

Local Service Group Guidelines and Recommendations

Last updated January 2016

1. What is a Local Service Group and what is its purpose?

- A Local Service Group consists of two or more FA members from more than one FA meeting group who combine resources to do service for FA. (FA Bylaws: Article IX, Section 2b).
- A LSG is an informal group. It is not a legal entity.
- The primary purpose of the LSG is to operate at the local level to spread the word of FA to the still-suffering food addict and others such as family, medical professionals, clergy, and employers.
- Each FA meeting is autonomous. While the LSG may perform functions that are helpful to individual meetings, an LSG's purpose is not to be a governing body over meetings. It has been found more helpful for LSG's to keep their primary focus on reaching the still-suffering food addict.
- Attendance or service at the local service group level is not intended to replace attendance or service at a committed FA meeting.
- Even though 12th step work of supporting the current membership is important, this is not the primary focus of the local service group.
- Sometimes, a local service group forms simply as a natural outgrowth of two or more PI reps and other members working together to coordinate a PI function.

2. Who can join a Local Service Group? Do you have to have 90 days of abstinence?

- Any FA member can join a LSG.
- In order to protect our personal recovery, it is suggested that a member speak with their sponsor before participating especially if a member has less than 90 days of abstinence.
- In situations requiring a formal decision, only members with at least 90 days of continuous abstinence in FA who are working with an FA sponsor shall have a voice and a vote (FA Bylaws: Article IX, Section 2b).
 - An example of an informal decision would be the group deciding to stay ten more minutes to finish folding tri-folds.
 - An example of a formal decision would be to decide if the local service group will participate in a health fair.
- A member of the LSG should have 90 days of continuous abstinence and be working with an FA sponsor in order to take on a temporary service position such as coordinating a writing workshop or contacting doctors in the area.

3. What types of activities do LSG's find especially helpful?

- Getting together to prepare for, and do information sessions.
- Monitoring an 800 or centralized number.
- Ordering tri-folds in bulk.

- Contacting corporate wellness representatives to discuss having information sessions, lunch and learns, distributing tri-folds within the company, or working with their Employee Assistance Program.
- Working with FA weblinks to get links for local high schools, colleges and businesses.
- Coordinating classroom information sessions for local high schools and colleges.
- Setting up and coordinating booths at local health fairs.
- Updating letters to Health Care Providers and Faith Community Leaders with accurate contact information, making copies, and distributing the letters to FA meetings.
- Coordinating efforts with local media such as newspapers and radio stations.
- Note that even though the LSG may coordinate efforts, members of the LSG can and should call other members in the area to help with the work.
- Many of these activities are also done at the meeting level. PI reps can refer to the tri-fold “So You’re a Public Information Rep...Now What?”
- Donate an FA Book to your local library.
- To get more ideas, attend the bi-monthly Service Group Support Call. For phone number and access codes, check www.foodaddicts.org under the Service Group Support tab.
- In addition to doing service to reach the newcomer, there are some 12th step activities that a local service group may help coordinate including a *connection* writing workshop or Thank-a-Thon.

4. How do you know when an area is ready to form a Local Service Group?

- An area is ready to form a local service group when FA members from different meetings see a need to get together to do service.
- If you find two or more people from two or more meetings getting together to perform service-oriented activities (such as those described in question 3) then the group is already performing as a local service group.
- If there is no desire to collaborate to do service, there is no need for a local service group.

5. Are there fixed service positions?

- It is recommended that the LSG have a rotating facilitator and a note taker for each meeting of the group; other service positions may be created as the need arises. For example, if the group is participating in a health fair, someone may volunteer to coordinate the effort.
- Rotating positions gives more people an opportunity to do service. It also keeps the LSG informal. Please note that holding a service position in any meeting including positions for a LSG, requires a member to have 90 days of continuous abstinence in FA and be working with an FA sponsor.

6. Does an LSG need to maintain a treasury?

- The LSG should not need to maintain a treasury. As is outlined in the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (Tradition 7), accumulating funds at the meeting level, beyond what is necessary for “bare running expenses plus a prudent reserve” conflicts with “the principle of corporate poverty (*which has been*) firmly embedded in 12 Step tradition.” (Taken from the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* as reviewed by the FA Traditions Committee).
- A local service group meeting, like any other FA meeting, should pass the basket to pay for meeting space. Typically, whoever is facilitating the meeting for the month will make certain the monies are channeled to the appropriate party at the venue. Any left over money should be channeled as stated in the 7th tradition pamphlet “Your FA Seventh Tradition”.
- There are times when the LSG needs funds. For example, if the LSG is coordinating an FA table at a health fair and needs funds for tri-folds, the LSG should let the area meetings know of this financial need. Whoever is holding the temporary position of coordinator for that event could gather the donations for the tri-folds from a meeting (or several meetings). All money collected would be used for the printing of the tri-folds. Any excess should be distributed per the 7th tradition pamphlet.
- If the area needs additional financial support for an event, they can contact their intergroup or chapter.
- Note: For additional information on the concept of corporate poverty, or how to distribute excess funds, refer to “Your FA Seventh Tradition” pamphlet at www.foodaddicts.org.

7. How often should a Local Service Group meet?

- Even though there is no set frequency for holding a LSG meeting, best practices recommend that LSG’s meet monthly either before or after an FA meeting.
- It is important to have a time limit on the meeting. LSGs typically meet 30-60 minutes per month. Some groups meet for a longer time period. It depends on what the group is working on.
- It is recommended to keep the agenda focused and work on only one or two projects at a time.

8. Does each FA meeting in the area need to be represented for a Local Service Group to form?

- It is not necessary for each meeting in the area to be represented to form a LSG.
- Once a LSG is formed, some Local Service Groups find it helpful if each meeting is represented. If there is someone from each meeting group at the LSG meeting, it makes it easier to inform the entire FA community of events.
- As an alternative, each meeting could have an LSG contact. This contact would not have to attend each meeting, but they would be the person to be contacted when information needs to be disseminated.
- Please keep in mind that the LSG is not a governing body.

9. Do you need to take notes? If so, should they be circulated (how and to whom)?
- Each meeting of the LSG has a note taker. This is especially important for the sake of continuity.
 - Notes could be distributed via email. It is helpful if they are circulated within a week of the meeting. Some groups send the notes to all who attend the meeting and others have a set distribution list for all who have ever attended a meeting. Others send the notes to LSG contacts.
 - Sending out an agenda a few days prior to the meeting serves as a meeting reminder and also can be used to let people know what is coming up in the area. Some LSGs set the agenda for the next meeting as the last piece of business at each monthly meeting.
10. How do you keep the momentum going once you have your group formed?
- Remember to keep it simple. Selecting activities that are manageable and achievable help people feel the group is being successful. Start small. Build upon your achievements.
 - Encourage everyone who attends to express their ideas without fear of judgment.
 - Give everyone who attends a task to help people feel a part of the group.
 - Send out an agenda a few days prior to the meeting.
 - Have some on-going activities such as maintenance of and/or distribution of tri-folds and racks.
 - Have repeated events such as an annual day of sharing or *connection* writing workshop as long as the LSG continues to focus on activities that support the primary purpose (see question #1).
 - Be willing to try new ideas. If the idea works, make sure you share it at the SGSC bi-monthly meeting!
 - Get several copies of the PI Kit printed and take time to review the PI Kit as a group.
 - Twice a year, prepare a list of successes that people can share with others.
11. How do you let people in your area know that you and others are thinking of forming a local service group?
- On your out-reach calls to fellows in your area, mention the idea of starting a local service group. Call especially those who are active in doing service.
 - When you find several people who are interested in forming a group, determine a meeting date and invite people who attend your meetings to join you.
 - Announce the meeting of the local service group at your FA meetings.
 - Talk with your sponsees and invite them to join you.
 - Before you start meeting formally as a local service group, some FA members found it helpful to meet before, after, or independent of one of their regularly scheduled FA meetings to brainstorm. Bring copies of these guidelines for everyone to review.
 - Share freely about the benefits of doing service in a local service group.

12. How do you expand and grow your group?

- Encourage sponsees to attend.
- Inviting members to help plan one event is a good way to get people involved.
- Announce the local service group meetings, along with any successes, at your weekly meetings and/or monthly business meetings.
- Give FA members information on where to find the guidelines and recommendations on the website.

13. What language do we use to announce local service group meetings?

Here is an example of a meeting announcement:

Hi – my name is XXX and I'm a food addict. I'm also a member of our Local Service Group. This is a group of FA members from several different meetings who join efforts to reach the newcomer. All are welcome to join us. Our next meeting is (day, time, location). We are planning (an information session, need help to man a booth at a health fair on whatever date, or we are going to be reviewing the PI kit, or whatever else is going on). If you have any questions, please see me during the break or after the meeting.

14. Is it OK for one area to have more than one local service group?

- In most cases, since the purpose is to pool resources, if the groups are geographically close, it may make more sense to keep it to one group. Keep in mind it's principles over personalities.
- For local service groups that have meetings that are more than an hour from each other, having two groups may serve a purpose.

15. Since meetings have PI reps, what is the benefit to also having a local service group?

- Since the PI rep rotates, the LSG gives some continuity to PI activities.
- The existence of a Local Service Group, gives meetings the opportunity to pool resources.
- Having a LSG gives more people the opportunity to do service.
- There are so many ways that a PI rep can be of service including maintaining the trifold, printing healthcare and medical professional handouts, contacting media to get calendar announcements out to the public, manning tables at health fairs and so much more; having a group to support them could be really beneficial.

To get more ideas, ask questions, or share information, attend the bi-monthly Service Group Support Call. For phone number and access codes, check www.foodaddicts.org under the Service Group Support tab.

AT ALL TIMES, REMEMBER TO KEEP IT SIMPLE!