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.

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 accept 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 the WSB officer), 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.

To learn more about Families Anonymous, please visit their website at www.familiesanonymous.org.
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.

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:

FAMILIES ANONYMOUS, INC.
701 Lee Street, Suite 670
Des Plaines, IL 60016
(847) 294-5877 • fax (847) 294-5837
(800) 736-9805 (USA only)

Website: www.FamiliesAnonymous.org
E-mail: famanon@FamiliesAnonymous.org

All Rights Reserved

No part of this pamphlet may be reproduced without the express written permission of the Board of Directors of Families Anonymous, Inc.

#5006 Revised 2/2013

A Look Inside the FA Fellowship