

## **Thought Force Topic: *Autonomy, Right of Decision and Service Authority***

Background Info: Our 4<sup>th</sup> Tradition states: "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting another group or Al-Anon or AA as a whole." Concept 3 states: "The right of decision makes effective leadership possible." Concept 10 states: Service responsibility is balanced by carefully defined service authority and double-headed management is avoided.

There are some difficulties that arise in Area service work around these ideas: autonomy, service authority and the right of decision. It seems important for us to have a discussion on these, and if necessary, to create some working definitions or Guidelines.

As a first step, this Thought Force is to begin the conversation on these principles, and to begin to gain some idea of how the membership of our Area wants these concepts to be managed in our Area service work.

Charge: Spend 10 minutes in silence, answering these questions based on your own ideas and thoughts. Then, spend 10-15 minutes discussing and listening to others at your table. These will be turned in, compiled and then posted (anonymously) on our website.

This Thought Force can also be filled out through a survey on our Website and there will be hard copies at Assembly.

### **Five KBDM Questions**

**1. What do I think about our Area's needs and habits regarding leadership and autonomy? What experience do I have with Right of Decision issues? Is there a "carefully defined service authority" for my position?**

- Autonomy at the level of Area means using your last name
- There is a need for more "right of decision making" for Legacy
- I believe that our Area allows autonomy
- I believe our Area fulfills its leadership needs well by its election of Officers and pulling Coordinators from a hat.
- If someone isn't doing their job it can feel like Area is slow to respond, but the alternative is probably not Al-Anon
- My Area position is well defined but when I was AISL it was a problem because I had no idea what my District expected of me.
- I believe the Area makes decisions in the best interest of Area 9
- Sometimes with "right of decision" I feel like I am being controlling.
- I'm glad there is a defined service authority for my position in the Service Manual
- I don't feel I know enough about leadership and autonomy
- I thought I had autonomy about something but it turned out not to be the case
- Yes I have the authority to listen
- I use the positive WSO Guideline to operate within the authority of my service position
- I like the way feedback is being requested
- Leadership seems to be well defined
- I have guidelines for my position and a service sponsor
- I think our Area habits are good
- There is not a carefully defined service authority for my position
- Autonomy was exercised to change hotel and start early on Friday but the same autonomy was stopped for changing Font, Color and Title on a Form.
- If I want to change something it takes 2 of 80 people to reverse it
- Its important to have ESH from others in same position
- Upside down triangle of authority, get guidelines in place in District

- Our independence is respected
- I have the right to make decisions and yet I need to think of others as well
- There is no carefully defined anything for AISL and it has caused problems
- Too much control we are becoming too “corporate”

**2. What do I know about our Area that gives me insight to our working definitions of our Legacies? Where do I go for information on this?**

- Legacies clearly defined in our Service Manual
- Clear access to members of WSO for help and Chairperson too
- Being on the \*\* Committee I can see autonomy at work.
- Area’s use of KBDM is good information
- The Service Manual is my greatest source of detailed info (18)
- I go to the website, CAL and my sponsor
- I observe how a person in a service position leads a team of members to achieve the goals of the job at hand
- I don’t know where to go to find out how North Florida defines the Legacies, maybe the website?
- I like the WSC summaries and my service sponsor for reaching out to
- Things take much time; if there had been annual reviews we would not be in such a crunch now
- Service Manual, New Workbook (Reaching for Personal Freedom), Ric’s Concepts Talk
- I am not alone!
- The Service Manual, CAL and I like surveys like this asking for feedback
- I feel like I am being told what to do – again, too much control!
- I wish the AISL had more definition, that I knew what I was supposed to do
- I like the website
- We need policies and a way for them to last from panel to panel.
- We need to emphasize “talk to each other, reason things out.”

**3. What do I know about our membership and the way we provide service in Area 9? Do we follow the Service Manual regarding Right of Decision? What about “Carefully Defined Service Authority”? Do I know what is expected of me? Do I know what is expected of others?**

- Each person has a defined objective and is put out in reports and on website
- I know most of the time, but I love learning more.
- I know others’ expectation as it relates to me
- Others are allowed an opinion, but each person has the autonomy to accept those opinions into their process or not as long as they stay within the guidelines as a whole
- I feel Area positions are well defined but when improvement is the goal it should be discussed

- I think we follow the Service Manual; I don't see any double-headed management
- I am dismayed by the low turnout at Assembly
- I thought I knew a lot, then a recent situation made me do more research and contact resources within the Area for help
- I believe the way Area 9 works is up to a leader to explain
- I know there is a website, and there WAS a published newsletter for members without access to a computer.
- We don't want to leave anyone out
- I have a job description and I know others do also
- I know what is expected of me and I know where to go for help (12)
- Some members strongly resist change without being open to possibility that change may be an improvement
- I'm really learning and growing the more I attend Area and District meetings
- If you cannot hold the position, don't stand
- We are encouraged to use our best judgment

**4. What are the ethical implications of discussing these ideas- what are the pros and cons of creating guidelines? Is open discussion consistent with our spiritual principles? How can we talk about difficult things, and maybe make decisions in ways that are consistent with our spiritual principles?**

- Discussion is important in every element
- I think feelings can be hurt by discussing ethical implications
- Pro: growth and clarification; opening new dialogue; increased information
- Pro: better understanding of the rules
- Con: sometimes people get offended
- We are members in various stages of recovery and may not know what to do, but we stand by ready to do it
- If we put too much emphasis on trying to control someone else by forcing a guideline on a position we can shut out someone who can do the service but not in the exact manner we want
- I do not understand what the questions is asking regarding "ethical implications"
- Ethics require transparency
- Open discussion is consistent with our spiritual principles
- We seem to be doing this
- Are guidelines suggestions, them seem to be used as rules
- Discussion is great and welcomed – include the trusted servants involved
- Open discussion helps us come to decisions without having to guess
- Spiritual principles can be used to solve any problem or disagreement
- Open Discussion helps us all remember that Guidelines are suggestions, not hard and fast rules
- Creating Guidelines is good, they just need to be flexible for growth and change

**5. What do I wish I knew, but don't?**

- I wish I knew all that HP wants me to
- I wish I knew how to be less judgmental about fellow members who don't use or follow KBDM
- I wish I knew more about Autonomy and how it is defined
- This is a trick question
- How do we enforce adherence to Guidelines
- Why discussions did not happen earlier
- I wish I knew more about the computer
- Where can a District go to get help if one of their District Officers (DR or AISL) is causing a negative impact in their District?
- How have previous Coordinators used the Legacies in their service at Area level?
- Where is the line between Service Authority and Dominance?
- I wish these questions were less complicated.
- How do we handle questions when others ask us why we do something that is decided by Group Conscience?
- I wish I knew how we could get elected positions taken more seriously and take responsibility for the position you are serving.
- We need better job descriptions for AISL
- What will work best for the best outcome?
- How to get more teens involved?
- Are there any other Areas with AISLs? Will WSO consider guidelines for AISLs?