

The DCM's Role in Data Stewardship in Area 15

This is a brief overview on how our General Service Office, with the assistance of district and area registrars, maintains records on groups and trusted servants in the U.S. and Canada in its database, Fellowship Connection. ***DCMs, because of their important role as the link between groups in their subdistricts and their district and area, have a vital role in this process.***

We've heard that the position of General Service Representative may be the most important job in A.A.; registrars often say the position of registrar may be the most *mysterious* job in A.A., simply because most people, even those who think they may want to *be* a registrar, don't know very much about what a registrar *does* and the vital role he or she plays in data stewardship in our districts and our area.

As you know, each group, each *service entity*, is autonomous. Home groups, districts, and areas all can create a structure best suited to meeting their needs. Here in South Florida Area 15, we are fortunate to have a service structure that includes the position of district registrar among its officer roles; not all areas do.

Here is the role of the district registrar:

- They assist new groups in getting registered and receiving their group number.
- They work with groups that have a change in status, such as from active to inactive.
- They work with newly elected GSRs, making sure their names get connected to their groups.
- They work with trusted servants who are elected to district positions, such as District Committee Member, alternate District Committee Member, district standing committee chair and district officer, adding their information to the database.
- And they do their best to stay abreast of trusted servants who have died or rotated out of their positions, updating the database accordingly.

Why do we collect all this information? The answer is that unless our trusted servants' information is collected in a database, there's no way for their districts, their area, and for GSO to communicate with them. At the district and area levels, this primarily means the timely receipt of district and area minutes. At the GSO level, it means receipt of GSR, DCM and standing committee kits as well as links to the quarterly GSO newsletter, Box 4-5-9.

Here is an excerpt from a March 2021 communication from our General Service Office to all members of the Fellowship regarding data stewardship:

The main reason for our existence as a Fellowship is to carry the message of recovery through our Twelfth Step. Our organization operates through elected leaders, trusted servants, special workers, and the principle of the group conscience. To do this effectively, consistently, and precisely we need accurate data ... Without correct data we will inevitably fall short in the communications that connect us.

In addition to being fortunate to have district registrars here in Area 15 to assist with communications that connect us, we're also fortunate to be among about one-third of the areas in the U.S. and Canada

that have a database at the area level. It's the role of our district registrars to enter information about groups and trusted servants into the Airtable area database.

When a district registrar makes a data entry in the area database, whether it's adding a new group, changing the status of a group, adding a new GSR or DCM, or removing a GSR or DCM who has rotated out of his or her position, those entries are compiled in a report inside the database called a change list. This is where the area registrar comes in, and the next step in the process occurs.

The area registrar keeps a frequent check on that change list, and moves the information entered by district registrars, one data entry at a time, into Fellowship Connection, the GSO database. Each district registrar processes between five to a dozen or more changes each month. Our area register conceivably could be moving upwards of 100 changes a month into Fellowship Connection.

Here is a brief description of Fellowship Connection:

Simply put, Fellowship Connection is a web-based application that allows for collaboration, or communication, between area registrars and the General Service Office. Fellowship Connection allows area registrars to accomplish three primary tasks:

- It allows them direct access for updating records in their areas, which as I've explained in the case of our area, are records entered in the area database by district registrars.
- Fellowship Connection allows area registrars to view current information on groups and trusted servants in their areas.
- And, it allows area registrars to search, filter and download reports, which they provide to district registrars, who in turn can provide the reports to District Committee Members.

DCMs are, or *should be*, in the unique position of knowing when new groups form in their subdistricts. They are aware, or *should be aware*, of which groups have elected GSRs, and when elections take place resulting in changes to a group's GSR. They also are aware, or *should be aware*, of when a group's status changes from active to inactive. This is information that is not necessarily readily accessible to the district registrar, despite the fact that he or she is responsible for maintaining accurate records of these fluctuations. ***So, a partnership between DCMs and registrars is crucial.***

Understanding that the DCM is so important in assisting with data stewardship and acknowledging that not all areas have an area database, the General Service Office has granted DCMs read-only access to Fellowship Connection as an aid, in its words, to "facilitate(ing) the widely desired goals of exact information, stronger communication, and responsible use of A.A.'s resources."

Having read-only access to Fellowship Connection allows you, as a DCM, to more fully fulfill your role in assisting with effective and continuous communication between members of the Fellowship and your district and area as well as the General Service Office.

One clear benefit of DCMs having read-only access to Fellowship Connection, again using the words of our General Service Office, is "to witness implementation of the 1990 General Service Conference advisory action that states: The General Service Office delay processing new A.A. group information forms for 30 days in order to allow the local A.A. structure to participate in the process."

With read-only access to Fellowship Connection, DCMs have the opportunity, if they choose, to reach out to new A.A. groups that are in the 30-day delay period to welcome them and to provide contact

information for the group's GSR. Additionally, with read-only access, DCMs can utilize various reports, for example a group contact report or a service position report.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of read-only access for DCMs is that it allows them to become partners in data stewardship with their district registrar. If a DCM sees an entry in Fellowship Connection that is not aligned with what he or she knows to be fact – for example, a GSR who has rotated from his or her position still showing as GSR for a particular group – the DCM can reach out to the district registrar to update the record.

Our General Service Office is eager to help you get started on this path. Contact the Records Department at records@aa.org to learn how you can establish log-on credentials and begin viewing records in Fellowship Connection.