



# ACA Monterey Bay Intergroup Orientation 2024

## What is an ACA Intergroup?

In areas where many ACA meetings exist, an Intergroup is generally formed to provide a forum for conducting ACA business within a given geographical area. The individual groups continue to conduct their own group business; however, the groups can select a meeting representative to represent the group at an Intergroup meeting. The Intergroup therefore, is composed of members from the various ACA groups. An Intergroup may help coordinate helpline functions, public information efforts, hospitals and institutions meetings, and ACA events in a given area.

<https://adultchildren.org/aca-intergroups-regions/>

## What is the Purpose of the Monterey Bay Intergroup?

In our local area, the Monterey Bay Intergroup (MBIG) was established to foster and support the growth and success of ACA in our service area. The MBIG website [acamontereybay.org](http://acamontereybay.org) provides listings of local meetings, maintains a calendar of events, organizes workshops and special events, maintains a literature depot to purchase ACA literature in bulk for distribution at reduced cost to local ACA meetings, and provides access to the ACA World Service Organization (WSO) and other ACA resources.

<http://acamontereybay.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ACA-INTERGROUP-MISSION-STMT.pdf>

## How does an ACA meeting join the Intergroup?

Meetings in our local area can choose to join the Monterey Bay Intergroup (MBIG) by a vote in their meeting or business meeting. Each participating meeting chooses an Intergroup Representative. The term is typically for one calendar year beginning in January. Each Intergroup Representative is expected to attend the monthly Intergroup meetings (or send a proxy) and share information covered with their home group. Additionally, intergroup members participate and support Intergroup activities and encourage service in their home groups.

## How is the Intergroup organized?

The Intergroup is made up of four elected officers (Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer), representative and the elected representatives (IGR's) from each of the participating meetings. These individuals are directly responsible to those they serve. Officers may serve as an Intergroup Representative/Alternate for an ACA meeting, however they have only one vote in MBIG. Committee Chairs also now have a vote. Non-voting participants in MBIG include a WSO representative (World Service Organization), committee members and visitors. All ACA members are welcome to attend and participate in MBIG meetings, however, only elected Intergroup Representatives, officers and committee chairs are eligible to vote.

**How does the Monterey Bay Intergroup make decisions?** The Monterey Bay Intergroup holds monthly business meetings via Zoom on the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday. We now use a relaxed approach to Robert's Rules for general decision-making. (More detail below).

## What ACA principles are related to how meetings are conducted?

### Unity

Tradition One states “Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on ACA unity.” ACA members working the Twelve Steps recognize the need to place the group’s survival ahead of their own selfish needs or their fear-based urge to control others. The groups’ members have learned to trust one another and to disagree without being disagreeable. The group members trust the collective decision-making process known as a group conscience. (BRB p. 491 & 492).

### Group Conscience

Tradition Two states “For our group purpose, there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.” A group conscience is a vote of the group that expresses the collective wisdom of the group and supersedes an individual opinion. “By adhering to the Traditions, we begin to see God’s footprint in our group decisions” (BRB p. 490).

### Substantial Unanimity

The one important principle included in the Twelfth Concept states: “*that all important decisions be reached by discussion vote and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity.*” **Substantial unanimity** means that decisions reached by ACA meetings or service bodies need to reflect **the clear will of the group**. Substantial unanimity is greater than a simple majority and exceeds a two-thirds majority of those voting on a given business item (BRB p. 596). If substantial unanimity cannot be reached on an “important decision” it is suggested that the action be postponed.

### Principles Before Personalities

Tradition Twelve states “Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities ... humility is the glue that places God in the center of our lives (BRB p. 550).

### Our Primary Purpose

Tradition Five states “Each group has but one purpose – to carry its message to the adult child who still suffers.” (BRB p. 513) The Monterey Bay Intergroup is designed to support local area meetings by organizing public information efforts, hospitals and institutions meetings, speaker meetings and other events designed to carry the message to adult children seeking a new way of living.

## How is a typical Monthly MBIG meeting organized?

At the previous monthly meeting of MBIG, the IGR’s were asked for input as to items to be addressed on the next agenda. The Chairperson emails the new agenda and related materials to all Intergroup Representatives 3 weeks prior to the next scheduled meeting, to allow IGRs to review the materials and discuss important issues at the meeting they represent. Occasionally, a member may request to have an additional item added to the upcoming agenda under new business. Under this circumstance, the Chair may update the agenda and distribute the revised agenda to all Intergroup members prior to the meeting with an alert that the agenda has been revised. **If an Intergroup member, officer or committee chair is unable to attend, it is strongly suggested that an Alternate be designated to serve as a proxy. This is important to maintain a necessary quorum for the meeting.**

### What is a quorum?

A quorum is enough voting members present to vote and make decisions. For MBIG, we need 2/3 of potential voting members, minus one, to hold a meeting. After readings, the Vice-Chair does a roll call count to determine if we have a quorum. Ten minutes into a meeting, if we do not have a quorum, we cancel the meeting. Additionally, visitors are noted as non-voting attendees. The count and attendees are recorded in the minutes.

Agendas and materials to be discussed are emailed to the members in advance (agendas 3 weeks in advance). Minutes from the last meeting are emailed out soon after the meeting (within 10 days) along with a Conscious Contact newsletter for each IGR to mention to the meeting they represent, also emailed to the general mailing list.

**This timing is to allow the Intergroup Rep to consult with the meeting they represent to get feedback on important issues, and to give them information about upcoming decisions and events and the members may want to participate in.**

MBIG meetings are scheduled for the fourth Saturday of the month from 4:00 – 5:30pm. Members can join the Zoom meeting a few minutes early, to meet, greet and check in with each other to set the tone for meeting. The meeting begins promptly with the Opening.

**Opening** - Approximately 10 minutes

1. the ACA Serenity Prayer
2. clarification that the meeting is being recorded for notetaking purposes
3. readings: Tradition and Concept of the month, Commitment to Service, Guidelines for Business Meetings (#12 read by all)

**Minutes** - Approximately 5 minutes

Members have received by email minutes from the last meeting with opportunities for corrections of substantive inaccuracies (typos and grammatical corrections may be noted but generally do not affect voting). A motion to accept with a second followed by formal voting is used to record the acceptance of the minutes. Note: with the exception of Committee reports, minutes do not ascribe comments to individuals.

**NOTE:** All motions, seconds and voting tallies are recorded by the Secretary in the meeting minutes and in the “Record Book of MBIG motions” for future reference. This document is published twice yearly at <https://acamontereybay.org/record-of-passed-motions-starting-2018-updated-each-june-and-dec/>

**Reports** - Approximately 30 minutes

1. **Officer Reports** - Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, WSO Representative
2. **Intergroup Representative (IGR) Reports**  
Each IGR briefly describes the structure of the meeting they represent, an update on service positions, etc.
3. **Committee Reports**
  - Literature Committee Chair
  - Speaker/Potluck Committee Chair
  - Workshop/Events Committee Chair
  - Outreach Committee Chair
  - Website Committee Chair

**Discussion and Voting** – Approximately 35 minutes

4. **Old Business** - The group addresses items carried over from a previous agenda.
5. **New Business** – The group addresses items which were not on a previous agenda. Attendees may offer new items for future agendas. Chair asks for any items for next month’s agenda.

**Closing** – Approximately 10 minutes

1. **Closing affirmations** or quick, inspiring / fun group activity as time allows, initiated by the Chair. In all cases the Chair strives to start and close the meeting on time.
2. **Adjournment** – A “**motion to adjourn**” is used to close the meeting, followed by a second and show-of-hands vote.

## How are Relaxed Robert's Rules used for dealing with business items?

(See ACA Motions and Voting Flowchart)

1. Using Relaxed Robert's Rules, items that are on the agenda for discussion and decision are opened for **informal discussion**. Participants freely share ideas about how and whether the item could be implemented in kind of a brainstorming approach.
2. When informal discussion leads to a proposed action that the group appears to support, the Chair may ask for a clearly stated formal motion. **Someone makes a motion, describing what they want to put forward for a vote**. If someone else seconds the motion, it is now ready for formal discussion leading to a vote. If nobody seconds the motion, the item is dropped and the next agenda item is considered.

**NOTE:** A motion may be made or seconded by any ACA attendee present, however voting is restricted to IGRs, officers and committee chairs.

3. **Formal discussion of a motion** Once a motion is seconded, a more formal discussion follows. Members are expected to **speak only once** and stick to the topic at hand. The Chair may use discretion to allow speakers to clarify points or raise concerns, however the purpose of the rule is to avoid prolonged discussion for an item that is ready for a vote.
4. **Friendly Amendment:** On some occasions a member may wish to add or modify a motion that is in discussion. To do that, the member may offer to "**make a friendly amendment**" to the item (e.g. I would like to make a friendly amendment to Sally's motion (e.g. I move that the motion be amended by adding/or changing the following wording). The person who made the motion may or may not accept the friendly amendment; if they accept it and someone else seconds, the modified version is now in play.

### **EXAMPLE: Making a friendly amendment**

Sally: "I would like to make a motion that we schedule an Intergroup workshop on Sponsorship for Saturday Jan. 23, 2021 from 2-3:30 that Mary has graciously agreed to facilitate." In general, a motion needs to be clearly stated before a second is offered. Formal discussion allows each individual to state their position. Sometimes a friendly amendment may be accepted by the person making the motion.

Bob: "I would like to suggest a friendly amendment to the motion made by Sally, to change the time to 3:00 - 4:30 to accommodate a number of people who have time conflicts."

At this point Sally may accept the friendly amendment or provide a rationale for maintaining the original proposal.

5. **Vote:** When discussion appears to be complete, the Chair asks members if they are ready to vote.
  - a. If so, the Chair then restates the motion so all parties are clear on the proposal. Next, the Chair asks for all in favor to visibly raise their hand (until the votes are counted), then asks for those against to visibly raise their hand for counting. If an eligible voter has not voted, the Chair asks for a show of hands from those abstaining (those not wishing to take a position on the item).
  - b. The Vice-Chair tallies the votes and reports the tally: 8 yes – 2 no – 1 abstention – which is recorded by the Secretary for the minutes.

**Note:** Abstentions do not count toward or against the item being voted on.

## 6. Thoughtfully Considering Minority Opinions

- a. If a vote is not unanimous, the Chair asks if anyone **who voted differently than the majority** would like to explain their reasoning. This allows the minority opinion to be clearly stated.
- b. The Chair then asks if hearing these explanations has caused anyone to change their vote.
- c. If someone decides to change their vote, a revote is taken once.
- d. If no one is persuaded to change their vote, the original vote stands.

This process allows thoughtful review of **minority opinions** but avoids the problem that arises when full unanimity cannot be reached.



## 7. Substantial Unanimity

- a. A vote that is very close, where the numbers of 'yes' and 'no' votes are almost equal, indicates we do not have substantial unanimity. If this is an important / impactful decision, we table the item for discussion at a later date.
- b. Similarly, a large number of voting members abstaining from the vote indicates we do not have substantial unanimity; if this is an important / impactful decision, we table the item for discussion at a later date.

### **Working to Achieve an Informed Group Conscience and Decision-Making in ACA**

*“Keep in mind the right of everyone to express an opinion. Participating in a business meeting allows us to practice learned recovery tools. The minority opinion is important. There should be an emphasis on obtaining a group conscience of all the participants on all issues, particularly when there is disagreement. A group conscience is the method by which we invite a loving God into our group decisions and discussions. The group comes to an agreement on a given business item after each person has expressed his or her views. An agreement or course of action may not appear after the first round of discussion. If so, the chairperson of the (business) meeting asks for more discussion among the group members until a consensus is reached.*

*Some groups will use a combination of the consensus discussion approach and entertaining formal motions. ... If a motion is made and seconded by the group members, there is usually a discussion and then a vote is taken. **General motions are usually passed by a simple majority. More serious motions such as removing someone from office or changing the meeting time can require a two-thirds majority.**” (BRB pp. 594-595)*