

## A Look Inside the FA Fellowship

### WHAT IT IS

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 former guide our members' personal recovery, while the latter assure the healthy functioning of individual groups and the fellowship as a whole.

### HOW IT BEGAN

The first FA group was started in 1971 by several Southern California parents who were struggling with the use and abuse of drugs by their teenage children. Their purpose was twofold: to encourage family members to focus on their own reactions to the behavior of their addicted loved ones, and to help them recognize that the only behavior over which they had any control was their own.

FA has continued to grow and expand. Now, more than 500 meetings take place each week in the United States and a dozen other countries. Over the years, FA has created and made available a wide assortment of recovery literature, much of which has been translated into various languages for use by non-English-speaking members both within and outside the U.S. The 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 twenty-four members, each serving a two-year term. Board members are nominated from individual groups and elected by group delegates at the World Service Annual Business Meeting that is held in conjunction with the 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 ten standing committees that support the fellowship: Budget, Bylaws/Parliamentary, Financial Oversight, Group Outreach, International Groups, Literature, Newsletter, Public Information, Sponsorship, and World Service Office. The chair of each standing committee is appointed by the WSB chair, who is the FA administrative officer. Each standing committee chair is a WSB member.

### WORLD SERVICE OFFICE (WSO)

The World Service Office was created to “spread the word” about FA and to serve the needs of the fellowship. It is the central service point for all groups, intergroups, national service boards, and the public. It is staffed by the WSO administrator; other paid employees, hired as needed; and volunteers from local groups.



The WSO maintains the literature inventory, fulfills and ships literature orders, updates and prints meeting directories, and processes correspondence. The office receives telephone and e-mail requests for assistance and information from the membership and the public, and it responds to such requests either directly or by referring them to a board member for follow-up. The office assists the general public in finding local meeting information, and it provides referrals to other Twelve Step programs when appropriate.

### THE TWELVE STEP RAG

*The Twelve Step Rag* is the fellowship's bi-monthly newsletter. The chair of the Newsletter Committee, assisted by volunteers, is responsible for editing, publishing, and distributing the *Rag*.



Articles for the *Rag* are submitted by group members who donate their anonymous literary efforts. The *Rag* contains information of interest to all groups: inspirational articles, poetry, and announcements; a report from the WSB chair; and an annual list of donations received from groups, intergroups, national service boards, and individuals. (Donations are one of the two sources of income that fund WSO operations.)

### GROUPS AND 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 of each of their member groups. Groups and intergroups are the mainstay of all “world service” work.

### NATIONAL SERVICE BOARDS (NSBs)

National service boards 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, Inc., and be approved by the WSB.

### MEETINGS

Groups meet weekly or as determined by “group conscience” (consensus). In addition to traditional, face-to-face meetings, alternative web-based 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.



No dues or fees are required for membership. Groups that hold face-to-face meetings receive voluntary donations by “passing the basket.” Web-based groups (including the E-meeting and the Meeting Without Walls) solicit donations by “passing a virtual basket” and accepting payments online and via mail.

Each standing committee of the WSB meets as directed by its respective chair. The WSB itself meets monthly (except for December); its meetings are open, and visitors and group members are welcome to attend. Special meetings may be called by the WSB chair. The Annual Business Meeting is explained below.

### WORLD SERVICE CONVENTION AND 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 usually 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 business meeting as well as to participate in the other events taking place at the convention.

Each group elects one delegate to represent it at 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 meeting 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 major sources of income: (1) voluntary contributions made by, and accepted only from, groups, intergroups, NSBs, and individual members of FA, and (2) proceeds from the sale of FA literature within the fellowship and to the general public.

Individual bequests may be accepted only from sources within the fellowship; they 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.

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 AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

The Literature Committee is responsible for all FA publications. It generates ideas for literature pieces and welcomes original contributions and suggestions from

fellowship members; creates, writes, edits, and formats the literature pieces; and, after text approval by the WSB, oversees their 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 mandate of the Public Information Committee 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 abuse drugs or have related behavioral problems. These professionals include public-agencies personnel, people in the medical and legal professions, schools and school counselors, and other persons at the local level who might refer families or friends to FA. The committee prepares announcements for newspapers, radio, television, and the FA website.



#### SERVICE AND THE MEMBER

As FA members, we recognize that our first responsibility is to help ourselves recover from the adverse effects of drug abuse within our families.

Our second responsibility is to inform and educate the public about FA and help other families suffering from the effects of a loved one's drug abuse.

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



Service may 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 capacity we choose to volunteer, we are helping to preserve the integrity and continuity of FA as a lifeline to families suffering because of the addiction of their loved ones.

#### DECLARATION OF UNITY

The future of FA depends on UNITY. Personal progress for each member is the common goal that can be achieved only through UNITY.



To order additional copies of this or other FA literature, to find a local or online meeting, or to obtain information about starting a new group in your community, please contact:

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## FAMILIES ANONYMOUS