Simplified CBDM Guide for Central Nova Area

Purpose

The purpose of this document is twofold:

1. To detail the CBDM process as it applies to the Central Nova Area; and,

2. To ensure that Central Nova Area's decisions and guidelines comply with the Traditions, Concepts, and spiritual principles of Narcotics Anonymous.

Concept 7, in particular, suggests that each service body should encourage all its members to participate in its decision-making processes, giving our service bodies the opportunity to develop a fully informed, balanced group conscience leading to sound, sensitive service decisions.

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What is the level of participation?

The "voting" members of the service body would be those committee members designated by that service body's guidelines . This allows them to gain an appreciation of how their service body operates.

Any "voting" member would be allowed to make proposals. The proposal would stand on its own merits, rather than on who makes the proposal.

Any member - "voting" or not – would be allowed to speak to proposals. The importance is on what is being said, rather than on who says it.

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What is the threshold for decision making? (*# in favour*)

The threshold for decision making could be a simple majority or two/thirds vote, depending on the decision being made. Many service bodies require a higher threshold for budget or policy decisions, for instance.

Defining members' level of participation and determining thresholds for decision making is not a "violation" of CBDM. There is nothing wrong with according different levels of participation for different members or establishing a percentage needed to approve a proposal.

Simple majority: More than 50% of those voting. This is not necessarily equal to 50% plus 1.

Two/thirds (2/3) vote: This is 66.67% or more of those voting. The number of votes in favour is at least twice the number of votes against. Abstentions and absences are excluded in calculating a two-thirds vote.

The threshold for decision-making varies depending on the decision being made. Refer to the specific committee guidelines regarding these decisions.

How do we facilitate a CBDM body?

One of the biggest advantages of CBDM is that participants can more easily share their views on a proposal or issue. One of the biggest challenges of CBDM is that it requires a strong facilitator who has the trust of the body to ensure that decision making doesn't turn into an open sharing session. Conversations need to progress toward a decision, and that requires some guidance on the part of the facilitator.

A good facilitator can feel the sense of the body and earn the trust needed to guide discussion toward a decision. The facilitator would refer to a facilitation guide when required. A sample guide is on page 5.

How do we participate in a CBDM body?

Whatever the outcome of discussions, everyone needs to be ready to shoulder the load to do the work involved to implement the decisions. Ideally, the discussion that takes place when using a consensus-based model is an evolutionary process. As our Basic Text says "All that is required is willingness. All that is essential is that we open the door to a Power greater than ourselves."

How to be an effective member of a CBDM process

Know yourself

a. ***Your personal behaviour has impacts on the group.*** Every person in a collaborative process affects the process. Think about how you impact the group. What assets do you bring? What liabilities? Think about how you might work to keep your liabilities in check as the group works together. How can you remind yourself not to do that behaviour that causes problems?

b. ***Your Personality Style.*** Every person has a personality style. In its simplest form, you can examine whether you are task or feelings oriented. Do you want to get things done, or do you want to hear about how people feel about it? Maybe you don't know, so you might ask how others perceive you. How you relate and react to people that have opposite needs than you has a great impact on the group's work.

c. ***Hot Buttons (triggers).*** Hot buttons are those things that get an instant angry response. They often come from events in our lives that shaped our values and are not often things we can control. What kinds of things make you mad? Remember, a skillful antagonist might be able to manipulate you by pushing your hot buttons to get you to react. Know them and be aware of your response when those issues come up.

d. ***Physical factors.*** When you are hungry, do you get irritable? If you are tired, do you have less patience than normal? If you have an injury or soreness that is hurting, does it change how you react to others? You can defuse this often just by admitting it out loud to the group. When I get hungry, I get cranky. I am sorry if I am not working well right now, but its right before lunch which is my worst time.

e. ***Emotional state.*** When something is causing you distress, you're in an abnormal emotional state and, like the physical factors, this may cause atypical behaviours. When you can do so, alert the group to your distress and warn them of potential consequences. Eg, I am feeling sad today because my dad is really sick and I was up late last night worrying about him. I apologize if I am impatient at this meeting.

Know your perspective

a. ***How you see the world may not be how it really is.*** The way you do things is not necessarily the right way, even if that is how you were taught. It is often difficult for us to see in our viewpoints and judgments the many things we believe or take for granted because of cultural and family indoctrinations that have saturated us since our earliest childhoods. A classic example of this can be found in how clean people are about their houses or personal spaces. Some folks spend lots of time cleaning and putting their possessions in a very specific order. Other folks are much less orderly and spend little time cleaning. Most often this comes from the way your family lived and how you were raised. This difference is often a source of conflict, as each cleanliness perspective views itself as being the right way. If you view yourself as being right, then those not like you must be wrong. This right and wrong judgmental thinking is often the root of conflicts within groups.

b. ***Identify your closures.*** What things are you closed about? What ideas are you simply not going to accept? This closed-mindedness comes from your personal values, and it's good to identify these and understand them. When these things become out of sync with the group you're in, it's very hard to continue working in that group. Eg, a person that believes all animal life is sacred will not succeed well on a farm that slaughters its livestock.

c. ***Humility.*** A key element to making consensus work is personal humility. By recognizing the limits of your own experiences, you open the way to learn new things.

d. ***Over-generalizing experiences.*** It's easy to over-generalize from experiences, eg, because you once had problems with a Ford, all Fords are lemons. This kind of over-generalizing from experience inhibits your ability to see that experiences are not always repeated in the same way, with the same outcomes.

e. ***A perspectives test.*** A good test of how open you are to other perspectives is how well you can explain them to someone else with fairness, and without making judgmental remarks or using negative tones.

Your actions during service meetings

These behaviours can be learned, practised, and form skill sets which members can excel at, and are helpful to many CBDM groups. It's helpful to adopt these as group ground rules, and post them to remind us to follow them. A good facilitator can use such ground rules to intervene and help the group succeed.

a. ***Be a good listener.*** Listen carefully and ask for clarification, especially about why people think or feel as they do. Never interrupt. Ask questions to clarify what the issue is and why is it an issue.

b. ***Be solution centred.*** Don't just criticize; suggest solutions and ideas for solving problems. Be sure to state the problem as clearly as you can before trying to apply solutions.

c. ***Use the right group.*** Sometimes we spend a lot of time trying to solve a problem that's outside our scope of experience or expertise. A small group of experts might be better than the larger committee.

d. ***Be open to outcome.*** Look fairly and equally at the pros and cons of all ideas. Don't come with THE PLAN; come with an idea. Then see where the group expands it and be open to change. Don't own ideas; give them away to the group. Don't lobby your idea; encourage the group to look at all the pros and cons. Don't set unnecessary limits.

e. ***Be concise.*** Think about what you want to say and be brief. Don't ramble; don't repeat what others said. If you think the same as someone who already spoke, then simply say, "I agree with _____."

f. ***Be patient.*** Others may need more time to understand or need more information. Consensus is NOT a fast decision-making process. Be willing to let others have the time they need.

g. ***Take a dose of humility.*** The answer that suits your needs does not mean it's the best answer for everyone, or that what meets your needs meets the needs of others. Learn to say to yourself: I might be wrong. Be willing to learn what lessons the group can teach you, even if you are the expert.

h. ***Take ownership of your feelings and share them when it's needed.*** If you feel unhappy, or uncomfortable, say so and try to pinpoint why. Don't forget to say you are happy or grateful as well.

i. *Take a long-term view.* Many decisions and proposals are learning experiences for things you have not yet done. If it doesn't work, you can change it later. Try things. Experiment. Be willing to try new ideas.

j. *Learn when to let go.* Many things a group decides can be redone later. Don't get hung up on small details, let the decision go forward and examine it later to see if your misgivings were justified or not.

k. *Use I statements to define your needs.* When you have things you want or need, tell the group what they are by using I statements, such as I need nearby parking because I'm handicapped.

l. *Give the reasons behind your thinking.* Whenever you state an opinion, you can add valuable information by giving others the reasons for your opinion. Be open to questions and comments about your opinions.

m. *Ask for feedback.* Ask others to tell you what they think. Invite others to offer ideas and suggestions. Encourage folks to talk with you about the things you do that bother them.

n. *Clean up your messes.* When you say the wrong thing, or act in a way that hurts, angers, or alienates others, talk later to discuss what happened and why with those who were affected.

o. *Intervene to help the group.* Even if you are not the facilitator, if you notice something is going well, complement the group or person. If things are not going right, try to state what you perceive to be happening and ask for feedback.

p. *Do your homework.* Don't wait until the meeting to get or give information. Call people, hold small gatherings, etc. Read everything you are given closely and think about it before the meeting.

How does CBDM work?

a. Proposals are bought to the committee by any CBDM eligible member. Proposals stand on their own merits; seconders are not required.

b. Once a proposal is presented, the proposer comments first, then the committee can comment. Any member ("voting" or not) may speak to proposals.

c. The Chairperson then tests for consensus (straw poll) to measure the initial level of support for the proposal: *"Is this what we want to do?"* Straw polls give a sense of where the committee is on a particular proposal. Terms used by the Chairperson when describing the results of a straw poll are:
   i. Unanimous support (100% support);
   ii. Strong support (2/3 support);
   iii. Support (over 50% support); and,
   iv. Lack of support (less than 50% support).

d. If unanimous or strong support (3a or 3b), consensus is reached and steps are taken to put the proposal into practice.

e. If support (3c), consensus is reached; however, the Chairperson should address the concerns of those members not in support. Depending on the concerns raised:
   i. The proposal might be modified to address them; or,
   ii. The unmodified proposal is put into practice.

j. If lack of support (3d), the Chairperson asks about concerns raised regarding the proposal. Depending on the concerns raised:
   i. The proposal might be more clearly explained to address them, and another straw poll taken;
   ii. The proposal might be modified to address them, and another straw poll taken; or,
   iii. The proposal dies due to lack of support.

k. If the concerns raised are significant, the proposal may be blocked. The member who blocks must state which Tradition, Concept, or spiritual principle fundamental to NA is violated by the proposal.

l. Although CBDM is the desired process, a decision may be reached using the voting procedures of Roberts Rules of Order from A Guide to Local Services in NA.
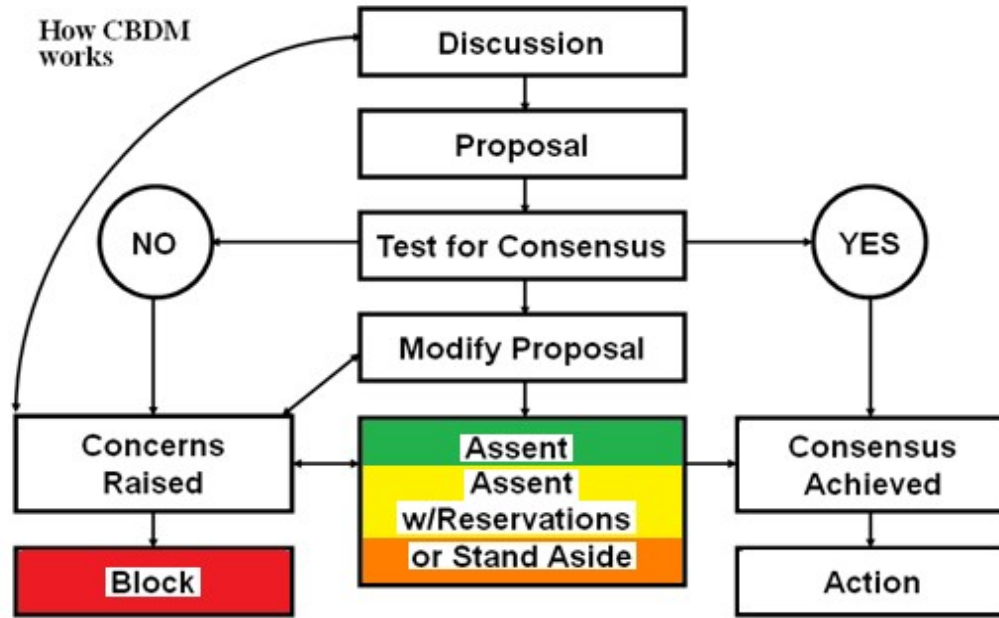
Consensus-Based Decision-Making Process

Revision Date

Document approved by Central Nova Area Service Committee: 29 September 2021

Amended:......................
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End of Document (CBDM Guides follow)

Guides to successful CBDM

Each member participating in a CBDM will have access to guides 2, 3, and 4 as a quick reference. The chairperson will have all four. The secretary holds a few copies of these guides.

These guides are used to understand CBDM better. Refer to them only when needed.

1. CBDM Guide 1: Basic Facilitation.
    This summarizes the role of a facilitator, setting up a discussion session, some key techniques, and wrapping up a discussion session.

2. CBDM Guide 2: Suggestions for successful CBDM
    This summarizes the basics of knowing yourself, your perspectives, your meeting actions, and some spiritual principles vital to successful cooperative consensus-based decision-making. The member may refer to it to determine how these four areas are either building or weakening the CBDM process.
3. CBDM Guide 3: CBDM Decision Making.
    This details how and why a member would Assent, Assent with Reservations, Stand Aside, or Block. It also compares the equivalent voting structure of Robert's Rules of Order. The member may refer to it to determine whether they want to Assent, Assent with Reservations, Stand Aside, or Block a proposal.
4. CBDM Guide 4 (unlabelled): Colour-coded proposal discussion and consensus phase actions.
    This details how and why a member would interact with the committee regarding the proposal under consideration, either during the discussion stage, or during the consensus (voting) stage. Being colour-coded green, yellow, orange, and red, allows the facilitator to quickly acknowledge when something is happening which requires rapid action. Each guide will be separated into four smaller coloured cards. The member may refer to it to determine their participation in the discussion stage, or during the consensus (voting) stage.

    NOTE: In general practice, CBDM Guide 4 is not used.

CBDM Guide 1: **Basic Facilitation**

1. **The Role of a Facilitator**

    The role of a facilitator is to help the body move through their intended agenda, reach decisions that all participants can support, and help ensure that these decisions are in harmony with the principles of the NA program. A facilitator will need to know several basic pieces of information to be effective:

    - Have a clear understanding of the purpose of the gathering, whether it is a subcommittee meeting, Local Service Planning Assembly, etc.
    - Have a general idea of the experience level of those attending. For a group of less experienced individuals more explanation of basic information may be needed, while more experienced members may be able to move more quickly through the set up phase of a discussion.
    - Have an awareness of any relevant resources, such as local guidelines, service handbooks, tradition and concept essays etc., and make these available when required.

2. **Setting Up a Discussion Session**

    Remind all participants of what the meeting is intended to accomplish, and how everyone will work together to achieve that aim:
    - State the purpose of the meeting, review the agenda and ground rules, and remind everyone how much time is available for the meeting.
    - Ask everyone for their help in facilitating discussions and following the ground rules for the meeting.

3. **Key Techniques**

    There are some simple ideas for facilitators that can have a positive influence on a session:
    - Make eye contact, smile, be enthusiastic.
    - Be who you are – let your own style come through.
    - Remember that communication isn't just the spoken word – for example, try to avoid "closed" body language such as crossing your arms or turning your back on your audience.
    - Remember that listening is a key part of successful facilitation.

    There are several techniques that a facilitator can employ to aid in their process. There are 3 main areas:

    a. **Gathering information**: Make sure everyone has a chance to participate so all the necessary information is available; remembering that some participants are shy and may need encouragement. Try to keep the discussion focused on the topic and get to the root cause of any issues, asking for more details to gain clarity if needed. **Key questions**: What have we tried before that works? What would happen next? Is that what you mean?

    b. **Organizing information**: Group common thoughts and ideas together. Avoid repetition, but don't lose the details. Don't lose good ideas that are off topic – record these for use in the future. **Key questions**: Are these ideas similar? What would happen if we tried these ideas together? Can anyone add anything to these ideas?

    c. **Connecting ideas**: Rephrase ideas so they relate to the issue we are discussing. Combine ideas to build solutions. **Key questions**: How can we use that idea to help with our issue? What can we do today that will make a difference? Can we see some solutions emerging from our ideas?

4. **Wrapping up a Discussion Session**

    Summarize any solutions offered or decisions made, making sure everyone is clear on what has been decided and what will happen next. If more information is going to be sought outside those in attendance, be sure that everyone knows who is responsible for this and when it will happen. Remind everyone how important it is to involve ourselves in these discussions and how we are a part of the solution today. Don't forget to thank everyone for coming, and ensure everyone knows when and where the next meeting is.
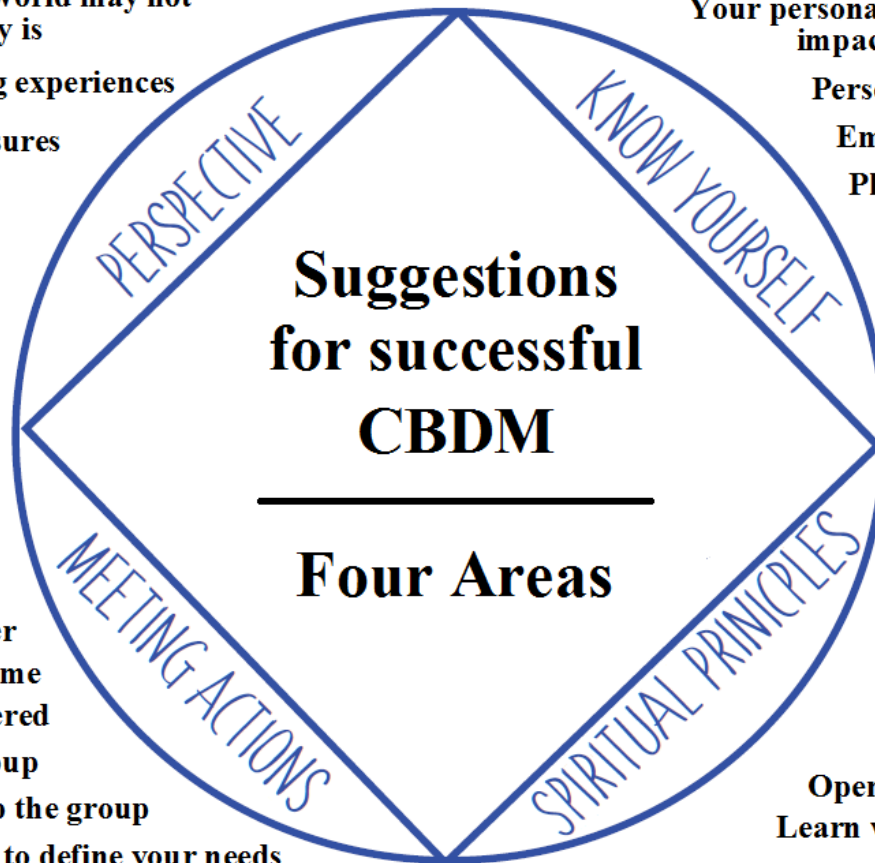
PERSPECTIVE

How you see the world may not be how it really is

Over-generalizing experiences

Identify your closures

Ask for feedback

KNOW YOURSELF

Your personal behaviour impacts the group

Personality Style

Emotional state

Physical factors

Hot Buttons

Suggestions for successful CBDM

Four Areas

SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES

Trust

Faith

Honesty

Humility

Good Will

Be patient

Willingness

Open-Mindedness

Learn when to let go

MEETING ACTIONS

Be concise

Be a good listener

Be open to outcome

Be solution centered

Use the right group

Intervene to help the group

Use I statements to define your needs

Take ownership of your feelings and share them when it's needed

Give the reasons behind your thinking

Clean up your messes   Do your homework

Assent

Indicated in a manner (non-verbal or verbal) which makes the member's Assent clear.

Why *Assent*?

You support the proposal, all things considered. It might not mean that you agree with every aspect.

Assent with Reservations

Indicated by raising your hand and stating "Assent with reservations."

Why *Assent with reservations*?

1. You are willing to let this proposal pass, but want to register your concerns.
2. It's understood that those concerns had already been talked about prior to this. You are simply noting that you support the proposal, but continue to have these concerns.

Stand Aside

Indicated by raising your hand and stating "Stand Aside."

Why *Stand Aside*?

1. You personally can't do what is proposed, but you won't stop others from doing it.
2. You have a serious personal disagreement due to your own personal beliefs or values, but are willing to let the proposal pass.
3. You are incapable of understanding or participating in the proposal.

Stand Aside sometimes may be regarded as a NO vote. With 33% or more committee members standing aside means that the proposal is too weak for the committee to put into practice. The proposal is either dropped, or delegated to the proposal maker or a workgroup for further design.

Block

Indicated by raising your hand and stating "Block."

Why *Block*?

1. You can't support the proposal, nor can you allow the committee to support it, because the proposal violates one or more Traditions, Concepts, or spiritual principles of NA.
2. You must be able to justify which Tradition, Concept, or spiritual principle was contravened by the proposal.
3. Your justification must be valid.

Block is rarely used. If consensus is blocked, or no reasonable consensus can be reached, the committee stays with the subject's previous decision (or does nothing, if the proposal was for something new).

Under Robert's Rules of Order, this would be a FOR vote.

Under Robert's Rules, this would be a FOR vote.

Under Robert's Rules, this could be a FOR, ABSTAIN, or NO vote.

Under Robert's Rules, this would be a NO vote.

GREEN

For Discussion	For Consensus
"I have something to say"	I agree with this decision, all things considered"
Raise this GREEN card when you want to 1. Make a comment, 2. Give an opinion, or 3. Ask a question.	Raise this GREEN card to **ASSENT** if you support this proposal. It may not mean you agree with every aspect, but you have heard the discussion, have had a chance to participate in the process of finalizing the proposal, and are prepared to support the final proposal.

ORANGE

For Discussion	For Consensus
"I have a process observation"	"I personally can't do this, but I won't stop it from happening"
Raise this ORANGE card when you want us to look at our process. Eg: if you need to refocus, you want to recognize another person's concern and have it posted for all to see, you want to suggest a break, or you think it's time for a straw poll or a call for consensus.	Raise this ORANGE card to **STAND ASIDE** if you have a personal disagreement with a proposal, but are willing to let the proposal pass.

YELLOW

For Discussion	For Consensus
"I can clarify" - *or* - "I need clarification on what was just said"	"I think this might be a mistake but I can live with it"
Raise this YELLOW card if you can offer needed information, or you require more information.	Raise this YELLOW card to **ASSENT with RESERVATIONS** if you are willing to let a proposal pass, but you want to register your concerns.

RED

For Discussion	For Consensus
"Stop! Our procedures" are not being followed"	"I can't support this, and I can't allow the group to support this. It is against our principles."
Raise this RED card to register serious problems with the process. Eg: the discussion has gone off topic, or a member is dominating the discussion or being inconsiderate.	Raise this RED card to **BLOCK**, a rare and extreme form of dissent taken only if you honestly believe a Tradition, Concept, or spiritual principle fundamental to NA is directly violated by a proposal. You must explain how the proposal is in violation.