



## Northern California World Service Area Resolving Inappropriate Group Practices Guideline

### **A. PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this guideline is to outline the Area's policy and process for resolving significant inappropriate group practices. When an Al-Anon Family Group practice does not align with Al-Anon's Traditions and Concepts, this guideline is a group conscience method of explaining the concerns and encouraging the Group to align itself with Al-Anon's Traditions and Concepts. Should all efforts to realign fail, the District or Area may unpublish the Al-Anon Family Group from its meeting lists. In addition, this guideline is intended to be shared with the World Service Office to allow its support of the Meeting List Publishing Policy the guideline outlines.

### **B. PROCESS:**

This process helps Groups in Northern California World Service Area (NCWSA) and its Districts, Intergroups, Al-Anon Information Services (AIS) and Literature Distribution Centers (LDC) remain consistent with Al-Anon Traditions, Concepts and Policies. When an individual believes a Group exhibits a significant inappropriate behavior, that individual is encouraged to reach out to the Al-Anon Group itself, and second, the District or the Area.

This guideline outlines the steps taken by the Northern California World Service Area (NCWSA) when an issue is brought to its attention. Regardless of where the issue begins, the NCWSA Group Practices Committee (GPC) will first ask the Group and/or District to resolve it themselves. If that is not successfully resolved, the GPC would undertake a thorough fact-finding prior to deliberation and present its findings.

There is still one more attempt at resolution if the issue is still not resolved. Either party may appeal to the Resolution Committee.

In the event that a Group continues on a path that does not abide by Al-Anon principles after full reviews have been completed, there is a clear procedure for removal from Area and District published meeting lists and websites, and notification of the decision to the World Service Office.

Any statement concerning the issue also outlines the steps a Group needs to take for being republished in their District and Area meeting lists and websites.

### **C. PRINCIPLES:**

The following principles guided the development of this policy:

1. Al-Anon presumes good will.
2. That when concerns arise, they are first addressed by collaborative information-gathering and discussion using Al-Anon tools such as KBDM and the Conflict Resolution Guide materials.
3. Any significant departure from Al-Anon's spiritual principles and policies, as outlined in Al-Anon's Legacies – the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts – as well as the current edition of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*, current Al-Anon Guidelines and current NCWSA Guidelines will first be addressed by the Group in question, then the Districts, Intergroups, Al-Anon Information Services (AIS) and Literature Distribution Centers (LDC). After the local resources have been exhausted, the Group Practices Committee will also share their experience, strength, and hope in order to find a solution.
4. The Right of Appeal is part of the process.



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5. If problems remain, there is opportunity to correct or clarify misunderstandings on either side. A recommendation may include dropping the inquiry, suggesting corrective actions, or the removal of a Group from the online and printed meeting lists.
6. When a Group is unpublished from meeting lists, there is an appeal process by which a Group can be returned to the meeting lists and be republished in accordance with this policy. While a Group is not displayed on meeting lists, it remains registered and will be encouraged to participate in service meetings with voice and vote through its Group Representative.

### **D. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

In order to consider the unity of Al-Anon as a whole, the clarity of its message, and to help ensure the safety of individual members, the Northern California World Service Area (NCWSA) refers members and newcomers to groups that adhere to:

1. Al-Anon Steps, Traditions and Concepts
2. Current<sup>1</sup> *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*
3. Current Al-Anon Guidelines
4. Current NCWSA Guidelines
5. *Using Al-Anon Principles to Resolve Conflicts Kit (K-70)*

### **E. SELECTED QUOTATIONS FROM AL-ANON LITERATURE:**

These quotations can be found in relevant Al-Anon literature and may be helpful during the consideration period by all parties involved. They are not meant to imply that these statements are the only Al-Anon literature that may apply to a situation.

1. *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P24/27)*<sup>2</sup>: Concept Twelve, Warranty Five: that our Conference “will always try to act with mutual respect and love, one member for another; that no action will be taken in anger, haste or recklessness; that care will be observed to protect all minorities; that no action will be personally punitive; that, whenever possible, important actions will be taken in substantial unanimity; and that our Conference will ever be prudently on guard against tyrannies, great and small, whether these be found in the majority or in the minority.”
2. *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27)*<sup>3</sup>: “The WSO will register a group with the understanding that the group will abide by the Al-Anon Traditions and not affiliate with or endorse any outside entity or practice. Joint meetings for Al-Anon and AA members, meetings composed of only AA members, and groups that practice specific therapies, such as guided meditation, are not in keeping with Al-Anon principles and do not qualify to be registered as an Al-Anon group.”
3. *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27)*<sup>4</sup>: “...local, Area or WSO service entities have no authority to close a group or engage in other punitive actions against a group because they disapprove of the manner in which a group practices the Al-Anon program.”

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<sup>1</sup> “Current” is defined as the latest version of the document at the time any issue is reported under the policy.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual 2018-2021, pages 221-222.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, page 34.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, page 109.



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4. *Many Voices, One Journey (B-31)*<sup>5</sup>: “We must try to understand these groups and to help them. But neither Headquarters nor the Conference can tell them what they should do. We can suggest and show them by example.”
5. *Sponsorship, What It’s All About (P-31)*<sup>6</sup>: “Sponsors do not wave magic wands, resolve difficulties, make decisions, or become responsible *for* us. Sponsors may suggest available options for us, some of which we may not have thought of ourselves, but Sponsors cannot be expected to make our choices for us.”
6. *Sponsorship, What It’s All About (P-31)*<sup>7</sup>: As Sponsors we can “never give advice or make decisions for a sponsee, particularly about family situations. Refrain from imposing personal views; instead, encourage the member to grow at his or her own rate and practice the program in his or her own way.”
7. *When I Got Busy, I Got Better (P-78)*<sup>8</sup>: “While we were responsible for conducting our meetings, we were asked to give primary consideration to the unity of Al-Anon as a whole.”
8. *When I Got Busy, I Got Better (P-78)*<sup>9</sup>: “As we reach out carrying Al-Anon’s message of hope, we look for confirmation that our actions in fact support our common welfare. For guidance and support, we turn to the Traditions and strive to practice our program’s concept of “obedience to the unenforceable.” The Traditions offer guidance for our efforts, but we have individual responsibility for applying them”.
9. *Loving Interchange to Resolve Conflict (S-71)*<sup>10</sup>: “CONFLICT – a disagreement where parties perceive a threat to their needs, interests, or concerns.”
10. *Conflict Resolution Using Our Twelve Traditions (S-72)*<sup>11</sup>: “In our Al-Anon groups and service arms, our freedom is balanced with the responsibility to preserve our Traditions and abide by Al-Anon principles.”
11. *Talk to Each Other, Resolving Conflicts within Al-Anon (S-73)*<sup>12</sup>: “Members can agree that our mutual goal is to provide help and hope to families and friends of alcoholics.”
12. *Loving Interchange to Resolve Conflict (S-71)*<sup>13</sup>: “Am I being honest with myself about wanting to resolve the conflict or do I want things my way?”

### **F. WHEN IS IT APPROPRIATE TO USE THIS GUIDELINE?**

This policy was developed as a resource for any individual, Group, District, Intergroup, Al-Anon Information Service (AIS) and Literature Distribution Center (LDC), or any other component of the Northern California World Service Area (NCWSA) with concerns about conduct that might affect any Al-Anon member, Group, or Al-Anon as a whole.

It was developed after careful review of the Traditions, Concepts, Warranties, as well as the World Service Conference policies, NCWSA policies and policies of other Areas.

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<sup>5</sup> *Many Voices, One Journey, (B-31)* page 386: Of the groups that wanted to use their own versions of the Twelve Step, [Lois] said [this quote]. Transcript from the *Review of the 1962 World Service Conference*. Session IV, page 7.

<sup>6</sup> *Sponsorship, What It’s All About, (P-31)*, page 6.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, page 8 and 9.

<sup>8</sup> *When I Got Busy, I got Better (P-78)*, page 42.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, page 38.

<sup>10</sup> *Loving Interchange to Resolve Conflicts (S-71)*, Wallet Card

<sup>11</sup> *Conflict Resolution Using Our Twelve Traditions (S-72)* one of 14 cards on a ring.

<sup>12</sup> *Talk to Each Other, Resolving Conflicts within Al-Anon (S-73)* starts on first page.

<sup>13</sup> *Loving Interchange to Resolve Conflicts (S-71,)* Wallet Card



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Most misunderstandings and differences can be resolved by a thorough discussion and by referring to Al-Anon documents that explain the use of the Traditions and Concepts.

### **G. WHO MAY INITIATE A DISCUSSION?**

When an individual believes a Group exhibits a significant inappropriate behavior that individual is encouraged to reach out to, first, the Al-Anon Group itself, and second, the District or the Area.

1. At the Group Level - Any member may bring an issue to the Group's business meeting, to the Group Representative or the Group Secretary. Should the discussion not lead to a satisfactory resolution by either the member or the Group, it is appropriate to contact the District for additional help.
2. At Districts, Intergroups, Al-Anon Information Services (AIS) and Literature Distribution Centers (LDC) - Any member or Group Representative may bring the issue to a District, Intergroup, Al-Anon Information Service (AIS) or Literature Distribution Center (LDC) meeting. A thorough discussion of the issue, including reviews of the background documents, will often resolve the issue at this level. It is appropriate to include the issue and the summary discussion in the minutes of the appropriate meeting. Should the discussion not lead to a satisfactory resolution by either the member, Group, District, Intergroup, Al-Anon Information Service (AIS) and Literature Distribution Center (LDC), it is appropriate to bring the issue to the Group Practices Committee (GPC) of the Northern California World Service Committee<sup>14</sup> (NCWSC).
3. At the Northern California World Service Committee (NCWSC) - The NCWSC has established a committee called the Group Practices Committee (GPC). It consists of the Delegate, Alternate Delegate, and a Past Delegate. Any individual member, Group Representative or District Representative may report concerns about group practices to the Group Practices Committee. The GPC may be reached by phone as listed in the 12 STEPPER or online at an email address established by the NCWSC.

### **H. EVALUATION**

1. Fact-Finding: The Group Practices Committee (GPC) will make an initial assessment of the concern. The GPC begins by contacting the Group to open a line of communication and continues to gather information until the GPC has enough information to make a recommendation. This collaborative dialogue will involve the Group itself, as well as any affected members, thereby ensuring that everyone may be heard and may appeal if desired.
2. Authority to consult others: The GPC also has the authority to consult others to assist them. The person who filed the issue, the Group, District, Intergroup, Al-Anon Information Service (AIS) and Literature Distribution Center (LDC) involved is informed that a fact-finding activity is in progress.

### **I. RESOLUTION**

1. The concern may be resolved with shared experience, strength, and hope with any member of the GPC. All parties, including the person who filed the issue, the Group, District, Intergroup, Al-Anon Information Service (AIS) and Literature Distribution Center (LDC) will be notified of the resolution in writing or through electronic means.

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<sup>14</sup> The NCWSC is a committee of Northern California World Service Area of AFG, Inc.



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2. If the recommendation involves removing the Group from local meeting lists, the Group is first informed in a conversation explaining the decision and then is provided the decision in writing to the CMA<sup>15</sup> address with the actions or changes needed in order to republish its listing(s).
3. In both cases, the original reporting individual is informed of the outcome as are the District, AIS (Intergroup) and LDC.
4. When the GPC recommendation is to remove the Group from local meeting lists, the GPC will recommend that the Northern California World Service Committee<sup>16</sup> remove the group information from the NCWSA meeting lists. While a Group is not displayed on meeting lists, it remains registered and will be encouraged to participate in service meetings with voice and vote through its Group Representative.
5. Upon substantial unanimity by the NCWSC, the GPC will advise that the WSO not refer members or others to this Group.
6. The GPC will inform the parties of the Area decision, include the reasons for the decision, and corrective actions required by the parties to be republished.

### **J. ARCHIVING**

The Group Practices Committee issues a full report of the fact-finding and decision and confidentially archives each report to ensure that future Al-Anon members with a need to know are aware of the history of any reported concern that warranted the decision.

### **K. RIGHT OF APPEAL AND REPUBLISH PROCESS**

As Group that has been removed from meeting lists may submit a request to be republished to the GPC, explaining how they have implemented corrective actions taken since the Group was removed from meeting lists.

The GPC will make an assessment and, within 30 calendar days of the receipt of the request to be republished will respond to the request in writing or authorize the creation of a Resolution Committee<sup>17</sup> to engage in a new round of fact-finding.

### **L. RESOLUTION COMMITTEE (RC)**

The purpose of this committee is to handle an appeal process at the area level. This committee consists of three members of the NCWSC not including members of the GPC. It is comprised of the Chairperson of NCWSA, a Past Delegate not serving on the Group Practices Committee and a District Representative not from the Section<sup>18</sup> where the appealing Group is located. The Resolution Committee acts with the same authority and responsibility as the Group Practices Committee.

### **M. CHANGES TO DOCUMENT B-34**

B-34 has been approved by the Area Assembly on October 5, 2019 with substantial unanimity, subject to changes suggested by the WSO. Substantial changes must receive the approval of

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<sup>15</sup> CMA = Current Mailing Address as listed in NCWSA or WSO records.

<sup>16</sup> The NCWSC will review the recommendation of the GPCS at its next regular meeting.

<sup>17</sup> See the Appendix to see its tasks.

<sup>18</sup> NCWSA is divided into three geographic sections as defined in the NCWSA Bylaws.



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NCWSA. WSO approval is not required before the changes can be implemented. The WSO must be notified of changes and—depending on the nature of the changes—may withdraw its support of the Area’s Meeting List Publishing Policy and republish Groups should the Policy be changed in ways that cause it to deviate from the Policy Committee’s intentions.

### **N. AT THE WSO**

Actions of the WSO are autonomous. They must verify that this guideline, Resolving Inappropriate Group Practices – B-34, issued by NCWSA, meets the WSO criteria. Once this procedure receives support from the WSO, the WSO may implement non-referral of Groups or republish as requested by NCWSC.



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## APPENDIX

### DEFINITIONS:

#### A. Group Practices Committee (GPC):

The GPC consists of three members of the NCWSC. It includes the Delegate, Alternate Delegate, and a past Delegate. The past Delegate selected is the one who most recently served as Delegate and is willing to serve. The GPC will select its own chair and secretary.

#### B. The Resolution Committee (RC):

The RC consists of three members of the NCWSC. It includes the Chairperson, a Past Delegate not selected for the GPC and a District Representative not in the section<sup>19</sup> where the resolution is required. The Resolution Committee will select its own chair and secretary.

#### C. Tasks of the GPC and the RC:

In following this guideline, the following tasks are part of the process of determining how to proceed with reviewing an inappropriate group practice.

1. Assessment:
  - a. A member expresses a concern about a significant inappropriate behavior to the Group, District, Intergroup, Al-Anon Information Service (AIS) or Literature Distribution Center (LDC). If resolved, it goes no further.
  - b. If the Group, District, Intergroup, Al-Anon Information Service (AIS) and Literature Distribution Center (LDC) cannot come to a satisfactory decision for the parties involved, they will notify the GPC.
  - c. When the RC is involved, its process begins here. From here, both the GPC and the RC follow the identical process.
2. Fact Finding:
  - a. The GPC or RC studies the concern and any previous information it has received.
  - b. The GPC or RC reviews any documents, especially those listed in Background Documents. (see D. above)
  - c. The GPC or RC may consult others to assist the GPC in the process.
3. Initial Resolution:
  - a. The GPC will issue a report outlining its conclusion, including principles that support the conclusion, any proposed corrective actions to be taken and the actions the Group may take if they appeal the conclusion. If there is no appeal, the GPC continues to item 5. below.
4. Right of Appeal:
  - a. Either party has the right to appeal.
  - b. The GPC will assess the appeal and will respond to the request in writing within 30 days.
  - c. When all issues are corrected per the GPC report, the Group who petitioned the appeal will notify the GPC. Information will be verified by the GPC. At this time the Districts, Intergroups, Al-Anon Information Services (AIS) and Literature Distribution Centers (LDC), NCWSC Group Records and WSO will be advised to republish the Group information to all directories and for referrals.

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<sup>19</sup> The area has divided itself into three "sections" to facilitate communication.



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- d. If not corrected, and is appealed again, the GPC may authorize the RC<sup>20</sup> to engage in a new round of fact-finding.
5. Final Conclusion:
  - a. If the GPC conclusion includes a recommendation to unpublish the Group from meeting lists, and there is no appeal to the RC, the GPC will request that the NCWSA Chair place the item on the agenda of the next available NCWSC meeting. (This request will not be done until the Group has had the opportunity to appeal the decision.)
  - b. If the GPC decision is appealed to the RC, and the RC conclusion includes a recommendation to unpublish the Group from meeting lists, it notifies the GPC.
  - c. Once final appeals are completed, the GPC notifies the NCWSC of its conclusion. The NCWSC, by substantial unanimity, will send a formal request to the WSO to no longer publish the Group.
6. Archives:
  - a. All relevant notes and reports will be placed in the area Archives.

### **D. Consulting Others:**

Al-Anon members may be selected by the GPC to assist the GPC. These individuals assist the GPC in identifying the facts and how the facts are interpreted by the traditions. The GPC is responsible to identify the individuals, goals, and other criteria to assure a reasonable conclusion. The individuals may be selected for a particular purpose as necessary and for a single issue.

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<sup>20</sup> See section J to see its responsibilities.





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**SUPPLEMENT TO B-34**

**CONCERNING HOW TO REPORT AN UNRESOLVED INAPPROPRIATE PRACTICE  
TO THE WSO.**

This email is posted with B-34 as a supplement to B-34 because part of B-34 involves World Service Office actions following the area decision process. in accordance with Section N. and Appendix 4c., and 5c.

This supplement states how to implement a final decision to unpublish a group at the World Service Level.

The reference in the WSO email to “Meeting list Publishing Policy for California North” refers to B-34.

From: Vali F [last name removed] <[valif@al-anon.org](mailto:valif@al-anon.org)>

Date: Thu, Oct 15, 2020 at 2:24 PM

Subject: RE: Draft #3 of CA(N)'s MLPP

To: Rosanna H [last name removed] <[peaceloveandjoyinservice@gmail.com](mailto:peaceloveandjoyinservice@gmail.com)>

CC: Chris M <[cmrturtle@comcast.net](mailto:cmrturtle@comcast.net)>, Darby T NCWSA Chair <[odatdarby@gmail.com](mailto:odatdarby@gmail.com)>

Dear Rosanna,

Please extend our thanks to your Task Force for their quick work and incorporation of our requests. This version will now be kept on file as the supported Meeting list Publishing Policy for California North. Should your Area find yourselves in the difficult situation of having to unpublish a group listing, your Area Delegate or Area Chair can send us the group details and date of approval to unpublish at [AFGRecord@al-anon.org](mailto:AFGRecord@al-anon.org), with a cc to me at [afg@al-anon.org](mailto:afg@al-anon.org). Our AFG Records Team will then mark the group as unpublished for the WSO meeting listings.

Thank you for your continued service and commitment to the unity of Al-Anon Family Groups.

With gratitude,

**Vali M. F [last name removed]** | Executive Director

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