

Rappahannock Area Narcotics Anonymous 2024 Annual Bylaw Review

This report outlines changes in the RANA Bylaws that were discussed and drafted during this past month's Bylaw Review sessions. At their best, bylaws ground the fellowship and support oversight of its current practices. Review of bylaws allow us as a service body to adapt to changing circumstances and learn from previous experiences.

Each proposed change has been considered in accordance with **Article 9 – Spiritual Guidance** of our current bylaws, using the 12 Traditions, 12 Concepts for NA Service, the current Bylaws, *A Guide to Local Services in Narcotics Anonymous*, and *Robert's Rules of Order (Newly Revised)* as guidance.

Proposed Changes and Rationales:

1. Article 3, Sections 1 and 2: Switching of Sections

Change: The order of **Section 1** (ASC Meeting Format) and **Section 2** (Date and Time of ASC meetings) should be switched.

Rationale: This reordering improves flow and is largely clerical in nature. By first outlining the meeting date and time then followed by the meeting format, the structure of the bylaws is more intuitive.

2. Article 4, Section 2: Administrative Committee Members Serving as GSRs

Change: The proposed change to the bylaws states that “No member of the Administrative Committee or Executive Body shall serve concurrently as a Group Service Representative (GSR) or represent a homegroup with the intent to carry that group's conscience at Area Service Committee meetings.”

Rationale: This change was made to avoid potential conflicts of interest or perceptions thereof that may arise when Administrative Committee members represent homegroup interests while holding executive roles. By ensuring that Administrative Committee members do not serve as GSRs, the ASC maintains impartiality in decision-making processes, ensuring that homegroups' voices are represented independently and that those in administrative roles remain unbiased in their service to the Area as a whole.

3. Article 5, Section 1, Item Q: Clarification of Duties

Change: The wording of **Item Q** was changed from “Send the *Consecutive Uninformed Absence Form Letter* ...” to “Contact...”

Rationale: This change still entrusts the Chairperson with the responsibility to ensure accountability among officers and subcommittee chairs but allows them the freedom to contact absentee persons in a method they deem acceptable. The previous wording included the title of a document, the *Consecutive Uninformed Absence Form Letter*, which cannot be located, nor could an example of one ever being sent be found in ASC archives.

4. Article 6: Zoom Meetings and Public Places for In-Person Meetings

Change: The proposed bylaws now explicitly allow for ASC and subcommittee meetings to be held via Zoom or similar virtual platforms.

Additionally, as a point of clarity to match this wording, there is the suggested edit to specify that subcommittee meetings that are being held *in-person* are to be held in public spaces.

Rationale: The practice of online subcommittee meetings has been commonplace for some time now, and adding this specific verbiage is clerical in nature. The addition of Zoom as an approved meeting method reflects the need for flexibility, especially considering the evolutions brought on by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Zoom subcommittee meetings allow for greater participation from members who may face geographical or scheduling challenges.

The addition of “in-person” to the verbiage of the second bullet point prevents the misinterpretation that subcommittee meeting attendees must be in a public place when attending online. Conducting in-person meetings in public places is a practice that comes from *A Guide to Local Services in Narcotics Anonymous*. The bylaw reflects this to foster transparency and neutrality. Meetings in public spaces ensure that all members feel comfortable and safe in attending, aligning with NA’s principles of accessibility. Public locations provide a neutral, accessible venue that does not have the appearance of favor to any individual member or group of members. Private homes and locations, while convenient for many members, may introduce discomforts and concerns over privacy, fairness, and inclusivity, particularly for newer members (“*Holding a meeting in an individual’s home may affect the willingness of some members to attend*” *A Guide to Local Services in Narcotics Anonymous*, p. 29).

5. Article 10, Section 1: Purpose of Area Funds

Change: To create a new Section 1, which defines the Purpose of Area Funds:

“The primary purpose of Area funds is to support the operations of the Rappahannock Area of Narcotics Anonymous. These funds are specifically designated for Area Service Committee and subcommittee expenditures, ensuring that we fulfill our responsibility to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. This includes but is not limited to maintaining meeting spaces, purchasing literature, supporting outreach efforts, and covering necessary or budgeted administrative expenses. The use of Area funds should always reflect the spiritual principles of our fellowship, with a focus on serving the homegroups and addicts within our Area.”

Subsequent sections will maintain their content, but section numbers will be sequentially increased.

Rationale: Effective and responsible financial oversight is outlined in **Concept 11** - *NA funds are to be used to further our primary purpose and must be managed responsibly*. This helps ensure that resources are used wisely to serve the needs of the fellowship. Defining the purpose of Area Funds ensures that we can sustain our Area’s administrative operations, as well as “maintain final responsibility for the activities of its subcommittees” (*A Guide to Local Service*, p.63). This addition strengthens the financial accountability of the ASC and reemphasizes the Purpose of Area Service in “supporting our members, our groups, and our area in carrying the message of NA” (RANA Bylaws, Article 2). By clearly defining the purpose of Area Funds, the ASC can prioritize expenditures and rule potential requests for funds “Out of Order” more effectively. If a request does not align with the established guidelines for fund usage, it may be deemed out of order, in accordance with **Robert’s Rules of Order**.

6. Removal of the Outreach Subcommittee

Change: The proposed bylaws officially remove the section concerning the Outreach Subcommittee, which has been operating as an ad hoc committee for some time. The responsibilities of outreach will now fall under the Public Relations Subcommittee if needed.

Rationale: Consolidating Outreach responsibilities into the Public Relations Subcommittee has been in place for a few years now, but no change to the bylaws remained in case a trusted servant stepped into this role. The removal and consolidation allow for more streamlined operations and better coordination of outreach efforts. The Public Relations Subcommittee is already tasked with external communications and community engagement, so this change ensures that outreach initiatives align with the overall public relations strategies. Removing the *ad hoc* status of Outreach simplifies the committee structure, enabling more effective use of resources and trusted servants.

7. Removal of Article 5, Section 4, Item E (File Box)

Change: The proposed bylaws remove Article 5, Section 4, Item E, which refers to the maintenance of a physical file box. With the move to electronic forms and record-keeping, this item is no longer relevant.

Rationale: As the area has transitioned to using electronic forms for documentation and communication, maintaining a physical file box has become obsolete. Removing this requirement streamlines our operations and reflects the current practices of digital record-keeping, which are more efficient and accessible.