



World Service Business Conference (WSBC) 2014

ASK-IT BASKET QUESTIONS

Answers provided by members of the Board of Trustees

In Italy, groups must have insurance for meetings to cover such things as possible accidents. Is this necessary in the USA?

It is up to the meeting place to determine whether or not a group needs insurance. It is becoming more common for groups to purchase insurance, but there is no US law requiring groups to be insured.

Why does OA have bylaws since AA and other Twelve Step programs do not?

Every fellowship has its own structure and rules. AA has bylaws for its general service board. Compulsive Eaters Anonymous–HOW also has bylaws. OA is incorporated ([OA Inc. Bylaws, Subpart A.](#)) and, as such, has corporate bylaws. The collective group conscience of OA at the World Service Business Conference has determined that bylaws should be in place to help carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous ([OA Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B, Article V, Section 1.](#)) There are also countries that require service bodies to have bylaws.

I was depressed when I came into OA. It took me some time to realize I had a disease that centered in my mind. To make any progress, I found I had to change my way of thinking. I could not do that, only God could. Why don't I hear this in meetings at the WSBC?

Do you mean the various OA recovery meetings that took place at the WSBC or the debates and discussion of various issues before the WSBC? Actually, my answer is the same in either case. I too have sometimes thought I would like to hear more of X, Y or Z in OA meetings. I feel that it is God who puts the thoughts in my mind that if I want to hear more of "whatever" in meetings, I can simply say "whatever." For example, if I want to hear more about abstinence in meetings, then maybe I need to pitch about abstinence. If I want to hear more about the Steps in meetings, then probably I need to pitch or talk about the Steps. If you want to hear more about God helping to change your thinking, my suggestion is to talk about how this has happened for you.

Has OA considered using digital marketing strategies that would allow for capturing lead data? For example, the Facebook ads could direct users to a landing page where OA captures users' information (first name, email address) in exchange for more information. This is a common and often successful tactic for growing a database of users. OA could then market to them by email, nurturing them with more information about OA periodically. Once we plant that virtual seed, we can continue to water it!

I would be very surprised if Banyan Communications, the firm we have hired to distribute our PSAs on the radio and TV and to design the Facebook ads, has not suggested this to the World Service Office staff. I am sure the staff turned down this idea for the same reason I will cite. According to Tradition Eleven, "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity. . ." The point of the Facebook ads and the public service announcements is to inform the public about OA and to take them to the OA website. This is enough! When people click on a Facebook ad or one of the ads in the online journal of *Today's Dietitian*, they arrive at the OA website. All our information is there and available. Email marketing is probably a great marketing technique, but it would be considered promotion rather than attraction, and therefore not in harmony with the OA Traditions.

Are there any intergroups that have achieved nonprofit status?

The World Service Office does not keep track of the nonprofit status of intergroups.

Can you explain why members of the Board of Trustees had to refer so many questions to the staff [at the WSBC 2014]? The BOT are our trusted servants, not the employees. It is disconcerting to see how much the BOT now relies on the staff. It did not used to be this way, and we could be headed down a very dangerous path if this trend continues.

Tradition Eight says, "Overeaters Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers."

Concept Eleven says, "Trustee administration of the World Service Office should always be assisted by the best standing committees, executives, staffs and consultants."

When questions arise at the WSBC, the BOT takes the task of providing accurate and appropriate answers very seriously. It is occasionally tempting, in the alleged interest of efficiency, to provide an answer based on memory. That is rarely a good idea. All answers should be as absolutely accurate as possible, which in many cases requires input from the staff. The staff has many sources of information from the World Service Office and Overeaters Anonymous available to them. It is not the job of the trustees, nor should it be, to keep up with all that data during the WSBC business sessions.

Generally speaking, it would be impossible for any Trustee to keep in memory

- the "in stock" count of particular pieces of literature.
- the basic cost of any given piece of literature.
- the time frame for designing and/or producing an "if this passes" piece of literature.
- the day-to-day intricacies and issues of upgrading and maintaining oa.org.
- all the nuances of our ever-evolving world of technological communications.

- the most recent numbers and/or tally of current public awareness or public information efforts.
- and much, much more.

The World Service Office staff most assuredly works for the Overeaters Anonymous Fellowship. They are directed by the Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee, and maybe most importantly the World Service Business Conference.

It's not standard procedure in any organization for the Board of Trustees to know the minute details of the day-to-day business, but rather the BOT looks at the big picture and gives direction and oversight to the staff.

It also bears mentioning that the trustees answer all questions related to the Traditions.

A large part of the reason the World Service Office staff is in the room at business sessions is to be a resource. It goes without saying that the World Service Office staff is absolutely the best source of accurate data and current information.

If a member refuses to introduce him- or herself as a compulsive overeater but simply as an “overeater,” can he or she take on service positions, such as newcomer information coordinator? Does it make a difference if the member has a sponsor and says he or she is working the Steps?

Members may call themselves whatever they want. Over the years I have heard many variations in OA meetings (compulsive, compulsive overeater, compulsive eater, compulsive under-eater, compulsive over-exerciser, grateful, I am a member of this Fellowship, I am changing my relationship to food, sugar addict, carbohydrate addict, food addict, compulsive about everything, recovered bulimic, restrictor, anorexic, you name it). As Tradition Three says, “The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively.”

For service positions, it is up to the group conscience what the requirements are for each position. Usually the requirements are based on time in the program and period of abstinence. Willingness to serve also helps. To encourage doing service, it is good to have positions that have little or no requirements, such as setting up chairs. “Each group is autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.” (Tradition Four) The requirements for a position can vary widely from group to group.

If a member has a sponsor, is working the steps and is willing to do service, then the member and the group are very fortunate when there is a service position to be filled. Since service is a tool that enhances our program of recovery on all levels for OA as a whole, it seems wise to create as few barriers as possible to doing service. From group experience it usually becomes clear what each position requires. In the *OA Handbook for Members, Groups and Service Bodies: Recovery Opportunities*, the section called “Getting Things Done in Your OA Group” has many wonderful suggestions. For instance in section 14, “What Are Some Good Qualifications for Service Volunteers?” it is stated that, “Experience has shown that giving members a job solely to help them maintain abstinence does not work; instead the group’s

welfare should be of primary concern in choosing members to fill the service positions. A review of Traditions One [unity] and Two [trusted servants] is helpful at election time. Service volunteers should fully realize that giving service to a group may sometimes involve doing tasks whether they feel like it or not.”

You may want to get a copy of this useful pamphlet for your group. It is available for purchase on oa.org in the bookstore, item [#120](#), \$2.25 each.

Can a member call himself “recovered” and offer a workshop called The Cure, meaning that he is cured for good, forever?

Members may call themselves whatever they want and may identify themselves as a member in OA in whatever manner that serves them. I myself would not call myself recovered or cured because I have this fatal disease of compulsive overeating that is never cured, only arrested one day at a time by my diligent work using the Steps, Traditions, Concepts and tools of OA and my reliance on a power greater than myself to guide my recovery. That said, another member of OA may have a very different experience and process in her or his recovery.

According to Tradition Eleven, OA is a program of attraction rather than promotion. This means we make no promises of weight loss or gain, beauty, gainful employment, or sane behavior and useful living. We only offer our own experience, strength and hope from working the Steps and tools, guided by the Traditions and Concepts of OA. If that is “the cure” the workshop leader is representing, then there is nothing in our guidelines that prohibits such a workshop. If the workshop is based on non-OA approved literature, then the workshop cannot be called an OA workshop.

Tradition One suggests that in the spirit of unity we use only OA approved literature, which has been defined by the [Overeaters Anonymous, Inc. Business Conference Policy Manual](#), Policy 2010a. It says, “In accordance with our Traditions, we suggest that OA groups maintain unity and honor our Traditions by using, selling and displaying only approved books and pamphlets at their meetings. This includes OA Conference- and board-approved literature; AA Conference-approved books, booklets, and all future editions thereof, with original edition copyright 2010 or earlier; and locally produced OA literature. Locally produced literature must be developed according to the [OA Guidelines for Locally Produced Literature](#), which can be found on the [OA Guidelines](#) page of oa.org and should be used with the greatest discretion. Local literature should be considered temporary and discontinued when OA literature approved for general use is available to cover the topic.”

Do regional business meetings distribute questionnaires about how the meeting went?

In my Region Ten we find the suggestions and feedback given at our Annual Region Assembly very helpful as we plan the next event. We give the evaluation forms out at the beginning of assembly and encourage region representatives to fill it in as the assembly progresses.

It is usual practice for most meetings or events to evaluate how the meeting or event went. Doing a survey or questionnaire allows meeting attendees to give feedback so that things that went well can be continued, things that didn't go well can be addressed and suggestions for future topics or processes can be put forward.

Can the additional costs of formatting translated books and pamphlets so that they appear the same as the original, English version be included in fund allocations?

I have the privilege of serving on the International Publications and Translations Committee. Twice each year service bodies that are in the process of translating OA books or pamphlets and need financial assistance can apply for funds from the Translation Fund. The deadlines for Translation Fund applications are Feb 1st and Aug 1st. The translation fund is allocated to help with the costs of translations, including printing, formatting and publishing of OA translated material, as funds allow. It is hoped that, as much as service bodies are able, the translated documents look similar to the English originals. See further information regarding the translation and licensing process at www.oa.org/membersgroups/service-body-support/oa-literature-translations.

Would it be possible for an intergroup to ask for financial support from the WSO to cover its cost of relocation?

The World Service Office, by direction from the Board of Trustees, works from a budget. There is no provision for this type of assistance. Tradition Four encourages group autonomy, so financial assistance from the World Service Office would not be in harmony with the spirit of that tradition. Occasionally there are requests for assistance from groups that are struggling, and assistance has been provided with literature and *Lifeline* magazine, but never money. You may want to check with your region or the groups that make up your intergroup to see how they may help you in your time of transition.

Does the Seventh Tradition at the WSBC come from intergroups or delegates?

Most of the donations taken during the Seventh Tradition are from the individual delegates. That was certainly the case this year at WSBC 2014, as \$4,455.36 was donated during the three days of business sessions. A special thank-you goes out to these delegates who place such a high value in Tradition Seven for their generosity, in not only giving money but also service.

Some service bodies, especially those outside the continental US, make special contributions during the WSBC since there are such serious restrictions on US dollars. Some bring large amounts of cash for royalties on literature, and some need a receipt for a Seventh Tradition cash donation. Occasionally a contribution check in the Seventh Tradition collection is from a service body, so it does happen from time to time.

The WSBC Motions Review Committee Comments about New Business Motion D states that several applications for funding were subsequently funded by region. Can you explain some of the reasons that these applications were rejected other than reasons already stated, e.g., second delegate or received after deadline?

NBM D Committee Comments provided 2012 information:

- 19 Applications
- 13 Funded with Delegate Support
- 3 Funded by the respective region
- 1 Denied due to this being the second delegate sent
- 1 Withdrawn
- 1 Received after deadline

All [Delegate Support Fund applications](#) submitted to the World Service Office are also sent to the respective region for evaluation and funding if possible. The three funded by the region were not rejected by the WSO DSF but funded first by the region. There is cooperation between the DSF and the region/virtual services trustees and chairs to fund as many applications as possible with the funds available.

What advice can the board offer to reach out and help three underserved groups: people of color, anorexics and bulimics?

OA has incredible literature that addresses these groups in general and some specifically. The literature is an avenue to begin a dialogue within a meeting or intergroup to evaluate if all who suffer from this disease are being given the opportunity that OA offers for recovery. There is another aspect to reaching out: We are all responsible to extend the hand and heart of OA to all who share [our] compulsion.

A few tools to help with reaching out are:

- [Strong Abstinence Checklist](#)
- [Unity with Diversity Checklist](#)
- [Strong Meeting Checklist](#)

Pamphlets also are great sources and are available from the bookstore at oa.org. Below is a short suggested list, but there are others that might be helpful too.

- *A Common Solution: Diversity & Recovery* ([#265](#), \$1.)
- *Focus on Anorexia and Bulimia Packet* ([#725](#), \$2.)
- *Person to Person* ([#108](#), \$.40)
- *Black OA Members Share Their Experience, Strength and Hope* ([#285](#), \$.75)
- *OA Members Come in All Sizes, Whatever Your Problem With Food* ([#110](#), \$1.25)

The key to inclusivity and unity can be found in the OA promise that says, “I put my hand in yours and together we can do what we could never do alone.”

Within the Traditions, can OA (as a whole or the Public Information Committee) or an individual write a city official or the President of the USA—or his wife—about the existence of OA?

Yes, it is within the Traditions for a member or committee to contact people who might benefit from knowledge of Overeaters Anonymous in a professional capacity. Doing a mailing campaign to city officials or other high-profile individuals falls within the scope of Tradition Eleven. Over the years our Public Information and Professional Outreach Committees have contributed to the following materials, which give guidance on ways to carry out such a project and stay within the boundaries of OA’s Traditions. Both are available in the bookstore of oa.org.

The *Professional Outreach Manual* ([#772](#), \$15.) is filled with ideas on how to get the word out to professionals and institutions about our organization. In addition, Appendix 1 of the manual is available on the oa.org documents page under the heading Public Information Suggestions. It includes guidelines on the Traditions and sample letters.

A *Professional Presentation Folder* ([#870](#), \$2.25) might be something you want to consider sending. It contains:

- [The Courier](#) newsletter for professionals
- [Introducing OA to Health Care Professionals](#)
- [Membership Survey Report](#)
- [Compulsive Eating: An Inside View](#)
- A cover letter to the professional

The *Public Information Service Manual* ([#762](#), \$15.) is oriented more toward engaging the media but is still full of ways to get the word out to the public.

My one concern on this topic is how do we sign the letter. What about anonymity? When reviewing Appendix I found this footnote. “Signing your full name is not a break in anonymity. It is your decision whether or not to use your full name or last initials. However, using your full name does make it easier for future contacts.” I hope you will follow through on the commitment to do such a mailing, as it is truly the act of carrying out our primary purpose.

At the end of a business assembly, what happens to the proposals and amendments that are not addressed? Do the makers of the motions have to resubmit them next year?

According to Robert’s Rules of Order, which OA uses at the World Service Business Conference, any time a business meeting is adjourned that will not meet again within a quarterly time frame or when the close of that meeting ends the terms of some or all of the members, then the unfinished business at the time of adjournment falls to the ground.

In terms of the WSBC, which meets only on an annual basis, any unfinished business is lost. If a service body wants to resubmit a motion for the following year it must go through the process as defined in OA Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B, Article XIV – Bylaw Amendments. All proposed motions must be postmarked no later than December 10th.

Can Conference approved literature be made available at the WSBC for purchase?

Delegates can preorder literature and pick it up when they register at Conference. There have been times in the past when we sold literature at Conference, but it was a great deal of extra work for the staff during an already busy week. So the decision was made to establish the preorder-and-pick-up arrangement, which takes much less staff time and still allows delegates to return home with any and all literature items.

Are the OA meetings at the WSBC open to everyone in Albuquerque? Or open only to delegates?

Yes, the OA meetings at the WSBC are open to all OA members, including delegates and local members in Albuquerque. Anyone who has the desire to stop eating compulsively is welcome to attend.

Will the website update include being mobile friendly? Considering that OA wants to attract and retain a younger demographic, many of who use mobile devices as their primary computer, we need to ensure this is a priority for the update.

Thank you for acknowledging OA's desire to reach the whole spectrum of compulsive eaters. We have budgeted to improve the OA website mobile application this year. Our first priority is to improve the Find A Meeting part of the website so it will work on mobile devices.

Will there be a group or subcommittee within OA that is familiar with technology and can serve as alpha and beta testers for the updated website?

Thank you for your interest in having a vital and user-friendly OA website. Yes, we will be doing extensive testing with OA member participation prior to the launch.

I'm visiting from Europe and want to know something about the structure of virtual groups in the USA. For example, do they participate in their country's national service board? Where are virtual groups registered?

Regarding how virtual groups fit into the OA service structure, the main difference between these groups and face-to-face groups is that virtual groups are non-geographic.

The [OA Inc., Bylaws, Subpart B](#) specifically says that virtual groups may affiliate with intergroups or create virtual service boards, which are not included in the regional structure. The bylaws are silent on whether virtual groups may join national service boards or language service boards. (For more information see OA Inc. Bylaws,

Subpart B, Article V – Overeaters Anonymous Groups, Section 1 – Definition; Article VI – Intergroups, Section 1 – Composition; Article VII – Regions, Section 1 – Composition; and Article VIII – Service Boards, Section 1 – Definition, and Section 2 – Composition.) The bylaws are on the Conference page of oa.org.

As of May 6, 2014, there are 371 registered virtual OA groups (191 telephone meetings and 180 online meetings), four registered virtual service boards with 59 affiliated groups, 13 virtual groups affiliated with intergroups and 299 unaffiliated virtual groups.

I believe we each determine our own abstinence. Do you think that is sick? Can we challenge people who are obviously still over- or underweight after several years as a delegate to the WSBC?

This is really a difficult to answer, and I am not sure I have the right answer. We need to be very careful when we judge and approach another member about their body size. Individually, we may approach a delegate who we think is still over- or underweight after several years as a delegate to the WSBC. Approaching privately is the loving and kind way to handle this situation. If you are concerned, ask if everything is ok and listen to the answer. Remember a healthy body weight is a medical issue and not ours to determine.

Our intergroup wants to make a public information tablecloth for wellness fairs. Can we use the OA logo?

You may request permission to use the OA logo. Go to the [Copyrights Requests](#) page on oa.org and download the [Logo Request Permission form](#). Complete the form and send it to the World Service Office.

Do you have any specific suggestions on how to encourage a climate of recovery in our meetings (other than the *Suggested Meeting Format*)? In many AA meetings, non-sober members are not allowed to share. OA favors giving a voice to everyone. Does this mean sharing about lack of abstinence is okay? Would it be okay to ask people their length of abstinence at the start and for the speaker to then call on those with the longest abstinence to share first, before getting to non-abstinent members (if they share at all).

In strong meetings, members share things that give hope, and they share things we can all identify with. I think this creates a “climate of recovery.”

Some meetings have a group conscience and decide to suggest that members have a certain length of abstinence before they share. According to Tradition Four, groups are autonomous, so they can do this. However, Tradition Three says, “The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop eating compulsively.” This means that groups cannot require members to be abstinent in order to speak.

I have been encouraged to begin my shares by “identifying.” That means saying how long I have been in program, how long I have been abstinent, how long I’ve been at my healthy body weight, and how much weight I have lost or gained to get to a

healthy body weight. Saying this gives hope that recovery is possible. So I believe that sharing this information at the beginning of my share is a good thing.

Sometimes newcomers may be better able to relate to someone who is newly abstinent rather than longtimers who may have forgotten what it used to be like.

As you mentioned, the [Suggested Meeting Format](#) found in the Group Support page of our website is a good guideline to help achieve a climate of recovery. I'll quote a few suggestions from the *Format*:

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR SHARING: "As you share your experience and strength in OA, please also share your hope. Please confine your sharing to your experience with the disease of compulsive eating, the solution offered by OA and your own recovery from the disease, rather than just the events of the day or week. If you are having difficulties, share how you use the program to deal with them. If you need to talk more about your difficulties and seek solutions, we suggest you speak to your sponsor and other members after the meeting."

Some of us say, "Share the message at the meeting and the mess with your sponsor." Others say, we ask for "positive pitches" or strongly suggest that non-abstinent people close their mouths and open their ears and minds. Sharing that you are having trouble becoming abstinent is one thing but bragging about it and expecting sympathy is not positive or helpful to the meeting. The intent is to let the solution come forth from within the group rather than to listen to the problem, which other members in pain already know too well.

Again, the *Suggested Meetings Format* offers good guidelines:

"Feedback, cross talk and advice-giving are discouraged here. Cross talk during an OA meeting is giving advice to others who have already shared, speaking directly to another person rather than to the group and questioning or interrupting the person speaking or sharing at the time.

We ask everyone to respect our group conscience. This meeting has decided that the chair for each meeting has the discretion to suggest to anyone sharing that he or she is off topic or is speaking too long. This meeting asks you to accept this suggestion in order to keep the meeting on track." [We suggest you add here any other guidelines your group conscience has decided to follow.]

This means that the meeting leader should kindly try to get the meeting back on track if a newcomer shares too long or goes too far off track. We have all suffered from "terminal uniqueness" when we first come into the rooms and many of us have control issues too.

Some groups decide to use a timer for shares. This is a non-judgmental way to help limit any shares that may go off track.

Many meetings go around the circle with shares so everyone gets a chance. This makes everyone feel welcome. I think this is a better way than having the speaker choose who gets to speak next.

Allowing a newcomer to speak can help them realize they are not alone, and it helps us to remember what we used to be like. Many newcomers will be disheartened if they are not allowed to share. They are “home” and we should try to make them feel that way.

The [Strong Meeting Checklist](#) found on the [Group Support](#) page on our website under the Members/Group section says just that. Are we welcoming? Do we follow a format? Do we hold a regular group conscience meeting? Do we avoid cross talk and advice giving?

How do you suggest we can incentivize and encourage members to do service beyond the group level?

Sponsors should encourage sponsees to do service. My sponsor set a good example by doing service at intergroup and she encouraged me. That is how I started.

Service should be fun instead of drudgery. If service bodies have fun, then its members will enjoy doing service and keep coming back.

Carpool or give someone a ride to intergroup or region. This allows fun and fellowship on the way to and from the meeting. Listen to OA CDs (available in the bookstore at oa.org) on the way if you can't think of anything to talk about.

Use the principles of the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts to solve problems that arise in service bodies, especially Tradition Twelve, which reminds us to “place principles before personalities.”

Do service at the group level. It isn't hard. Start small if necessary. Put out chairs. Be a [Lifeline representative](#). Confidence at giving service in a group will give members confidence to do service beyond the group level.

Ask someone to be a group representative. Don't wait for them to volunteer. Suggest someone who you think will be good at it.

Have two group representatives from your group. Then the time commitment won't seem so bad. One can be a representative and the other an alternate. Or the two representatives can split the time.

Practice rotation of service in the group, intergroup and other service bodies. This gives others a chance to give service. Set term limits for group positions and other service body positions. This also gives people a chance and the same person doesn't do all the work or get burned out.

If you are an intergroup or region officer, delegate responsibilities. Don't try to do it all yourself. This gives others an opportunity to serve. Make an effort to create jobs that require different levels of commitment. Give the newcomer to intergroup something to do. This gives him or her a sense of responsibility and ownership and keeps the member coming back. Have many different jobs available at intergroup

with different skills. If you are an officer, think about succession planning. Suggest and encourage certain people do certain jobs. Don't wait for them to volunteer.

Some group representatives to intergroup don't have to be abstinent to serve. But other positions may require abstinence. This allows a newcomer to see what abstinence looks like and encourages them to "stick with the winners."

Practice Step Twelve. Doing service is carrying the message. Service beyond the group level can reach even more people than being a sponsor. When my home group dwindled down to two members, I was afraid the meeting would close. One of the reasons I became active in intergroup was so I would have a meeting to go to, even if my home group closed.

OA members attending business meetings (region and world service) should not have to pay for room, board and travel expenses. If I had to pay for these things out of my own pocket, I probably couldn't afford it and wouldn't go.

Intergroup is a fabulous arena in which to grow my program, learn new skills, strengthen my abstinence, and to carry the message among groups. Intergroup rep might be considered the first service position beyond the group level. But all service positions—group, intergroup, assembly, World Service Business Conference delegate, and even Trustee—are critical to our helping each other recover from our compulsive eating.

Service keeps me abstinent. What more could I want?

Our NSB wants to know something about the recent survey.

The survey was part of the Strategic Plan 2008–2013. We did a census survey in 2008 to get a baseline number, and then in 2013, we conducted another survey to compare for growth. As you can see in the Managing Director's Report on page 194 of the 2014 WSBC binder referring to the Strong Meetings on the Strategic Planning, the goal was that by 2013 the member base of OA would increase by at least 20 percent.

In 2008 we had a census that indicated that OA had approximately 54,000 members attending weekly meetings worldwide. Virtual meetings were not included in the count at that time. In 2013, the census showed an increase to about 60,200 (+11.5 percent), including virtual meetings. Without the virtual meetings, the total decreased by 12.5 percent to about 47,300.

There is a group that calls itself OA and uses OA literature but refuses to register with the WSO or to affiliate with the National Service Board of the relevant country. What can or should we do to protect the name and message of OA? Or should we do nothing and let them be? (Needless to say, they have no recovery.)

It is good to try and encourage them to register as an OA meeting and affiliate with their intergroup or national service board. You can contact them and ask why they don't want to be affiliated. Emphasize the benefits of registration and affiliation.

On the other hand, if they choose to not register as an OA meeting, we cannot do or enforce anything as they are an outside organization. Because they are not part of OA, they can do whatever they find works for them.

However, if they are not registered, they are not supposed to call themselves an OA meeting. They can call themselves anything they like except an OA meeting.

In short, encourage them to register with WSO and to affiliate with the NSB and explain the benefits. If they decline, inform them that they are not allowed to call themselves an OA meeting and request that they stop using the OA name in association with their meeting.

OA is not growing because the current OA service structure members are not displaying sufficient physical recovery. Can't the trustees find the answer?

[This Ask-It Basket submission has been abbreviated to suit this format.]

Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive eating and to carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer.

I agree the problem with obesity is growing. That is why we are redoubling our efforts to get the message out. The board has a [three-year strategic plan](#) that is intended to address this problem, and encourage more recovery in meetings. The message must filter through the service bodies and groups, but most importantly, from sponsors to sponsees.

Both the BOT and many of the region boards have physical recovery requirements, which are met.

When I came into program 25 years ago I wanted to be thin in the worst way. I thought that would solve all my problems. My sponsor said to me, "Thin is not necessarily well." I thought she was crazy—Thin was well! After 25 years in program I finally know what she meant. This is a three-fold disease. Yes, physical recovery is the attraction. I can be thin on a diet. The emotional and spiritual parts are my program of recovery. They teach me to live life on life's terms without compulsively overeating.

Our trusted servants are living their lives through the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts. They are doing service to help others, so that they also find recovery in the Steps, Traditions and Concepts.

The trustees find the answers by doing as the Fellowship dictates through the World Service Business Conference and the group conscience of the Fellowship. It is a we program, not us and them. Together we can!

Is there a long-term aim among some of the members of the BOT to stop the use within the OA Fellowship of AA literature and replace it with only OA literature?

There is no short- or long-term aim to remove the use of AA literature within OA. While the WSBC, various literature committees and the World Service Office staff have worked hard to create and produce a variety of quality OA literature to help

the compulsive overeater, individuals are encouraged to use whichever works best for them.

Does OA take the position that the BMI is an accurate measure indicating healthy body size? I ask because it is referenced in the new *Overeaters Anonymous, Third Edition, Appendix B, as statistical data in a footnote.*

As stated in Tradition Ten, "Overeaters Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues." The footnote is from statistically respectable organizations and journals and is meant to provide more recent data since the statistics quoted in *Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition, Appendix B, "A Disease of the Mind,"* p. 234, were from 1980.

I would like to understand why we use quotations from outside OA in *For Today* and in *Voices of Recovery*.

For Today was produced in 1980 when there was very little OA literature available from which to quote. *Voices of Recovery*, produced in 2002, is actually full of OA quotes and references, as AA requested that no quotes from AA literature be used. Both books received the OA Conference Seal of Approval from its respective World Service Business Conference delegates. *For Today* ([#984](#), \$11.) and *Voices of Recovery* ([#986](#), \$11) are still so popular that writing workbooks, providing a question a day related to that day's reading, have recently been produced. To purchase, go to the oa.org bookstore and look for *For Today Workbook* ([#974](#), \$11) and *Voices of Recovery Workbook* ([#996](#), \$11).

I'm visiting from Europe and wondering how special interest groups in the USA run their meetings?

Tradition Four states, "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole." Each group is free to find the meeting format that best suits the needs of the group.

Most OA groups use or adapt the [Suggested Meeting Format](#) found on oa.org.

In addition to the *Suggested Meeting Format*, other meeting formats in the documents section, that are likewise used and adapted as needed, include *Lifeline Meeting Format*, *Newcomer Meeting Guidelines and Format*, *Recovery From Relapse Meeting Format*, *Suggested Meeting Format for Young People*, *Suggested Step-Study Meeting Format*, and *Suggested Telephone Meeting Format*.

Can special interest groups participate at WSBC?

Typically, groups do not participate at WSBC. Groups form intergroups and service boards, which can and do participate. All OA groups, special interest and otherwise, are considered exactly the same when it comes to participation at WSBC. OA Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B, Article X, Section 3 – Delegates outlines the qualifications for delegates and how delegates to WSBC are selected.

Can special interest groups have an autonomous website?

Yes. Members of service bodies at all levels of OA service may consider developing a website. The World Service Office, regions, service boards, intergroups, groups, as well as individual OA members have developed websites to disseminate information about our Fellowship.

The [Web Site Development Guidelines](#) are found on the [OA Guidelines](#) page of oa.org.

Does everyone have a voice at a Region Business Conference?

Each region is different. Typically, members with a voice at region assemblies include the elected representatives, members of the Region Steering Committee, and sometimes the region trustee. Whether they have a voice or not, all members of Overeaters Anonymous are welcome to attend their region assembly.

In my country, Italy, the last time bylaws were sent to WSO for approval was in 2006. Do we have to update the English translation and send them for approval, and how often?

Updated bylaws are to be submitted when they are amended so that the World Service Office has an up-to-date version, as covered in [OA Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B](#), Article VI, Section 2B. The requirement for bylaws to be in compliance in order for a service body to register WSBC delegates was rescinded in 2014 because it proved to be burdensome for service bodies, staff and trustees. Therefore resubmitting bylaws annually for trustee review, even if no changes were made in order to register delegates, is no longer needed. There is no set requirement for bylaws to be amended in a certain time period per Tradition Four. And bylaws can be submitted in their native language.

Many service bodies review bylaws on a regular basis, but changes may not be necessary. If bylaws need to be frequently amended, I suspect those bylaws might contain unnecessary detail that would be better included in a policy manual. For example, bylaws that specify that an intergroup meets once a month on Sunday at 7:30 p.m. would have to go through a full bylaws amendment procedure to change the day or time. It would be more appropriate for the details of meeting day and time to be placed in a policy manual that can be easily changed as needed and that the bylaws make a more general statement that the service body meets on a regular basis.

Members with bylaws questions may consult with their regional or virtual services trustee. In addition, the [Sample Intergroup Bylaws](#) and [Sample Service Board Bylaws](#) on the [Service Body Support](#) page on oa.org are intended to be helpful guides for service bodies to follow in revising or creating bylaws.

Can you explain in a satisfactory manner why the Board Reference Manual (BRM) is shrouded in such secrecy? The explanation given at WSBC referring to the document being a living document that frequently changes is not sufficient. We have technology today. I would hope the BRM is easily saved as a PDF and shared. Even if the document, in electronic format, is only updated and made available on a quarterly basis, that would be better than never showing a soul outside of the BOT. This is a dear desire of the Fellowship, and if I recall correctly, the BOT serves this Fellowship and not the other way around.

The Board Reference Manual is a collection of agreed upon policies and procedures by and for the OA Board of Trustees (BOT). It is true that there are frequent changes and that the BRM is not posted on oa.org. It is a private working business procedures document, but I do not agree that it is a secret document.

In my recovery I have personal things that I share with my sponsor and select program friends that it would not be appropriate to share at meetings. These are private, but not secret. While it is true we are only as sick as our secrets, I do not believe telling everything to everyone is necessary. Developing differing levels of privacy rather than the extremes of being completely shut down or indiscriminately open has been a healthy development for me. As Step Five says, only one other human being is required to hear the inventory.

The material posted on oa.org is to assist the board in implementing OA's primary purpose of carrying the message to those who still suffer from compulsive overeating. I am not sure how a document relevant to so few people (17 trustees and certain WSO staff) would be useful for that purpose. There is such a thing as too much detail. And there is already a great deal of material posted on oa.org that I believe is underutilized.

In the three years I have served on the BOT, no one has ever asked to even see the BRM.

Much of my job as a trustee is to respond to various queries and requests for assistance from OA members, so I find it difficult to think in terms of OA members serving me. The awareness that my job as trustee is to serve the Fellowship at large has been an enormous privilege and responsibility that has strengthened my recovery in more ways than I can count. It may sound cliché, but what service I have given out has been returned to me many times over.