

A Look Inside The FA Fellowship



Families Anonymous

WHAT IS FAMILIES ANONYMOUS?

Families Anonymous® (FA®) is a fellowship of people whose lives have been affected by the use of mind-altering substances or related behavioral problems of a relative or friend. The FA program is based on two sets of fundamental principles: the Twelve Steps of FA, and the Twelve Traditions of FA. The Steps guide our members on their personal paths to recovery, while the Traditions assure the healthy functioning of our individual groups and the fellowship as a whole.

HOW DID FAMILIES ANONYMOUS BEGIN?

The first FA group was started in 1971 by several Southern California parents who were struggling to deal with the use and abuse of drugs by their teenage children. The purpose was twofold: to encourage family members to focus on their own reactions to their loved one's behaviors; and to help them understand and accept that the only behaviors they can control are their own.

WHAT IS FAMILIES ANONYMOUS LIKE NOW?

FA has continued to grow and expand. Now, more than 400 in-person and virtual meetings take place each week in the United States and at least a dozen other countries on six continents.

Over the years, FA has created and made available a wide assortment of recovery literature. Much of this literature has been translated into other languages for use by non-English speakers both within and outside the U.S. FA's World Service Office receives requests from around the world for FA literature and for assistance in starting new groups.

WORLD SERVICE BOARD OF DIRECTORS (WSB)

The WSB consists of up to 24 members, each serving a two-year term. Board members are nominated from individual groups and elected by group delegates at the Annual Business Meeting that is traditionally held in conjunction with a World Service Convention.

Board members formulate policy, administer business, oversee the World Service Office, and safeguard adherence to the FA program and its guiding principles.



STANDING COMMITTEES

FA has the following standing committees that support the fellowship: Budget, Bylaws/Parliamentarian, Financial Oversight, Group Outreach, International Groups, Literature, Long-Range Planning, Newsletter, Public Information, Sponsorship, Technology, and World Service Office. Each standing committee chair is appointed by the WSB chair, who is FA's administrative officer; each is a WSB member.

WORLD SERVICE OFFICE (WSO)

The WSO was created to "spread the word" about FA and to serve the needs of the fellowship. It is the central service point for all members, groups, intergroups, national service boards, and the public. It is staffed by the WSO administrator, a data management coordinator, and volunteers from local groups.



The WSO maintains the literature inventory; fulfills and ships literature orders; manages FA's meeting directories; and processes correspondence. It oversees, monitors and updates FA's website and e-store.

It receives telephone and e-mail requests from the membership and the public asking for assistance and information. It responds to such requests either directly or by referring them to a board member for follow-up.

It assists the general public in finding local in-person meetings as well as virtual meetings being held online or by phone. It also suggests referrals to other Twelve Step programs when appropriate.

SERENITY MESSENGER

The *Serenity Messenger* (formerly *The Twelve Step Rag*) is the fellowship's bimonthly newsletter. The chair of the Newsletter Committee, assisted by volunteers, is responsible for editing, publishing and distributing the newsletter.

The newsletter contains information of interest to all members and groups. It includes inspirational articles and poetry written by FA members; descriptions of FA's literature offerings; thoughts and announcements from individual groups and WSB members; and reports from the WSB.

It also includes, periodically, a list of members, groups, intergroups, and national service boards that have donated to the fellowship. This highlights the importance of donations as one of the only two sources of income that fund WSO operations, the other being sales of FA literature.

GROUPS & INTERGROUPS

Groups are formed when concerned individuals come together to hold meetings in accordance with the FA meeting format and with the guiding principles set forth in the fellowship's bylaws. Groups are autonomous and self-supporting.

Several groups within a geographical area may team up to form an intergroup. Intergroups enable closer collaboration among neighboring groups and are guided by elected representatives from each of their member groups. Groups and intergroups are the mainstay of all "world service" work.

NATIONAL SERVICE BOARDS (NSBs)

NSBs may be established in countries outside the United States whenever the growth of groups creates a need for local administration of the program and collaboration on related business matters. The bylaws of a NSB must comply with those of Families Anonymous and be approved by the WSB.

MEETINGS

Groups meet weekly or as determined by "group conscience" (consensus). In addition to traditional in-person meetings, virtual meetings have been established to provide support to people who have no local groups nearby, who are unable to travel to a meeting location, or who desire broader or more frequent participation than is available in their local communities.

Although no dues or fees are required for membership, groups do have expenses (such as rent, literature, refreshments, and helping fund the WSO). In-person meetings have traditionally received voluntary donations by "passing the basket." Virtual meetings—including the E-meeting, the phone meeting, and the meetings of local groups choosing to gather partly or completely online—pass a *virtual* basket, with members either mailing donations to their group's designee or making donations to the WSO online through the FA website.

The WSB and its respective committees meet virtually via conference call, with members logging on by phone or through an online app. Each standing committee meets as directed by its respective chair. The WSB itself meets monthly (except December); its meetings are open to any FA member who wishes to attend. Special meetings may be called by the WSB chair. The Annual Business Meeting is explained below.

WORLD SERVICE CONVENTION & ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING (ABM)

The ABM addresses any FA business that requires national or worldwide consensus. It is presided over by the chair of the WSB.



The ABM is traditionally held in conjunction with the World Service Convention, a fellowship event attended by group delegates, other FA members, and visitors. All convention attendees are invited to attend the ABM as well as participate in other events taking place at the convention.

Each group elects one delegate as its representative to the ABM. Delegates vote on official business, act as their group's link with the WSB, and express their group's opinions and needs. Business conducted at the ABM includes the election of officers and board members, the approval of policy changes affecting all groups, consideration of amendments to the bylaws, and other issues placed before the delegates for resolution.

WORLD SERVICE FUNDING



FA has two sources of income: 1) voluntary contributions made by, and accepted only from, groups, intergroups, NSBs, and individual FA members, and 2) proceeds from the sale of FA literature within the fellowship and to the general public.

FA accepts individual bequests, but only from sources within the fellowship; such bequests are expressly prohibited from sources outside the fellowship, as stated in FA's Seventh Tradition. This policy helps assure that no money or outside influence will affect the program, and that no non-FA entity will become affiliated or otherwise connected with the program, thereby violating the fellowship's Traditions. (More information about donations and contributions can be found on the DONATE page of the FA website.)

The treasurer of the WSB oversees finances. The Financial Oversight Committee reviews financial records monthly. An independent public-accounting firm submits necessary governmental and corporate forms as required.

LITERATURE & PUBLIC INFORMATION

The Literature Committee is responsible for all FA publications. It generates ideas and welcomes suggestions and original contributions from fellowship members; creates, writes, edits and formats new literature pieces and updates existing ones; and, after text approval by the WSB, oversees publication. The purpose of all FA literature is to explain the program so that suffering family members of addicted loved ones may be helped in achieving serenity, personal growth, and recovery.

The Public Information Committee's mandate is to foster, within the public domain, an awareness of the FA program. The committee directs the fellowship's message to a wide range of professionals that work with people (and the families of people) who have substance use disorder or related behavioral problems. These professionals include personnel in public agencies; people in the medical and legal professions; school counselors, teachers, and other staff members; and other persons at the local level who might refer families or friends to FA. The committee prepares announcements for newspapers, radio, television, other media, and the FA website.

SERVICE

Our first responsibility, as FA members, is to help ourselves recover from the adverse effects of drug or alcohol use or abuse within our families. We do this by understanding how codependency causes pain and distress in our relationships with our loved ones and by learning more positive ways of interacting with them.

Our second responsibility is to carry FA's message to others. We do this by informing and educating the public and by welcoming other families who are suffering as we have.

Our third responsibility is to perform service to the fellowship. This may include serving as our group's meeting leader, secretary, or treasurer; as its intergroup or NSB representative; or as a WSB member or officer.

Service can also consist of other Twelfth Step work, such as appearing at speaking engagements, organizing a table or booth at local public-information events, buying FA literature, "spreading the word" about FA, and making donations to the WSO.



In whatever capacities we choose to volunteer, we are helping preserve the integrity and continuity of FA as a lifeline to families struggling to understand and cope with a loved one's substance use disorder and related behavioral problems.

DECLARATION OF UNITY

The future of FA depends on UNITY. Only through UNITY can we achieve our common goal, which is personal progress for each member.



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