

Questions & Answers on Electronic

Al-Anon Groups: Prepared by Joanne P, VT Delegate

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#12: (This question was asked by the NJ delegate.) The second question pertains to allowing a group to have two meetings at the same time on the same day. One would meet face to face and the other would meet electronically. They would have the same WSO # . This would be similar to a group that meets more than once, with one GR. The only difference here is that both meetings would be held on the same day and same time. Is this type of scenario permitted if the group submits that information to WSO? 8

13: (This question was from the TX delegate.) If as an Area we decide to accept AFGs that meet electronically into our Area and have our procedures for that, can we accept AFGs from the Non-Panel Area before it is voted into WSC? And if in the future it is not voted in? 9

14: (This question was from the TX delegate.) If and when we can start accepting AFGs from the non-panel Area, how is it determined what District they are part of? Is that decided by the AFG petitioning to come to our Area or someone else? Is it recommended we great an Electronic District to house some of them? Can we do that? 9

15: (This question was from the TX delegate.) Can our Area start accepting AFGs that want to remain electronic that are currently already attached to a District in our Area if we have made our decisions around this issue? 10

The main resource we will use at the 6/26/2021 and 8/7/2021 Town Hall is the [WSO Guide: Transforming Electronic Meetings into Al-Anon Family Groups A Guide for Geographically Based Areas in the WSC Structure](#). Go to the [VT Al-Anon Website](#) for the flyer. The meeting opens at 9:45AM for fellowship and check-in. The Town Hall starts at 10AM.

I asked these questions except where noted. The answers are from Sue P., WSO Associate Director of Group Services, from Vali F., WSO Executive Director and a WSO Trustee.

#1: May an area accept any geographic group from anywhere?

Answer: No. Groups that are meeting outside your geographic Area but near the borders of your Area may request admission to your Area.

#2: May an area accept any registered electronic group?

Answer: This is an Area decision to make based on the 2021 WSC discussion.

#3: A group may belong to a geographical area or a non-panel area but not both. Is that right?

Answer: Yes. This is correct.

#4: If a group wants to switch areas, they have to be released from the one they're in first and then be admitted to the other area. Is that right?

Answer: Yes. See page 158 [of the manual]: "Miscellaneous Renaming an Area, Changing a group/District to a new Area."

#5: There will be one non-panel area to start but later there may be more than one. Right?

Answer: Yes. This is correct.

#6: WSO will not be able to register groups into the non-panel or geographic area until March 2022 or after WSC 2022 when the conference will vote to accept the non-panel area. Is that right?

Answer: Al-Anon Family Groups that meet electronically will continue to be registered through the current registration process. Groups do not register into an Area. Once a group registers, it is assigned to an Area and District based on the registration information.

#7: (This was asked by another delegate at WSC 2021.) We have electronic meetings that are not represented in the WSC by a delegate. Currently they are represented at WSC By WSO group services [and no delegate]. The motion would grant a new electronic Area for these electronic meetings. This [the motion] would also affect every current Area within the WSC. The effect would be that each current Area would need to decide if they want to accept electronic meetings into their Area. If the Area says Yes, then the Area would need to create a new process on how to accept or deny electronic meeting into their Areas. Do I have this process correct ?

Answer from JP M., WSO Trustee and EMWG Chair:

In my opinion, you are essentially correct. There are some caveats. When a group asks an Area to join, then the Area needs to make or have made a decision. EMWG suggests Areas start addressing it now while the non-panel Area is being formed. An Area doesn't have to create a new process so much as it needs to determine the acceptable parameters of a group that only meets electronically joining the Area if/when asked. The process is simple and is expressed in the Handbook. The parameters are up to the Area autonomy.

#8: I'm still confused about how electronic groups would join an area - electronic or geographic.

Answer from Vali F, WSO Exec Director

The Electronic Meetings currently registered with the WSO will automatically become Al-Anon Family Groups which are part of a non-panel Area upon the 2021 WSC approving the EMWG

(Electronic Meeting Workgroup) Policy Digest and World Service Handbook recommendations. [The WSC 2021 approved.]

Geographic Areas will have the opportunity to decide whether they want to admit groups which meet electronically into their Areas along with face-to-face groups in the year following the 2021 WSC. The EMWG has prepared a four-page guide and accompanying graphic to help geographic Areas reach an informed group conscience on this topic. These materials are ready for distribution pending WSC approval of the Policy and Handbook motions

- The Guide: [Transforming Electronic Meetings to AFGs-A Guide for Geographically Based Areas Apr 2021](#)
- The Graphic: [Transforming Electronic Meetings To Al-Anon Family Groups 2021-22](#)

#9: If an area decides to accept registered electronic groups, does the area assign the group to a district? Could the area create a virtual district for registered electronic groups?

Answer: If an Area decides to accept registered Al-Anon groups that meet electronically, the Area assigns the District number where the group belongs at the time of registration. If the member filling out the registration form leaves this information blank, the Area Group Records Coordinator fills this in. If you look at the Online Registration form for new Al-Anon Groups, the first piece of information requested is "District Number." It is not a required field on purpose as many times the member registering the meeting does not know what it is. This jot form is sent to the Area Group Records Coordinator to enter the new

group meeting information into the Online Group Records database (OGR). If a paper form is sent to WSO, AFG Records Staff will enter the information into the OGR database and the AGRC will receive a notification that a new group's information needs to be reviewed. Click here to view the registration form: [New Al-Anon Group Registration](#)

#10: If a physically located NH group (NH borders VT) wants to join VT and they are given permission by NH to be released from NH, does VT assign the NH group to a district?

Answer: For the New Hampshire to Vermont scenario the Vermont Area needs to consider re-drawing it's boundaries and assign the District number as part of its' Area procedures. This way, if any other Al-Anon or Alateen group were to register in New Hampshire that is in this same proximity, that group would belong to the Vermont Area. This redrawing of boundaries requires discussion and agreement by both Areas. Please see the section : "Miscellaneous: Renaming an Area, Changing a group/District to a new Area" on page 158 in the "World Service Handbook" section of the 2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27) version two (2) for details. Please note: If an Alateen group from New Hampshire is part of this new District, the Vermont Area may want to consider a conversation with local counsel regarding any mandatory reporting procedures required in New Hampshire and any changes the Vermont Area may need to make to be in compliant with the law in order to serve that Alateen group.

#11: (This was asked by the NJ delegate.) The first question pertains to posting the physical location and electronic meeting information in the group's record. I believe we have been told that there is no way to list both the physical meeting location and the electronic link, in the group records, yet when I search for meetings, I am able to see both when a group has submitted the link for meetings that are temporarily meeting electronic due to the pandemic. Can you provide some clarification?

Answer: In order for the temporary electronic meeting information to display on al-anon.org. Area Group Records Coordinators (AGRC) were provided with written guidance on April 10, 2020 as to how to enter the temporary electronic meeting information in the Online Group Records (OGR) database without removing the permanent group information. The field that was designated for use is the "Location instructions." This field is usually to provide information specific to finding the meeting, like "park in the rear parking lot" or "enter via the side door." The temporary meeting information will be displayed on the al-anon.org website and this same text for location instructions remains in tact. This field in the database was identified as the one to use as when information is populated there, it is auto populated to the meeting search information on al-anon.org. This was only a temporary measure and it was optional for AGRCs to enter this information or not. This is an example from one of the meetings in New Jersey:

Wednesday AFG
Wednesday 7:30 PM
First Presbyterian Church
111 Irvington Ave, South Orange, NJ, 07079, USA

Temporary electronic meeting available during COVID-19 pandemic: Zoom; us02web.zoom.us/j/81740375876; password 354453. Physical Location Notes: AA meets at the same time

#12: (This question was asked by the NJ delegate.) The second question pertains to allowing a group to have two meetings at the same time on the same day. One would meet face to face and the other would meet electronically. They would have the same WSO # . This would be similar to a group that meets more than once, with one GR. The only difference here is that both meetings would be held on the same day and same time. Is this type of scenario permitted if the group submits that information to WSO?

Answer: The second question is somewhat more complex in that the policy for group registration needs to be taken into consideration as well as the spiritual principles found in our Traditions as they relate to Al-Anon groups. In accordance with the policy, a group registers to be able to offer help and hope to anyone affected by someone else's drinking. Each Al-Anon group is also autonomous which is why a Group Representative (GR) is elected. This trusted servant brings decisions from the Area Assembly back to the group and vice versa. The question for discussion is how does the GR participating in the face to face group convey the needs and ideas of the members in the online group if they are one group (or vice versa)?

Page 31 of the 2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27) version two (2) speaks to multiple meetings as those that occur on two or more days at the same location. The type of registered group described above does not meet this criteria. The guidance on page 31 goes on to state the importance of

discussing the advantages and disadvantages of being one group comprised of multiple meetings and the means by which a group conscience is formed. The idea is that multiple meetings usually have similar participants which is why one GR is able to be elected to represent the multiple meetings registered. There is no simple answer to this complicated question other than to please talk to each other and reason things out in light of the Traditions and the members to ensure their voices will be heard.

13: (This question was from the TX delegate.) If as an Area we decide to accept AFGs that meet electronically into our Area and have our procedures for that, can we accept AFGs from the Non-Panel Area before it is voted into WSC? And if in the future it is not voted in?

Answer: An Al-Anon group that is currently permanently registered online cannot request to move into a geographic Area until the non-panel Area is accepted and approved by the World Service Conference.

14: (This question was from the TX delegate.) If and when we can start accepting AFGs from the non-panel Area, how is it determined what District they are part of? Is that decided by the AFG petitioning to come to our Area or someone else? Is it recommended we great an Electronic District to house some of them? Can we do that?

Answer: The Area will have to determine what District an electronic group will belong to. This is part of the discussion that is referenced on the document provided at the 2021 WSC, "Transforming Electronic Meetings into Al-Anon Family Groups A Guide for Geographically Based Areas in the WSC Structure."

15: (This question was from the TX delegate.) Can our Area start accepting AFGs that want to remain electronic that are currently already attached to a District in our Area if we have made our decisions around this issue?

Answer: Any Al-Anon group can continue to meet temporarily online as long as we are in the midst of the pandemic. These same groups can even consider trial periods of attempting to meet on a hybrid basis if it is possible. Any group that decides now to permanently stay online, will need to register as a permanent electronic Al-Anon group and will become part of the non-panel non-geographic Area. This means that the Al-Anon group that met in the face-to-face location in Area 48 would effectively disband and be removed from display on al-anon.org and any AIS or local websites where that meeting would have been displayed. It would also entail the Area Group Records Coordinator inactivating the group in the database.