Iowa Area Al-Anon has been on the leading edge of thought concerning integrating electronic groups into our Area structure. Beginning with the recognition of Electronic groups into the World Service Structure, followed by the creation of the Global Electronic Area and most recently, and perhaps most pertinent to us, the inclusion of electronic groups into our Area Service Structure. The Electronic Group Work Group (EGWG) has been consistently considering all facets of this change and presented our findings and recommendations to the Area World Service Committee (AWSC) in August. We are sharing two key ideas with you today in hopes to broaden your understanding of how these changes are relevant to our primary purpose as outlined in Tradition 5.

We are excited to introduce the first Electronic Group to register as a part of our Area structure. Welcome to Hope & Serenity AFG, Group number 30795783. They meet Saturday mornings at 10am CST. This group splintered from the original group after some members returned to the physical location. The group did not want to have a hybrid connection so the electronic group decided to register as its own entity. Hope & Serenity chose to join District 16, rather than District 3 where the original physical group meets, in order to connect with a broader membership throughout our state.

Meeting Searches At the August AWSC, the Area Website Committee recommended that all meeting searches be linked to the WSO website because of a growing discrepancy between what the Area website and the WSO website showed. In many cases groups had migrated to online meetings, or had closed, and the local information had not been updated to reflect this.This led the newcomer to arrive at a meeting location and not find anyone there. The WSO website provides the most accurate and up to date meeting information thereby ensuring the newcomer can find a meeting. The WSO is working on system upgrades that allow their meeting search function to include electronic Al-Anon groups connected to a geographic Area. Until this fix is made, we have included a button to find 'local' Electronic Groups Registered in Iowa on the meetings tab on our website.

Registering Electronic Groups In August, the AWSC supported the EGWG's recommendation to encourage groups that have splintered from their original physical group to register as a new permanent electronic meeting by December 1st.

As outlined in the example of the Hope & Serenity group, a splintered group is one that is meeting both in person and electronically without a hybrid connection. Splintered groups do not include groups that are planning to merge back together at a later date. The WSO specifies that groups can have meetings on different times/days, but cannot meet in more than one location. Groups at Work, page 30, says, *While the majority of new meetings are individual groups, some groups consist of more than one meeting. They are one group that meets on two or more days at the **same location.*** Location is defined by where your meeting is held, either physically OR electronically. We are asking groups that have splintered to take a group inventory to consider if

the group will remain in two locations. If the group is going to permanently split, then one of these meetings will need to register as a new group with the WSO.

Our primary goal is to ensure that the newcomer can find the meeting. A December 1st deadline will allow enough time for groups that have splintered from the original group to get their group registered. This also allows our group records information to be cleaned up and ready to transfer to the new Group Records Coordinator by January 1st for the new term. We understand that some groups that are operating as splintered groups may continue to be a reflection of pandemic conditions. We are speaking to groups that have made the decision to become a permanent electronic group but haven't made the transition. Instructions to guide groups in registering or updating location information is included at the bottom of this report and on our Area website.

Groups that choose not to register a splintered group will not be listed on the WSO meeting search directory. Groups at Work, page 27, states that *Registration is required before groups are granted permission to share or display any copyrighted materials during their meetings.* Please reach out to our Group Records Coordinator or any of the Officers if you need help discerning this process. Our goal is to ensure that every registered group is visible and that the newcomer can find us.

<u>District 16 or Local District</u> Any new Electronic group from Iowa that completes their WSO registration has the option of joining either the Iowa Area or Global Electronic Area (GEA). If the group joins the Iowa structure, they then have the choice of joining Iowa's Electronic District 16 or a local district, if available.

Any existing group from Iowa that transitions to an Electronic group may choose which Area (Iowa or GEA) they would wish to join. The Group may then choose to join District 16 or the local district, if available.

Shortly we will be voting to amend our motion from the June Assembly regarding District 16. Initially we had thought all electronic groups would filter into District 16. Further reflection and experience invites us to allow new and transitioning groups to choose District 16 or a local district if that district is able to accept them. Our goal is to be inclusive and reflect similar policies and practices for ALL groups regardless of location.

<u>Transitioning and New Group Process</u>
Iowa Group Records has created an Area guideline to assist new electronic groups and groups that are transitioning from a physical group to an electronic group in the registration/change process. This will be included in the procedures section of the Iowa Policy and Procedure Guidelines. In most cases, following the guidelines found in our Service Manual and in the Guidelines found on the WSO website should assist new groups that are forming.

Guidelines for Electronic Group Registration in Iowa Area

Any member wanting to establish a **NEW** Electronic group would need to do the following steps:

- Go to **https://al-anon.org/for-members/group-resources/group-records/**
- Scroll towards the bottom of the page to pick **Electronic group registration**
- Members can decide to register online or print the form and mail it to WSO
- Make sure to complete the form with as much information as possible. Completing the form with as much data as possible is advantageous to the group.
- Make certain the **LOCATION – Platform** section is completed.
- Information about the **Host name, phone and email** is **not mandatory unless** the group wants to be available on the Al-Anon app.
- Meeting Location information needs to be completed to make certain members can join the meeting. Utilizing Location Instructions can let attendees know how to join the meeting. (ie: 'The Host will let you in or Please enter password', etc.)
- All Electronic Groups, **must have** a CMA email address listed.
- **NEW** IOWA electronic meetings will be automatically assigned to the Electronic District 16 by the WSO. WSO has been notified that Iowa has an electronic District and a process has been designed to allow electronic meeting.
- **If the new Electronic Group wants to be a member of the Global Electronic Area, it is recommended that a note be attached to the form indicating that choice.**

Existing Iowa Groups and Electronic formats.

- Any existing Iowa group, already registered with the WSO and with a WSO number who wants to either **1)** change from a temporary electronic group (was electronic due to COVID) to a permanent electronic group or **2)** wants to transition from a physical group to an Electronic group should utilize the Electronic Group Change Form that is located at **https://al-anon.org/for-members/group-resources/group-records/**
- The Area name and WSO ID number MUST be filled out (Or the group will get assigned a new number and be treated as a new group.)
- Make sure to complete the form with as much information as possible. Completing the form with all the necessary data is advantageous to the group.
- Under "Summary of Group Changes" section, check the box: *"Group Name, Mailing Language, Participants, Electronic Meeting Location, or Platform"*
- Make certain the **LOCATION – Platform** section is completed.
- Information about the **Host name, phone and email** is **not mandatory unless** the group wants to be available on the Al-Anon app.
- Completing the **Location Instructions section** can let attendees know how to join the meeting. (ie: 'The Host will let you in or Please enter password', etc.)
- All Electronic Groups **must have** a CMA email address listed.
- These groups will stay within their current local District (WSO will not change that). **But**, if this electronic group wishes to move to the Electronic District 16, they will need to follow the process explained in the Iowa Policy and Procedure Manual.

- **If the Electronic Group wants to be a member of the Global Electronic Area, it is recommended that a note be attached to the form indicating that choice.**