

## **Written Summary of the GEA Districting Task Force's Presentation of its Recommendations for Creating Districts**

### **Charge:**

The Global Electronic Area (GEA) Districting Task Force is charged with formulating a plan to create districts within the GEA and bring our recommendations to the Global Electronic Area World Service Committee (GEAWSC) for approval.

In accordance with Concept One (the ultimate responsibility and authority for AI-Anon Services within our Area belongs to its AI-Anon Family Groups) these recommendations will then be presented to the Group Representatives (GRs) in a Town Hall meeting and then brought to Assembly for a vote of acceptance to move to the next step.

### **Framing:**

The GEA does not currently have districts formed. Having districts in place will complete the vital links of service that are already established in geographic areas. Having districts in place ensures that our World Service Office (WSO) makes decisions guided by our GEA groups so that all GEA AI-Anon members experience encouragement, support and unity within the fellowship.

### **Background Information: What We Know:**

This GEA Districting Task Force was formed as a result of a KBDM Districting Thought Force's findings. The KBDM Districting Thought Force researched the possible solutions to creating districts and discovered the commonalities within the GEA AI-Anon Family Groups and how they are meeting in real time. A presentation of their findings and suggestions was given on May 13, 2023 to the GRs.

In summary, the commonalities that the Thought Force found as being important for the formation of districts were (by importance listed as follows):

- Common Language
- Common Platform
- Time Zone

The end result of the Districting Thought Force was a consensus that districts would best be formed with language as first consideration and then by platform. It was thought that these two items were of more importance than that of time zone considerations and size of the district. Language was a large focus of the KBDM Districting Thought Force. These recommendations were presented to the Assembly and were moved on to a Districting Task Force for the next steps.

This GEA Districting Thought Force was formed by the GEAWSC (the originating body) and our Area Chair, Rosemary B, in accordance with the 2022/2025 AI-Anon/Alateen Service

Manual. For more information on how Task Forces, Thought Forces and Work Groups, are formed and why; please refer to pages 70-72 of the current service manual. The Districting Task Force is composed of seven AI-Anon members appointed by the Area chair who have experience serving at the group/district/area level and have a working knowledge of the current Service Manual. At least two members are located outside the United States and there are several different platforms represented with its members.

**What do we know about our members' or prospective members' wants, needs and preferences that are relevant to this discussion?**

**Concept Four:** *Participation is the key to harmony.*

**Tradition One:** *Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends on unity.*

Members want inclusion, the right of participation and to feel they belong to AI-Anon as a whole. Without the districts being formed, a vital link of service is missing and therefore there could be feelings of exclusion and disconnect from our Area. There is confusion and misinformation without the representation of District Representatives (DRs).

**What do we know about the current realities and evolving dynamics that are relevant to this discussion? What do we wish we knew but don't?**

The GEA is an evolving dynamic Area. It is an Area that is bound by no one time zone, language, platform, country or continent. The GEA has no physical geographic boundaries. The GEA presents the ability to offer meetings 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and it has opened a gateway for more AI-Anon Family Groups worldwide to register.

It seems difficult for members of the GEA to understand that we are not tied to a geographical area. Without districts being formed, members new to the GEA have misconceptions that their group belongs within a "local to them" geographic district.

There are groups registered with the GEA that are unsure that this is where their group belongs. These groups are meeting electronically while awaiting admission into a geographic area or into another AI-Anon service structure.

The reality is that the GEA will continue to grow. With over 900 registered groups, over 1,500 meetings, and over 400 GRs, the need for the GEA to create districts is paramount.

**The Process:** *How to unify an entire global community.*

The Task Force was not asked to actually create districts but to come up with a plan on how to do so. There were many scenarios, questions and additional research that this Task Force went through to discover how districts could be formed using information we gained throughout our meeting duration.

### *What we know:*

- How many registered groups in the GEA
- How many meeting platforms
- How many different languages spoken at meetings
- How many time zones are represented worldwide
- Meeting times
- Thought Force recommendation of no more than 25 groups per district with consensus that 20 was a better number.

*\*We came to find it important to know how many GRs there are because the reality is that a district needs to have GRs in order to be healthy and thus avoiding becoming a dark district. We would have to be sure that this was also a priority in the formation of a district.*

Using the KBDM Thought Force recommendation to sort districts by language first and then platform was our first priority.

We started this process by first looking at the largest platform being used: Zoom. It quickly became evident that if we followed the recommendations of the Thought Force of no more than 20 groups per district, then Zoom would have an overwhelming number of districts on its own. There are quite a few other platforms being used with a smaller number of groups.

Sorting by language revealed that 16 districts would contain only one group. Was sorting by language and platform able to achieve the definition of a district according to our service manual? The answer is no.

We discovered through discussion that none of us on the Task Force knew everything there was to know about platforms being used outside of our own experiences with our own platforms. There was much discussion on this topic and the reality is that AI-Anon promotes unity and understanding of ALL its members. The Task Force members unanimously agreed that in order to accomplish this, platforms should be mixed in a district. This will promote inclusion and acceptance of each member in AI-Anon and will bring a **greater understanding of each other**. This is in line with Traditions 1, 2, 4, and 5 as well as Concepts 4 and 10.

If districts contained mixed platforms, how would that look with language as the second consideration? This is easily solved through the use of an overlay district after districts have been formed.

Each Task Force member was asked for, and came up with, possible districting ideas and presented them to the group for discussion and consideration.

### **Time Zones, Meeting Times, UTC:**

We did not all initially wholly agree with the KBDM Thought Force's conclusion that time zones or meeting times were not as important as platform and language. We gained a new perspective when we concluded that using meeting start times as expressed in UTC in the registration database, respects group autonomy and it works!!

### **What is UTC?**

Coordinated Universal Time, or UTC, is the primary time standard by which the world regulates clocks and times.

UTC is measured by lines of longitude which go from North to South around the planet. The time standard for setting all the clocks in the world starts at the prime meridian, which is the "0" point of longitude lines.

UTC does not change for any form of daylight saving time and is used as the primary time measurement by pilots because they often change time zones quickly. Every other time zone changes by hours, minutes or even seconds.

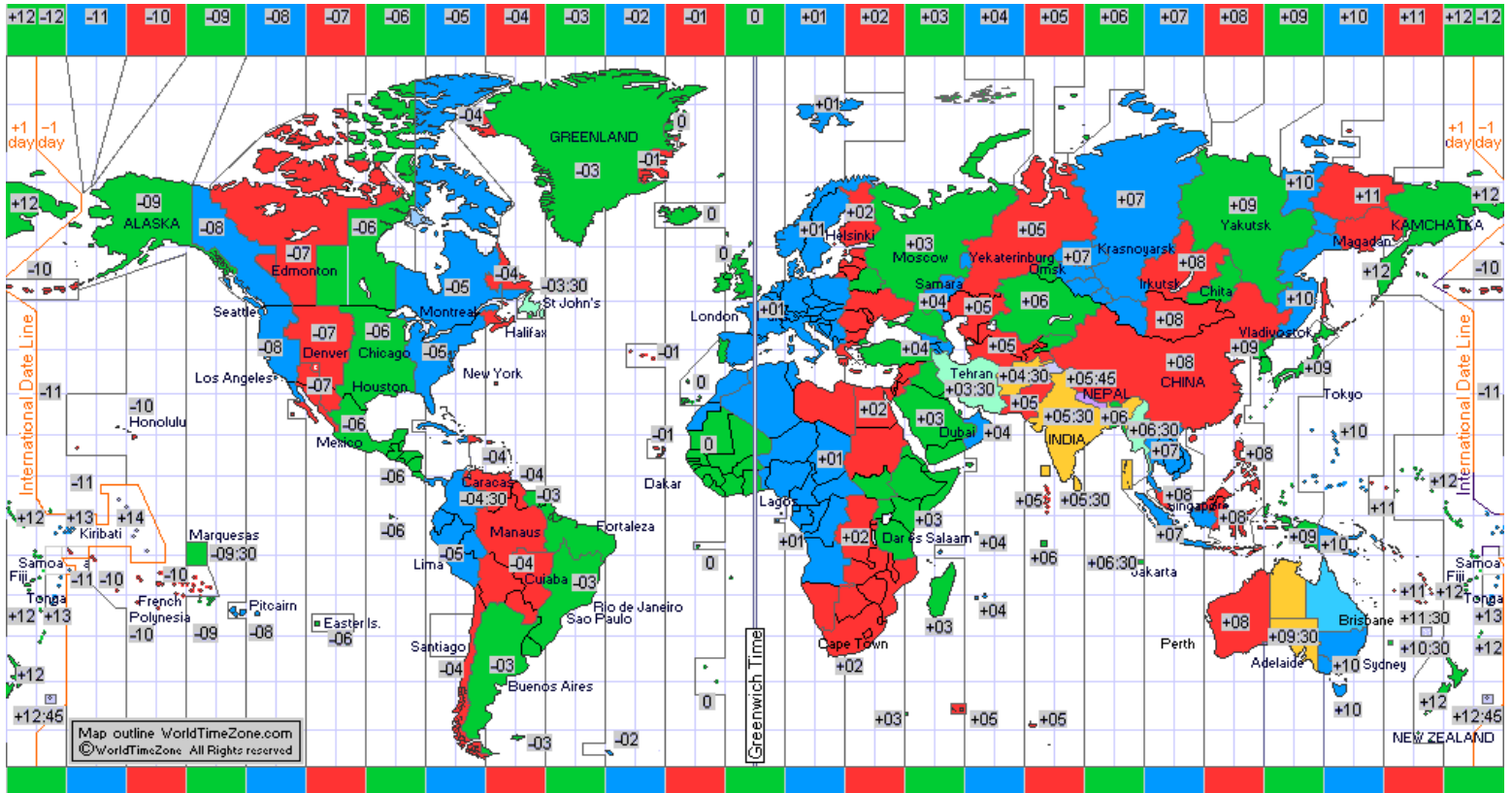
UTC starts at the Prime Meridian, which on a flattened world map, would be a longitudinal line straight down the middle of the map. UTC starts here at 12:00 am.

On a flattened world map there are equal lines of longitude across the entire map. These lines are labeled in positive or negative values and the UTC time increment as shown on the graphic on the next page.

Anything with a negative value, for example UTC-1, subtracts an hour from 12:00 am so in those at UTC -1 the time would be 11:00 pm the previous night. Anything with a positive value such as UTC + 1, the time would be 1:00 am. Computers, phones, and other electronic devices, work on Atomic Time, which is set by UTC. Whenever a member looks online at al-anon.org for an electronic meeting, they are getting meeting information that is displayed in their current time for where they live. When a meeting says it starts at 5:00 pm, that 5:00 pm is listed as the time zone the member lives in. It does not list 5:00 pm Eastern time, Central time, GMT or make any other reference to a time zone. It simply says 5:00 pm. If that time is a time that works for the member they may choose to join that group for a meeting.

Where UTC becomes very important is when it comes to doing business in an electronic Area and, subsequently, future districts. We have already seen this at work in our Area Assemblies because our Area does business according to Eastern Time. For instance, during the Alternate Delegate election the Assembly was held at 4:00 pm Eastern Time. We had at least one candidate that lives in UTC +4. It was 2:00 am the next day for this candidate by the time the assembly ended. If we have members attending meetings and doing service to their groups, the question is how can we create a district when there is a huge disparity in time? How can districts have a unified and inclusive district meeting if their DRs are scattered across the globe in very different UTC areas? What time would

they have their district meetings? If one DR lives in UTC 0 let's say at 10:00 am (Greenwich, England) but you have a DR that lives in UTC -10 (Alaska); it would be 12:00 am there. Chances are the DR in UTC-10 will not be able to attend a District meeting if it is held at 10:00 am UTC 0.



### Districts by Meeting Platforms and Language

We have studied to the KBDM Districting Thought Force recommendations and listened to the GRs' passionate discussions on groups.io with regards to creating districts by language first and then by platform. There have been repeated questions by members if a platform can be its own district or platforms that feel they are their own district already. According to the Districting Task Forces findings, we do not believe this is possible for several reasons:

- We have found that creating districts by only platform or language considerations could possibly cause feelings of not being included or underrepresented at the GEAWSC. There are two platforms in the GEA that are very large but there are many that do not meet the guidelines in our Service Manual to create a district of their own.
- Mixing platforms in a district will promote **harmony, unity and understanding** of each other. This will also prevent feelings that one platform is superior to another. By mixing platforms in a district members can feel the spirit of being equal to each other.

- Likewise, we do not believe that creating a district solely by language promotes harmony nor unity either. The whole idea is to unify the globe using Al-Anon principles and legacies when districts are formed.

### **What is an Overlay District?**

An Overlay District is a collection of groups typically aligned by a commonality, such as language or non-geographic location. Groups may belong to either the District or Overlay District based on their group conscience. Decisions may be made on holding local functions and doing local outreach. News will be disseminated to and from the groups. Overlay Districts are formed upon approval by the Area (2022-2025 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual pgs 64-65, pgs 74-75).

### **Assignment of groups to a district once they are formed.**

There was much discussion by the GEA Districting Task Force on if a group can choose which district they want to belong to after they are formed. After many scenarios were gone through, we discovered that this is not a possibility. For a few reasons:

- Honoring the "service work to life" balance of the trusted servants elected to be DRs as suggested by the Thought Force, districts should be composed of not more than 20 groups.
- It would cause a group to have to possibly change districts with the election of new officers in their group, based on the preferences of the new officers.
- It would cause confusion. The GEA Group Records coordinator would not be able to handle the constant record updates from groups moving from one district to another while assuring that districts are balanced with a healthy amount of GRs and assuring that there are enough DRs for the district to be represented.

### **Recommendations of the GEA Districting Task Force**

- All groups registered in the GEA, regardless of whether or not they have a GR, will be placed in districts.
- Groups will be assigned to districts. Groups will not choose their district.
- Districts will, whenever possible, consist of up to 20 groups.
- DR terms will align with the terms of the current panel. Thus DRs elected during this panel will serve until 12/31/24.
- Because 57% of the GEA groups do not have a GR, it is recommended that districts include a mix of groups that have and do not have a GR, so as to avoid inadvertently creating districts in which none of the groups have a GR.
- The UTC meeting start times displayed in the electronic meetings list on al-anon.org are to be the primary consideration for sorting groups into districts. Language and platform will have the next highest priority.
- To promote unity and understanding in the GEA, each district where possible will include a mix of at least two platforms.

Respectfully submitted by the GEA Districting Task Force

Grateful to be of service:

Tom L., Chair

Evelyne

Gerald M.

Jeri W.

Ken T.

Malinda P.

Suzie M.