate resigns and an Alternate Delegate completes the term, that Alternate

may be elected for a three-year term as Delegate on their own. They would then qualify as a Past Delegate upon the completion of their three-year term.

It is recommended that the current policy of activity (as stated under General Policies in the Area 61 WIUPMI Policy Manual 2018 Page 2 #1) be enforced for all Past Delegates in determining 'active' status.

*It is recommended that the Area approve the following as Policy and to be added to the WIUPMI 2018 Policy Manual under General Policies, addition to item #1:*

*Wisconsin and Upper Peninsula of Michigan (WIUPMI) Past Delegates who wish to re-enter as an Active Past Delegate must first inform the Area Chair and the Secretary of their intentions. The Past Delegate must attend three consecutive meetings of the Area World Service Committee (AWSC) meeting and Area Assemblies at their own cost. The Past Delegate must show recordable activity on their part in the meeting minutes or in a committee meeting of the Area at each of the consecutive meetings. Recordable activity includes participation on a committee (assigned by the Area Chair) and/or involvement on a Thought or Task Force Committee. Upon completion of the third meeting showing recordable activity, the Past Delegate will be considered "Active" and their cost will be reimbursed for the third meeting and all future meetings, following the guidelines for "Active Past Delegates" in our policy Manual.*

*Past Delegates from other Areas who have moved into Wisconsin and Upper Peninsula of Michigan Area and wish to participate in Wisconsin and Upper Peninsula of Michigan (WIUPMI) Area World Service Committee (AWSC) meetings and Assemblies must first inform the Area Chair and Secretary. The Policy Committee will confirm their status in their previous Area and approve or deny their ability to complete the above process for re-entry or entry in this case into our Area as an "Active Past Delegate".*

## **2. Do they hold a position in the Area service structure:**

It is recommended that the current policy is sufficient in identifying Active Past Delegates as members of the Area World Service Committee (AWSC) and the Area Policy Committee. [See page 2 for AWSC and page 1 in the 2018 Policy Manual]

## **3. Should they have such things as a job description, duties, and an attendance policy:**

It is recommended that Active Past Delegates roles are so varied and 'Experience, Strength, and Hope' so unique to each person that it would be nearly impossible to define every possible duty or job description. Past Delegates have already been elected previously because of their abilities and well-rounded skills.

It is recommended that the current attendance policy as sited in the 2018 Policy Manual on page 2 #1 under General Policies is sufficient for Active Past Delegates.

**4. Recommend how that all ties into their being eligible to be a member of the AWSC and reimbursed for their Area expenses:**

Active Past Delegates share their experience, strength, and hope, have a broader view of AFG Area/World business, provide historical data, act as Service Sponsors, are helpful settling forces on each new Panel, and share their expertise in the duties at which they excel. We always hope to find the best use for talents of those who come before us and pass it onto present and future needs. Each Active Past Delegate knows their strengths and offers them up in a kind, generous way. As with all our service positions, Active Past Delegates are trusted servants, they do not govern.

**Respectfully Submitted by the Task Force on Active Past Delegates**

**Members: Don Boche - Chair, Jan C., Brenda M., Arla P.**

**Dissolution:** This Task Force respectfully requests that we be dissolved at the Wisconsin UPMI 2020 Spring Assembly following approval by voting members.

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**Additional comments from TF members made while they worked on their Charge:**

- Our Policy Manual states, “All Active Past Delegates are to be life members of the Area World Service Committee” via votes from 1986-1914 (page 2 AWSC #3)
- Each steps up filling leadership roles needed for the a Area, whether that be data gathering, thought force, action committees, convention, or the 10,000 other possibilities
- The Policy Manual states reimbursements for “All Officers, Coordinator and Active Past Delegates to attend AWSC and Assembly Meetings” and for “Any Officer, Coordinator or Active Past Delegate who is asked to present as a function of their position at an Area or District Event.” (Policy Manual page 4 #8) In addition, reimbursement if provided to “The Delegate, Alternate Delegate and Active Past Delegates to attend the North Central Regional Delegate’s Meeting. (Policy Manual page 5 point 1) Obviously there is an expectation that Active Past Delegates should and do have value at the Area Service Structure.
- We cannot hope to continue to flourish as a group without the ESH and skills of those who came before us. I for one do not want to “reinvent the wheel” every three years.
- Active Past Delegates are the embodiment of our AI-Anon Declaration. *Let It Begin With Me. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, let the hand of AI-*

*Anon and Alateen always be there, and – Let It Begin With Me.* It is through the experiences of those that have gone before us that those that come after have a path to follow!

- In my experience, they bring so much to the table, it would be unreasonable to not pay their expenses. This is not a paid vacation we are offering them, everything they are reimbursed for is about the business of our Area.
- In the 2018-2021 Service Manual, page 55 under Tradition Seven, it states: *“Groups are within their autonomy to create a financial budget to plan for the purchase of literature, refreshments, the group’s trusted servants’ expenses to attend business meetings, purchasing Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism as a public outreach project and contributions to the service arms.”* Given that Active Past Delegates have been and continue to be trusted servants working for the good of Area 61 Al-Anon Family Groups, it is within the understanding of Tradition that we support our Active Past Delegates for the service they provide to our Area.
- As I reviewed the charge, I could not find a segment that referenced limiting the number of past delegates that serve.

Early in my program I had to work on rational and irrational fears and reasoning through how those fears kept me from moving forward. Projecting into a negative and irrational future made my present difficult to live in.

This is how I see the potential for a vote imbalance.

- Current Active Past Delegates. 2
- End of current delegate term 2022 1
- End of 2025 delegate term. 1
- End of 2028 delegate term. 1
- End of 2031 delegate term. 1
- Total of Past Delegates potentially
- Voting in 2031 7

So, in effect an imbalance would only occur at Policy Meetings when the 5 officers and the Alateen Coordinator were present and EVERY active past delegate was present and in agreement. An imbalance could never occur at AWSC since there we have all the DR's, Coordinators, and Officers.

Let’s consider the above and allow those a decade from now to put that into their task force charge if none of those active past delegates have 1) stopped attending, 2) resigned, or 3) taken other positions keeping them from being voting members.

Additionally, during the same period that all the Past Delegates mentioned in your email were eligible to attend the Area managed to accumulate excess funds. I understand that a new policy was put in place to help us determine which Past Delegates were Active and reimburse only those who were attending regularly.

For all these reasons I think we should move on to identify items more closely related to our charge.

## KBDM notes (Dominance)

Agenda Item #1: KBDM

### 1. What do we know about our membership's needs, wants and preferences that are relevant to this topic?

- \*Members want to be heard whether they are a majority or a minority voice
- \*Fewer Assembly members are willing to step forward into service opportunities
- \*Few people were actually concerned enough about this concern that they were willing to volunteer to be on the Task Force (only 4 members...5 but one didn't follow the commitment)
- \*Looking at the issue and researching what other Areas have done may help promote greater harmony within our Area
- \*Respect is important to everyone involved whether it's the majority or minority voice
- \*Deliberating may help bring harmony especially if respect is practiced; however, at some point discussion can turn into control if some continue to push their perceptions on others

*Our program does support the voice of everyone being heard and that there be enough time for discussion and deliberation prior to any vote. We found that there is a trend of people wanting things done but are not willing to participate to accomplish them. Given the minimal number of people willing to step onto the Task Force to look at the issue of dominance and what determines an Active Past Delegate, the interpretation was that dominance was not the issue. However, defining what an Active Past Delegate is might be helpful in encouraging greater clarity for the assembly members and better understanding for Past Delegates. As a result, there were two charges for our Task Force: 1) "What is the definition of a Past Delegate" followed by suggesting a "Job Description for a Past Delegate." Our Task Force Chair reached out to other Areas to determine if their Past Delegates have voice and/or vote on their Policy Committee and at their AWSC. 16 Areas responded in the following way:*

*1 area No Voice and No Vote*

*6 areas Voice and No Vote*

*8 areas Voice and Vote*

*1 area PolicyCom. Lottery for Voice and Vote ; AWSC Voice and Vote*

*This confirmed that Area 61 WIUPMI's policy of Voice and Vote for Active Past Delegates is not out of line. We have had ample opportunity to discuss the role of a Past Delegate. Unfortunately, respect has not always been practiced particularly by the minority voice. When in the minority, acceptance of a majority opinion is not always an easy skill.*

### 2. What do we know about our resources that are relevant to this topic?

- \*We have had a variable number of active past Delegates over the years. Most recently we only have two active past delegates
- \*Some of the Area's financial resources are used to support the involvement of Active Past Delegates but we get historical knowledge, experiential background and networking from former Delegates
- \*Delegates were elected by the Area membership because of the belief that the nominees would be a capable trusted servants
- \* Delegates do not represent local interests. They may reflect Area opinion and contribute Area ideas but they are not bound by directives from their groups but rather act as servants of World-wide Al-Anon
- \*The perception of "Active" Past Delegate has changed over the years. At one time they were coming to Area Assemblies but didn't actively participate on committees. The Past Delegates were then directed that, if they were to continue coming, they would have to take a more active role in service i.e. being involved with committees, thought forces, task forces, etc. Now there are some who are saying that the Past Delegates are over-involved. In a way the Past Delegates might feel like that they "are damned if they do and damned if they don't".

*Though the number of Past Delegates of our Area has varied, presently we have only two Past Delegates. It is hard to believe that they can over-ride the Policy Committee or the AWSC. The Area does financially support Active Past Delegates as indicated in our Policy Manual. In return, they provide to the Area with their experiential background, networking with other Areas and service arms, and historical knowledge of our fellowship. They also have shown a willingness to be of service when no one else steps up to do so. Our fellowship elects members as trusted servants based on their ability and competence rather than because they are a friend or they've been around a long time. Trust comes hard to many of us and we must remember to inventory our own motives if we, as an area, elect trusted servants then in the future individual members mistrust and disrespect them. Our Delegates represent Al-Anon as a whole, not any individual group of which they may be a part whether Al-Anon home group or a group of individual Al-Anon members. There seems to be confusion as to how to define "Active" Past Delegates. As a Task Force we felt that was a perception that would be best to address since it would not only help Past Delegates to understand what was expected of them but would also help Area members to recognize there's accountability for Past Delegates.*

### **3. What do we know about the current realities and our fellowship's environment that is relevant to this topic?**

- \*Al-Anon has a declining membership and appears to have fewer members willing to be actively involved in service

\*The topic of dominance of Past Delegates does not appear to be a perception shared by the majority of the Area membership. However a vocal minority continues to bring up this issue of dominance. Though the minority does have a voice, it does not have the right to override the perception of the Assembly majority and continually bring the issue back again and again. This is in and of itself “dominance”.

\*The spiritual principles of open-mindedness, trust, and harmony are important to our fellowship and should be practiced

\*The 3 Legacies, our Service Manual, the Area 61 Policy Manual, and information from other Areas will be helpful in guiding this task force

*As years pass, we've witnessed declining membership in Al-Anon as well as less desire to be involved in service. Past Delegates that have remained active are an asset to our fellowship. Generally, the assembly membership as a whole does not seem to have grievances about Past Delegates role in our Area. Though this issue has come up and there has been discussion about it, Group Conscience has never seen a reason to go beyond discussion and collecting information. Information is necessary but it doesn't always require a vote. Information when viewed with an open-mind, trust in each other, and a desire for harmony has been practiced in the past discussions. Unfortunately, that is not the present trend. Such behavior is not aligned with our spiritual principles. In addition to relying upon our HP, the 3 Legacies, the Service Manual, and our Area 61 Policy Manual have proven to be great resources in assessing our fellowship's environment.*

#### **4. What are the ethical implications of our choices? In other words, will our decision be consistent with our spiritual principles.**

\*The Task Force is tasked with coming to a conclusion about dominance knowing that it will be impossible to please everyone and support their perceptions but that it is important to remember that our common welfare should come first: “Personal progress for the greatest number depends upon unity.” (Tradition 1)

\*We need to seek out our HP's will for our efforts knowing that it will then be the best outcome for all

\*Is there open communication between leadership and membership? We need to ID issues, determine what needs our attention, decide where the problems lie, determine what is/isn't working, and investigate where we can get help

*People pleasing and approval seeking will not lead us to an unbiased conclusion. Our First Tradition maintains that unity is a goal that is worth pursuing. Following self-will most likely will not achieve unity but seeking the will of our HP will promote greater success. Presently there doesn't seem to be a 'central collection' body or individual to whom problems can be brought, documented and facilitated. Perhaps having such a source*

would lead to more open communication between leadership and membership.

##### **5. What do we wish we knew but don't?**

\*Do we have a job description for our Past Delegates that will guide them in being trusted servants?

\*What procedures do other Areas use in the participation of their Active Past Delegates?

\*We would like to know if this is truly an issue that is held close to the hearts of the majority of Area members that causes disunity or it is an issue that is by itself causing disunity where there would otherwise not be any.

\*Is there a "culture of trust" where we can examine the issue without an end or action in mind?

*Composing a draft of a definition of an Active Past Delegate led to a natural outcome of a realization that perhaps an Active Past Delegate Job Description might also be helpful. A natural starting point was to reach out to other Areas to see how they use their Active past Delegates. Though not all Areas responded, those that did certainly led us to believe that our Area's handling of Active Past Delegates is not out of line. We are again faced with the question, "Is this issue of dominance as it relates to Past Delegates truly a concern of the majority of Assembly members or is the conflict a result of a minority of members seeking the outcome they prefer?" Since the latter appeared to be the case, the greater focus for our Task Force was to define an Active Past Delegate and compose a Job Description for the position even though the issue of dominance was part of our discussion. Because the word "dominance" has become such a hot button term, we felt it more beneficial to write a definition and Job Description for Active Past Delegates and not accentuate dominance as a factor related only to Past Delegates. Dominance can be practiced by anyone and it certainly does seem to have more global undertones at this point in time.*

**Misc: Comments from Policy Committee Members to TF Report** (made but never answered):

- Under #1: Will WIUPMI and "Past Delegates from other Areas" have "voice but no vote" during the probationary period?
- During the three meetings they will have a voice but no vote.
- Is that one time only, or can they become inactive and then try to become active again? 2nd par, 2nd sentence

- What is “participation and/or involvement?”
- A Past Delegate is not an elected position but a lifetime member of the AWSC if they remain active at the Area level. (All Active Past Delegates are to be life members as of the 5/91 motion. -- 2018 Policy Manual on page 2 under AWSC #3.)
- Disagree with the recordable activity, if the Past Delegate is not going to have any of those requirements before they become inactive.
- These are not policies, change to -It is recommended these be added to the Past Delegate’s Duties and Procedures (yet to be established).