



# Area 25 Diversity Task Force

---

Final Presentation to the Area 25  
2023 Spring Assembly



# Diversity Task Force Charge

---

‘The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, or other ideologies.’ (2010 WSC Summary)

- Survey the state of diversity in our area and what challenges we face.
- Identify strategies and actions for groups, districts, and the area.
- Identify strategies and actions to improve our group's ability to welcome everyone.
- Identify strategies and actions to improve our public outreach in underrepresented communities

# Diversity Task Force Findings

---

## 1 - Survey the state of diversity in our area and what challenges we face.

---

State of Diversity in Area 25- Members need only to look around the room at meetings, assemblies, and the AWSC meetings to see a lack of diversity. Members obviously of color are so few that they stand out. Members in their 20's are a rare sight. While there is no Al-Anon Area 25-specific demographic data, the 2021 Membership Survey found that the average age of an Al-Anon member is 62.5, 86.8% female, and 90% white. The average age of attending one's first meeting is 44.1 years old. According to the US Census Bureau, there are 7 million residents of MA. The 2020 US Census found MA is 67.6% white (down from 76.1% reported in 2010). The median age is 39.6, with those between the ages of 20 and 39 at 28%, 40 and 59 at 26%, and those 65 and older at 17% of the population.

## 2 – Challenges, Part 1

---

The population of our Area is growing more diverse, while our membership is not. As noted in our Charge, “In 2018, 13,395 Al-Anon members participated in the WSO’s twelfth study. These studies have indicated what most members already know: the disease of alcoholism is far more diverse than our membership.”

The Area is made up of mostly white-presenting, similar-aged members. This may create a climate for unintended bias. Those that don’t fit the dominant group may not feel that they belong and/or the lack of diversity may be inadvertently creating conditions that feel unwelcoming to those of different groups. It is difficult to be an outlier in a group.

The Al-Anon Service Manual, by-laws, Steps, Traditions, Concepts, and literature offer some guidance but lack specificity when it comes to diversity.

How do we reach out to individuals without singling them out?

How do we know if they feel welcome?

What barriers to service have members from underrepresented communities have encountered?

## 2 – Challenges, Part 2

---

Outreach to underrepresented communities is more complex than making literature available or letting them know we exist. There may be cultural barriers in some communities where alcoholism is stigmatized and/or where asking for help outside your own family is taboo. Additionally, outreach to communities speaking non-English languages with Spanish or French CAL may attract interested members but if there are no meetings in those languages, their ability to join is limited. While the traditional types of outreach may help build awareness of our program, it lacks lasting impact. A more incremental, long-term type of outreach may be needed which builds the conditions to sustain membership. People of underrepresented communities trust people within their own communities and the best outreach comes from within. What can we do to build safe and welcoming meetings for these communities?

The Areas Service Structure may be a barrier for some members. For positions appointed by the Area Chair, there may be a tendency to select people familiar to the Chair, which is natural. This may exclude those members who may not be known to the Chair. Strategies like nominations from within the membership, Service Resumes, and voting for every service position may help create a more diverse group in service.

### 3 - Identify strategies and actions for the Area.

---

- Create a permanent standing committee that is focused on Diversity within Area 25. The suggested standing committee would have a chair and co-chair.
- Suggesting that Service Resumes be requested for all AWSC Service Positions, including Area Officers, Coordinators, Steering Committee, Chairs, etc.
- Suggesting that all Coordinators should be voted on at the Fall Election Assembly just like the Area Officers instead of being traditionally nominated by the Area Chair and then affirmed by the AWSC.
- Seeking Outside Expertise in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) and to create a Bequest Spending Proposal for the expense of the DEIB professional.
- Spanish Overlay District.
- Conducting an Area Inventory to examine ways the Area may not be welcoming to all.

### 3 - Identify strategies and actions for Districts and Groups.

---

- District Representatives can add topics of diversity into their District Meeting agendas.
- Be mindful of how District meetings are open and closed – are you using the Lord's Prayer, which may not be welcoming to non-Christian Members? Consider adding the AI-Anon declaration to all District Meetings. Talk to the GR's and see what diversity means to them.
- Invite GR's to strategize on ways their groups can be more welcoming to all.
- When planning District Events, maintain a focus on the many different communities within the fellowship and seek speakers from across these groups.
- Commit to holding events in physically accessible locations. Accessibility also includes the availability and the ease of access to public transportation to that location.
- Consider creating a Diversity service position/committee in your District.



### 3 - Identify strategies and actions for Districts and Groups con't.

---

- Examine your meeting opening and closing and the way you conduct the meetings: Are you being welcoming to all?
- As a group, use the Facing Our Biases Inventory created by the Task Force: Celebrating Our Differences and Common Purpose 2018 World Service Conference.
- Conduct regular group inventories.
- Look around the room. Does the group resemble the community within which it meets? Who's missing?
- Consider your meeting space. Is it wheelchair accessible? Is it on public transportation routes? If not, are there other meeting spaces available that would allow more members to attend?
- Consider members with children. Parents of young children may not have childcare access to attend meetings. Would your meeting allow young children to come with their parent? Discuss and take a group conscience vote.

### 3 - Identify strategies and actions for districts and groups con't.

---

- After the meeting is over, do you include everyone in any post-meeting fellowship? How could you be more welcoming to new members?
- When planning group events, such as workshops or anniversaries, consider inviting members from different communities to speak.
- When hosting raffles, keep the prizes all Al-Anon. Imagine how it might feel for someone winning a raffle and being given a Christian-themed prize (such as a journal with Bible verses on each page). Al-Anon has no religious affiliation.
- Plan public outreach in your area. Reach out to communities that are not appearing at your meetings and plan outreach efforts for those communities. Consider using CAL pamphlets such as Al-Anon Welcomes All People of Color (S-68), Al-Anon Welcomes Native Americans/Aboriginals (S-67), Al-Anon Welcomes Adult Children of Alcoholics (S-69), Al-Anon Sharings from Adult Children (P-47), Al-Anon if for Men (P-1), The Al-Anon Focus (P-45).
- Keep your group strong through the links of service. Elect a GR and alternate GR for your group. They can report your diversity questions and concerns to the District and find support.

## 4-Strategies and Actions for the Public Outreach in Underrepresented Communities.

---

This poses quite a challenge. Our lack of diversity means that we may have few, if any members of underrepresented communities in our membership and therefore no one to reach out.

By beginning today to ensure that AI-Anon in Area 25 is truly welcoming to all, we begin to build a bridge to future members of underrepresented communities. As more members attend meetings and find help, they are likely to tell others. Then outreach to underrepresented communities by their own members will grow.

Like tending a garden, we must provide healthy soil, water, and sunshine that will help our flowers flourish and sew new seeds.

That does not mean that we shouldn't plan outreach. It is important that we continue to reach out to many communities so that they know we are here for them. In doing so, we must also be sensitive to the differences in each group and respect their dignity.

Thank you for letting me  
be of service.

Nieta G, Area 25 Diversity  
Task Force Chair