

# Thought Force Report: Area Information Service Liaison (AISL) position as part of Area World Service Committee (AWSC)

## Charge

- Discuss as to whether this position should be part of AWSC or be a District Position.
- It may be viable in some Districts (large districts) and not viable in other Districts.
- Each District can be autonomous with regard to the AISL position.
- Is it a viable position in Area 9 Florida North?
- Recommend if this discussion be moved to a task force!

## Thought Force Participants

- Mark F., Area Secretary and Thought Force Chair, District 3
- Doris M., Panel 55 DR, District 13
- Sue P., AISL, District 6
- Freddie S., AISL, District 3
- Carmen S., 2018 Convention Chair and AISL, District 8

## Recommendations

Based on the discussion, the Thought Force participants agree the AISL position is viable and should be kept as part of the AWSC. Having two representatives from each District at the Area meetings gives the Districts a greater voice in the decision-making process, and all panel members benefit from the shared experience, strength and hope the additional members offer. Participants also agreed that there is confusion about the position's role in the Districts. The Thought Force participants recommend a Task Force be created and charged with the following:

- **Recommending a new name for the position:** The AISL position is often confused with other organizations in the AI-Anon Service Structure. The name should be changed to clarify it is a District-level position. Names suggested were District Information Services Liaison, Information Services Liaison, District Chairperson Liaison, or Lead Coordinator.
- **Recommending a way for the Districts to reimburse the Area for the expenses of the AISL to attend the AWSC meetings:** In line with the Spiritual Principle of being fully self-supporting, Districts should consider reimbursing the Area for the costs of their AISL to attend the AWSC meetings. Districts could recategorize donations regularly sent to the Area to mitigate or eliminate the cost. Another Thought or Task Force may want to consider if Districts should reimburse the Area for their District Representatives to attend AWSC as well.
- **Recommending an Area-level job description for the AISL:** There is no consistent job description among the Districts for the AISL's responsibilities. The Area should develop a common job description that could be suggested to the Districts for adoption. Districts would retain the autonomy to keep their own job description or modify the Area's suggestion.

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## Meeting Summary

Thought Force participants met on Aug. 6 to discuss our charge and decide if this matter needed to be expanded to a Task Force. We used the Knowledge-Based Decision Making questions to lead our discussion. Key points that the members discussed include (edited for brevity):

- As a DR, I found it extremely helpful to have an AISL to work together and coordinate our efforts. I would support the groups and she would support the chairpeople positions.
- It concerns me that there is no position in the Service Manual called AISL and it's confusing to members.
- There is a description for the AI-Anon Information Services office, but it is not how we use it. What has happened in Florida is each District has our own Information Service, we just don't have it in a storefront. We do all those things that the storefront does, they just do it for multiple Districts. Our AISL is doing the same thing. They are going to AWSC and bringing the information back. Normally it would be brought back to the AIS. In our District, we have an AIS number assigned to our LDC.
- The members benefit from the AISL because we are there to help them and keep them from feeling alone. We're able to get more people to participate in public outreach, which hopefully brings in new members.
- I thought there was some reason relating to being incorporated as a 501(c)(3) that monies paid back to the Area could not be called a reimbursement. Is that no longer the case?
- The Area Treasurer estimates the cost for an AISL to attend AWSC to be \$220. Attending both would cost approximately \$440.
- Our District has been sending donations into the Area that should cover the cost and beyond. We do make that commitment to the Area.
- Florida South does not pay for the DRs and AISLs to attend AWSC. Each District is responsible for paying their own way.
- It has only been two panels for the Districts not to pay for the DRs and AISLs to attend AWSC. We changed this to accommodate the hotel and help the Districts. When we started Florida North, we were supposed to donate funds back to the Area so that we are fully self-supporting and paying for the DR and AISL to attend AWSC.

## Discussion Using Knowledge Based Decision Making Questions

1. *What do we know about our members (or prospective members) needs regarding this discussion?*
  - 1.1. Members could be confused about what the AISL position is since it is not in the Service Manual.

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- 1.2. When we have met for roundtable discussions at past Area meetings, and were asked to describe the AISL, everybody described a completely different position. There was no cohesion on what the AISL did from District to District.
- 1.3. How does the AISL position benefit members:
  - 1.3.1. We have 15 chairs and an AISL, I try to communicate with the Chairs about six weeks before the next District meeting to see if they need any help or assistance. I keep close communication with my chairpeople. As a District, we limit them to two minutes to give a report on what they have been doing in their service position. I work with my DR - we communicate about different meetings
  - 1.3.2. The way it's always been done in the past two panels in my District is the DRs bring information from AWSC solely for the GRs and two Chairs. All the other Chairs are Information Services Chairs - Public Outreach, Alateen, Spanish Liaison. I meet with my Chairs under the Information Services a half hour before District Meetings. We all work together to make public outreach better. Also, in our District the Alternate DR is also our AA Liaison, so that keeps that person pretty busy.
  - 1.3.3. We don't have an abundance of people in service in our District. People are retired, and even though people love Al-Anon, they don't want to commit to a three-year term. Our Area chairpeople are so good in communication, I wonder if there is a duplication of effort there, or if they can't be having teleconferences with the Area chairpeople? Perhaps a DR or AISL or Alternate DR could facilitate that happening, but not be a point person. In our District everyone was looking to the DR or AISL to grease the wheels and make everything happen, and that's not the way it's supposed to be.
  - 1.3.4. The AISL has to be the motivational people for the rest of the District Chairpeople. We have to motivate them, and that's sometimes hard. There are a lot of working relationships between the chairs, and sometimes they have to be motivated.
  - 1.3.5. My DR and I divide everything up. We have a Steering Committee meeting a week before a District Business Meeting. At the Meeting, she chairs half and I chair half. She is the liaison between the Group Reps and the Officers and I take care of being the liaison between the chair people and the Area Coordinators. I try to engage our Chairpeople to go out and do outreach, so no one feels like they are doing anything alone. I know we're moving to an age where we're getting this all done on the phone or in some kind of format on our computers. I don't think the chairpeople in my District are ready for that.
  - 1.3.6. I think there is a small percentage who aren't there with technology either. I think people are learning.

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- 1.3.7. I served as an Alternate DR and was busy with other responsibilities. I do not think I could have handled communicating with our District chairpeople at the same time.
- 1.4. Members could use some clarity on the role would be. Since the position is a leadership role and interacts with the Area, an Area Task Force could recommend job requirements for the AISL. It could then be consistent in the Area. Each District could vote on it to accept it as their AISL position after it moves through the Thought Force and Task Force process. That way, what the AISL does in one District would be the same as what they do in another District. That's the consistency of AI-Anon. It depends on the size of the District you are in.
- 1.5. If we're going to include the role at AWSC, we should have some information on what the AISL is expected to do.
- 1.6. Changing the name may not help clarify the role. Some people call it the "AI-Anon" Information Services Liaison, others called it the "Area" Information Services Liaison.
- 1.7. Our District never had an AIS. I see in the Service Manual it's also called an Intergroup. That's what this is, you know. I think they have too many AIS, AISL, and so many different acronyms. The DR has enough to do with the groups and all that. A better name and job description would be beneficial.
2. ***What do we know about the capacity and strategic position of the Area relative to this discussion?***
  - 2.1. If the money is the problem, the District could decide to send their AISL. If they did, it would be their responsibility to pay for them.
  - 2.2. To stage the World Service Conference and arrange for travel for all Delegates to attend, the WSO uses equalized expenses – where the WSO calculates a suggested contribution for all Areas the make to cover costs. The Area could calculate a similar suggested contribution in support of AWSC including the costs for the room and meals the Area provides.
3. ***What do we know about current realities, evolving dynamics of the world and our fellowship's environment that is relevant to this discussion? What are the pros and cons?***
  - 3.1. Having the AISL at AWSC could be redundant to having the DR attend and could save costs.
  - 3.2. I really like the sharing and richness of the wisdom that the AISLs bring; it gives them an opportunity to meet the coordinators, who are the go-to people to help motivate district people and help implement ideas.
  - 3.3. Sometimes the AISL and DR work so closely together that they can bring back separate things from AWSC. The DR does not have to do it alone.
  - 3.4. Two heads are better than one – when a DR and AISL come together, they can compare notes and see things from a different point of view.

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- 3.5. Any time we can give more people opportunities for service, if they chose to or not, will benefit us in the long run.
  - 3.6. The personal contact that the AISL brings to the District Chairs reminds them that they are never alone and have someone to help. There may be a time when technology can help spread out the AISL tasks, but for now, the support for the District Chairs and DR is very important.
  - 3.7. Considering how it is often difficult to find people to participate in service.
  - 3.8. While the WSC ensures new delegates are not alone by having a third of their panel be new each year, we're in brand new panels every three years. It can be helpful for newcomers to be lost together in their positions and work their way through it.
  - 3.9. The costs to the Area for the AISL to attend AWSC appear to be the only costs.
  - 3.10. Should the name of the position be changed, all references to the AISL in the Area's website, process and procedures, and other documents will need to be updated.
- 4. *What are the ethical implications of our choices? Will our decision be in line with our spiritual principles?***
- 4.1. Having the Districts pay for their AISLs to attend AWSC would be in line with being fully self-supporting.
  - 4.2. The more information we have and bring it to any of the District Chairs, we are carrying the message to others who are hurting.
  - 4.3. An implication would be while the change would bring more money to the Area, it may mean Districts would have less.
  - 4.4. As a 501(c)(3), the Area should not be picking up the tab to avoid paying the taxes, if they are paying something the District should pay and pay the taxes. That's the ethical way to do it.
- 5. *What do we wish we knew, but don't?***
- 5.1. What do the DRs feel about this? How do they feel about the AISL position and how the AISLs support them.
  - 5.2. If we're the only part of the North America that has AISL participation, we allow AISLs and DRs to vote, is that appropriate to have more people voting and setting the agenda than other Areas do?