Southern California World Service (SCWS)
Electronic Groups Task Force Presentation

Does SCWS want to welcome Electronic Groups into our Area service structure?

SCWS Assembly Meeting
November 19, 2022

Task Force Members:
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Complete presentation is found on our website
https://www.scws-al-anon.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/EG-TF-Present.Assembly11-22.pdf

*NOTE: Service Manual References (SM): See *2022-2025 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*

Glossary of Terms

➢ **Electronic Groups (EGs):** are not attached to a physical location and do not have an "in-person" component. They meet using various electronic platforms. **(Previously called:** *"Permanent Electronic Groups"***)** If a group has registered as an Electronic Group with the World Service Office (WSO), they are included in the **Global Electronic Area** and listed on WSO's website under Electronic Meetings.

➢ **Hybrid Meetings/Groups:** the group is meeting at a physical location with a virtual platform added in real time. **Note: Hybrid Meetings are here to stay, are accepted by WSO, and are not affected by the GRs' vote today!**

➢ **Temporary Electronic Meetings/Groups (TEMs):** were formed to *temporarily* take the place of an "in-person"/physical meeting as a result of COVID. TEM's are still attached to their physical meeting location because that was how the groups were registered in our Area.

Glossary of Terms, continued

➢ **Districts:** Convenient segments into which an Area is divided by the Area World Service Committee, with the approval of the Assembly [the Group Representatives.](**SM** p.141)   **SCWS Area has 29 Districts.**

➢ **Overlay District:** a collection of groups typically aligned by a commonality, such as language or electronic format. Groups may belong to either the [geographic] District or Overlay District based on their group conscience. (***SM**, p. 74)

   ○ **SCWS has a Spanish language "Overlay District"(D-64)** with groups participating in this District from across our Area. This Overlay District "lays over" the entire Southern California Area. Spanish language Groups have the autonomy to decide if they want to belong to the District where their physical meeting is located, or to join District 64.

Background Information

➢ There are now approximately 250 "**Temporary Electronic Meetings**"(**TEM**s) in our SCWS Area that were originally formed to temporarily replace physical meetings as a result of COVID. Most are meeting via "Zoom." Many **TEMs** do not want to, or are unable to return to a physical location and are waiting for SCWS to decide if we are welcoming Electronic Groups into our service structure.

➢ Some **TEMs** "*split*": a portion of their group decided to return to meet in person, while a portion remained on a virtual format. These two groups are <u>not connected to each other in real time</u> (not a "hybrid"). Many of these TEMs are unregistered and don't have a voice/vote in our Area.

➢ The **TEMs** that have split from the physical group, or were never connected with a physical location, are "floating" without any attachment to our SCWS Al-Anon service structure. In many ways they are in "limbo", waiting until our Area makes a decision.

What Was the First "Task" For This Task Force?

1. Use Knowledge Based Decision Making (KBDM) to help research the question: **"Does SCWS want to welcome Electronic Groups (EGs) into our Area service structure?"**

2. Prepare a presentation and bring this information back to the Group Representatives (GRs) to discuss at an Assembly.

3. Assist with the question/comment section following the presentation so GRs are prepared to decide if they want to welcome EGs into the SCWS Area.

    For more information about KBDM: https://www.scws-al-anon.org/knowledge-based-decision-making/?highlight=KBDM

What Were the Significant Findings of the Task Force?

What do we know?

1. This is an important issue, especially for Temporary Electronic Meetings (TEMs) that originated in our geographic Area and still want to identify with SCWS. Many of these TEMs are waiting to be included in our Area service structure. Including Electronic Groups in our Area service structure would indicate they are recognized and supported.

2. Some members in our Area prefer/need to attend virtual meetings and yet still want to be connected with our SCWS Area.

3. We do not anticipate any additional significant expenses by "welcoming Electronic Groups" into our Area.

We know…

4. Having Electronic Groups welcomed into our Area is consistent with our **Vision for Al-Anon**, which is to Welcome all newcomers/members (Al-Anon/Alateen Declaration). The Vision is to:

    a. Encourage younger members to join/participate in meetings

    b. Continue to be inclusive so members of both physical meetings and electronic meetings feel welcome and a part of our Area

    c. Encourage participation in service beyond the group level

We know…

5.   The World Service Conference (WSC) and the Al-Anon Family Groups (AFG) Board of Trustees have encouraged Areas to develop a plan to welcome Electronic Groups in their Area.

We know this is still about choices:

6.   Electronic Groups would still have the choice to belong to our SCWS Area, or the Global Electronic Area, depending on their group conscience.

7.   When newcomers ask for guidance about which meetings to attend, our first question now is "Do you want to attend a physical/in person meeting, or an Electronic meeting?"

What Principles, Policies and Legacies (Steps, Traditions/ Concepts) Apply to This Question?

1. **Tradition 1: Our common welfare should come first; personal progress depends upon unity.** *This decision could help unite Temporary Electronic meetings that were formed in our Area as a result of COVID. Accepting EGs into SCWS is the essence of unity, not separation.*

2. **Tradition 3: The relatives of alcoholics, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves an Al-Anon Family Group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation. The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend.**

    Electronic Groups ARE Al-Anon Groups. We can focus on commonalities not the differences. They fit the "requirement for membership."

3. **Tradition 5: Each Al-Anon family group has but one purpose: to help families of alcoholics. We do this by practicing the 12 Steps of AA *ourselves*, by encouraging and understanding our alcoholic relatives, and by welcoming and giving comfort to families of alcoholics.**

   Welcoming Electronic Groups into our Area supports our primary purpose.

   a. *Supports public outreach to younger members who are comfortable using technology and may prefer it as an option for an Al-Anon meeting.*

   b. *Supports members who are unable to attend physical meetings.*

   c. *Supports members who prefer to attend electronic meetings.*

4. **Concept 4: Participation is the key to Harmony.** *Electronic Groups would be encouraged to elect a GR who participates in their District meetings and the SCWS Area Assembly.*

5. Our spiritual principles of Cooperation, Participation, Responsibility, Singleness of Purpose, Unity or Common Welfare (SM p. 91) are supported by welcoming Electronic Groups into our Area service structure; "We are a fellowship of equals" (SM p. 39).

6. *"Practicing our principles in all our affairs"* means we are recognizing not only Al-Anon Groups that are meeting at a physical location, but also those Groups that are meeting electronically.

The Task Force has been meeting weekly since June 8, 2022. These are the questions that we don't have answers for:

We don't know:

1. How many Electronic Groups fall into the category of wanting to officially belong to our SCWS Area and participate in Area business?

2. The details regarding registering Electronic Groups in our Area, and how EGs in our Area will be listed on the World Service Office (WSO) website. WSO staff is working on this and is communicating with our Group Records Coordinator (GRC).

3. If our Area Assembly will need to stay "virtual" (currently on Zoom), or have an electronic component (hybrid) added if we return to meeting at a physical location.

Are you still wondering about the main differences between an Electronic Group being registered in the Global Electronic Area or being registered in the SCWS geographic Area?

Electronic Groups in the Global Electronic Area (GEA):

1. These Electronic Groups (EGs) are listed on the WSO website under Electronic Meetings and are readily available for all members from around the world.

2. These EGs are often larger groups since they can be found/accessed easily.

3. The group can elect a GR who will participate with voice/vote in the GEA Assembly.

4. They have no connection with a geographic Area.

If Electronic Groups Were Welcomed and Registered in the SCWS Area...
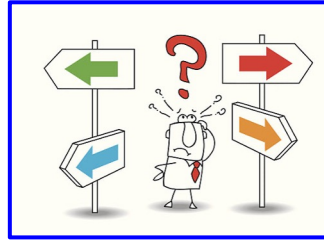
1. These Electronic Groups (EGs) would be listed on the WSO website connected to our SCWS Area. (WSO Group Records is working on this detailed process.)

2. Members would have the flexibility to locate Electronic Groups in our SCWS Area which could:

   a. Attract more local members.

   b. Facilitate meeting a local Al-Anon Sponsor in our Area, meeting up with local members who reside in our Area and attend local Al-Anon events.

3. The group can elect a GR that will participate with voice/vote in the SCWS Area service structure. They would still feel connected with Southern California Al-Anon topics important to our Area.

Task Force Summary

The KBDM information gathered by the Task Force indicated that:

1. Electronic Meetings have been an integral part of our Al-Anon/Alateen Family Groups for a long time.

2. Electronic Meetings are now officially recognized by the WSC/WSO as **"Groups"** with all of the rights and benefits that a Physical Group has.

3. Our Legacies and Spiritual Principles support recognizing and including Electronic Groups into our service structure, equal to Physical Groups.

4. We have Temporary Electronic Meetings in our Area that want to stay connected to our Area service structure.

Let's start with Questions, then Comments.

Reminder:

➢ Only "members" of the Assembly have "voice"

➢ Raise your Zoom hand (click on "reactions", "raise hand")

➢ 1 minute at the "mic" for Questions; 2 minutes for Comments

➢ Please lower your hand if another member asks your question or makes your comment.

==Note to Assembly members:==

We will continue on with the next slides if the GRs vote to agree to welcome EGs into our Area.

If our GRs vote to "Welcome Electronic Groups into the SCWS Area" in November, how soon could EGs register in our Area?

1. Currently, WSO has a process to register an EG into a geographic Area.

2. Our Area would need to agree upon minimum registration criteria before we register EGs in our Area. WSO is deferring to Area autonomy to make this decision.

3. Could we agree on this minimum criteria at our Assembly today?

Task Force Proposal One

1. **The TF proposes to welcome all Electronic Groups that have formed in our Area with the same criteria that would apply if they were a physical group.**

This is because…

a. We want members of these groups to feel connected and a part of our Area.

b. We want to welcome these members to participate in our Area service structure.

The simplest way to welcome EGs into our Area would be to require that…

1. **Group Current Mailing Address (CMA):** the member of the EG holding this position would need to reside in the SCWS Area. (CMA information: *2022-2025 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (SM), p. 31)

2. **Group Representative (GR):** the member of the EG holding this position would need to reside in the SCWS Area. (GR information: SM pgs.73,143)

3. **The Electronic Group meets the criteria in our Service Manual:** "The WSO will register any group designating itself as an Al-Anon Family Group with the understanding that it will abide by the Traditions and that meetings will be open to any Al-Anon member." (SM pg.85)

Questions, Comments regarding the TF proposal:
Electronic Groups who wish to register in our SCWS Area will need their CMA and GR to be residents of the SCWS Area.

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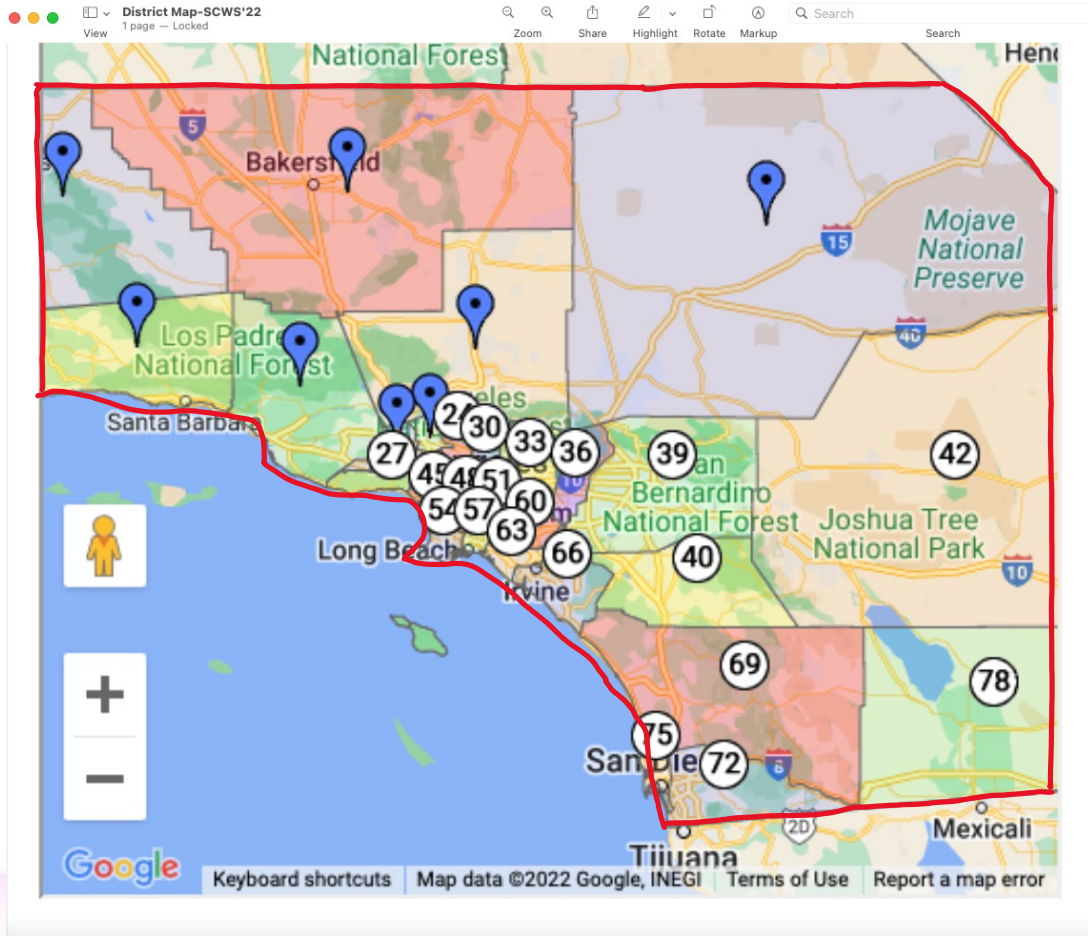
Task Force Proposal Two

1. **The TF proposes that the Area form a "SCWS Electronic District" available for Electronic Groups (**registered in our SCWS Area**) to have an option to join.** Proposal is to form the SCWS Electronic District on a three-year trial basis.

2. **Why is the TF Proposing adding an Electronic District?**

    a. Some groups have no connection to one Geographic District/city or county, but still have a connection to SCWS.

    b. Some groups contain a higher number of members who are spread across Southern California instead of being in one District. This would allow more members to step up for service beyond the group level.

3. **How would the Electronic District be formed?** If our GRs agree to forming this District, the EG Task Force will continue to work out these details and support the initial stages of forming the new District.

Task Force Proposal Two, continued

What District would the SCWS Electronic Group join?

1. The Electronic Group would have the autonomy to choose to belong to a "geographic" District (like D-8, D-27, D-60), our Spanish Overlay District (D-64), or the new Area "SCWS Electronic District".

   a. If the EG chooses to be registered in a geographic District, their GR would need to be able to attend a face-to-face District meeting if applicable.
   b. If the EG registers in the Electronic District, the GR can reside anywhere in the SCWS Area and will attend a virtual District meeting.

2. The Task Force encourages Electronic Groups to have a Business Meeting(s) to discuss their District options and take the time needed before taking a Group Conscience.

Electronic Groups Registered in our SCWS Area would have two options:

1. Choose to register in a Geographic (Physical) District, *****

    or

2. Choose to register in the Area Electronic District.

* GR would need to be able to potentially participate in a "face-to-face" District meeting since this is a "physical" District.

Questions, Comments regarding the TF proposal: Creating an SCWS Electronic Groups District

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The TF will schedule a follow-up informational meeting in 2023 where your questions will be heard/discussed.

We are planning this because…

1. The Task Force will have
   a. more information from WSO and time to "reason out" the details.
   b. received questions/comments from members regarding the Electronic Group registration process. Please send your questions to groupandmemberconcerns@scws-al-anon.org.

2. Area Members (especially those belonging to EGs) may want/need the information before the May Assembly, 2023.

3. This meeting will be open for all Area Members to hear the latest information, ask questions and join in the discussion. We will not be voting on "Policy" and will be a more informal meeting than an Assembly.