
Group Removal Guidelines and Procedures Manual

Section I. – Introduction

1. Purpose and Authority

The Group Removal Guidelines and Procedures manual has been prepared by the Board of Trustees to assist area Intergroups and individual Gamblers Anonymous members in following the steps in the complaint and removal process of any current Group or Intergroup from the Room Lists for any acts which may be deemed to be detrimental to Gamblers Anonymous as a whole. Such a meeting will no longer be recognized as part of Gamblers Anonymous and will be removed from the International Service Office directory of meetings.

The conditions that would qualify for fulfilling this provision leading to removal of a Group or Intergroup can only be determined by the Board of Trustees. The Group Removal Merit Panel is a standing committee and consists of five (5) currently-sitting Trustees and five (5) back-up Trustees to replace any of the Panel members who are unable to fulfill their commitment. This Panel acts as an intermediary in this process between the member submitting the complaint, the Group or Intergroup in question, and the Board of Trustees. The sole purpose of this Panel is to make recommendations, if appropriate, to proceed with referring the matter to the Board of Trustees for removal determination, or to discharge the matter as being unrelated to the provision of the Guidance Code. The Panel is under the supervision of the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

There is no satisfaction on anyone's part in conducting any procedure to have a Group or Intergroup removed. Irrespective of the decision by the Group Removal Merit Panel and possibly the entire Board of Trustees, items that are detrimental to Gamblers Anonymous as a whole cannot continue to exist. Issues that disturb the unity of the Fellowship because of the acts of a Group or Intergroup must be dealt with via the group conscience. Upholding the Guidance Code is a responsibility of all the Trustees, and conducting these proceedings is specifically for the purpose of maintaining the integrity of the Guidance Code and Fellowship.

2. General Guidelines

The purpose of this process is to ensure that all concerned parties are given a fair and honest representation in what has no doubt already become a very contentious issue at the local or national level. The selection of the panel members is meant to give equal representation with the four (4) compass points plus Canada. The committee is a standing committee with a continued existence; the members will have been selected and in place before any complaint is

brought to the Panel. This is important to avoid any issues of bias from a member selection process made after a complaint is brought to the Panel.

After the designated period for collecting information, the Panel will openly discuss the matter, using only the material submitted by all parties. The determination as to whether or not the Group or Intergroup in question committed an act deemed to be detrimental to Gamblers Anonymous as a whole will only require a majority vote of the Panel. If the determination is that a detrimental act was committed, then the matter will be referred to the Board of Trustees for final action. The Board of Trustees will review the matter and only be able to remove the Group or Intergroup after a two-thirds (2/3) vote in the affirmative.

3. Procedures Flowchart
Attachment Pages 10-11.

Section II. - Guidelines and Procedures

1. Claimant

Any member of Gamblers Anonymous (claimant) who has had regular attendance at thirty nine (39) Gamblers Anonymous meetings in the previous twelve (12) months and has abstained from gambling for at least two (2) years, may file a written complaint with the Board of Trustees alleging that the Group or Intergroup should be removed for acts deemed to be detrimental to Gamblers Anonymous as a whole and specifying the alleged reasons, but not without first attempting to resolve his or her concerns at its local Intergroup.

If the claimant has been a member for less than two (2) years, he or she must be assisted by a co-claimant from the same area who meets the claimant's attendance and abstinence requirements listed above. The function of the co-claimant is to ascertain that the complaint has been considered carefully and to help assure the preclusion of a frivolous complaint being filed.

2. Local Resolution

The claimant will have forty-five (45) days from the date of notification to its Intergroup or Area Trusted Servants to have his or her concerns heard, and if local resolution at the Intergroup or Area level fails and the claimant desires to pursue action at the Board of Trustees level, then the claimant must obtain written acknowledgement from its Intergroup or Area that it exhausted all efforts to resolve the claimant's concerns.

If the local Intergroup or Area fails to conduct a hearing, or fails to provide written acknowledgement within the 45-day period, then it will be deemed to have exhausted all efforts to resolve the claimant's concerns. The Panel committee will confirm such status with the Chair of the local Intergroup. In the event the area does not have an Intergroup, then the local area components that are part of the election process for Trustees will be notified for confirmation.

Should the matter be resolved at the Intergroup level, then no further action will be taken.

3. Complaint

The claimant can now proceed with a formal filing of charges against the Group or Intergroup in question. The claimant must submit a detailed listing of the alleged problem, including all the pathways that were taken to resolve the issue(s) in writing to the Chair of the Board of Trustees via the International Service Office.

The complaint must specify the alleged reasons why the Group or Intergroup should be removed, and it must be accompanied with a separate, written acknowledgement from the local Intergroup or Area. The complaint should also include any information or arguments supporting the claimant's assertion that the Group or Intergroup should be removed from the Room Lists.

4. Directive to Initiate Process

Upon receipt of the complaint from the claimant, the Chair of the Board of Trustees will forward all the material to the Chair of the Group Removal Merit Panel. The Chair of the Board of Trustees does not have any discretion in this process. The Chair of the Board of Trustees is the only source for the initial receipt of the complaint, and the Chair is also the only contact for the complaint.

Section III. – Group Removal Merit Panel

1. Function

The function of the Group Removal Merit Panel is to determine if there is reasonable cause to believe that a current Group or Intergroup should be removed based on its review of the complaint and all other pertinent material. A group or Intergroup can only be removed for acts which are deemed to be detrimental to Gamblers Anonymous as a whole.

The Panel may request further information from the claimant and conduct any investigation deemed necessary.

The Panel will be a Standing Panel with a continued existence formed on an ongoing basis. The term of service will be two (2) years starting with the fall meetings in the even years, coinciding with the new term of the Trustees.

The Panel will consist of five (5) currently-sitting Trustees and represent five (5) compass points from the regions of East, West, South, Midwest and Canada (see Zone Mapping, page 12.). There will be one (1) back-up Trustee from each compass point impaneled by the Executive Board of the Board of Trustees in the event any Panel member resigns or otherwise vacates his or her position on the Panel.

The Executive Board of the Board of Trustees will have the option to appoint different members of the Panel at the initiation of the new term for the Panel.

If the 2-year term expires during an ongoing complaint process, the current Panel will continue in service and see the process through completion or resolution.

2. Actions

Preliminary Assessment.

The Group Removal Merit Panel will conduct a preliminary assessment and determine whether or not there are grounds for further investigation. If the Panel determines that there are no grounds for further investigation, the complaint process ends.

If it determines there are grounds, the Panel will move forward with the complaint process and all parties connected with the complaint will be notified that a complaint has been filed with the Panel.

Further Investigation.

In moving forward with the complaint process, the Group Removal Merit Panel may require additional information and, reserves the right to continue to collect evidence, and generally investigate the allegations made against the Group or Intergroup.

it determines there is reasonable cause to believe a current Group or Intergroup should be removed, the Group or Intergroup will be notified in writing that the Group Removal Merit Panel will recommend to the Board of Trustees it believes there is sufficient evidence to have the Group or Intergroup removed also provide the specific reasons for such action.

The Group or Intergroup remains part of the Gamblers Anonymous fellowship during the period leading up to any hearing

If the Panel determines the complaint is unwarranted, the complainant, the Group or Intergroup in question, the local area Intergroup and/or trusted servants, and the Chair of the Board of Trustees will be so notified and advised that all action has been stopped at the Panel level. Similar charges cannot be filed against the Group or Intergroup for a period of one (1) year.

During this period, the Group or Intergroup may continue its functions and responsibilities to the area however, a voluntary removal of the Group or Intergroup will be allowed. Such action by the Group or Intergroup will stop the Panel's actions and no permanent record of the complaint will remain.

Panel Recommendation.

If after further investigation, the Group Removal Merit Panel determines the complaint is unwarranted, the complainant, the Group or Intergroup in question, the local area Intergroup and/or trusted servants, and the Chair of the Board of Trustees will be so notified and advised that all action has been stopped at the Panel level. Similar charges cannot be filed against the Group or Intergroup for a period of one (1) year.

If the Panel determines the complaint is warranted, then such opinion will be forwarded by the Panel chair to the person submitting the complainant and the Group or Intergroup being charged.

Formal Hearing.

This will act as official notice for a formal hearing by the Panel. Both parties will have fourteen (14) days from their receipt of the determination to pursue the issue and provide all the detailed support information they both believe will better outline the merits of their individual positions. If the material is not received by the Panel chair within fourteen (14) days, the Panel will utilize only the information it has received by both parties up to that date. The Chair of the Board of Trustees will also be informed of the decision of the Panel.

The Group Removal Merit Panel will convene via conference call at some time subsequent to the fourteen (14) day material submission deadline. All Panel members will review and discuss the circumstances for possible removal of the Group or Intergroup. **When the Panel has completed its review, it will render a majority decision.**

If the decision is to proceed with submission to the Board of Trustees with the recommendation for removal of the Group or Intergroup for act(s) committed that are deemed to be detrimental to Gamblers Anonymous as a whole, all involved parties will be notified accordingly.

If the decision is to not proceed with submission to the Board of Trustees, then all parties will be notified and the matter will not be eligible for consideration by the Group Removal Merit Panel from any Gamblers Anonymous member for a period of one (1) year from their notification by the Panel. Similar charge(s) cannot be filed against the Group or Intergroup for the same one (1) year period.

3. Zone Mapping

Attachment page 12.

Section IV. - Board of Trustees Meeting Procedures

1. Notification and Placement of Item in Meeting Agenda

All matters under consideration by the Group Removal Merit Panel will be dealt with as expeditiously as possible taking into account both the need for such matters to be resolved quickly but also the Group or Intergroup's right to be treated fairly.

The Chair of the Group Removal Merit Panel must notify the Chair of the Board of Trustees in writing by submitting an agenda item to the Board Chair no later than fourteen (14) days prior to the beginning of the first session of the Trustees meeting. The Item will be placed on the meeting agenda under the category entitled "Items Omitted from the Agenda". The Board Chair will not have an option to refuse to hear the item formally brought forth by the Group Removal Merit Panel.

The Chair of the Board of Trustees must provide written notification of the agenda item to both the claimant and the Group or Intergroup in question.

If a resolution is arrived at by both parties prior to the item being heard by the Board of Trustees, the entire matter will be canceled without prejudice.

Group or Intergroup removal actions can only be handled at physical meetings of the Board of Trustees, and they will be heard immediately after the Rules and Procedures portion of the meeting agenda. If the Group or Intergroup being charged is unable to be present at the meeting session in which the item will be heard, the Group or Intergroup will have the right to be represented by another current or past Trustee. If the Group or Intergroup being charged is present at the Board of Trustees meeting but is physically unable to attend the meeting session due to illness, then the item will be postponed until such time as the Group or Intergroup is in attendance at that physical meeting of the Trustees; otherwise the proceedings will continue and be concluded before the last session of the meeting is completed. No motions to table or attempt to delay the proceedings will be allowed due to the serious nature of this item, other than that which is listed in this section.

2. Responsibilities of the Chair of the Board of Trustees

The Chair of the Board of Trustees will chair this item paying special attention to make sure that current Trustees speaking in the discussion or during the question period restrain themselves to

matters of principles, not personalities. The Chair should make best efforts to communicate and reinforce brevity and directness of the questioning to allow for maximum participation by the Trustees.

3. Meeting Presentation and Proceedings

The order of speakers will be: 1) a designated member of the Group Removal Merit Panel; 2) claimant or his/her appointee; 3) and Group or Intergroup in question or its appointee. Each speaker will be allowed a maximum of fifteen (15) minutes for such presentation, with no extensions of time.

All procedural questions and processes, including points of information and order, challenges to the Board Chair and voting, will not interfere with the allotted time during the presentation segment of these proceedings.

The Group Removal Merit Panel designated person will make the appropriate motion and submit it in writing to the International Executive Secretary.

Subsequent to each speaker's presentation, the Group or Intergroup will be allowed fifteen (15) minutes during each segment to:

- **Directly question the designated person of the Group Removal Merit Panel** as to the facts of the Panel's deliberation and the procedures and processes used to determine that the matter was indeed a bona fide issue for consideration by the Board of Trustees to remove the said Group or Intergroup.
- Questions will be only from current Trustees, and each Trustee will be allowed a maximum of one (1) question with a related follow-up question. No Trustee may ask a second question unless all other Trustees wishing to ask a question of the Panel Chair have done so first.
- The Chair of the Board of Trustees is empowered to immediately curtail a Trustee's time at the microphone if the questions turn into opinion or discussion on any aspect of the matter in question.

- **Directly question the claimant or his/her appointee** as to the facts and reasons surrounding the initiation of action and subsequent issues that brought the item(s) to the floor for consideration by the Board of Trustees to remove the said Group or Intergroup.
- Questions will be only from current Trustees, and each Trustee will be allowed a maximum of one (1) question with a related follow-up question. No Trustee may ask a second question unless all other Trustees wishing to ask a question of the claimant or his/her appointee have done so first.

- **Directly question the Group or Intergroup being charged** as to the facts and reasons surrounding the initiation of action and subsequent issues that brought the item(s) to the floor for consideration by the Board of Trustees to remove the said Group or Intergroup.
- Questions will be only from current Trustees, and each Trustee will be allowed a maximum of one (1) question with a related follow-up question. No Trustee may ask a second question unless all other Trustees wishing to ask a question of the Group or Intergroup being charged have done so first.

4. Voting and Final Determination

When the presentations by all concerned parties on the motion have finished, the Board will then determine whether to remove the Group or Intergroup in question. There will be no general discussion on the matter by the Trustees. The voting will be by written ballot, with results counted by three (3) past Trustees chosen by the Chair of the Board of Trustees. Removal will require an affirmative vote by two-thirds (2/3) majority of the members of the Board of Trustees who voted. Abstentions will not be counted in any part of the voting total to determine the two-thirds (2/3) voting results.

The results will be final and not subject to appeal, or to review by the Group Removal Merit Panel or Board of Trustees Executive Board. The results will be in writing through recorded minutes. In the event of a decision for removal by the Board of Trustees, that Group or Intergroup will cease to be a Group or Intergroup as of the decision and will be restricted from being eligible as a Group or Intergroup for a period of two (2) years from the decision date.

COMPLAINT AND REMOVAL PROCESS OF ANY CURRENT GROUP OR INTERGROUP

The CLAIMANT notifies their Intergroup or Area Trusted Servants in writing of their concerns that a Group or Intergroup should be removed for actions that affect Gamblers Anonymous as a whole.

The GROUP and CLAIMANT have 45 days from the date of notification to have the concerns heard and resolved.

WERE THE CONCERNS RESOLVED
AT THE INTERGROUP / AREA LEVEL

YES

CONCERNS RESOLVED
END OF PROCESS

NO

The Claimant proceeds with a **formal filing of charges** against the Group or Intergroup by submitting a detailed written account of the alleged problem and the resolution pathways to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

The Chair of the Board of Trustees forwards the material to the Chair of the Group Removal Merit Panel.

The Group Removal Merit Panel conducts a **preliminary assessment** and determines whether or not there is reasonable cause to believe a Group or Intergroup should be removed, and that there are grounds for further investigation.

GROUND FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION ?

NO

NO GROUNDS
END OF PROCESS

YES

The Group Removal Merit Panel investigates the allegations. The Panel requests additional information and collects evidence in its **formal investigation**. A voluntary removal of the Group or Intergroup will be allowed during this formal investigation period.

DID THE GROUP OR INTERGROUP
VOLUNTARILY REMOVE ITSELF?

YES

NO FURTHER ACTION IS
TAKEN BY THE PANEL
END OF PROCESS

NO

Did the Group Removal Merit Panel render a **majority decision to proceed** with submission to the Board of Trustees with recommendation for removal?

NO

NO FURTHER ACTION IS
TAKEN BY THE PANEL
END OF PROCESS

YES



