
AFG Connects

1. What Is the Definition of Policy vs Procedure?

DEBBIE HARVEY, Chair of Area 61 WIUPMI

We publish and print an Area Policy Manual every 3 years and provide updates on our website as they are approved. It currently contains all of our Area-specific policies (or what has been defined a policy in the past). Changes (other than housekeeping) require approval by Assembly.

There is a separate Supplemental Materials section containing some but not all of our procedures. Changes to this section require peer approval and notification-only to Assembly.

2. JUDY W. KIRBY, Policy Committee Chair

Your question: "What is policy and what is procedure?" is a question that I have considered often while serving as Chair of our Policy Committee. What has helped me understand both definitions better is the explanation of Policy in the Introduction to our Policy Digest, p. 79 of the Service Manual.

The "Introduction" says that policy statements are "interpretations of our basic guides, the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts of Service." Further down, "They help when there is confusion about how a specific Tradition applies to a new or controversial situation in Al-Anon or Alateen."

When I am trying to decide whether or not something is policy, I ask myself if the situation involves interpreting a Tradition or Concept. If not, it's probably not Policy, but a procedure. That test has helped me discern the difference. Some statements identify traditional practices or definitions. These are more like procedures. They are usually stated objectively.

Policy statements are more subjective, broad, and not as specific. Neither can Policy statements be proven right, even though we often want the "correct" answer when seeking a solution. Interpreting our Traditions and Concepts challenge our ability to reason things out and trust our Higher Power. This reasoning things out together often takes time and patience, as our Policy Digest reminds us.

3. DAVID GREEN, Area Chair, Rhode Island

Policies are the high level overall Area decisions of governance on significant areas. Policies require Assembly approval. Examples could be: the financial policy for an Area, terms of officers, etc.

Guidelines are the best practices or procedures of how the particular Area panel conducts the business of the Area. Guidelines do not require Assembly approval, but are reviewed and approved by the Area World Service Committee (AWSC). Examples could be guidelines on how to open/close a group, how to transition from an outgoing officer to a newly elected replacement, or how to handle the situation of an officer who is not fulfilling the duties of their position, etc.

Procedures are the smaller step by step of how applicable policies or guidelines are implemented. They do not need Assembly approval, and many could be within the responsibility of the individual officer to create. They may or may not be presented to the AWSC for approval. Examples could be how to handle cash receipts in the LDC office, who makes the deposits and when, who has keys to the Area LDC and how these are safeguarded, etc.

In Rhode Island we have only a few policies, and these are posted on our website.

RI Area Policies, Procedures & Guidelines - 8/18/16, <http://www.riafq.org/>

Policies:

Multiple Voting Positions - Policy 01-2009
Policy Creation & Revision - Policy 01-2010
Voting Members - Policy 02-2010
Financial Policy - Policy 01-2013

Procedures & Guidelines:

Procedures for Changing a Group
Guideline for AWSC Members Mutual Support
Guideline for Transitioning AWSC Members
Guideline for adults involved with Alateen
Guideline for Petty Cash in the Office
Guideline for Staggered Terms
Guideline for GR Terms

4. CINDY JACOBS, Area Chairperson, Panel 55 Florida-North

Policy - an Area-wide Group Conscience decision that indicates our desire to move in a particular direction. We include Alateen Safety Requirements here, and Ample Reserve Fund Guidelines, and the structure of our AWSC and things like that. Policy requires a vote - either by AWSC or Assembly.

Procedure - the process an individual or committee goes through to implement the Policy. This is where autonomy comes into play. It can be a gray area, and we are becoming quite adept at discussing things.

A good example is our website. We have had a Web Coordinator for 12 years (4 panels) and our Area website changed with each Panel. Panel 55 has had three Technology Task Forces and the Policy changes we made are: change the name to Technology Coordinator and keep the current website across Panels for stability and consistency. We also adopted some technology guidelines and how to change web formats when necessary.

We use the Service Manual and WSC Conference Summaries to guide us.

Area 61 Email Discussions

DEBBIE HARVEY

"Should it be in the Policy section or the Supplemental Materials section?"

I see the following destinations for the material:

1. Published Policy Manual, Policy section.
2. Published Policy Manual, Supplemental Materials section.
3. Separate procedural documents, e.g. Detailed Duties for Officers & Coordinators, Group Records Change Instructions, etc.
4. Publish all on the Area website.

CHERYL ANDERSON

Try the Policy bank website. Example of board attendance policy/procedure

Policy Bank, <https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/icda/policybank/>

These policies are free for any not-for-profit organisation to download and use, so long as it is for a non-commercial purpose and that the organisation is not paying a consultant to carry out this work. [Click here](#) for our full copyright guidelines. Important Notes:

- You can't (or shouldn't) rely on these sample policies and procedures alone. They are designed as a starting point only - you will have to adapt them to your own organisation's needs and structures.
- Most of the sample policies provided here contain both policies and procedures (the policies provide guidance on standards for the organisation, while procedures provide instructions on how these standards are to be implemented). We recommend that policies be adopted at a board level, while procedures be developed and signed off by the organisation's head staff member (e.g. the CEO).
- In these policies we use the term 'Board' to cover Boards, Committees of Management, and whatever name you have for the body that has final authority in your organisation. Similarly, we use the term 'CEO' for Executive Directors, CEOs, and whoever runs your administration.

BOARD ATTENDANCE POLICY

Policy number	<<insert number>>	Version	<<insert number>>
Drafted by	<<insert name>>	Approved by Board on	<<insert date>>
Responsible person	<<insert name>>	Scheduled review date	<<insert date>>

Introduction

Regular attendance at Board and committee meetings is essential in order to maintain continuity and cohesion in the management and governance of [name of organisation].

Purpose

This Board Attendance Policy is intended to encourage regular attendance at [name of organisation]'s Board and committee meetings and to provide procedures to deal with any failures in such attendance.

Policy

Board and committee members are expected to demonstrate their commitment to the organisation by unbroken attendance at the Board or committee on which they sit, except when prevented by unforeseeable events.

Authorisation

<Signature of Board Secretary>
 <Date of approval by the Board>
 <Name of organisation>

BOARD ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

Procedures number	<<insert number>>	Version	<<insert number>>
Drafted by	<<insert name>>	Approved by CEO on	<<insert date>>
Responsible person	<<insert name>>	Scheduled review date	<<insert date>>

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Board Chair to monitor the attendance of each member and to issue warnings as appropriate.

Procedures

The Secretary shall notify members of forthcoming meetings no sooner than 21 working days before the set date of the meeting.

Where Board members are prevented from attending any Board meeting, they should notify the Chair of their intended absence.

Where a meeting is to be held either in the form of a teleconference or online, the Chair should notify members accordingly. Participation in these meetings shall be equivalent to attendance at a regular meeting.

Attendance requirements

If a Board member is absent for two consecutive meetings without first notifying the chair of their absence, or if a Board member is absent for three consecutive meetings having notified the chair of their absence, that Board member is in breach of their obligations and is liable to be removed from the Board, subject to the following processes.

Prospective members of the Board shall be issued with copies of the attendance policy and asked to commit themselves to observing its terms.

Process

If a Board member is in breach of their attendance requirements then the Chair shall consult them to discuss this matter.

If the Board member’s difficulties are resolvable, then the chair shall attempt to resolve them.

If no mutually satisfactory resolution is possible, and if the Board member wishes to continue on the Board, then the member’s response will be put to the Board at its next meeting. The Board member shall be entitled to speak to this item, and to vote on it. The Board will then decide what actions to take regarding that Board member’s future membership on the Board.

If the Board decides that termination is justified, the Board may suspend that person’s membership of the Board. In the event the member wishes to continue in his or her position, the suspension shall be put to a general meeting for approval. The suspended member shall be given an opportunity to be heard, either personally or through a representative, and may submit materials in writing to be circulated.

The Board may remove any person from any Board sub-committee for any reason, including (but not limited to) non-attendance.

When any person has been removed from the Board or from any committee under this provision, the Board or committee will promptly initiate a process to recruit a new Board member. The person whose membership has been terminated shall retain the right to stand again at the next election for the Board.

Related Documents

- [Constitution](#)

Authorisation

<Signature of CEO>

<Name of CEO>

<Date>

JAYE ROUSH

I've tasked myself with reviewing the Service Manual to see what they have as Alateen Policy. I think if we can follow their lead we may be able to place fewer (but more important) things in Policy and put more in Supplementary and procedure documents.

CONNIE OLIVER

Policy - a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions: a high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable procedures especially of a governmental body.

- A set of guidelines or rules that determine a course of action < what is the store's return policy?

Procedure - a particular way of doing or accomplishing something, such as a series of steps followed in a regular definite order.

Process – a series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular end.

Our Service Manual has a whole section on Policies. It would make sense to me if things (anything?) written in that book should be part of the Policy. i.e. 2003 Alateen Motion (page 87) which we have done by updating current pages 11 & 12 - Rules for Participating Minors.....and the Safety & Behavioral Requirements. We updated our procedure, so we were bound to change the policy.

So much of what Mary & I do is directed by WSO memos, or WSO Guidelines, i.e. certification process, re-certification process, multi area note. Again they are supplemental pages.

CATHY TROJAN - Items that were actually presented to and voted on by the assembly are policy.

JAYE ROUSH - I don't think something is policy because we voted to put it into the Policy Manual