

District 9 Inventory Recap - September 17th, 2023

Present:

Benjamin G Area 92 Chair/ D9 Inventory facilitator

D9 officers: Ben H Interim District 9 (D9)DCM/Treasurer/Group Service Rep (GSR) Tues Night Promises, Kari D9 Secretary

D9 GSR's and Committee Chairs: Rick Activities/GSR Touch On Feelings, Gene GSR Sunday Morning Eye Opener, Ron O Juvenile Justice/GSR Spiritual Toolbox (M-F), Walt GSR Thursday Night Open, Margue GSR Water Tower, Chris GSR Night Owls, Craig B GSR Early Birds, Janet Web & Technology, Barbara Literature, Marc Area Corrections

AA members: Steve H, Tyler, Nancy, Will, Virginia, Danielle, Lauren

Al-Anon: Jan A

Welcoming and housekeeping:

Ben H opened the meeting with The Serenity prayer, and then read the Daily Reflection from 9/16/2023 which contained a message of Unity – reminding us that we stand or fall together.

Traditions read by Gene.

Meeting handed over to Benjamin G, our facilitator for the inventory, who went over ground rules for today's meeting starting with the importance of respecting everyone's viewpoint. Five questions were prepared by the D9 Ad hoc Inventory Committee (Ben, Janet, Ron, Barbara) – whom he thanked for their outstanding work. He explained that everyone at the meeting would have an opportunity to comment on each of the six questions and each person has up to three minutes to respond to each question.

Timekeeper: Walt, Note Takers: Janet and Kari.

This re-cap of the day's input by all present represents the common thread of the Group Conscience in response to the five questions, weighted as "Many people said:", "Some people said:" and "A few people said:" to help D9 prioritize which action items to address moving forward. Each of the five questions include bulleted sub-questions, as submitted by participating GSR's groups.

Question 1: What is the Basic Purpose of District 9?

- What does District 9 do?
- Are we reaching out to the alcoholics still suffering?
- What is the job of District 9?

Many people said:

We should make it attractive to be involved in service.

Many questioned the effectiveness of our District. Several members saw the need to improve our communication to groups and groups to District. Some questioned why members are reluctant to step up and get involved in service. Do members know what GSR's, District officers, Committees comprise? The need for clearer guidelines on these roles was frequently mentioned. Is the AA Service manual available to members, are GSR's encouraging their group members to get involved in service? Do we encourage all groups to see the importance of having a voice at the District 9 level?

Outreach committees need more help. We need to improve our outreach/carrying the message into our community. In order to accomplish this, we also need to bring in more people to participate on the committees.

District ideally provides tools to Groups for carrying the message, help in understanding service opportunities at every level and how to get involved, workshops (i.e., community outreach, GSR roles, sponsorship), outreach to local area hospitals, institutions and schools, putting on AA Social events and maintaining financial accountability to our district, groups and to General Service Office (GSO) in NY and Area 92. All these are examples of ways D9 can do the things that individual Groups are less able or less efficiently to accomplish on their own.

Common thread was that education was needed to understand what District 9 does and is responsible for at both the District and Group level. Help in understanding Service – education, manuals, guidelines

There also needs to be more unity within AA in our area, and more respect between GSR's and officers at the District Level. Love and tolerance. Practicing our principles (before personalities).

Some people said:

They saw it as a conduit for the Group's conscience to be carried to District, from the District to Area 92 and to GSO. Then a conduit back the other way, sharing information from GSO, Area 92, and District to our Groups.

The district has the responsibility to allow the voices from the local AA groups to be shared with the District and Area level.

A few people said:

Yes, we are reaching the still suffering alcoholic.

The District is carrying the message to suffering alcoholics but is concerned that not all groups are represented at District meetings. Not all GSRs attend.

District should be supportive of the local groups in the Primary Purpose of AA.

The following comments were primarily from AA meeting members vs D9 GSR's:

They were not sure what District 9 did and is. Several in attendance said they were new to Walla Walla, or to AA, and were there to learn. Another said it was their first District level meeting and they were there to learn about AA hierarchy. Another stated that they were interested in serving on a District committee.

Actions Items Discussed:

- Education at all levels – Group, District and in the community
- Service sponsorship
- Community outreach

Question 2: Are our District 9 service Positions Clearly Defined?

- Why is it OK for District 9 to be judgmental about newcomers in relation to holding positions within District 9?

Many people said:

Consensus heard was, NO, our service positions are not clearly defined.

We need to define roles. We need to do more sharing with the Groups regarding what the service opportunities are, length of commitment, when the positions rotate.

Some people said:

Some members feel that the district is seen to be judgmental, divisive, not inclusive. It was discussed that there's a need to have guidelines on sobriety time before doing service on some positions. The purpose of a minimum requirement is to ensure that person is stable in their recovery, focusing on that first. Equally important, we should have consideration for any newcomer who expresses a desire to be involved. Sobriety length should only be a suggestion for many positions. We should err on encouragement not judgement or exclusion.

Are we leaving opportunities for newer members to be involved, like at the Committee level, so that they can serve and, at the same time, learn more about the service structure at the District level?

A few people said:

This person is new to sobriety – what is “GSR”? (several answer “General Service Representative”) – she makes coffee and grateful for the opportunity to help her group. She knows she has a lot to learn.

Benjamin G noted that the GSO (General Service Office in NY) website is a wealth of information on service, as is the area92aa.org site, and the AA Service Manual.

Action Items Discussed:

- Update our Guidelines with Service Positions/Committee descriptions clearly defined
- Encouragement to those showing interest
- Service sponsorship
- Judge less, Love more

Question 3: Are our District Guidelines Clear and Concise?

- How is the “Spirit of Rotation” being dealt with?

Many people said:

The present District guidelines were brought up frequently by many who hold service positions. The common theme expressed was that the present guidelines are not clear and certainly need to be reviewed and updated. Many in the room admitted they knew nothing about them and had never read them.

It was discussed that it is so important to instill the importance of service to individual’s quality of sobriety. Are we doing this at the group and district level? How do we attract members to take on service positions?

“Rotation is about humility.” Fresh Inspiration: “Influence and control does not bring fresh inspiration.”

Benjamin G reminded us that our D9 Guidelines should be seen as a living breathing document, “nothing set in stone”.

Some people said:

Spirit of Rotation in the draft guidelines, recently presented at a D9 meeting, tried to address stricter suggestions on this. (The Spirit of Rotation subject was tabled, proposed new Guidelines were not approved at two different recent D9 meetings.)

Benjamin asked whether District 9 keeps a “Motion History”? There were mixed responses to this.

Someone stated that there have been older members who have stayed in Service positions almost constantly due to lack of participation. Should positions be left open if no one steps up?

Several members saw the advantage of newer members working alongside as an alternate in a service position, but questioned how we make it attractive to step up?

A question was asked as to how much prayer is practiced in attracting members to Service Positions? Another commented that letting new people step into serve also helps them replace their character defects with AA’s principles of patience, tolerance, kindness and love.

Benjamin G suggested we consider having D9 officers and GSR’s rotate out to the Alternate position to serve as a guide and historical memory for the newly incoming Trusted Servant and he said, “Members taking on Service positions will trip and make mistakes and, in falling, will gain experience, humility and will ultimately succeed.”

Positions will be filled!

Actions Items Discussed:

- Update our Guidelines with Service Positions/Committee descriptions clearly defined
- Important to have alternates for all service positions.
- Education needed for the future of our District.

Question 4: Are our business meetings attractive, informative, and filled with enthusiasm, do we treat each other with respect and dignity?

- Do District 9 members listen with an open mind to the questions from the groups?
- Are we being respectful, open minded and fair?

Many people said:

“No”. A lack of trust and cooperation among members, officers not being able to vote on issues before the District if not also a GSR doesn't make sense. How can one be responsible for moving things forward when you can't vote? It leaves a feeling of not being fully involved and almost not trusted. They felt this was unfair and should be reviewed.

Benjamin G pointed out most Area's and District's allow officers and Committee chairs to vote in addition to the GSR's.

Many have experienced people being disrespected, interrupted, sarcastic body language, demeaning comments, not listening, engaging in other conversations while someone is presenting their report, ignoring efforts by the DCM and Secretary to restore some order. “Very rude.” District should consider some form of Roberts Rules of Order “light” process so that the basics of ensuring motions are made and seconded before any discussion starts and no other subjects are brought forth until the motion at hand has been voted on.

Consensus was that at times we do not treat each other with respect and dignity at the District meetings. There is a lack of respect for any structure or order to the meeting which causes chaos and cross talk.

It was hoped by many that the outcome of the inventory would be a review of the guidelines and a change to promote structure and procedure in the meetings that would reinforce respect and encourage participation in the district.

Some people said:

Those who have not been part of the meetings said they had heard nothing good about them, which makes them not compelled to join.

Members at the meeting need to understand how a meeting should be conducted, adhere to more structure, : maybe an agenda published ahead of time with an opportunity to add agenda items before the meeting commences.

A few people said:

It was noted by one member that a recent email string requesting comments on “New draft Guidelines” moved into inappropriate conversations that were upsetting and disrespectful. Naming names, putting personalities before our principles. Not the way to do business or practice our principles.

One GSR stated we need to understand why GSR’s and officers do not want to be at the meeting. Another present said we should try to instill more fun, less divisiveness.

Someone commented that “they wished the District meeting could be conducted as well as this inventory meeting!”

Action Items Discussed:

- Need for Structure and clear procedural guidelines to D9 meetings.
- Need to Practice our Principles in all our affairs, placing principles before personalities.
- Need help groups understand the function of District as it relates to their groups.
Encourage participation.
- Have more fun, attraction rather than promotion!

Question 5: Do we attract New Members and Groups?

Many people said:

Participation is the key to harmony!

The general feeling from majority was that our **Groups** are doing well in attracting new members (not so the **District**). Each GSR agreed that they are seeing new members in their groups. We have a new group that has started recently.

We need to do a better job of “Practicing our Principles in all our affairs. What would our Higher Powers want us to say or do?”

Some people said:

A member asked if the GSR’s are sharing information from the District meetings with their groups and is it shared with a positive attitude? It was felt that part of the problem is that, at times, there is not a positive feeling at the group level regarding the district meetings.

A member was concerned that some groups do not have a GSR or have a GSR but no representation at the district meeting. It was suggested we need to investigate why this is, and how we can improve this, maybe have GSR’s visit other groups to talk about service opportunities at D9.

Another suggested that getting Group members involved on Committees that need support might be one way to get members interested in serving as a GSR as well.

A few people said:

They’ve seen so much dissention in the past that they felt their sobriety was more important than sitting through the D9 meetings.

Action Items Discussed:

- Hold workshops on Service/Traditions and Concepts/Service Sponsorship/What District committees do
- Encourage greater participation by Group members to serve on Committees at D9
- Commitment by all - GSR’s, Officers, Committee chairs and members - in bringing positive change through participation on the Action Items coming from this Inventory

What Comes Next? Wrap up

- Will the inventory have actions that “Will Fix Things”?

Many people said:

There was hope in the room that the outcome of the inventory would be instrumental in “fixing” the issues of concern in the district if we can work together, treat each other with respect and dignity and have fun in the process.

Some people said:

It was expressed that the hope is that the D9 GSR’s will digest this inventory and make motions at the next D9 meetings to prioritize and act on the suggested Action Items under each of the 5 Question’s.

Our inventory will only be effective as:

- Our complete honesty with ourselves, our own behavior.
- Our open mindedness to try new things and ideas.
- Our willingness to put into action the suggested Action Items, ideas and proposals from this very successful and thoughtful District 9 Inventory.

Final Actions for Inventory Ad-Hoc Committee:

- Notetakers combine their recording of the inventory discussions.
- There will be a Google Meet meeting with Benjamin G and the D9 Ad hoc Inventory committee within next 2 weeks to summarize the inventory. GSR’s and D9 officers are invited to attend.
- A list of suggested ACTION ITEMS will be finalized and presented at the next D9 meeting.
- The results will then be posted on D9 website for all groups to see.

Suggested Follow up actions for GSR’s.

- GSR’s to take the suggested ACTION ITEMS back to their groups.
- GSR’s prioritize, make motions and resolutions on suggested ACTION ITEMS.
- Ad-Hoc Committees appointed to explore how suggested ACTION ITEMS can be completed and report progress back at future District 9 meetings.
- **UNITY!!!** **PARTICIPATION!!!** **SERVICE!!!**