

Excerpts on the Service System Project from NAWS News, 2008-2012

June 2008

SERVICE SYSTEM

This project will begin with developing a vision statement for all NA services. It will create options and frame discussions about improvements to our service structure in this cycle. This is a two-conference-cycle project.

The topic “Our Freedom, Our Responsibility” follows from the IDT “Our Service System.” One of the things we learned during this past cycle is that we are still struggling with the spirit of our service work—we continue to struggle with apathy and a lack of a sense of commitment and responsibility. Of course, “Our Freedom, Our Responsibility” was also the theme for the WSC and is the theme for the 2008–2010 conference cycle. We hope that this IDT will help us look more closely at our responsibilities and the freedoms we gain from them.

At the conference, the IDT session on “Our Freedom, Our Responsibility” focused on both the individual and fellowshipwide application of these principles. We began by breaking down the word “responsibility,” realizing that at its base it simply means “the ability to respond.” Individual members had an opportunity to share about their experiences in learning how to take personal responsibility and how that led to personal freedoms.

This became one of the most “hands-on” sessions, as some tables were asked to construct a model house, while others were given a prefabricated model. Participants were asked to consider the difference between attending (simply being present) and participating (being involved with others and co creating). Participating in our service allows us to build a better fellowship. The session’s activity seemed to emphasize that we value what we are responsible for creating. When we are responsible for creating the freedoms we have, we cherish them, and in doing so we strengthen them for ourselves and for those to whom we pass them.

November 2008

SERVICE SYSTEM

The Service System Workgroup has also met twice. This project is charged with developing a vision for all NA service efforts and framing recommendations for improvements to our service delivery.

Our biggest challenge is how to engage the fellowship in a meaningful discussion that might lead to a reframing of our service efforts and, ultimately, the creation of tools that will help us deliver services more effectively—either a revision or rewriting of *A Guide to Local Services* and/or the production of other tools. Our strategic plan explains that the project will “be rooted in an analysis of the success factors that work across our service structure, as well as allow for flexibility in meeting unique local needs.”

January 2009

We spent a full day in a facilitated discussion focused on our Service System project. We have heard throughout the years at workshops what is lacking: an attitude of giving back to a fellowship that saved our lives. This missing attitude manifests in disunity, lack of trusted servants, and declining financial resources and cooperation. The Service System project aims to help stem the tide of service disparities by working with our fellowship and the board.

SERVICE SYSTEM

We quickly realized this cycle that although we asked for your support in initiating this project, we had not done a very good job of communicating our expectations for both this project and the workgroup.

We spent the second day of our meeting backing up a bit and trying to better define the scope of what we expected with this project. We knew we had challenges that reached past simply the service structure, which is why we called this the Service System project. We discussed the components of a system—the structure, process, people, and resources; all focused toward a common vision. We are fortunate in NA; there is a commonly held understanding of why we do what we do. Whether we call it the primary purpose as expressed in our traditions (to carry the message to the addict who still suffers) or we describe it in more detail as in the NAWS Vision Statement, we all mean the same thing. We have been hearing through workshops and fellowship discussions for the past many years about our collective difficulties in keeping that focus and being effective in our service efforts. The repercussions of that collective inability are many, but we hear the same things repeated throughout the world. We were reminded about what we said in the 2008 *Conference Agenda Report* about this discussion topic in the fellowship:

Repeatedly over the course of these four years, we have heard that we need better communication, less duplication of efforts, more training, and more effective delegation, among many other responses. We need to find a way to make service more attractive, more accessible, and more supportive. Interestingly enough, these are all observations that were repeatedly made about world services in the 1980s and early 1990s. Many of you will remember that we ceased all but essential services to devote our attention to an inventory, and the results of that inventory led to a restructuring of world services, including the adoption of our vision statement in 1996 and the creation of the World Board in 1998. Almost immediately, we began to see improvements, and we continued to suggest smaller improvements to the structure (e.g., reducing the size of the board). While, of course, things aren't perfect in world services today, they are greatly improved on every front.

But while we made huge structural changes to world services, little has changed on the local level. We're not suggesting that local service bodies should cease all but essential services for a years-long inventory process, but we are thinking that we need to reexamine our service structure in a broad sense. Perhaps some of our chronic problems mentioned above can be alleviated through restructuring local services in some way.

After much discussion, we defined the overarching question for this project as “How can we build a system of service within NA that is driven by unity of purpose, and that allows for flexibility in meeting the diverse service needs and goals of our NA communities?” We know this project and the issue of WSC seating definitely overlap and that we were correct in asking for two conference cycles to discuss both of these issues. We agreed that a common vision is essential to guide all our service efforts, and the workgroup will be asked to refine the NAWS Vision Statement so that it speaks to all areas of NA service. Toward the end of the day, we began the process of deciding what our next steps are and who should undertake them. We will continue shaping this project and assigning responsibilities at our next meeting. We want to work in tandem with the workgroup to ensure a continual communication flow, a shared responsibility, and clearly defined parameters for the project.

April 2009

We spent a full day in a facilitated discussion focused on our Service System project. The Service System Workgroup members and staff participated with us in this planning day which was a follow-up from our January meeting. This session was a brainstorming of ideals and ideas. Our service delivery structure has been functioning for years in a prescribed manner that may not be the best way to meet our collective needs or carry the message. To consider what needs to be accomplished to improve the service system as a whole—who do we need to reach and what vehicles may help provide the services—is a huge undertaking. Together, we laid the directional groundwork and refined the focus for this project. We

followed up with the Service System Workgroup for a half day on Saturday discussing issues related to regional seating.

SERVICE SYSTEM

One of the interesting “firsts” at our April meeting was a joint meeting with the Service System Workgroup. Most of the time, coordination between the board and workgroups of the board takes place through communication relayed by the board member(s) on the workgroup and NAWS staff. This past board meeting was the first time we ever met together with a workgroup and worked side-by-side to forge some of the foundations of a project.

The Service System Workgroup is charged with framing models for more effective service delivery, and the nature of that task is potentially so large and fundamental that we thought it best for us to meet together to discuss some of the basics. We are all in agreement that we can’t afford to limit our thinking this early on in terms of what a functional and effective service system might look like. The scale of change this project may end up proposing is potentially as broad sweeping on a local level as the changes in 1998 on a world level that brought about the restructuring of world services.

On Thursday we spent the day together talking about some of the fundamental “givens” of the service system—what needs must an effective service system satisfy, for instance. Friday the workgroup, independent of the board, continued that line of thinking, developing ideas about the functions and characteristics of a healthy service system and what variables it has to consider. This kind of groundwork will help us build a template to use when creating and evaluating potential models for service delivery. Saturday afternoon, we talked about WSC seating, a separate but related issue that may be affected by the work of the Service System project. Our discussions were primarily focused on the philosophical issues and underlying principles of regional representation at the WSC. We refrained from discussing the details of a new seating process. It would seem that once we are focused on the principles of the issue, a process would be most easily developed. One thing is clear: There are many facets to the issue, with no easy answers, and resolution will take the efforts of all of us. We encourage your input as we move forward in our discussions.

July 2009

We spent time reviewing the progress and direction of the Service System project; we offered suggestions for a global vision statement—one that both encompasses our entire service system and inspires. We continued our discussions on WSC seating and on the purpose of the conference, which will help us in our consideration of seating. We recognize that seating is a small part of a larger issue, namely, the purpose of the conference and what is to be accomplished during the WSC.

SERVICE SYSTEM

Following our joint meeting with the Service System Workgroup in April, where we agreed on the fundamental needs that an effective service system must meet, the workgroup continued to put together foundational pieces for the project. They have discussed, for instance, the many variables that must be considered when framing options for service delivery and the necessary roles that would need to be filled in an effective service system. In all of our discussions we are trying to follow the maxim that “form follows function,” so we are being very thorough in these first steps putting together these basic building blocks. In that spirit, one of the first tasks of the Service System Workgroup was to create a common vision for NA service efforts. After some discussion, we determined as a board that the best approach was to simply widen the focus of the existing NAWS Vision Statement to make it a Narcotics Anonymous Service System Vision. This proposed revision will be included in the *CAR* scheduled for release in November of this year.

As of this writing, the workgroup is putting together a “template” that lists all of the elements that must be included in a model of the service system. In addition to this we are looking at the ways in which both NA service bodies and external organizations are arranged so as to gather as many ideas as possible. We are still asking NA members to send us any innovative ideas that are working in their local services, so if you are doing something new to answer an old need, please let us know about it. Your experience may be invaluable in NA communities around the world. We will use all of this information at our next meeting to begin discussing alternative models for service delivery in NA. We have determined not to limit our thinking at this point, but instead are keeping our minds open to any ideas that seem effective. We look forward to sharing our thoughts at the conference and beyond.

WSC SEATING UPDATE

Our discussions on WSC seating continued from our last meeting, where we talked about the underlying philosophy and principles of regional representation at the conference. At our June meeting we touched on some of the larger, foundational elements: the purpose of the WSC; the decision-making process; how NAWS receives direction; training, development, learning, and sharing experience; the “magic” of attending the conference; and the impact on a local fellowship of WSC representation.

In the *NAWS News* following the April board meeting we wrote, “It would seem that once we are focused on the principles of the issue, a process would be most easily developed. One thing is clear: There are many facets to the issue, with no easy answers, and resolution will take the efforts of all of us.” Well, we were certainly feeling that sentiment at this meeting. The broad topics we covered in June began to outline our ideas about the “what” of the ideal WSC. Our hope is to discuss the purpose of the conference and how it satisfies the needs both of world services and of local NA communities. These discussions will in turn help us to tackle questions about the size and composition of the WSC, which may be more like the “how” of the issue. It proved to be quite a challenge to encompass an issue of this size in the short time we had available at this board meeting, however.

Seating is an issue that is closely linked to the work of the Service System project. The work of that project definitely overlaps with the issues related to seating, which in turn may be affected by the possibility of changes to our system. We will meet together with the Service System Workgroup again in January, and we hope at that time to be further along in our discussion. We are finding the question of seating to be more formidable than we had first hoped, but we remain committed to engaging delegates in structured discussions at the 2010 WSC.

November 2009

SERVICE SYSTEM

At their July meeting, the Service System Workgroup began to consider options for alternative system models, focusing first on the structural component. To guide this effort, the workgroup reviewed a list of the major challenges in our current system, identified from several years of discussion at workshops around the world, as well our own conversations as a board. Having created several possible structural ideas, the workgroup then means-tested these options to see how well they may perform to meet our service delivery needs. Means testing is a structured process of reviewing ideas and refining them; the workgroup will continue exploring possibilities and will consider options for further elements of the system in the upcoming months.

During our October board meeting, we devoted agenda time to familiarize ourselves with the workgroup’s ideas by undertaking a shortened version of the means-testing process. Following this process, we offered input to the workgroup for their upcoming meeting when the workgroup will begin to revise these structural elements.

We are planning another joint meeting with the workgroup in January to further develop the options we will be talking about with delegates at WSC 2010. We also spent some time exploring ideas for seating at the WSC, and will use our joint meeting with the workgroup to see if our ideas for the WSC and the service system work together. Ideally, the seating at the WSC and the service system ought to mesh; they are interdependent. When we were considering seating, we reviewed and explored the purpose of the World Service Conference – why we all come together biennially and what we hope to accomplish at the conference. Coupled with the purpose is a consideration of cost for this event. These costs have substantially increased since we have moved to full delegate funding, and one of the goals in considering seating is to ensure that the conference makes best use of fellowship funds. Additional information for discussion and deliberation will be forthcoming in the January *NAWS News* and the March *Conference Report*. In the meantime, we encourage you to read the essays in *The Conference Agenda Report* pertaining to the service system and NAWS resources; these will contain more information on both these topics.

At our October meeting, we also finalized the vision statement that we will be offering for approval through the CAR at the 2010 conference. To briefly recap, we refined the existing NAWS Vision Statement with an aim to speak to service in NA as a whole, rather than just the service efforts of NAWS. Our hope is that “A Vision for NA Service” will serve as a unifying ideal for all of us to strive toward and will guide us in all our efforts to further carry our message of recovery.

February 2010

“Our Vision, Our Future,” the theme for the 2010 WSC, will be the focus of WSC sessions and the 2010–2012 conference cycle. The service system and WSC seating sessions will showcase options for a more efficient, effective service delivery system and a focused, purposeful worldwide conference. We spent a half day walking through a facilitated discussion of the work of the service system workgroup, and a full day of discourse, deliberation, and consensus-based outcomes with the service system and WSC seating options, facilitated by Jim DeLizia.

SERVICE SYSTEM

Following our input at the October board meeting, the workgroup revised their ideas for the structural component of a service system. One of the main goals of our joint meeting in January was to combine the workgroup’s ideas about structure with our ideas about seating so that we could have a unified set of structural options to discuss at the conference. We reviewed the workgroup’s new ideas, and their beginning thoughts on the processes we use to deliver services. We also reviewed the structural ideas for seating options at the WSC, and discussed how these interfaced with the service system models. Together with the workgroup, we talked through ideas until we constructed two basic models of the structure, each of which has a series of options to make it more flexible and adaptable. In a general sense, we feel strongly that form should follow function, and want to find a way to ensure that communities have the ability to create a structure that works best for them.

All of our ideas throughout this process have been guided by four key principles. We feel the most effective service system will be:

- Purpose-driven: Each of the proposed service system units should answer a specific need or group of needs, and the responsibilities of each unit should be clearly defined and understood.
- Group-focused: Each model offers ideas for better aiding groups in their efforts to carry our message.
- Defined by geopolitical boundaries: Following established geopolitical boundaries for at least some of our service bodies would allow us to better interface with professional and legislative bodies, making it easier for professionals and the general public to find and communicate with us.

- Flexible: Each model offers ideas for extra service bodies to answer specific needs, but does not mandate their existence if they are not needed.

We know some of these ideas are a radical departure for many regions. We will be offering more complete information for review and discussion on both WSC seating and our service system in the *Conference Report*. It is important that we be able to talk together at the conference—delegates and the board—because these are big ideas. In order to make any useful changes to our service system and conference seating practices, we'll have to have extensive conversations throughout the upcoming cycle. The conference will be the beginning of that dialogue. We are looking forward to hearing from conference participants about whether we are on the right track with our ideas and how you think they might be practically implemented.

June 2010

At the conference, we presented service system models with new structural ideas; we have been using a service model designed in the 1980s whose effectiveness and lack of flexibility may have outlived itself. We will be developing session material to discuss these service system proposals fellowshipwide.

SERVICE SYSTEM & WSC SEATING

Another topic you will hear plenty about this cycle is the service system. This conference marked the beginning of what will become a fellowshipwide discussion on alternative models for service system delivery. Several sessions of the conference were devoted to presenting and gathering input on proposals the board is offering with new structural models for service delivery. We heard a lot of things from delegates ranging from excitement about a system that focuses more clearly on the needs of the group to generalized anxiety about change.

We asked conference participants what concerns them and excites them about the proposals and we got a lot of input that the workgroup and board will review at their next meetings. Some of the input points to aspects of the models that simply need clarification—for instance, some participants were concerned that the models add layers of service. In fact, they do not, and so that seems to be an aspect that needs clarification. Other feedback indicates some areas that the board may want to reexamine and perhaps revise. For example, the name “geopolitical” concerned some members. The workgroup will discuss this sort of input and work on possible changes to present to the board. After the board meeting in July, revised materials will be available.

The conference also offered some input that will help frame the fellowshipwide discussion about these concepts and models. Participants were asked, “What challenges do you think we will face in discussing these models with the fellowship? What should we try to stress to show the benefits?” Many delegates expressed anxiety about having to explain these ideas on a local level when they were only just grasping the information themselves. We are trying a number of things to help.

First, we launched a webpage devoted to the project <http://www.na.org/?ID=servsys>. The first three links on that page are a good “starter kit” for anyone trying to get caught up with the project. There is a link to a two-page essay giving the background of the project and explaining why it was undertaken. There is a one-page update about current work. And there is a formatted version of A Vision for NA Service, adopted at WSC 2010. Along with those pieces, the page has links to a discussion board for the project, as well as downloadable copies of the material distributed for WSC 2010 and material on the project published in previous reports.

The other thing we are starting to plan that will help is a series of United States workshops. We are planning five workshops in the US between mid-August and mid-November at places with concentrated fellowship density. Right now we are thinking of New York, Florida, California, Texas, and a Midwest city like Chicago or Detroit. These workshops will give us a forum where we can talk with members about

the ideas presented at the WSC, answer questions, and get input. We will have a revised report, session outlines, and Flash and PowerPoint presentations for delegates and others to use locally to further the discussion. We also want to devise some sort of tool or template to help you provide input more easily.

These workshops would be held in lieu of the two US worldwide workshops we'd normally have and some zonal forum attendance. Obviously we need a strategy to engender fellowshipwide discussion that extends beyond the United States, but we aren't yet sure how to have that international discussion in an economically feasible and practically effective way. We welcome your ideas, and will publish our thoughts in *NAWS News* when we make further plans.

The Service System Workgroup meets at the end of June, jointly with the Executive Committee of the board. The board meets in July and any tools or plans that are produced as a result of those meetings will be posted on the webpage for the project.

November 2010

We held our initial meeting of this conference cycle 29-31 July 2010 in Chatsworth, CA. Our agenda was ambitious, with a focus on the Service System Project. We spent half a day discussing the Service System Project, its timeline, charge, next steps, and what we desire from the workshops. In our second board meeting, 21-23 October 2010, we spent a day and a half refining the session profiles based upon input from three previous workshops. Our goal in all of the workshops we participated in was to gather input, but more importantly to create a common understanding of the proposals in their current form. We see this as the only way to proceed down this path together. More information about the Service System Project and next steps are included in this *NAWS News*.

SERVICE SYSTEM

Much has happened since we last reported in *NAWS News* about the work of the Service System Workgroup. The workgroup met three times since the conference, once with the EC and once with the board as a whole. Information has been revised from what we presented to the conference, a webpage for the project has been launched (www.na.org/servicesystem), and five US workshops and several shorter workshops in other countries were held. Now we are collecting input on the proposals in preparation for revising them again in 2011. Here are some highlights of the ground we've covered and where we expect to be by WSC 2012.

The Executive Committee spent a day with the Service System Workgroup in June to discuss revisions to the service system proposals the board presented to the conference. Many of you (we hope most of you) have seen that revised material by now. We used the input we received from WSC participants to simplify the framing of the proposals. The information is basically the same but we think the revisions make the information easier to understand and to present.

At our joint meeting with the workgroup, we also talked about the areas we felt needed further discussion or where there are questions we have not yet answered. Since that time, many of these answers have begun to come through our more recent work on the processes, people, and resources portions of the service system. We have started talking about planning processes and leadership development processes, for instance. These ideas, together with the input on the current proposal drafts, will get factored into the revisions to the proposals in 2011.

During our July board meeting, we reviewed the revised materials and achieved broad agreement on the changes in the proposals. A revised and reformatted version of the service system proposals report was mailed to conference participants, posted on the Service System Webpage (www.na.org/servicesystem), and discussed at numerous workshops.

We held five weekend-long US NAWS workshops:

- September 17-19th in Dearborn, Michigan
- September 24-26th in Dallas (Grapevine), Texas
- October 15-17th in Oakland, California
- October 29th-31st in Baltimore, Maryland
- October 29th-31st in Orlando, Florida

We also had sessions about the service system proposals in several places internationally (and California):

- Guadalajara, Mexico: Mexico Occidente Regional Convention
- Israel: European Delegates Meeting
- Culver City, California: Hispanic Area Convention
- Honduras: Honduras Regional Convention
- Chandigarh, Punjab, India: SIRSCONA workshop
- Siliguri, West Bengal, India: NERF workshop
- Toronto (Mississauga), Ontario: Canadian Assembly & CCNA (RD-led)

During our October board meeting, we spent a day with the workgroup to discuss some of what we heard at those workshops as well as some of the workgroup's initial ideas about processes. This wasn't a decision-making meeting for us, just a chance to meet jointly and begin talking about some of the ways the proposals could be improved after the end of the year. We will meet with the Service System Workgroup again in January. At that time, we'll have received all of the input from local workshops and begin making decisions about revisions to the proposals.

We have tried to help those of you who are holding locally based workshops. We released a session outline and PowerPoint for a 90-minute to two-hour workshop. Both of these are available on the Service System Webpage: www.na.org/servicesystem. We encourage everyone to send us any input from local workshops or from interested members. We've posted an online form to make it as easy as possible to send us input, but we will take it in whatever form it arrives: online form, email, fax, or post. We are grateful for your efforts and your ideas.

Many of you have expressed anxiety about the time frame involved in communicating these ideas, getting input, and revising the proposals. We want to reassure you that 31 December does not represent the end for input on this project or even on the ideas contained in the current proposals. All of the input we've heard so far indicates that the revisions to the proposals will most likely involve refining and adding to these ideas, not rejecting them in their entirety and issuing a radically different set of proposals. The process of developing these ideas is more of an evolution than a revolution, and if you are putting on a local workshop late in the year, you need not worry that you will be talking about information that will become irrelevant in a short period of time. Further, if you are gathering local input, that input is useful even if it comes after the deadline and can't be factored into this set of revisions. Work on a local level will not be wasted even if it's at or after the end of the year.

We've talked within the board and with the workgroup about the time table for this project and what seems realistic to discuss and decide upon at the 2012 World Service Conference. Most likely, what we will be publishing in the 2012 *Conference Agenda Report*, for discussion and decision at the conference, is a set of "agreements in principle," not unlike the resolutions voted on at the 1996 conference that led to the restructuring of world services. Pending the conference's decision on those agreements, we expect to need a project for some sort of transition group to lead us into the next stage in this process of change. We are not trying to rush this process, and we continue to welcome your input.

We realize with our current direction for "agreements in principle" that may be offered at WSC 2012, the WSC seating component of the service system is involved. We have been functioning under the premise of coming to WSC 2012 with a proposal for seating. The discussions at WSC 2010 seemed

pretty clear that people are not in a rush and want adequate time for discussions. To separate seating from an entire service system is not practical and will detract from our goal of developing a *system* for effective service provision. We are taking this opportunity to inform you that we will be engaging conference participants in a discussion of what should happen when the current moratorium expires at the close of WSC 2012. The current moratorium states we will only consider regions not resulting from a regional split for seating at the conference.

If you haven't yet visited the Service System Webpage, we hope you will. In addition to the proposal report, the page also contains:

- A two-page essay giving the background of the project
- A formatted version of A Vision for NA Service, adopted at WSC 2010
- The discussion board for the project
- Downloadable copies of the material distributed for WSC 2010
- Material on the project published in previous reports
- Session profiles and PowerPoints from the workshops in the US
- An abbreviated session profile and PowerPoints for shorter local workshops
- An online form to use to give input on the proposals

Most of these materials are now also posted in Spanish.

February 2011

We spent two days focused on the Service System Project; one day we reviewed and discussed fellowship input on the proposals and day two was facilitated by Jim Delizia who helped us refine the revised proposals. Our service system workgroup partners were with us for these two days. In this *NAWS News*, there is a synopsis of points and the website is a great source of current and past information about this project. We hope that you take the time to visit the service system area on the website, www.na.org/servicesystem.

SERVICE SYSTEM

As many of you (perhaps most of you) already know, we met jointly with the Service System workgroup again in January. We reviewed the input we'd received on the first draft proposals and talked about our

Input on the First Draft Proposals

We received input from:

63 individuals, 6 groups, 14 ASCs, 27 RSCs, 18 workshops (not including the 5 NAWS US workshops)
10 countries: Canada (3 provinces), Finland, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, South Africa, Sweden, US (30 states), the UK, and Venezuela.

impressions from the service system workshops and sessions we have facilitated and attended.

As we ebled to delegates, we made some decisions about how to revise the proposals—both how to refine some of the existing ideas about structure and what to add at this stage about process. Certainly, it is clear that this continues to be a work-in-progress. We are currently working on those revisions and expect to have them out sometime in March. In the meantime, if you have not read the February 2011 update yet, we have posted it online, and it offers a brief explanation of what we expect those changes to be: www.na.org/servicesystem. These “second draft” proposals should form the basis of conversations that will help shape the material in the *Conference Agenda Report*. At this point, we expect to include a set of “agreements in principle” for decision by the conference. We also expect to be

presenting a project plan for some sort of transition workgroup (this project plan would be included in the Conference Approval Track mailing along with the other project plans).

We continue to welcome your ideas and input about the service structure-what kind of changes can we make to more effectively carry the message? One of the areas we are specifically looking for more information about is shared services. If you have had experience working with a successful shared services body of some kind, we'd like to hear from you. We are particularly interested in hearing how you dealt with the potential pitfalls or challenges related to accountability and delegation in a body formed to share services between two ASCs, for instance. Please write to us at worldboard@na.org with your best practices.

Thank you for your help so far in spreading the word about this project, putting on workshops and talking about ideas in your service bodies, sending us input and generally trying to help us move forward in this process of change. Together we can.

August 2011

We spent two days focused on the Service System Project; day one we collaborated on processes for various aspects of the proposed system and day two was facilitated by Jim Delizia, who helped us refine the proposals which we will forward in the *CAR*. Our Service System Workgroup partners were with us for these two days which was bittersweet as this was the last meeting of the workgroup. The workgroup will be communicating by email as we move the proposals forward. In this *NAWS News*, there is a synopsis of points from our meeting, and the website is a great source for current and past information about this project. We hope that you take the time to visit the Service System area on the website, www.na.org/servicesystem.

SERVICE SYSTEM

We met jointly with the Service System Workgroup over two days of our June meeting, with one of these days being facilitated by Jim Delizia. Since our January 2011 meeting, we have released a revised copy of the Service System Proposals document and added a number of resources to the project webpage, including session profiles and PowerPoints for local workshops. These can be found online here: www.na.org/servicesystem. We also put together a session profile and accompanying PowerPoint focused on A Vision for NA Service, an integral part of the earlier stages of the Service System Project. This material can be found online at: <http://www.na.org/?ID=IDT-IDT>.

We reviewed the fellowship input we received on the proposals since our last meeting, talked about a number of key aspects of the proposals, and began to discuss what material will be in the 2012 *Conference Agenda Report*. We've received a few questions about how long we will be taking input on the proposals, and we want to clarify: In a broad sense, we appreciate input at any point since any changes to how we deliver services need to involve collaborative efforts and the more conversation we can have together, the better. In terms of having a specific effect on the written proposal report, however, input received after the October board meeting is unlikely to effect the third draft proposals because we will need to draft the *CAR* and finalize the third draft proposals shortly after our October meeting.

As we have reported previously, the issues of how groups get their literature, how funds flow through the service system, and how shared services work in a revitalized system are among the things that need further definition in the proposals. These topics were a focus of our discussions in our two day meeting. We also spent time talking about the possible roles of zonal forums, how service body boundaries might be established, and the possible advantages of more effectively coordinating planning cycles across the system. We expect to offer more material on all these topics in the near future as we move towards a third draft of the proposals for inclusion in the 2012 *CAR*.

We discussed seating issues beyond our January decision to propose seating state, national, or provincial bodies at the WSC, such as what further seating criteria will be needed, and ideas for how to accommodate service provision in both very large and very small states, national or provincial service bodies.

Our other major task was to begin to frame a series of “agreements in principle” which would be included in the 2012 CAR and voted on at the 2012 WSC. The third draft proposal report will be included in the CAR but provided more as background information for the thinking that led to the agreements in principle. The proposal report itself will not be voted on. The agreements are broader in nature—thus the “principle” part of “agreements in principle.” Our belief is that each of these agreements will provide an essential piece of the foundation for the next phase of the project. Because we are proposing a system, really these agreements in principle all work together. In this respect it’s almost artificial to separate them into distinct ideas to vote on, but we understand that is the way that these ideas will be workshopped and discussed. After a discussion, we decided that including them as distinct ideas to be voted on separately would be easier for all and would allow someone who agreed with most of the ideas but strongly disagreed with one to register that disagreement. As we reported in January’s *NAWS News*, we also expect to offer a project plan to form some sort of transition workgroup as part of the *Conference Approval Track* material in January.

June saw the last meeting of the Service System Workgroup. We want to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to the workgroup members, who have spent three years and countless hours working on this project. One unique aspect of this project is that for the first time we met jointly with a workgroup. We believe that this has been a great success, due in part to the experience and hard work of the workgroup members. Thank you all for your dedication.

We also want to thank all those members who have organized and attended service system workshops throughout our fellowship. Your ongoing participation is an invaluable part of this project.

November 2011

Service System Project: based on the work of this project, the CAR will contain eight resolutions for discussion and decision at WSC 2012.

January 2012

SERVICE SYSTEM

We had attended two CAR workshops prior to the board meeting and discussed our interactions with members in these workshops along with their issues of concern. We heard three recurring issues.

One thing people asked about was project background – where did this project come from? The Service System Project stemmed from efforts to address what seem to be perennial challenges on a local level. Over the years, we have heard the same concerns with local service delivery from various sources.

Worldwide Workshops asked what were the significant issues members faced and apathy was usually the #1 challenge – members did not want to be involved. During the PR Roundtables, professionals from treatment, medical, and judicial fields stated that there were significant challenges with contacting NA in specific locales, often involving the need to contact multiple services bodies. Finally, we had several IDTs focused toward service delivery (Infrastructure, Our Service System, and Leadership, are examples) over the last ten years. Members repeatedly brought up lack of training and mentoring, a lack of trusted servants, negative atmosphere of recovery in service meetings, and ineffective services such as helplines with no one answering the calls. There have been efforts over the years to “patch” some of the “holes” in the system, but after hearing the same challenges for so long, taking a holistic approach to examining and suggesting improvements to the service system seemed to be the wisest approach to resolving

some of these issues. More information about the background of this project can be found at www.na.org/servicesystem.

A second issue which has been voiced at the CAR workshops is that of delegation. For one thing, there seems to be a misconception that the Service System Proposals are outlining a system in which groups would no longer be voting on matters for the WSC. There is no intention whatsoever to distance members, and certainly no suggestion to remove a member or group's voting privilege for WSC matters. The proposals are geared toward Consensus Based Decision Making, but this in no way removes the group's ability to vote on proposals/motions/items affecting the WSC. It's worth noting that not every region in NA functions the same way with CAR voting; some gather their conscience at workshops or assemblies, some use area voting, and some gather group tallies. *We are not proposing anything that would change those practices.*

Delegation on a local level, on the other hand, may function a bit differently for some communities if the ideas in the Service System Proposals were put into practice. The group support unit is focused toward group issues, and GSU meetings would be held separately from the LSU, which is based upon a planning cycle for local service projects and ongoing services such as H&I. The local service unit, as it's described in the proposals meets quarterly to make decisions and have discussions about planning, prioritizing, and overseeing work. Much of the administrative detail on a local level is delegated to the local service board as well as the project workgroups and committees in the hopes that the LSU meetings can be focused on broader strategic discussions, more deliberate decisions about resources, and oversight of the work being done. In other words, delegating more of the administrative detail ideally would promote groups' participation in decision making, rather than discourage it, as groups are better empowered to make decisions that affect local practices and outcomes.

Thanks to the discussions held at the two CAR workshops, we were able to clarify these points on the session profiles and PowerPoints for CAR workshops. These third draft proposals, outlines and PowerPoints for local CAR workshops can be found at www.na.org/servicesystem.

Finally, the third issue regarding the service system centers on a common theme of questions about the specifics of implementation (e.g., "What will happen to my ASC if..." "What if other ASCs in the region decide..." "What if my group decides..." In a sense, these sorts of questions put the "cart before the horse". We are offering resolutions in the CAR which move us in a direction that is different from what exists. Until we know whether we have agreement in principle about the broad ideas being proposed, it seems premature to work out the details of a transition to that system. Of course, any effective transition has to rely on unity. We are all in this together. We will be offering a project plan at the conference to accomplish possible next steps with the Service System Project; the concrete details of implementation will be addressed in the transition/implementation aspect of this project.