

A.A.® Guidelines

Treatment Committees

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

A.A. Guidelines are compiled from the shared experience of A.A. members in various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada). In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy, except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an *informed* group conscience.

HOW A.A.s CARRY THE MESSAGE TO ALCOHOLICS IN TREATMENT AND OUTPATIENT SETTINGS

In trying to reach the alcoholic who is in an inpatient or outpatient treatment setting, A.A.s work together, insofar as possible, by using suggestions from those who have had experience carrying the message into these settings. These Guidelines provide a summary of that shared experience. A Treatment Committee Workbook, available from the General Service Office, contains detailed information about carrying the message into treatment and outpatient settings, including ways to approach treatment personnel, presentations and workshops, temporary contact programs, and other helpful information. The workbook is sent to area and district committee chairpersons at no charge and is listed in the literature catalog.

PURPOSE

Treatment Committees are formed to coordinate the work of individual A.A. members and groups who are interested in carrying our message of recovery to alcoholics in treatment and outpatient settings, and to set up means of “bridging the gap” from the facility to an A.A. group in the individual’s community.

A Treatment Committee may function within the structure of a general service committee on the area or district level or it may serve within the structure of a central office/intergroup. Prior to forming these committees, this Twelfth Step service is sometimes handled by an individual group or member. As A.A. groups grow in number in a community, experience suggests that a committee works more effectively.

In some parts of the country, A.A.s interested in carrying the message into treatment and correctional settings work together on Hospitals and Institutions committees independent of, but in cooperation with, general service and intergroup committees. This structure also works well in areas where lines of communication between the various service entities remain open.

HISTORY

Ever since A.A.’s co-founders first stayed sober by carrying the A.A. message into hospitals, many other alcoholics have discovered the great value to their own sobriety of working with suffering alcoholics in treatment settings.

In 1934, Bill W. kept trying to help drunks in Towns Hospital in New York City. None of them seemed interested at that time, but Bill stayed sober. Dr. Bob worked with thousands of alcoholics at St.

Thomas Hospital in Akron, Ohio. In 1939, Rockland State Hospital, a New York mental institution, was the site of one of our first A.A. hospital groups.

Today many A.A. meetings take place in inpatient and outpatient settings all over the world. Twelfth Stepping and sponsoring other alcoholics —where they are—has long been one of the most important and satisfying ways of keeping ourselves sober.

Service to treatment facilities used to be combined with service to corrections facilities under the title Institutions Committee. In 1977 the General Service Conference voted to dissolve its Institutions Committee and form two new committees, one on correctional facilities and one on treatment facilities. For more information on A.A.’s work in hospitals and treatment settings, see the book Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Since hospitals and treatment settings do not permit unauthorized visitors to enter their facilities, the first step is to establish contact with administrators. In some areas, the initial contact may be by a committee on Cooperation With the Professional Community (C.P.C.). A meeting to discuss ways A.A. can cooperate with the facility within our Twelve Traditions will help avoid numerous pitfalls later.

If possible, arrange for informational presentations to the facilities’ staff for the purpose of explaining what A.A. is and is not. The General Service Office can provide service material offering suggestions for informational programs. The video “Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous” explains the principles of A.A., our primary purpose and many other aspects which will be of interest to administrators, counselors and clients.

The pamphlet “A.A. in Treatment Settings” describes different types of meetings in treatment centers. In some instances, regular A.A. groups meet in facilities where they rent space in the Tradition of self-support and function in the same way as groups which meet in church basements, schools, etc. The clients are welcome to attend the meetings and this is a practical and simple way of introducing alcoholics to A.A. while they are still in treatment.

“Treatment center meetings” differ from those of the regular group. They are A.A. meetings held for treatment center residents, and they are usually not open to A.A.s in the community. A.A. members are sometimes invited to arrange these meetings for the clients, and these members often bring in one or two other speakers.

Such meetings are often the responsibility of a local Treatment Committee. Other times these meetings are arranged by the treatment center administrators.

Alcoholics in treatment, especially those in outpatient settings, are often able to go to regular meetings of A.A. groups in the community. Care should be taken to ensure that groups receive adequate notice so they can be prepared for the visitors.

All A.A. groups and members should be given the opportunity of sharing in and doing this type of Twelfth Step service. It has proved a good idea to have members from many groups serve on these committees. A chairperson is then elected and plans are developed so that each treatment setting in the area will be assured of A.A. help and cooperation.

Treatment Committees usually convene every month to make assignments and handle other related business. Some of the committees have shared the following activities with us. Perhaps some of these ideas and programs might be used in your area.

1. Workshops have proved an effective way of informing and preparing new committee members for their work with treatment clients and in sharing the experience of the member already involved in this form of service.
2. Other areas have developed sets of guidelines that are helpful for A.A.s newly involved in taking meetings to alcoholics in treatment settings.
3. Many committees have sent letters to all treatment centers and outpatient settings in their areas explaining what A.A. does and does not do.
4. The video "Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous" has been a useful tool for both staff and patients.

BASIC FUNCTIONS OF TREATMENT COMMITTEES

1. With approval of administration, takes A.A. meetings into treatment settings within its area.
2. Encourages group participation. In some areas each group has a representative on the Treatment Committee.
3. Coordinates temporary contact programs, such as Bridging the Gap.
4. Arranges purchase and distribution of literature for these groups and meetings.

RELATIONSHIP WITH INPATIENT AND OUTPATIENT TREATMENT SETTINGS

1. Seeks to understand, respect, and adhere to all treatment setting regulations.
2. Makes information about A.A.'s function and purpose available.
3. Assists in the formation of new A.A. meetings in treatment settings or outpatient facilities.

MEETINGS—SPEAKERS

In some areas, groups are assigned to specific times at specific facilities and this system works very well. However, sometimes commitments are not followed through. The major problem seems to be deciding who is responsible for finding speakers. The specific responsibility can be given to:

1. The contact chairperson or "meeting sponsor" for each setting, who then seeks out individual speakers.
2. An individual appointed by the chairperson.
3. The chairperson of the committee, who arranges for rotation among groups in the area.
4. Committee members who assume the total responsibility, rotating the assignments among themselves, but obtaining other speakers as well.

All people responsible for meetings in treatment settings concur that the more outside members who participate, the better. The alcoholic then has an opportunity to hear varied A.A. talks, and has a better chance to identify.

The importance of dependability cannot be overemphasized.

LITERATURE AND AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS

Most committees feel that adequate literature supplies and audiovisual materials are essential for treatment center meetings. It is especially important that each client is supplied with a list of local A.A. meetings. Supplies are financed and obtained in several ways:

1. Donated by area or district general service committees or local intergroups.
2. Purchased with group contributions designated for this purpose.
3. Provided by groups through their Treatment Committee representatives (where the committee is organized and functioning to this extent).
4. Donated by members of the committee.
5. Special funds — Such as special containers at regular meetings, marked "For Treatment Literature."

Note: Treatment Committee Discount Literature Packages are available from G.S.O.

TEMPORARY CONTACTS AND SPONSORSHIP

Experience shows that even though a client may have been participating in a group or meeting in a treatment facility or outpatient setting, there is anxiety about the transition to a regular group on the outside. With the reminder that A.A. has only sobriety to offer, many committees do try to provide some additional personal contact so this transition period can be made easier. In many places, this is referred to as "bridging the gap" between treatment and a home group. The pamphlet "Bridging the Gap" is available from G.S.O.

1. A growing number of areas has established temporary contact programs. Contact G.S.O. for details. G.S.O. can also provide sample forms to use in this type of service, if your area has not developed one of its own.
2. Where there is a local intergroup, soon-to-be released treatment clients may be put in contact with an A.A. member who may act as a temporary sponsor or contact.
3. In some areas, clients are allowed to attend outside meetings and this makes "bridging the gap" easier.
4. The contact volunteer or meeting sponsor meets the client when he or she is discharged from the facility. Since sponsorship is personal, many areas have found it helpful to have patients or clients select their own sponsors once contact with the outside has been made.
2. The use of newsletters or bulletins distributed by the area, district or intergroup/central office.
3. Announcements at regular A.A. meetings by Treatment Committee members.
4. Treatment Committee workshops at area assemblies and regional or state conferences and conventions.
5. Monthly committee meetings to which all A.A.s are invited. Committee minutes help keep everyone well informed and provide a good record of committee activity and progress. G.S.O. appreciates receiving committee minutes, if possible.

The initial A.A. contacts do not necessarily act as sponsors, but do serve as a vital link between the treatment setting and the outside A.A. group.

When G.S.O. receives a request for A.A. contacts from a treatment professional, a friendly letter of explanation about anonymity is sent with a list of central offices, intergroups and answering services enclosed. The local Treatment Committee may also be notified of the request.

INFORMING THE FELLOWSHIP

As in all A.A. activity, communication on committee activity progress is important. Such communication can be maintained through:

1. Group representatives at district, area or intergroup/central office meetings.

RELATIONSHIP TO AL-ANON

Many areas report it is helpful to cooperate with Al-Anon Family Groups in order that the family of the treatment client may gain a better understanding of our Fellowship. For information, contact Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., 1600 Corporate Landing Parkway, Virginia Beach, VA 23454-5617. Tel: (757) 563-1600.

RELATIONSHIP TO G.S.O.

G.S.O. maintains a mailing list of area and district Treatment Committee chairpersons (U.S. and Canada).

Committee chairpersons receive the Treatment Committee Workbook, and are on the mailing list for About A.A., a newsletter for the professional community, and Box 4-5-9 that sometimes contains a section on Treatment Committee news.

Please keep in touch so that your activities may be shared through Box 4-5-9 or activity updates from the assignment. Your comments may add experiences to the files, to help others who are involved in this rewarding area of service.

A.A.® Guidelines

Sharing the A.A. Message with the Alcoholic Who Is Deaf

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

A.A. Guidelines are compiled from the shared experience of A.A. members in various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada). In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy, except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an *informed* group conscience.

CARRYING THE MESSAGE TO ALCOHOLICS WHO ARE DEAF

Accessibility issues apply to all alcoholics who have difficulties participating in Alcoholics Anonymous. Throughout the Fellowship A.A.s are discovering that the common bond of recovery can transcend these access issues.

Whatever the external access barrier in receiving the A.A. message may be, groups and members can become aware of various access issues, keeping in mind that all alcoholics want to be part of the whole. The goal is to enable every alcoholic to be an active and full participant in the group, and some may need more than just a passing handshake, a pamphlet, and a cup of coffee. And just because we don't often see alcoholics who are Deaf in A.A. meetings doesn't mean they are not out there suffering.

In terms of carrying the A.A. message to alcoholics who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing, there are a variety of ways to communicate. American Sign Language (ASL) is a primary means of communication in the Deaf community and is a unique language, with its own grammar and sentence structure, and many groups use trained professional ASL interpreters to help carry the message to members who are Deaf. Writing, typing, and alternative technical methods can also be helpful, such as videophone, texting, and cellular video messaging. But whatever means are used to communicate, what's most important is to speak "the language of the heart." Encourage the newcomer to take A.A. literature and invite them to come to another meeting. Ask for their phone number or email and contact them as you would any other newcomer. Invite them to coffee and other Fellowship events. Alcoholics who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing need to fully participate in A.A. meetings in the same way that hearing members do.

ASL INTERPRETERS

If there is a need for an interpreter, try to arrange to have a sign language interpreter at the meetings that Deaf alcoholics attend. Numerous areas have developed experience with the situation and groups may want to contact their local Accessibilities Committee, intergroup/central office, general service district or area committee, or a local agency to see if they can help in providing information about ASL interpretation at meetings. Additionally, the member who is Deaf may be able to bring their own interpreter. Often, however, when a person who is Deaf brings their own interpreter that member is likely paying for the interpreter out of their own pocket. Expecting them to do so on an ongoing basis is a problem the group should look into, as not every alcoholic has the means to afford such an expense.

A growing number of groups are providing signers to interpret for their members who are Deaf. Additionally, interpreters allow Deaf and hearing members to share experience, strength and hope with each other, as communication with the Deaf is not a one-way street. Most groups will agree to having a non-A.A. interpreter attend its closed meetings in such cases, recognizing that professional interpreters adhere to a strict code of ethics which assures the confidentiality of the A.A. meeting.

Accessibilities Committees and local service offices often maintain lists of qualified interpreters available for hire who are willing and able to sign for A.A. meetings and events. Providing a signer takes money, and if the group cannot afford the cost, there are other sources of help. Some local intergroup/central offices have provided resources in their annual budgets for helping groups hire interpreters, and some area committees have set up special funds. Some agencies provide interpreters for people who are Deaf.

Whatever arrangements are made should be based on a group conscience decision arrived at after full discussion at a group business meeting. Is the group willing to cover the expense of this service, or does it wish to appoint someone to contact the central office or a professional agency about providing an interpreter? It is important that a full consensus on these points be reached in advance, and if the decision is reached to hire an interpreter, that person should be introduced to the group before meetings, emphasizing the assurance of confidentiality.

It is important, however, not to let fears about money become the focus. Our primary purpose is to carry the message and, as the A.A. Responsibility Declaration indicates, "When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there." And for that, each one of us is responsible.

For non-A.A. interpreters, certain concepts (like Higher Power, anonymity, sponsorship, etc.) are specific to A.A. and it can be helpful to provide interpreters with copies of pertinent A.A. materials, such as A.A. pamphlets or books. Additionally, if time and opportunity allows, it might be helpful to have a C.P.C.-based conversation to orient them to A.A., if they are not familiar, to outline the format and norms of the particular meeting or group, and to answer any questions they may have about A.A.

OTHER FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

An increasing number of A.A. members are learning sign language in order to communicate with members who are Deaf. Some learn enough to greet Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing newcomers and encourage them to keep coming back. It is a benefit to the group to know ASL

or be willing to learn it in order to communicate with Deaf members in their primary language. However, like any other language, there is a vast difference between one who may have reached a basic level of proficiency and one who is a professionally trained interpreter. Nevertheless, A.A.s should not let a lack of ASL skills prevent them from reaching out to Deaf alcoholics.

Initially it may be difficult to convey feelings through another person, so try to communicate as directly as possible. Visual communication is important, and a wave of the hand or a tap on the shoulder can signal that you want the person's attention. Usually, it is more appropriate to approach members who are Deaf with paper and pen, a dry erase board, or a smartphone to type out a conversation. We must remember that our A.A. experience is the most important thing we have to share.

Those A.A. members who do not know sign language can maintain regular communication with members who are Deaf by video phone, texting and video messaging. The system used for the video phone is known as the Video Relay Service, a video telecommunication service that allows Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing individuals to communicate with hearing people in real time via a sign language interpreter over video telephones and similar technologies. Information on this service can be found over the Internet.

Many area, district and intergroup/central office newsletters publish information about groups for the Deaf. Meeting lists should note which meetings are interpreted.

SHARING BY MAIL AND ONLINE

If the alcoholic who is Deaf is comfortable reading and writing in English, the Loners/Internationalists (LIM) correspondence service is one way to share his or her experience, strength and hope with other alcoholics. The *Loners-Internationalists Meeting (LIM)* is a confidential bimonthly bulletin sharing excerpts from LIM members' letters that are sent to the General Service Office.

Some Deaf members actively participate in online A.A. meetings. A large number of online meetings, some videotaped in ASL, are available, as well as computer bulletin boards. One source for information about these is the Online Intergroup of A.A., www.aa-intergroup.org. It can also be helpful to contact the local A.A. community via area, district and intergroup/central office websites and webmasters who may be able to forward contact requests to local A.A. members who are willing to correspond via email and text message. Further information can also be obtained by contacting the Accessibilities desk at G.S.O.

A.A. MATERIAL FOR ALCOHOLICS WHO ARE DEAF

The catalog of A.A. material lists literature and audio-visual material both for alcoholics who are Deaf and for sign language interpreters.

Alcoholics Anonymous (the Big Book), Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and the pamphlet "A.A. for the Alcoholic with Special Needs" are available in ASL (American Sign Language) on DVDs.

In addition, the "Young People's Videos," "Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous," and a selection of other A.A. videos, as well as the Conference-approved A.A. public service announcements, are subtitled for the Deaf.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COOPERATION WITH THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY COMMITTEES

Based on responses G.S.O. has received from professional agencies, we encourage local P.I. and C.P.C. committees to contact local and government agencies that work with the Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing/DeafBlind communities, as well as professional groups like healthcare and social workers, judicial and law enforcement agencies and ASL interpreter schools. We also understand that it is valuable to offer to put on an open A.A. meeting or a Public Information meeting about Alcoholics Anonymous and to provide information about available A.A. resources.

Another project that has been suggested for P.I. committees is to take an A.A. meeting to schools for people who are Deaf and/or provide information and material about A.A. to such schools.

Often, local C.P.C. committees will exhibit A.A. literature at conferences which are focused on services for people who are Deaf. Some C.P.C. service people also make presentations about A.A. and available services to these types of conferences and professional meetings. But, whatever the focus of the conference or professional meeting, pamphlets and information directed to alcoholics who are Deaf should always be included.

A.A. EVENTS AND CONFERENCES

A.A. members who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing may need a few special considerations when attending an A.A. event. For those who have a fair amount of hearing, seating near the speaker may be all that is required. Others may require the use of a sign language interpreter, and members who are Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing/DeafBlind rely on a clear and accessible view of their ASL interpreter. The interpreter is usually positioned near the speaker, therefore, the Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing/DeafBlind members generally require seating arrangements near the speaker.

Here are some points to consider when planning a conference or meeting that will be attended by A.A.s who are Deaf:

- Reserve interpreters well ahead of time because they are in great demand. It is also suggested to seek interpreters who are familiar with A.A. and its twelve-step program.
- Budget the interpreting expenses. Find out early what the estimated cost will be, whether by the hour or by the day. If you are holding concurrent workshops, you may need more than one interpreter.
- In designating reserved seating for members who are Deaf, reserve at least a couple of rows so Deaf members can spread out to allow each person adequate visual access to the ASL interpreter. Mark the area or the seats, "Reserved for ASL Users."
- On event flyers and programs, be sure to indicate which meetings/sessions will be ASL interpreted.
- Stick with your plans once you have announced that an event is to be interpreted. People who are Deaf are very likely to travel far distances for events that are interpreted. If the event has concurrent meetings and workshops, plan for the availability of at least one interpreter per time block.
- If you are listing the event with the General Service Office, your local intergroup/central office or in any A.A. publication, specify that it is sign language interpreted and be sure to include that information on all

flyers and registration forms. If possible, list a phone number that accepts text messages, or an anonymity-protected email address, that people who are Deaf can access for more information.

CONCLUSION

A G.S.O. staff member who serves on the Accessibilities assignment is available as a resource and facilitator of communication among local Accessibilities Committees. This staff member ensures that inquiries from and about alcoholics who are Deaf are given the proper information and are referred to the local A.A. committee for further action.

You can contact the Accessibilities desk at G.S.O. by calling (212) 870-3400 or emailing access@aa.org.

For information on local meetings and services, use the Internet to contact intergroup/central offices in your area.

We encourage you to keep us informed of your experience in carrying the message. We look forward to hearing from you, and wish you good luck in carrying the message. "I am responsible ... when anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible."

The General Service Office publishes an Accessibilities Checklist to help groups determine the overall accessibility of their meeting spaces. The following is an excerpt from that checklist, as it related to carrying the message to alcoholics who are Deaf.

THE MEETING ROOM:

- ☐ Are chairs set up with adequate aisle space for a wheelchair?
- ☐ Is the lighting adequate?
- ☐ Is there a designated section for members who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing?
 - ☐ If so, is there adequate space for a sign language interpreter to sit with easy access to that group?
- ☐ Is someone available to welcome people and orient them to the meeting space as needed?
- ☐ Is coffee service accessible to a person in a wheelchair or with another type of mobility device?
- ☐ Is A.A. literature available that addresses the needs of individuals with diverse abilities?
- ☐ Does the local intergroup/central office know that the meeting space is available to people with diverse accessibility needs?

Additional information about Accessibilities and setting up your meeting space may be available from your district or area Accessibilities Committee or your local intergroup/central office. You may also want to search the Internet for a variety of Accessibilities Guides and information. In addition, the following accessibilities service materials are available on our A.A. website at www.aa.org.

1. A.A. Guidelines — Accessibility for All Alcoholics (MG-16)
2. Accessibilities Checklist for Meetings and Groups (SMF-208)
3. Serving All Alcoholics (F-107)

A.A.® Guidelines

Relationship Between A.A. and Al-Anon

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

A.A. Guidelines are compiled from the shared experience of A.A. members in the various areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada). In keeping with our Tradition of Autonomy, except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an *informed* group conscience.

The Fellowships of Alcoholics Anonymous and the Al-Anon Family Groups have a unique relationship. They are naturally drawn together by their close ties. And yet the Twelve Traditions, the General Service Boards, and the General Service Conferences of both Fellowships suggest that each functions more effectively if it remains “separate,” cooperating but not affiliating with the other.

Each Fellowship has always had its own General Service Board, General Service Office, Conference, publishing company, and directory. Each has established its own policies and maintained its own services. This separate functioning has served both A.A. and Al-Anon Family Groups well. A.A.’s policy of “cooperation but not affiliation” was established as long ago as the early 1950s, and both Al-Anon and A.A. recognized at that time the importance of maintaining separate Fellowships.

However, from time to time, questions come to both A.A. and Al-Anon General Service Offices indicating confusion as to how A.A. and Al-Anon may best cooperate in the groups, intergroups or central offices, and area and regional conventions and get-togethers.

A.A. and Al-Anon have shared on these questions, and here are some common questions and sharing from A.A. and Al-Anon about them:

Question: Should a group be affiliated with both A.A. and Al-Anon?

Answer: As the primary purpose of the A.A. group is to help the sick alcoholic to recover and Al-Anon Family Groups offer strength and hope for friends and families of problem drinkers, it is suggested they not be combined, but remain separate groups. This enables both Fellowships to function within their Twelve Traditions and to carry their messages more effectively.

Question: Should “family groups” be listed in A.A. directories?

Answer: “After discussion, the Conference reaffirmed A.A. group policy that only those with a desire to stop drinking may be members of A.A. groups; only A.A. members are eligible to be officers of A.A. groups; nonalcoholics are welcome at open meetings of A.A. It is suggested that the word ‘family’ not be used in the name of an A.A. group; if A.A.s and their nonalcoholic mates wish to meet together on a regular basis, it is suggested they consider these gatherings ‘meetings’ and not A.A. groups. Listing in A.A. directories: It was the sense of the meeting that the family groups should not be listed under the family group name in the directories.”

Question: Should A.A. and Al-Anon have combined central (or intergroup) services and offices?

Answer: Experience and the Twelve Traditions of A.A. and Al-Anon suggest that each Fellowship will function more effectively if each retains separate committees, staffs, and facilities for handling telephone calls, as well as separate telephone answering services, intergroup activities, bulletins, meeting lists, and Twelfth Step services of all types. Also, that the members involved in each service committee or office be A.A. members, if an A.A. facility, and Al-Anon, if an Al-Anon facility.

Question: How may A.A. and Al-Anon cooperate in area and regional conventions and get-togethers?

Answer: In accordance with the Twelve Traditions, a convention would be either A.A. or Al-Anon — not both. However, most A.A. convention committees invite Al-Anon to participate by planning its own program, and the committee arranges for facilities for the Al-Anon meetings.

Question: When Al-Anon participates in an A.A. convention, what is the financial relationship between the two Fellowships?

Answer: The relationship and the financial arrangements usually follow one of two patterns:

When an A.A. convention committee invites Al-Anon to participate with its own program, A.A. may pay all expenses (for meeting rooms, coffee, etc.) and keep all income from registrations, etc., in a single fund used to pay all convention bills, after which any excess income reverts back to A.A.

Alternatively, Al-Anon may have a separate registration and pay its own direct expenses, plus a proportionate share of common expenses of the convention. Al-Anon, in this case, receives its own share of the registration income and also shares in any losses that may be incurred.

Question: Should an A.A. convention committee make a contribution to Al-Anon from the financial profits of the convention?

Answer: In accordance with the self-support Traditions of both Fellowships and to abide by the concept of “cooperation but not affiliation,” it is suggested that A.A. should not make gifts or contributions to Al-Anon. By the same token, A.A. should not accept contributions from Al-Anon.

If separate registrations have been kept for both A.A. and Al-Anon members, however, income may be easily assigned.

Question: How may I get in touch with Al-Anon?

Answer: Do an Internet search or look for a local Al-Anon intergroup office or write: Al-Anon/Alateen Family Group, Inc., 1600 Corporate Landing Parkway, Virginia Beach, VA 23454-5617. Tel: (757) 563-1600; www.al-anon.alateen.org.

A.A.'s Debt of Gratitude to Al-Anon

The following resolution of gratitude to the Fellowship of the Al-Anon Family Groups was unanimously approved by the 1969 General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The delegates of this, the 19th General Service Conference of

Alcoholics Anonymous, meeting in official session in New York City, this 25th day of April, 1969, do hereby declare:

WHEREAS, it is the desire of this Conference to confirm the relationship between Alcoholics Anonymous and the Al-Anon Family Groups, and

WHEREAS, it is the further desire of this Conference to acknowledge A.A.'s debt of gratitude to the Al-Anon Family Groups, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that Alcoholics Anonymous recognizes the special relationship which it enjoys with the Al-Anon Family Groups, a separate but similar fellowship. And be it further resolved that Alcoholics Anonymous wishes to recognize, and hereby does recognize, the great contribution which the Al-Anon Family Groups have made and are making in assisting the families of alcoholics everywhere.

www.aa.org

A.A.® Guidelines

Public Information

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

A.A. Guidelines are compiled from the shared experience of A.A. members in the various areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada). In keeping with our Tradition of Autonomy, except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an *informed* group conscience.

PURPOSE

Like all of A.A., the primary purpose of members involved with public information service is to carry the A.A. message to the alcoholic who still suffers. Working together, members of local Public Information committees convey A.A. information to the general public, including the media.

HISTORY

The 1939 publication of our Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, was the first A.A. information available for the public. By 1941, several articles on A.A. in national publications helped to encourage understanding and acceptance of A.A. Also significant were good relations with professionals, such as Dr. W. D. Silkworth, Rev. Sam Shoemaker and Dr. Harry Tiebout.

In 1956, the Public Information Committee of the General Service Board was formed, with a corresponding Conference P.I. Committee established in 1961. The General Service Conference established this policy for A.A. Public Information:

In all public relationships, A.A.'s sole objective is to help the still-suffering alcoholic. Always mindful of the importance of personal anonymity, we believe this can be done by making known to the still-suffering alcoholics, and to those who may be interested in their problem, our own experience as individuals and as a fellowship in learning to live without alcohol.

We believe that our experience should be made available freely to all who express sincere interest. We believe further that all efforts in this field should always reflect our gratitude for the gift of sobriety and our awareness that many outside of A.A. are equally concerned with the serious problem of alcoholism.

By 1973, the General Service Conference confirmed that "We must recognize that our competence to speak about alcoholism is limited in subject matter to *Alcoholics Anonymous* and its recovery program."

COOPERATION WITH THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY

Responding to an expressed need, the Conference recommended formation of a separate Conference Committee in 1971. Now known as the Cooperation with the Professional Community Committee (C.P.C.), its purpose is to better distribute A.A. information to those in contact with alcoholics through their professions. In some locales, C.P.C. and P.I. committees are separate; elsewhere they function as one committee covering two services.

It is clearly understood that both of these committees work within our primary purpose and are not in competition.

LOCAL P.I. COMMITTEES

Whether sponsored by an area assembly, district, or A.A. central office (intergroup), P.I. committees are responsible to the A.A. entity they serve.

Getting Started: P.I. chair listings can be updated by the area registrar or you can send your contact information directly to G.S.O. Once new chairs are listed, the General Service Office (G.S.O.) sends them a welcome letter along with basic P.I. information and places them on the Box 4-5-9 mailing list. A P.I. Workbook is sent to all new P.I. chairpersons. Others are asked to purchase them.

To get shared A.A. experience regarding P.I. service, contact with others in your area/region is helpful. There is also a staff person at G.S.O. who handles P.I. activities and maintains contact with local committees.

Committee Members: The first qualification for doing P.I., or any other service work, is sound sobriety. All committee members need to be thoroughly familiar with the A.A. program and able to provide consistent and accurate information about the Fellowship. Experience in public relations is not essential.

An understanding of the Twelve Traditions, including a firm grasp of the Anonymity Traditions, is most important. This is often enhanced through committees studying basic P.I. material together. Many local P.I. committees find it beneficial to review the P.I. Workbook at their initial meeting, familiarizing themselves with it before setting goals.

From one area P.I. committee: "After the assembly acted to establish a P.I. committee, a few interested members met together and realized that we needed participation from the districts and background from G.S.O. Individually, we purchased basic P.I. pamphlets and the P.I. Workbook through our local intergroup or G.S.O. The committee decided to meet monthly to read and discuss the pamphlets 'Speaking at Non-A.A. Meetings' and 'Understanding Anonymity,' the service piece 'Information on Alcoholics Anonymous' and the P.I. Workbook."

"Our study meetings gained in enthusiasm as we read together from one basic P.I. pamphlet at a time. New members joined, and before long we each began to enjoy taking part in 'practice talks' during our monthly meetings."

"A 'practice talk' session was led by a committee person who had prepared a presentation, asking us to 'pretend' to be a certain audience (high school students, church or business group, etc.). After the talk, the 'audience' would ask questions suitable to the supposed group. We concluded by offering loving suggestions for improvement or clarification."

"After six months, we informed the local community of our availability. The next year, we were able to visit 20 schools, sharing A.A. information with more than 7,300 people."

In locations with sparse populations and small number of A.A.s involved in P.I. service, the need to regularly share experience and information is just as vital, and may be conducted by phone or mail. P.I. committee meetings are less frequent, but the purpose, need for guidance and link to an A.A. service entity remains the same.

Box 4-5-9: P.I. committees can benefit by the shared P.I. experience through articles in G.S.O.'s bimonthly newsletter. Collected A.A. service experience in carrying the message is valuable to the Fellowship, and G.S.O. welcomes the opportunity to receive sharing on local activities and projects from local P.I. committees so that it might be shared with others.

Financing: Most often the cost of doing P.I. service work is met from group contributions to whatever body forms the committee — general service area, district, central office/intergroup or, in smaller communities, one or more A.A. groups.

Usually, funds for the committee's work will be included in the budget of the A.A. entity served, and P.I. expenses are regularly reported. Occasionally, there is consideration of a special allocation for P.I. projects, such as distributing Big Books to local libraries.

BASIC COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS

What follows are the essential services, which may be altered or amplified by the group conscience of the P.I. committee or the A.A. entity supporting the P.I. work.

P.I. Visits: Some examples of visits might include schools, local businesses, church and civic groups. Where no C.P.C. committee exists, P.I. committees might also be in contact with professionals such as the clergy, health care providers, lawyers and teachers. In advance of initial contacts, P.I. committees often distribute a simple letter describing their availability and how interested persons can make contact for more information. They might also plan a visit by two or more committee members.

A P.I. visit might include distribution of A.A. literature, a brief talk and/or showing an A.A. video. It is essential that participating A.A.s agree on the basic outline for the visit, and are familiar with the details in "Speaking at Non-A.A. Meetings" and "Understanding Anonymity."

A few points to remember:

- Open by describing the need for personal anonymity at the public level; give your first name and A.A. membership.
- Avoid drunkalogs, keep your A.A. story general and brief. Use humor with good taste; what's funny to A.A.s may not be laughable to nonmembers.
- Confine your comments to A.A. information; remember that we're not experts when speaking as A.A. members. We don't try to speak for A.A. as a whole.
- As nonprofessionals, we do not give any information concerning the general subject of alcoholism, including on treatment, medication, prevention, advocacy and legislation.
- If appropriate, offer A.A. literature, such as "A.A. at a Glance," "A Brief Guide to Alcoholics Anonymous" or the A.A. Membership Survey pamphlet. Include information on local open A.A. meetings.
- Be on time. Dress simply and neatly. First impressions are important.

Public Meetings and Luncheons: Some P.I. committees host informational meetings that are open to the public. Careful advance planning is important to assure a successful outcome.

The gratitude luncheon is another way of thanking non-A.A.s who have given a P.I. committee an opportunity to carry the message. Committees have also invited public representatives to a special luncheon as a means of introducing them to Alcoholics Anonymous. Brief talks may be given, but the atmosphere is kept informal. For both these and the gratitude luncheons, it has been suggested, the seating arrangement should alternate hosts and guests, to give the latter a chance to meet some live examples of recovery in A.A.

Staffing an A.A. Booth: Many P.I. committees are active in staffing "A.A. booths" at health fairs in the communities they serve. The invitation to participate may come directly to the local P.I. committee or through the G.S.O. staff person on the P.I. desk. The local P.I. committee ascertains if taking part serves A.A.'s primary purpose. The invitation is acknowledged with appreciation whether or not the invitation can be accepted.

Many times a simple table is provided by the organization hosting the function, and two or more committee members staff the booth. P.I. committees rotate this responsibility to assure that all have an opportunity to participate.

A.A. literature specifically for the public is set out on the table and offered to interested passersby, along with "P.I. mailing labels" from G.S.O. for those wishing more information. Soon after the event, completed mailing labels are sent to G.S.O., which sends information packets to each.

G.S.O. can help by sharing experience and by furnishing basic literature to the committee undertaking this service ("A.A. at a Glance," "A Message to Teenagers," the most recent A.A. Membership Survey pamphlet or display, "A Brief Guide to Alcoholics Anonymous," etc.). It is vital that requests for special-event literature be received by G.S.O. in ample time to allow for packing and shipping — usually three weeks notice is sufficient.

COOPERATING WITH THE MEDIA

A.A. has enjoyed excellent relations with print, radio and television journalists.

Anonymity: By Conference Advisory Action, G.S.O. annually sends several thousand Anonymity letters requesting that those working in print, radio and TV journalism observe our Tradition of personal anonymity at the public level for all A.A. members. Some P.I. committees distribute copies of this Anonymity letter locally, while others use the text on their letterhead for a mailing to local media outlets.

Information on Local Events: Upon request, some P.I. committees assist by distributing information about upcoming A.A. conventions or Regional Forums to community and local newspapers.

For Small Communities and Foreign Language Papers or Publications: P.I. committees may request that A.A. information be included in the public service page or community bulletin board. The committee offers a simple description of whom A.A. serves and how to obtain more information locally.

Public Service Announcements (P.S.A.s): Whether for radio or television, A.A. Conference-approved P.S.A.s are widely accepted as a way to provide information on A.A.

Historically, local radio and television stations have offered free airtime for public service announcements from nonprofit organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous. Although stations are no longer mandated to donate airtime to P.S.A.s, local broadcasters are generally quite willing to air them.

In most locations, you can reach out to the radio station's public service director who often handles P.S.A.s. Many times, P.I. committees find that a personal visit to deliver the P.S.A. often results in an opportunity to share A.A. information, emphasizing the principles of anonymity and nonaffiliation. It is always helpful to request that the station lead into an A.A. radio or TV P.S.A. with a statement such as "Here is a public service announcement from Alcoholics Anonymous."

If you would like more information about working with radio or television stations, please write or call G.S.O. and ask for the service piece "Suggestions for Working with Your Local Radio and Television Stations to Help Carry the Message."

A.A. Videos: Conference-approved videos are listed in the literature catalog and serve as an excellent way of telling the A.A. story visually. Occasionally, a TV station is willing to air information on A.A. in more detail than can be included on P.S.A.s. "Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous" is suitable for this purpose, as are the "Young People's Videos." Keep in mind that no A.A. video or P.S.A. can be altered without the permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

Requests for A.A. Presence on Radio or TV: Such requests are carefully considered to assure that: a.) Anonymity of members will be protected; b.) A.A. cooperation will adhere to our primary purpose and Traditions.

Two suggestions seem to be essential for a good outcome: 1) Discuss the request with other A.A.s involved in service, seeking input from a wider group conscience beyond the P.I. committee; and 2) If the decision is to proceed with A.A. participation, use members with good experience in discussing our program with the public.

The 1969 General Service Conference considered this matter and approved this resolution:

"We will endeavor to avoid participation on radio and TV programs, unless:

- a. We are given adequate time for preparation;
- b. Our presence will serve an A.A. objective;
- c. The primary discussion is appropriate for A.A. — not concerned with crime, sex, controversy or any other sensationalism;
- d. We are satisfied that our anonymity is guaranteed."

LITERATURE AND ONLINE RESOURCES

The Conference-approved Literature and Other A.A. Material catalog has information on P.I. (and C.P.C.) specific items, including the P.I. Workbook and pamphlets mentioned in these Guidelines.

The aa.org website provides resources for local committees on the "Public Information Committees" page. Committees may also wish to refer media professionals to the online Press/Media page on aa.org.

Additionally, G.S.O. has P.I. Discount Packages for sale to help P.I. committees with quantity purchases of basic A.A. information for the public.

Displays of A.A. literature are often placed in public areas in cooper-

ation with the responsible officials. Such displays might be placed in libraries, schools, bookmobiles, church literature racks and hospital reading rooms or carts. An example of how this works is where a P.I. committee cooperated with the local library system to determine a suitable location in each branch, along with a system for replenishment. The result was a small, attractive A.A. literature display with information on how to obtain local A.A. meeting information.

Some literature for P.I. committees is listed below, and Discount Package Information is contained in the P.I. Kit. For information about Discount Packages, please contact G.S.O., Grand Central Station, P.O. Box 459, New York, N.Y. 10163, or call (212) 870-3400.

BASIC P.I. LITERATURE (Available in print and online)

For Committees:

Public Information Workbook

A.A. Guidelines (on) Public Information

A.A. Guidelines (on) Internet

"Speaking at Non-A.A. Meetings"

"Understanding Anonymity"

"A Member's-Eye View of Alcoholics Anonymous"

"A Brief Guide to Alcoholics Anonymous"

A.A. Fact File

A.A. Fact Sheet

Anonymity Statement for Public Meetings

Anonymity Wallet Cards

Box 4-5-9

Anonymity Online (service material)

Frequently Asked Questions about A.A. Web Sites (service material)

For the Public:

"A.A. at a Glance"

Information on Alcoholics Anonymous

"A Message to Teenagers"

"Alcoholics Anonymous Membership Survey"

"Problems Other than Alcohol"

A.A. Preamble placard

A.A. Membership Survey display (easel back)

"A.A. in Your Community"

"Members of the Clergy Ask About Alcoholics Anonymous"

"If You Are a Professional, A.A. Wants to Work with You"

"Is There a Problem Drinker in the Workplace?"

"Is There an Alcoholic in Your Life?"

CARDS AND SIGNS

These are often used to offer the telephone number of the nearest central office, groups, or A.A. contact (depending upon the size of the community), or to give the times and places of nearby meetings. Cards and signs have been placed in telephone offices, police stations, sheriffs' offices, hospitals, county infirmaries, hotels, and taxi stations. Signs may be in the form of car cards (in buses or subway trains) or of road signs or billboards (those that welcome the traveler to "our town" by listing local lodges and civic clubs).

TELEPHONE DIRECTORIES & WEBSITES

Sometimes, it is the local P.I. committee that is responsible for the A.A. listing in the phone book (including the Yellow Pages). Many

local A.A. entities have created their own A.A. websites to offer information on local meetings and events. Often the P.I. committee is responsible for the maintenance of these websites.

P.I. COMMITTEE SHARING

As part of P.I. shared experience, the following is a list of goals from a district P.I. committee:

1. Be sure every public library has at least one Conference-approved book, e.g. the *Big Book*, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* or *Living Sober*.
2. Let the Fellowship know how to reach out to the hearing impaired or blind.
3. Place a literature rack in every high school, college, police station, library and hospital in the district and keep the rack stacked with appropriate literature and meeting schedules.
4. Send a letter to high schools, offering A.A. literature and/or a presentation on A.A. — what we do and what we do not do.
5. Send a letter to convalescent homes, rest homes and senior centers in the district offering A.A. literature and/or a presentation on A.A.
6. List open A.A. meetings in the newspapers in the district.
7. Place a small (paid if necessary) announcement in every district newspaper around the holidays.
8. Work with the newspapers — generating interest in our Fellowship.
9. Respond to speaking requests at non-A.A. meetings in the district.
10. Place Public Service Announcements with radio and television stations.
11. Put meeting schedules behind the front desks at every hotel, motel and bed and breakfast.
12. Participate in district and state A.A. seminars and conventions.
13. Fight apathy within the Fellowship, find a co-chair and interested people in order to achieve all the above, and most importantly, keep your sanity and stay away from the first drink.

INFORMING THE FELLOWSHIP

Though the “public” in “public information” refers to non-A.A.s, many local P.I. committees consider that helping to keep the Fellowship itself informed is also among their responsibilities.

Building wider understanding of the Twelve Traditions among A.A.s, especially as they pertain to online social networking sites,

is a common P.I. activity; special meetings are often held for this purpose. Committees everywhere have been successful in explaining the P.I. applications of Tradition Eleven. The A.A. Guideline on the Internet and the service piece “Anonymity Online” are helpful resources.

Many P.I. committees provide local members with reports on all P.I. activities in the area. This is an excellent way to enlist the cooperation of local groups in planned projects. Information is disseminated through:

- A regular P.I. newsletter or a P.I. section in a local A.A. bulletin, including list of all completed P.I. projects in a given year. For instance, the types of outside groups that requested P.I. speakers may be shown.
- Visiting local groups to give brief talks about Public Information service.
- Setting up P.I. workshops at assemblies, conventions, conferences, and other A.A. get-togethers.
- Inviting members of local A.A. groups to attend a special meeting on P.I.
- Informing local groups when a TV or radio program produced with the cooperation of the P.I. committee is about to be aired.

G.S.O.’s A.A. WEBSITE

G.S.O.’s A.A. website, www.aa.org, is available in English, French and Spanish. In addition to available online resources already described, here are more items on the website that may be helpful to local P.I. efforts:

- A.A. Conference-approved pamphlets “Is A.A. for You?,” “A Newcomer Asks...,” “A Message to Teenagers...”
- Contact information for Central Offices/Intergroups/Answering Services in the U.S. and Canada
- Contact information for international general service offices
- Anonymity letter to media
- About A.A., newsletter for professionals
- Resource page for professionals

G.S.O.’s A.A. website has been successful as a P.I. tool. We have received positive comments from media professionals, librarians and students who are interested in Alcoholics Anonymous. We invite you to visit this website and provide information about it in your P.I. presentations.

A.A.® Guidelines

Literature Committees

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

A.A. Guidelines are compiled from the shared experience of A.A. members in various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada). In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy, except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an *informed* group conscience.

LET LITERATURE CARRY THE MESSAGE, TOO

Today, as in the early days of Alcoholics Anonymous, the A.A. message of recovery from alcoholism is carried by one alcoholic talking to another. However, since the publication of the first edition of the Big Book in 1939, literature has played an important role in spreading the A.A. message and imparting information about the A.A. Twelve Step program of recovery.

A.A. co-founder Bill W., who often called the influence of A.A. literature "incalculable," wrote in the May 1964 issue of the Grapevine, "Suppose, for instance, that during the last twenty-five years A.A. had never published any standard literature...no books, no pamphlets. We need little imagination to see that by now our message would be hopelessly garbled. Our relations with medicine and religion would have become a shambles. To alcoholics generally we would today be a joke and the public would have thought us a riddle. Without its literature, A.A. would certainly have bogged down in a welter of controversy and disunity." (*The Language of the Heart*, p. 348) Bill's words ring just as true today.

The newcomer, walking into an A.A. group for the first time, may be given a meeting list, basic recovery pamphlets and, depending on the individual group conscience, perhaps a copy of Living Sober or the Big Book.

In 1992, the Conference Literature Committee suggested that the trustees' Literature Committee develop literature committee guidelines comprised of shared experience from the Fellowship.

These guidelines provide a summary of shared experience of A.A.s in the groups, central and intergroup offices, general service areas and districts who have formed literature committees and shared how they "Let Literature Carry the Message, Too."

BASIC COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS

- Inform groups, district or area assembly members, through displays and other suitable methods, of all available Conference-approved literature, audiovisual material and other special items.
- Become familiar with the information on G.S.O.'s A.A. website (www.aa.org).
- Provide literature for groups, area, and district functions.
- Consider suggestions regarding proposed additions to and changes in Conference-approved literature and audiovisual material.
- Encourage A.A. members to read and purchase A.A. literature.

HOW TO GET STARTED

- Contact G.S.O. for a copy of the current Literature Catalog, which includes information on how to order A.A.W.S. and Grapevine publications.

- Become familiar with literature and audiovisual material.
- Ask G.S.O. for a complimentary literature package to create a display.
- Discuss literature needs of the intergroup/central office, groups, area and districts.
- Form a literature committee and make a traveling literature display.
- Prepare a budget.
- Plan ahead where you want to exhibit A.A. literature.

AREA LITERATURE CHAIRS

Experience indicates that a thorough knowledge of A.A. literature is a good way to assure that our primary purpose remains the focus for successful A.A. groups and members. You can be a part of the solution by emphasizing our books, pamphlets, audiovisual and service material.

Some areas hold workshops to help local groups and district chairpersons learn about where A.A. literature comes from and the Conference process.

DISTRICT LITERATURE CHAIRS

- Maintain a stock of suggested literature to give new G.S.R.s.
- Keep a stock of catalogs for A.A. literature.
- Keep an ample supply of current General Service Conference-approved pamphlets, books and audiovisual material, as well as other A.A. material.
- Set up this material for viewing and sale at functions, including: workshops, conferences, conventions, roundups and meetings.
- Order literature for district activities as needed.
- Become familiar with the general contents of all literature, in order to provide information to inquirers.
- Be represented at and participate in literature committee functions, and, from time to time, communicate with the General Service Office.

GROUP LITERATURE REPRESENTATIVES

The group's literature representative makes certain that A.A. literature, purchased from the local intergroup (central office) or ordered from the General Service Office, are on hand for meetings and properly displayed.

Sharing for a group literature representative can be found in "Does Your Group Have a Literature Chair?" Box 4-5-9, Vol. 59, No. 3/Fall 2013, which is available on www.aa.org.

Many A.A. groups purchase bulk subscriptions to Box 4-5-9 (in units of 10, four times a year, \$6.00) for distribution to their members, thus providing them regular communication with A.A. in the U.S., Canada and countries throughout the world. Digital subscriptions to Box 4-5-9

are also available on G.S.O.'s website, www.aa.org. Some groups also have bulk subscriptions to the A.A. Grapevine. Digital magazine subscriptions and other A.A. Grapevine resources may be accessed at www.aagrapevine.org.

REFERENCES FOR LITERATURE COMMITTEES

- An overview of the substance and content of our literature is found in The A.A. Service Manual.
- A "job description" for a literature chairperson and/or representative is found in "The A.A. Group" pamphlet.
- Conference-approved Literature and Other A.A. Material (catalog) with corresponding order form.
- Service Material Available from G.S.O. This service piece is an excellent source of information.
- What is Service Material? Service material, available to A.A. members upon request, differs from Conference-approved literature in that it has not come about through Conference Advisory Action. It is produced when there is a need for readily available information on a specific subject. Service Material reflects A.A. group experience as well as specific and timely information that is subject to change.
- Box 4-5-9 (order form). A.A.'s quarterly newsletter carries A.A. announcements and news from the U.S. and Canada, as well as A.A. worldwide. Encourage the G.S.R.s to suggest that their groups subscribe to Box 4-5-9.
- The Literature Chairperson Information form (available from G.S.O.) may be filled out and sent to G.S.O.'s Literature Coordinator. Please make a copy available to your area literature chairperson. G.S.O. sends literature activity reports and updates to literature chairs/contacts, two to three times a year.

SHARING FROM LITERATURE COMMITTEES

We formed guidelines for literature committee elections, meetings, subcommittees and district liaison persons, budget, officers and their duties, and members' responsibilities.

Our committee displays A.A. literature and audiovisual material at every possible area and district function and selling literature at those functions helps to carry the A.A. message and fulfill our primary purpose.

We try to stock at least two of each book and five of each pamphlet. The reasoning behind multiple copies of books and pamphlets is that someone wants an item desperately, we will sell or give it to them depending upon the need.

We have three or four tables of literature for sale and display. This helps to get members interested in the literature. Tables are always neat, with literature catalogs in plain sight and easy reach. We have a traveling display board with all pamphlets, book covers, Guidelines, A.A. Fact File, Box 4-5-9, local intergroup's newsletter and business cards from our central office, with address and phone number.

We always have a supply of meeting lists and, since we have a large Spanish community, we keep a supply of Spanish literature.

One area committee reviewed all A.A. literature and submitted a report, summarized here:

In carrying out this project, we have completed an inventory, not unlike the Fourth Step, of our literature. The result has not been an

increased negative attitude towards our literature, but rather an awakening to our wealth of literature and the many possibilities for its use. Along with this awakening has come a spirit of cooperation in striving to make our literature the most effective possible.

Another area committee has formed guidelines for their literature committee elections, meetings, subcommittees and district liaison persons, budget, officers and their duties, and members' responsibilities.

Both committees concluded displaying A.A. literature and audiovisual materials at every possible area and district function and selling literature at those functions helps to carry the A.A. message and fulfill our primary purpose.

A district literature chairperson reports:

We have an inventory of all pamphlets and books and also most of the other items, such as tapes, directories, etc. We sell these items to the groups at the prices published by G.S.O. We do not give the groups the 20% discount that we get for pamphlets because that amount helps offset the cost of pamphlets we give away through our H&I, Public Information and Cooperation With the Professional Community committees.

We have a monthly literature meeting with the groups in our district at which we talk about any new items that have been released by G.S.O. We also try to pick one literature item to discuss to help everyone learn about how important the literature is when it comes to carrying the message.

I also have made myself available to take a literature display to group business meetings, as well as group meetings for literature studies. This seems to be a very good way to get the literature message to several people at the same time.

My own opinion is that the literature is the best way to carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic. There can be no confusion with words when you see them in black and white. To this end I think that anything you can do to make people aware of literature is very acceptable.

An area literature chair shares:

My experience is limited to one year on the area committee and my observation of it for the prior year. We only deal with Conference-approved items listed in the catalog. Grapevine is a separate committee. Our purpose at this time is to display the materials so that G.S.R.s and others see what is available to their groups.

We display all of the hardback and softback books, plus pamphlets and an assortment of the other lower-cost service items. We set up our display at all area assembly and district committee meetings, our mini conference, the state conference when hosted and any other time we are asked, i.e., district workshops, area workshops and P.I. type events.

We are not displaying any other Twelve Step literature or anything not in the catalog or available from G.S.O. as a service item. We try to stock at least two of each book and five of each pamphlet. We carry one of all other items that we can justify costwise.

We do not stock many copies of the Final Conference Report or The A.A. Service Manual, but they are for sale. We also tend to have more than five of the service pamphlets, such as "The A.A. Group," "Your G.S.R.," "The Twelve Traditions Illustrated." The reasoning behind multiple copies of books and pamphlets is as follows: If some-

one wants an item desperately, we will sell or give it to them depending upon the need. This is kind of a gray area and we could probably use some sort of policy. We try to present one item per month to the assembly/district meeting. Sort of a "If you never looked inside this, here's what's in it" deal.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO MAKE AN ATTRACTIVE DISPLAY

- Order a complimentary Literature Display package from G.S.O. and buy enough pamphlet racks to display all the pamphlets.
- Order a complete set of A.A. books for display.
- You might decide to purchase three-fold 3'x4' display panels from a local office supply store and make some attractive displays of service pieces, foreign pamphlets, newsletters, etc.
- Display some of the lesser known items, such as Braille publications, audiovisual material, *Conference Reports*, etc.
- Display the large poster-size items, such as anonymity declaration, unity statement, Bill and Bob's last messages, etc.
- Provide extra copies of literature order forms for individuals/groups.
- Make a banner of the book covers of foreign editions of the *Big Book* and hang it above the literature display.
- Have a computer with the *Big Book* on CD, with instructions on how to word search.
- Have equipment available to view films, such as "Bill's Own Story," and to listen to A.A. literature in nonprint format.

One committee had a literature display and was setting it up at district and intergroup functions, but they were frustrated at the way it would just sit there with members walking right by it. So they sought suggestions from other literature committees for ways to attract members' attention to the display. Four ways that they found worked very well were:

Making a banner of color Xeroxes of the book covers of the foreign editions of the Big Book and hanging it above the literature display.

Having a computer with the Big Book on disc loaded up, with some simple instructions next to it on how to word search.

Having a DVD and a TV with one of the videos, such as "Bill's Own Story" which has been known to draw a crowd at our local events.

Having a tape recorder and earphones with A.A. cassettes or CDs.

Another area reports:

Our area assemblies always have three or four tables of literature for sale and display, consisting of all books and pamphlets. The area literature chair usually asks the D.C.M. of the host district to get some volunteers from local groups to help staff the tables. This helps to get members interested in the literature. One lady, who had sat in only a couple of times before she moved from the area, helped get a literature committee started in another area.

All recovery material is placed together and in plain sight, including all formats of the Big Book, Braille and audio tapes, and extra Spanish material in areas where there is a large Spanish community. All P.I. and C.P.C. pamphlets and video and audio cassettes are kept together and arranged neatly. Other service pamphlets, Guidelines, and the Fact File are in another section with all Workbooks. Tables are always neat, with literature catalogs in plain sight and easy reach. Any literature chairperson should be informed

of what is in stock and have a good idea of what is in each item, so, if asked a question, they would know where to look for the answer:

The area bought one Big Book in every language for a display (50th year) which was to be turned over to the archives at a later date, but most were sold at the assemblies.

Our local district has a traveling display board with all pamphlets, book covers, Guidelines, A.A. Fact File, Box 4-5-9, local intergroup's newsletter and business cards from our central office, with address and phone number.

One district chair reports:

I took a suitcase of literature out to different groups and would ask the chairperson of the group for a few minutes for a short pitch of what they had available in Conference-approved literature. This was received well, especially at groups in small towns that were some distance from our central office. One district in our area has a literature chair that writes an article in their district newsletter. He tells of some interesting parts of the book that he is reading at present.

A central office shares:

We have a good relationship with our general service committees, lending literature for display at district functions. The central office has a display rack with all pamphlets. These are placed near meeting schedules so a person looking for the schedules might see a pamphlet that would interest him or her. All books are at the catalog price. We have a fairly large Spanish community so we keep a supply of Spanish literature. At all social events, we have a literature drawing and ask all groups to donate some literature for the event. This keeps sales up at the central office and gets the message out. Many times when someone wins a book they ask if a newcomer needs it, or it may go to one of our committees.

SOME GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE LITERATURE COMMITTEE ADVISORY ACTIONS

It was recommended that:

- 1968: Conference-approved literature and G.S.O. *Guidelines* be displayed and distributed at assembly meetings.
- 1969: One group member be chosen to be solely responsible for the distribution of Conference-approved literature and its display.
- 1971: The delegates assume responsibility for informing A.A.s of all available Conference-approved literature, and that the updated spring and fall literature order blanks which are mailed with *Box 4-5-9* be reviewed at district and assembly meetings.
- 1972: It be suggested that when a local A.A. facility (central office, intergroup, group, etc.) sells non-Conference-approved literature, it be clearly designated as such.
- 1977: It was suggested that A.A. groups be discouraged from selling literature not distributed by the General Service Office and the Grapevine.
- 1986: In an effort to strengthen our network of literature representatives to ensure that A.A. literature is available at meetings, as well as catalog order forms for books and cassettes that individuals are likely to want, it is suggested that groups appoint literature coordinators.

The spirit of the 1977 Conference action regarding group litera-

ture displays be reaffirmed, and recommended the suggestion that A.A. groups be encouraged to display or sell only literature published and distributed by the General Service Office, the A.A. Grapevine and other A.A. entities.

EXTENDING THE HAND OF A.A. THROUGH TRANSLATIONS

Translations of A.A. material come about in two different ways:

The A.A.W.S. Board has pamphlets and/or the Big Book and/or The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions translated for countries where A.A. is in its earliest beginnings.

OR

A.A.W.S. grants licenses to A.A. offices or entities in foreign countries so that they may translate, print and distribute A.A. literature in a language or languages appropriate for that country.

At the present time there are over 62 General Service Offices operating worldwide in addition to our U.S./Canada General Service Office. A.A. literature has been translated into more than 90 languages, and the Big Book has been translated into more than 69 languages. This is an amazing achievement and leap forward from A.A.'s beginning with two members in Akron, Ohio on June 10, 1935.

RELATIONSHIP TO G.S.O.

G.S.O. maintains a mailing list of literature chairpersons and representatives (U.S. and Canada). All are sent Box 4-5-9. Each newly elected literature chairperson receives a welcoming letter from the Literature Coordinator at G.S.O. Some enclosures include: "The A.A. Group" pamphlet; literature catalog; and service piece on Conference-approved literature.

Please keep in touch so your activities and experience can be added to our files.

TO REACH US...

G.S.O.'s Publishing Department has a direct phone number for customers placing charge orders, (212) 870-3312. To research orders, or for problems with your order call: 1 212-870-3023.

If you wish to be sent a catalog: (212) 870-3400.

You may fax order form to us 24 hours daily: 1-212-870-3137; 1-800-437-3584.

Online ordering is also available: www.aa.org.

www.aa.org

A.A.® Guidelines

Internet

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

A.A. Guidelines are compiled from the shared experience of A.A. members in various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada). In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy, except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an *informed* group conscience.

A.A. TRADITIONS AND THE INTERNET

We observe all A.A.'s principles and Traditions on A.A. public media such as the Internet.

Anonymity — As anonymity is the “spiritual foundation of all our Traditions,” we observe anonymity on public websites at all times.

In 2013, the 63rd General Service Conference affirmed that “the Internet, social media, and all forms of public communications are implicit in the last phrase of the short form of Tradition Eleven, which reads: ‘...at the level of press, radio, and films.’”

As Bill W. wrote: “At this altitude [public], anonymity — 100 percent anonymity — was the only possible answer. Here, principles would have to come before personalities without exception.”

In simplest form, this means that A.A.s do not publicly identify themselves as A.A. members using their full names and/or full-face photos. For more information on anonymity online, see the section of this Guideline, “Guarding Anonymity Online.”

Attraction not promotion — As our co-founder, Bill W., wrote: “Public information takes many forms — the simple sign outside a meeting place that says ‘A.A. meeting tonight’; listing in local phone directories; distribution of A.A. literature; and radio and television shows using sophisticated media techniques. Whatever the form, it comes down to ‘one drunk carrying the message to another drunk,’ whether through personal contact or through the use of third parties and the media.”

Self-support — In keeping with our Seventh Tradition, A.A. pays its own expenses and this also applies in cyberspace. To avoid confusion and to guard against the perception of affiliation, endorsement or promotion, care should be taken in selection of the website host. Website committees have avoided any host site that requires the inclusion of mandatory advertising space or links to commercial sites.

Many “free” web hosting services require that the website include mandatory advertisements or links. Most A.A. website committees see this as actual or implied affiliation or endorsement of the products or services listed in those ads. They have found it prudent to create a website through a service that does not include mandatory advertisements or links.

Nonaffiliation, nonendorsement — Linking to other A.A. websites will often have the positive effect of significantly broadening the scope of a site. However, even when linking to another A.A. site, care must be exercised since each A.A. entity is autonomous, has its own group conscience, and may display information that another A.A. group con-

science might find objectionable. There is no way to know when this might occur.

Experience indicates that linking to non-A.A. sites is even more problematic. Not only are they much more likely to display non-A.A. and/or controversial material, but linking might imply endorsement, if not affiliation. In the final analysis, experience strongly suggests that, when considering linking to another site, proceed with caution.

G.S.O. has attempted to avoid some of these pitfalls on G.S.O.'s A.A. website, aa.org, by confining its links to known A.A. service entities and by incorporating a mandatory exit statement when someone wishes to activate the outside links on the site. (This statement also covers access to application software such as Adobe Reader, which is provided to assist visitors in reading Portable Document Format (PDF) files.)

GUARDING ANONYMITY ONLINE

Modern communication in A.A. is flowing from one alcoholic to another in ways that are high-tech, relatively open-ended and evolving quickly. Protecting anonymity is a major concern for members, who are accessing the Internet in ever-growing numbers.

As Bill W. noted, “Anonymity has two attributes essential to our individual and collective survival; the spiritual and the practical. On the spiritual level, anonymity demands the greatest discipline of which we are capable; on the practical level anonymity has brought protection for the newcomer, respect and support of the world outside, and security from those of us who would use A.A. for sick and selfish purposes.”

When we use digital media, we are responsible for our own anonymity and for protecting that of others. When we post, text, or blog, we should consider whether we are publishing at the public level. When we break our anonymity in these forums, we may inadvertently break the anonymity of others.

For more information on anonymity online see the pamphlet “[Understanding Anonymity](#)” and the October 2010 issue of AA Grapevine on Anonymity on the Internet.

GENERAL SOCIAL NETWORKING WEBSITES

Facebook and other social networking websites are public in nature. Though users create accounts and utilize usernames and passwords, once on the site, it is a public medium where A.A. members and non-A.A.s mingle.

The platforms in and of themselves do not infringe on our principles of anonymity or any other Traditions. It is the actions of the individual

that may cause harm to themselves, to others, or to A.A. as a whole. For that we are, each of us, individually responsible to our fellowship, to ourselves and to our personal higher powers. Using these platforms to provide information about anonymity online may actually strengthen the principle of anonymity at the public level.

Individual members can take clear steps to safeguard their own anonymity. For example, an individual or group might create an entirely anonymous social media account without use of their full name or face and for sharing about recovery only. Another may choose to use their name but not photographs of them self. Both the letter and the spirit of the Eleventh Tradition are clear guideposts for our fellowship in this respect.

When it comes to the Twelfth Tradition this has proven to be something that only the individual can answer because of its foundation in humility. The following questions have proven useful tools for evaluating if our actions may or may not be in conflict with the principle described in Tradition Twelve.

- Is my posting about the message or the messenger?
- Am I carrying the A.A. message in the hopes of helping someone else, or simply “shouting from the rooftops”?
- Am I taking my story and affiliating it with political causes?
- Am I being extra cautious about not identifying other members as A.A. members in photographs or statements?
- Am I avoiding the temptation to incite controversy with caustic argument or bully others who disagree with me?
- Am I providing helpful links to my local A.A. website, aa.org, or the aagrapevine.org?

As long as individuals do not identify themselves as A.A. members, there is no conflict of interest. However, someone identifying themselves as an A.A. member using their full name and/or a likeness, such as a full-face photograph, would be contrary to the spirit of the Eleventh Tradition, which states in the Long Form that, “...our [last] names and pictures as A.A. members ought not be broadcast, filmed or publicly printed.”

Experience suggests that it is in keeping with the Eleventh Tradition to not disclose A.A. membership on social networking sites as well as on any other website, blog, electronic bulletin board, etc., unless composed solely of A.A. members and password protected.

Websites and social networking offer individuals the chance to post a great deal of personal information about themselves (and others). Our experience suggests that some A.A. members do not post anything that is “A.A. jargon” on their personal profiles and in “status updates,” while others feel it is alright to do so as long as A.A. or Alcoholics Anonymous is not mentioned.

These websites often allow users to create social networking “groups” and the ability to invite others to “events” for like-minded individuals. Some A.A.s have chosen to create A.A.-related groups. Since this is an evolving medium, A.A. members are frequently “learning as they go,” as technology and applications change practically on a daily basis. Our experience has shown that the evolving nature of social networking platforms makes it difficult to provide specific guidelines for using these resources for A.A. purposes. Any A.A. group or member that is thinking about entering this public arena should closely consider

the privacy policies of such sites, in light of A.A.’s tradition of anonymity. For example, social networking sites may provide full names and pictures of group members, contrary to A.A.’s practice of avoiding such disclosures in public media. Even “closed” or “private” groups might still reveal an individual’s identity. Being well-informed *prior* to joining or starting such a group is the key to protecting your own anonymity, and that of others.

G.S.O. has received numerous complaints from concerned A.A. members regarding anonymity breaks online, inappropriate use of the A.A. name, and copyrighted materials and protected trademarks being improperly used on Facebook and other social networking websites. No online A.A. or non-A.A. entity should purport itself to be a spokesperson for A.A. or act as if they represent the General Service Office, A.A.W.S., or the General Service Board. Each A.A. entity is autonomous and encouraged to make decisions by informed group conscience decision in light of the guidance provided in our Twelve Traditions.

A.A. members sometimes contact G.S.O. for suggestions on how to remain within the Traditions on Facebook and other social networking websites. Keep in mind that G.S.O. staff members are not specifically trained in technology, but can act as a resource regarding A.A.’s Twelve Traditions and the shared experience of the Fellowship in the U.S. and Canada. How A.A.’s spiritual principles play out in the digital environment needs to be carefully discussed by each A.A. individual or entity creating an online presence.

A.A. WEBSITES — SETTING UP A LOCAL WEBSITE

Decisions in the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous are made through an informed group conscience and the decision to create a website is no different. Whether area or district, central office or intergroup, A.A. experience suggests forming a committee to discuss all aspects of the project, including all possible concerns about the Traditions. Unless password-protected and for members only, an A.A. website is a public medium, and, therefore, requires the same safeguards that we use at the level of press, radio, and film.

Early on, it is important to agree upon a method for achieving the group conscience that represents the local A.A. community, and for informing local groups, districts and central/intergroup offices in an area (if affected) about the committee’s progress. When the committee has reached a consensus about its role and responsibilities and the scope of the website, its findings are shared with the whole body (district, area, etc.) and a decision is made through an informed group conscience vote on whether to move ahead with the development of a website. As part of this process, committees may wish to bring technical questions to experts in the field. A guiding resource of shared A.A. experience regarding websites is the G.S.O. service piece “Frequently Asked Questions About A.A. Websites.”

SPIRITUAL CONSIDERATIONS

Based on A.A.’s strength and history of personal and intimate sharing, the spiritual nature of “one drunk talking to another” is an ongoing concern when discussing technology as a source of A.A. information. Even many Internet-savvy A.A. members say that they do not want the ease of new technology to detract from the one-on-one sharing that

has been so essential to our Fellowship and our recovery from alcoholism. It is helpful to remember that there is no need to let the speed of technology dictate the speed of our actions.

Based on shared experience to date, website committees not only discuss the technical aspects of developing a website but also address questions related to preserving the spiritual connection created by one alcoholic talking with another. Some committees have reported a loss of “personal touch” when relying too heavily on technology, while others report that they have found a balance that works for them. It will be up to a committee’s informed group conscience to determine what A.A. content is useful and appropriate. The good news is that today’s decisions can be reviewed, revised, abandoned or expanded. A committee can always try something for a certain length of time and then come back and determine how well it is working. This is the A.A. way!

WEBSITE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

After an informed group conscience structure is in place to decide the contents, policies and procedures involved in setting up and maintaining an A.A. website, it has been suggested that a webmaster (web manager) be appointed or elected. The webmaster is responsible to the committee or the groups served.

One area has the following experience: Their website committee is composed of six A.A.s: the web chairperson, area Public Information (P.I.) chairperson, a current district committee member (D.C.M.), a past delegate, a current general service representative (G.S.R.) and an ad hoc member. The latter three individuals are selected by the website chairperson, and their term of service is two years. In addition, a webmaster, alternate webmaster and other ad hoc members are responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of the website. (Experience indicates this can be time-consuming if the webmaster is responsible for updating local meeting information.)

Some committees choose to create their own website guidelines, including: description of the site’s purpose; details of the website’s content; procedures for adding or removing content; committee rotation schedule; defining the difference between a website committee and a website maintenance team (e.g. webmaster and alternate); guidelines for the website committee and, if applicable, guidelines for the web team outlining its composition and responsibilities.

SELECTING A DOMAIN NAME

The choice of a domain name should, as other critical elements, be determined by an informed group conscience. To preserve Alcoholics Anonymous’ trademarks and service marks, website committees are asked to avoid using the marks “A.A.,” “Alcoholics Anonymous,” and/or “The Big Book” in their domain names.

It has been our experience that many service entities have integrated lower case “aa” into their domain names along with other identifying information (e.g., www.aacentraloffice.org or www.area999aa.org). This has proved to be a positive resolution in support of A.A.’s trademarks and service marks.

USE OF COPYRIGHTED MATERIALS

Copyright restrictions protect material displayed on a website just as copyrights protect A.A.’s printed literature. Permission must be obtained from G.S.O. prior to including A.A.W.S. or A.A. Grapevine and

La Viña material. A link to the aa.org Terms of Use can be found at the bottom of every page on www.aa.org.

Just as with A.A. newsletters, websites created by A.A. areas, districts and central/intergroup offices can quote a phrase, sentence or brief paragraph excerpted from A.A. literature — such as the *Big Book* (*Alcoholics Anonymous*), *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, *The A.A. Service Manual*, and Conference-approved pamphlets — without a prior, written request. When this occurs, the proper credit line should be included to ensure that A.A. literature copyrights are protected. After a brief quotation from a book or pamphlet, the following credit line should appear:

Reprinted from (*name of publication, page number*), with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

As the *A.A. Preamble* is copyrighted by A.A. Grapevine, the following words should appear beneath the Preamble or any article reprinted from the Grapevine:

From the (*date*) Grapevine. Reprinted with permission of A.A. Grapevine, Inc.

We ask that you do not recreate items that are currently available on the G.S.O. or A.A. Grapevine websites. Instead, link to the appropriate pages of the sites: www.aa.org and www.aagrapevine.org.

POSTING SERVICE MINUTES AND REPORTS

Deciding what contents to post on public websites requires careful consideration. While it can be helpful when websites make minutes of meetings, reports and background material readily available to a broad population, it is also paramount to keep in mind that these documents may be posted in a public medium. Each document needs to be reviewed and edited to insure that the full names of A.A. members are not included.

Some committees have one version of minutes for A.A. members only, which includes full names and personal phone numbers and email addresses, and a second version of the report that omits names and personal contact information so that minutes can be placed on the committee’s public website.

In addition to local A.A. members, please remember that the following individuals are A.A. members and that their full names and photographs should not appear in publicly posted reports or on publicly posted flyers: Class B (alcoholic) General Service Board Trustees, A.A.W.S. and Grapevine Directors, G.S.O. staff members and some Grapevine and La Viña employees. If there is any doubt about placing a person’s full name in a report, it would be best to ask permission first.

Some committees may find it perfectly acceptable to post full names and personal contact information on a password-protected website meant for A.A. members only. This will be up to the informed group conscience to decide.

PERSONAL PHONE NUMBERS ON A.A. EVENT FLYERS

Until relatively recently, A.A. members usually had little concern about placing their first names, last initials and personal phone numbers on flyers announcing upcoming A.A. events, since these flyers were typically given out only in A.A. meetings, left on tables at other A.A. events or distributed to members. Today, event flyers can be easily uploaded and viewed on websites, accessible to the general public.

Due to search services on the Internet, it is now possible to utilize phone numbers to find out a person's identity, including full names and, possibly, other personal information. If A.A. members become increasingly uneasy with personal phone numbers being placed on flyers, event committees may need to look into alternate ways of providing contact information such as an event email address.

“PRIVATE” SECTIONS OF A.A. WEBSITES

G.S.O. has heard of some districts and areas that have designated certain parts of their websites as “private,” which require the use of usernames and passwords to gain entrance. In some instances, the only requirement to receive a username and password is to state to the webmaster or another trusted servant that you are an A.A. member. In other cases, access is only available to those holding specific service positions.

Website committees that are considering creating password-protected sections of their websites may wish to consider: what content is private and what is public; who will be given access to the private information, and how; and how usernames and passwords will be communicated, stored and/or maintained.

Some websites use these private sections to change or update meeting information or trusted servant contact information. When giving the ability to a service worker to change content on a website or database, committees may wish to proceed with care. Members with the ability to change content may need training on the software used, and the committee may want to designate someone to review the data for accuracy.

To date, G.S.O. has not heard of any major problems regarding non-A.A.s retrieving confidential A.A. information from these private sections. However, website committees may wish to discuss how they will safeguard confidential A.A. information, and how to avoid a breach in security.

A.A.'s shared experience thus far is that some A.A. members feel comfortable using their full names and giving personal contact information on a password-protected A.A. website. However, other members are less comfortable providing this information for communication purposes, even for a password-protected site. Committees usually exercise care in helping members learn about new modes of communication, and continue to offer members the option of receiving A.A. correspondence by mail if preferred.

G.S.O. has some experience with private, password-protected A.A. sites. First, the A.A.W.S. Directors and then the General Service Board of Trustees agreed to receive their background information via a “dashboard” — a username/password protected electronic communication tool. In 2008, the General Service Conference members also received their background information on a private dashboard for the first time. (All Conference members were also given the choice of receiving their background on CD and/or on paper.)

ANONYMITY AND EMAIL

Electronic mail is a widely used and accepted method of communication. It is now used regularly as a service tool in A.A., but as with any service, we need to ensure the Fellowship's Traditions are maintained while still receiving the most benefit from this form of communication.

When using email it is necessary to consider the anonymity of the recipients of messages. Sending messages to multiple recipients that disclose the email addresses of everyone on the addressee list is a potential break of someone else's anonymity. Therefore, it is a good idea to obtain a recipient's explicit permission before using his or her email address for A.A. correspondence, especially if it is a workplace email address. When sending A.A. mail to multiple recipients who wish to remain anonymous, use can be made of the BCC (Blind Courtesy Copy) option available on most computers.

EMAIL IN A.A. — ACCESS, ADDRESSES AND ROTATION

It is not necessary to own a personal computer or laptop to utilize email. Many A.A. members in service who do not have computers use free email services to obtain an email account and specifically designate it as their A.A. email service. A.A. members can check their email accounts at public libraries, Internet cafes, and anywhere else Internet service is available.

For A.A. service positions, generic email addresses can be passed from one trusted servant to another at rotation time. For example, the sample email address and account for pichaird10a7@area999.com could, upon rotation, be passed on, maintaining the email address identity for the position, one rotation to the next.

USING FULL NAMES IN EMAILS TO PROFESSIONALS

It is suggested that email communication with professionals is similar to a letter-mailing project with two caveats: 1) emails can easily be forwarded, and 2) the contents of emails can easily be cut-and-pasted, changed and/or uploaded to websites.

Professional “friends of A.A.” have shared that, for the purposes of Cooperation with the Professional Community (C.P.C.) or Public Information (P.I.) service, it lends credibility to the letter or email if a full name is used and if the letter or email has a professional look and feel.

The Public Information coordinator at G.S.O. responds to email and letter requests from the media with the following signature:

Sincerely,
John Doe (name not for publication or broadcast)
Coordinator of Public Information

ANONYMITY ON PERSONAL COMPUTERS

Some A.A.s think, “I have my own computer, so I have nothing to fear about the anonymity of A.A.s in my address book.” However, it is possible that a motivated individual could obtain a username and password to access another person's email account. Hopefully, such an intrusion would not occur, but it may be prudent to select a password that is as unique as possible and to keep the password private.

Even the most guarded email account could be “hacked” by a computer expert, but at this point we find that many A.A. members and committees are willing to take this risk, all the while utilizing prudence and good common sense.

We may also want to consider that email address books used for A.A. correspondence on a home computer, laptop, smartphone, tablet, digital media device, etc., may be available to friends and family if more than one person uses the device.

THE DANGERS OF SPAM

It is up to a committee's informed group conscience to determine how best to approach service projects via the Internet, especially regarding C.P.C. or P.I. projects.

It is strongly suggested that A.A. members not send bulk unsolicited email messages for A.A. service, i.e., email "mail shots." By doing so they could be bringing the A.A. name into public controversy and damaging the reputation of A.A. as a whole. It may also be illegal, so get informed on the local and federal laws pertaining to email communication and spam.

Instead, the committee could discuss the possibility of sending A.A. correspondence to a small number of recipients or sending personalized emails one at a time. Emails may be filtered into a recipient's spam account so an alternative follow-up plan should also be in place in case there is no initial response. In addition to A.A. members continuing to make personal contacts, an effective route for interacting with professionals and the public has been to provide the link to G.S.O.'s A.A. website, aa.org.

SPEAKER TALKS ONLINE

Members report that audio files of A.A. talks increasingly are being disseminated over the Internet. If a member objects to having his or her A.A. story broadcast publicly, he or she may wish to contact the site's webmaster and request its removal.

Numerous members have acted, with good outcomes, on the following suggestion for speakers at A.A. events that appears in the G.S.O. service piece [A.A. Guidelines for Conferences, Conventions and Roundups](#):

Experience shows that it is best to encourage speakers not to use full names and not to identify third parties by full names in their talks. The strength of our Anonymity Traditions is reinforced by speakers who do not use their last names and by taping companies whose labels and catalogs do not identify speakers by last names, titles, service jobs or descriptions.

In addition, some A.A. members, if being recorded for future play on a public website, may choose to leave out other details of their lives that may make themselves or their families identifiable.

In recent years, the trustees' Public Information Committee has requested that G.S.O. contact speaker taping companies and remind them of A.A.'s Tradition of Anonymity at the public level and ask for their cooperation.

ONLINE A.A. MEETINGS

Just like regular A.A. meetings, online A.A. meetings are autonomous. Due to the lack of a central geographic location, online A.A. meetings

are not a direct part of the U.S./Canada service structure. A.A. members are encouraged to participate in service where they physically reside and to participate in group conscience decisions locally. In addition, some online A.A. meetings have business meetings and collect Seventh Tradition contributions.

INTERNET STREAMING AND WEB CONFERENCING

Among A.A. members, there are various levels of experience in the use of computers, email and the Internet. It is important to remember that not all A.A. members have computers and not all who have access are comfortable using this technology. Some people are just now signing up for their first email accounts, while some are talking about things like "Internet streaming," "Teleconferencing technology," and "Web conferencing."

Since these topics are relatively new, G.S.O. is still collecting shared experience. One district has shared that they are considering how to utilize Internet streaming and/or teleconference/web technology so that general service representatives (G.S.R.s) may participate in area assemblies without traveling to the assembly site. They are considering several options: video and audio conference; audio-only conference; full-stream one-way video and audio with text chat return.

Geographically isolated A.A. members are able to participate in weekly A.A. meetings thanks to the efforts of local A.A. committees to connect them via video conference. A.A. Conventions have also utilized the Internet to live stream portions of their programs to far distant members.

Many technological options are possible and, presumably, more are being developed each day. Yet, as stated earlier, it is important not to let the speed of technological development pressure a committee into a quick solution as opposed to a well thought out A.A.-oriented decision. Of course, all decisions must include careful consideration of any situations where an A.A. member's anonymity could be compromised at the public level.

LOCAL SHARED EXPERIENCE REQUESTED

Local A.A. needs and experience will determine how A.A. communications will develop in this evolving electronic age. If you have questions, or if you would like to share your website committee's experience, please contact G.S.O. at:

General Service Office
P.O. Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163
Tel: (212) 870-3400
websiteservices@aa.org

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

A.A. Guidelines are compiled from the shared experience of A.A. members in the various areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada). In keeping with our Tradition of Autonomy, except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an *informed* group conscience.

“A.A.’s far-flung Twelfth Step activities, carrying the message to the next sufferer, are the very lifeblood of our A.A. adventure. Without this vital activity, we would soon become anemic; we would literally wither and die.

“Now where do A.A.’s services — worldwide, area, local — fit into our scheme of things? Why should we provide these functions with money? The answer is simple enough. Every single A.A. service is designed to make more and better Twelfth Step work possible, whether it be a group meeting place, a central or intergroup office to arrange hospitalization and sponsorship, or the world service Headquarters [now the General Service Office] to maintain unity and effectiveness all over the globe.

“Though not costly, these service agencies are absolutely essential to our continued expansion — to our survival as a Fellowship. Their costs are a collective obligation that rests squarely upon all of us. Our support of services actually amounts to recognition on our part that A.A. must everywhere function in full strength — and that, under our Tradition of self-support, *we are all going to foot the bill.*”

Bill W., October 1967 Grapevine

One of G.S.O.’s responsibilities is to share A.A. experiences with groups and members who request it. In these Guidelines, we are glad to provide sharing from a variety of sources, though we are aware that actual A.A. practices often vary. So, if your group has found solutions other than those cited in this Guideline, please let us know, so that we may share your experiences with others.

Often-asked questions about finances directed at G.S.O. cover such topics as group rent, bank accounts and insurance; reimbursement for service workers’ expenses; I.R.S. deductions and tax I.D. numbers, and the role of the General Service Board.

WHERE MONEY AND SPIRITUALITY MIX

Members celebrate sobriety by giving time, energy and money in support of our Twelfth Step—carrying the message—the basic service that the A.A. Fellowship offers. Members assure that group expenses are paid by putting money into the basket passed at each meeting. It is each member’s responsibility to support the services that have been requested by the A.A. Fellowship, to help facilitate A.A.’s vital Twelfth Step. Contributions are made in a spirit of sacrifice, and they honor A.A.’s code of “love and service.” Contributions also underscore the spiritual nature of our Fellowship and our mutual love and trust. We have found that these contributions are as important to each member as they are to the service centers supported.

SUPPORTING A.A.’s STRUCTURE

Question: Why do A.A. groups support A.A.’s essential services?

Answer: Because the services benefit all A.A. groups. Our Seventh Tradition states that “Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”

A.A.s want our Fellowship to endure, and to be readily available for the still-suffering alcoholic to come. An A.A. group makes this possible by taking care of its basic group expenses: rent, refreshments,

A.A. literature, etc. After meeting these basic group expenses and providing a meeting place, many groups participate by supporting the central or intergroup office in their locale, the area and district general service committees, and the General Service Office (G.S.O.).

Question: How can groups participate?

Answer: To help support A.A.’s essential services, the General Service Conference suggests that individual groups, through an informed group conscience, adopt a specific contribution plan tailored to meet the group’s financial situation. Once the basic group expenses have been taken care of (rent, refreshments, A.A. literature, local meetings lists), and a “prudent reserve” has been set aside to cover unexpected expenses, the group may decide to further carry the message by sending money to the following A.A. service entities:

- The local district, which communicates directly with the groups, providing the district group conscience for the area assemblies, and serving as a link between the area delegates and the G.S.R.s.
- The area committee, which coordinates vital A.A. activities over a broad geographic area; sends a delegate to the annual General Service Conference; holds area assemblies to deter-

mine the needs of the Fellowship; and provides information at all levels of service.

- The local intergroup or central office, which may provide phone service for the Twelfth Step calls and other inquiries; coordination of group activities; A.A. literature sales; institutions work; public information and cooperation with the professional community activities.
- A.A.'s General Service Office, which functions as a storehouse of A.A. information, communicating with members and groups in the U.S. and Canada, and sometimes around the world; publishes A.A.'s literature; and supplies information and experience to professionals and others interested in A.A.

Question: Doesn't all A.A. money go into one pot? In other words, when our group contributes to central office (intergroup), isn't our money distributed to the area, district and General Service Board (for G.S.O. operations)?

Answer: Each A.A. entity — group, district, area, central or intergroup office, and G.S.O. — provides a specific service and is autonomous. Separate contributions need to be sent to each entity. (Note: Some local A.A. entities do pass along a portion of the contributions they receive to G.S.O.)

Question: How do groups divide their excess funds, then?

Answer: Outlines for contribution plans are described in the pamphlet "Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix." Individual groups decide based on their group conscience. For suggested contribution plans see page 5 of this Guideline.

Question: After covering our group's expenses, we have very little money left. Isn't it embarrassing to send what seem to be just nickels and dimes?

Answer: The General Service Conference has emphasized that it is not concerned about the amount each group contributes, but that each group contribute something. At a service assembly, one G.S.R. said, "It is a spiritual obligation to participate by contributing."

Question: How do we know that G.S.O. has received our contribution and credited our group?

Answer: All group contributions are acknowledged by a computerized receipt, sent to the person indicated on your contribution envelope, or to the G.S.R. if a name and address is not indicated.

Quarterly contribution statements are sent to each group's G.S.R. These statements reflect year-to-date information, whether or not the group contributed.

Question: Our group would be glad to contribute to these various service entities, but we do not know where to send our check. Where do I find mailing addresses?

Answer: If there is a central office or intergroup in your community, it will be listed in the telephone directory. (If your group does not already have an intergroup representative, think about electing one.)

Your group's general service representative (G.S.R.) probably has addresses for the area and district committees. If not, call G.S.O. for information: (212) 870-3400.

Other sources: The names and addresses of your general ser-

vice delegate and area chairperson are listed in your regional A.A. Directory.

Contributions to the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous can be sent to:

General Service Office
Grand Central Station
P.O. Box 459
New York, NY 10163

Please make checks payable to the "General Service Board" and write your group number on the check. Preaddressed group contribution envelopes are available from G.S.O. (See catalog/order form.)

Question: Is it possible to make contributions online?

Answer: A.A. members can also make contributions online at G.S.O.'s A.A. website www.aa.org These online contributions may be made by credit card or "E-Check" from U.S. banks. Users first create a confidential user profile, which includes a user ID and a password.

While the Contributions Online site is protected by state-of-the-art encryption technology, G.S.O. suggests that members use the online contributions system from a personal computer that they own or completely control, as entering confidential personal and/or financial information on a public or shared computer can pose security risks. It is suggested, therefore, that members using computers in libraries, hotel business centers, Internet cafes and even workplace computers and computers owned by friends or acquaintances continue to make their contributions through the traditional telephone or postal methods.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Question: Our treasurer just ran off with the money. What should we do?

Answer: Unfortunately, this sort of thing, though rare, does occur. Though legal action is always an option, most groups avoid it. In some cases, the person who stole the money will resurface and return it.

Whether or not that happens, some groups have found it helpful to hold a group conscience meeting to review the way the group's finances are being handled. Some sample questions for such a group conscience meeting might include the following: Does the group choose well in their selection of a responsible member to be the treasurer? Is the treasurer helped to an understanding of his or her responsibility as suggested in the pamphlets "The A.A. Group," "Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix," and the service piece "The A.A. Group Treasurer?" Are they holding the treasurer accountable by receiving regular financial reports and are the treasurer's records available for review at business meetings? Are excessive funds being accumulated by the group?

Question: Our group is planning a party to celebrate its anniversary. Can we use Seventh Tradition funds to pay for the decorations and food?

Answer: Most A.A. members understand that their Seventh Tradition contributions will be used to pay group expenses and Twelfth Step work. Group anniversary parties, while considered traditional and helpful by many A.A.s, are not generally regarded as Twelfth Step

work. Some groups ask their members to dig deeper into their pockets to cover a celebration. Others choose to pass a second basket. It is a matter for each group to decide, and either course would not seem to conflict with the Seventh Tradition of self-support.

Question: Can our group accept donations from local businesses or other non-A.A. individuals or organizations? Can our group make a donation to a local homeless shelter, treatment facility, etc.?

Answer: Alcoholics Anonymous accepts no outside contributions. In accordance with the Sixth Tradition, A.A. makes no contributions to any outside organization or cause, no matter how worthy.

Question: If the facility in which an A.A. group meets cannot accept rent (such as a federal or state building), what can be done in accordance with our tradition of self-support?

Answer: A group can usually contribute in some other way. For example, the group might provide equipment or furnishings for the facility, or help with upkeep.

Question: Is it our group's responsibility to reimburse service workers for their expenses?

Answer: Each group, district, area or service committee is autonomous, and each has different needs and resources. While it is certainly up to the group conscience, many A.A. members seem to agree that no one should be excluded from service because of finances. Some service workers' expenses come out of their own pockets, while others are reimbursed.

In areas holding two- and three-day assemblies, expenses of participants (G.S.R.s, D.C.M.s, etc.) are sometimes met by asking groups to contribute. Expenses for area officers are usually covered by the area treasury. *The A.A. Service Manual* includes information on the subject.

BANK ACCOUNTS & TAX ID NUMBERS

Question: Our group needs to open a bank account and we were asked for an "I.D. number." Can we use G.S.O.'s?

Answer: No. More and more frequently, A.A. groups in the U.S. are being asked to supply an I.D. number to a bank when opening a checking or savings account, whether or not it is interest bearing. No local A.A. organization can use the tax-exempt status or identification number of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc., since each entity is autonomous in financial matters, as in all other ways. A tax I.D. is separate from the service number given to A.A. groups by G.S.O.

Question: How do we obtain an I.D. number for our group checking account?*

Answer: Local entities can obtain an "employer identification number" (EIN) from the IRS. To get this I.D. number, fill out IRS Form SS-4, "Application for Employer Identification Number," available at www.irs.gov. This number applies even though the group is not an employer. Look for the section about obtaining an EIN for banking purposes only. The form asks if there is one group exemption number that applies to all, and there is not.

**This information applies to the U.S. only.*

TAXES, GROUP EXEMPTIONS, ETC.

G.S.O. is in no way attempting to give tax advice for single A.A. groups or other entities. This information relates to the United States only, and does not apply to Canada.

Achieving tax-exempt status is different from getting an I.D. number for banking purposes. Becoming a non-profit organization recognized by the state and federal government is a process that very few groups undertake. You may want to read IRS Publication 557, "Tax-Exempt Status for Your Organizations." As rigorous reporting may be required, an accountant or tax lawyer can be helpful in the process.

Question: What about local/state/province taxes?

Answer: We suggest that you talk to people in your area who may have related experience.

Some questions we have recently received are:

- I have heard that the laws have changed and our group is automatically exempt from taxes.
- I have heard that our group should have been filing a postcard instead of a tax return.
- I have heard that because we have not filed the postcard and three years have passed we are automatically not tax exempt.
- I have heard that contributions to my group are (are not) tax deductible because we did (did not) file the postcards.
- My group does not want to take the time and expense to comply with the new rules.
- My group does not take in enough money to bother with the rules.

Question: Can I deduct the contributions to my group?

Answer: Unless your group is formally exempt — which means having gone through the full process of becoming exempt, filing the appropriate forms and paying the appropriate fees — contributions to your group are not deductible on your personal tax return.

If exemption application were not filed, donors cannot deduct any charitable contributions to an organization that is required to apply for recognition of exemption, but has not done so. (Page 20 Chapter 3 section 501 (c) 3 Organizations)

If your group's annual receipts are under \$5,000 you do not have to apply for exemption. However, if the I.R.S. has no record of the group (i.e., they did not register voluntarily for the 990-N program) then it does not seem logical that contributions can be deducted.

Question: Are contributions to G.S.O., (The General Service Board in New York) tax deductible?

Answer: Yes. The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous in New York is on the list of approved tax exempt organization that are able to accept contributions under section 501 (c) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code. All the proper applications were filed and the G.S.B. was approved by the I.R.S. as a tax exempt organization able to accept contributions. The organization employs accountants and has an annual audit by outside certified public accountants and files appropriate annual tax returns with the I.R.S., which are available for public inspection.

Question: Are contributions to my local Intergroup or Area structure deductible?

Answer: You cannot make a generalization about local entities; you must ask them if they have received a letter from the I.R.S. stating that they are tax exempt.

Question: What do groups use for articles of incorporation or bylaws? Our group is not incorporated or formally organized and it looks like the I.R.S. instructions, or banks, require such information, what shall we do?

Answer: The information required by the I.R.S. calls for organizing documents. We understand that on occasion some A.A. groups or other entities have used the short form of the Traditions as their governing documents.

Question: What should I do if my group takes in more than \$5,000 but does not think it is important to file the appropriate paper work?

Answer: Try to have a discussion at a business meeting that explains that as good members of society the group should be mature enough to comply with appropriate laws.

Question: Why have these rules changed and why must we do this?

Answer: Tax rules are always evolving and will probably always continue to do so. Not-for-profit organizations (mostly charities) have received a lot of attention in the past few years, in part because some organizations abused the rules and were operating for the personal benefit of certain individuals who controlled the organizations. In addition, the tax benefit of deducting charitable donations means that the Federal government has an important interest in insuring that charities are formed, operated and dissolved in an appropriate and legal manner.

Excerpted from I.R.S. publication 557, page 22 (Rev. October 2010)

Organizations Not Required to file form 1023 (application for exemption)

Some organizations are not required to file form 1023 (application for exemption).

- “any organization (other than a private foundation) normally having annual gross receipts of not more than \$5,000.”

These organizations are exempt automatically if they meet the requirements of section 501 (c) 3.

Basically, section 501 (c) 3 covers charitable, educational, religious and scientific organizations.

Required annual filings:

Question: Is an organization required to file an e-Postcard (annual return) if it was not required to file an application for tax exemption?

Answer: Yes, certain organizations do not have to apply for tax exemption but still have an e-Postcard filing requirement. If your organization did not file an application for tax exemption because it is a section 501 (c) 3 organization whose gross receipts in each taxable year are normally not more than \$5,000, or because it is exempt under another code section, such as 501 (c) 4, an officer of the organization should call Customer Account Services at 1-877-829-5500 (toll-free number) and ask that the organization be set up to allow filing of the e-Postcard.

An e-Post card contains the following information: Employer Identification number; Tax year; Legal name and mailing address; Any other names the organization uses; Name and address of principal officer; Web site address if organization has one; Confirmation that the organizations annual gross receipts are normally \$25,000 or less (\$50,000 for tax years ending on or after December 31, 2010); If applicable a statement that the organization has terminated or is terminating (going out of business).

There is some discussion about three years having passed since the laws changed and organizations not having filed the e-Post cards. Likely the best course of action is to call the number above and ask to have it set up now.

Organizations with gross receipts normally in excess of \$5,000 wishing to be considered tax exempt should file the appropriate paper work.

Organizations having done so with gross receipts up to \$25,000 through December 31, 2010, and up to \$50,000 thereafter may still file the e-Post card Annual Return discussed above.

Organizations having gross receipts from \$50,000 to \$200,000 may file form 990 EZ, and those with gross receipts over \$200,000 or assets more than \$500,000 are required to file form 990.

INSURANCE

Question: Our landlord has asked us to provide our own liability insurance. Can G.S.O. help?

Answer: No. G.S.O.'s liability insurance cannot be extended to cover local groups. A.A. groups are autonomous, and are not subsidiaries of G.S.O. Some groups cooperate with the facility where they meet by purchasing a “rider” to the facility's liability insurance policy. The group might consult a local insurance agent or attorney about liability matters.

G.S.O.'s FINANCES

Question: Who manages contributions made to the General Service Board?

Answer: The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc. is the custodian of all contributed funds. The board's Finance and Budgetary Committee meets quarterly to review and approve G.S.O.'s budget and financial statements.

The budgeting process of G.S.O. is under the direction of the director of finance, who oversees the annual budget for G.S.O., which is reviewed by the general manager before presentation to the Finance and Budgetary Committee of the A.A. World Services Board. A.A.W.S. then forwards the budget to the trustees' Finance & Budgetary Committee, which recommends the budget to the General Service Board.

Question: What is the General Fund?

Answer: Contributions to G.S.O. by A.A. groups and members make up the General Fund, which is administered by the General Service Board. G.S.O. does not accept contributions earmarked for a specific project or service.

Question: What is the Reserve Fund?

Answer: The Reserve Fund is G.S.O.'s prudent reserve. Its principal purpose is to provide the financial resources to continue the essen-

A.A.® Guidelines

Corrections Committees

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

A.A. Guidelines are compiled from the shared experience of A.A. members in various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada). In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy, except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an *informed* group conscience.

HOW A.A.s CARRY THE MESSAGE TO ALCOHOLICS IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

The material in these Guidelines has come from the experience and growing pains of A.A. corrections and Hospitals and Institutions (H&I) committees. We are privileged to share it with A.A.s throughout the United States and Canada who are carrying our message behind the walls. Additional information is available in the Corrections section of G.S.O.'s website at www.aa.org or you can contact G.S.O.'s Corrections Desk (corrections@aa.org) directly.

PURPOSE

The purpose of a corrections committee is to coordinate the work of individual A.A. members and groups who are interested in carrying our message of recovery to alcoholics behind the walls, and to set up means of smoothing the way from the facility to the larger A.A. community through prerelease contacts.

A corrections committee may function within the structure of a General Service Conference area committee or an intergroup/central office. As A.A. has grown, it seems that a committee formed within the A.A. service structure works more effectively than an individual member or group.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Perhaps the first step would be to contact your local area committee and, if there is an existing corrections committee, they will connect you to the corrections chairperson. Local A.A. groups and members also have the opportunity to participate in corrections Twelfth Step work by electing a corrections group representative. It has proved a good idea to have members from many groups serve on this committee. If a corrections committee does not exist in your district, then you may wish to form one. Thus, a chairperson is elected, and plans are worked out so that each correctional facility group will be assured of A.A. help. The corrections chairperson often participates with the area, district or intergroup committee. The chairperson also relays information from the Conference Committee on Corrections, held annually at the General Service Conference, and shares Conference thinking and experience on A.A. in corrections service work.

If you are a new committee, please list your corrections committee with the General Service Office in New York by contacting G.S.O.'s Corrections Desk (corrections@aa.org) or Records department. Your chairperson will be put on a mailing list and receive a Corrections Workbook and other service material.

The Corrections Workbook is a good basic tool. It contains informa-

tion on how to do corrections work, background information, guide letters, and a selection of pamphlets, leaflets, etc., and may provide new ideas or new ways of implementing old ideas.

The Corrections page on the G.S.O. website also provides other service material, including the newsletter "Sharing from Behind the Walls," videos, and prerelease and correspondence forms.

RELATIONSHIP TO A.A. IN THE AREA OR DISTRICT

A corrections committee shares with local meetings about the various service opportunities available to carry our message to alcoholics behind bars, or to help with the transition from a facility into the larger A.A. fellowship. They are also the point of contact for any questions and concerns about Twelve Step work at a corrections facility. Some individual groups have a corrections representative who attends the committee meetings. Corrections committees coordinate special events or corrections workshops for interested or participating A.A. members including clearance paperwork in cooperation with the local or state facilities; correspondence and prerelease contacts; funding literature requests; and orientation about bringing an A.A. meeting or information into a facility.

As in all A.A. activity, communication of needs and progress is important. Corrections committees usually meet either as an individual committee or before or after a local district or area committee; on a monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly basis. The committee also participates in area and district meetings where they can highlight shared experiences and communicate needs, including literature requests. The Trustees' Committee on Corrections has requested that most literature needs be handled through local committees.

FUNCTIONS OF CORRECTIONS COMMITTEES

The basic functions of corrections committees are described in the Corrections Workbook. However, here are highlights of major headings. Corrections committees, when allowed to do so, take A.A. meetings into facilities within their area. They encourage "outside" group participation in this kind of Twelfth Step work. In some areas, each group has a group corrections representative. The committee provides a liaison between the correctional facilities' groups and meetings and groups on the outside, and also coordinates prerelease contacts.

In the spirit of cooperation, the relationship with prison authorities is discussed in the workbook to ensure a positive reciprocal working relationship with administrators and staff. A.A. members wishing to carry our message to alcoholics behind the walls of correctional facilities should understand that we always do so within the regulations of

such facilities. Corrections Committees and Hospital and Institutions (H&I) Committees are encouraged to thoroughly review and understand all procedures of institutions with whom they cooperate, and to share this information with all A.A. members who bring A.A. meetings inside. Some committees make available copies of regulations and forms that must be completed, so that A.A. members new to this service work can review the materials prior to making their decision. Some committees share this information with A.A. members new to corrections service through regular workshops, information sheets, and volunteer packets developed by local trusted servants.

The workbook also goes into detail about prison A.A. meetings. It suggests different ways to shoulder responsibility for meetings and speakers.

Most committees find that adequate Conference-approved literature and service materials are essential in a correctional facility group or meeting. Such materials are financed and obtained in several ways: donated by local intergroup or general service committee; donated by members of the committee; purchased with individual contributions; provided by groups through their corrections representatives.

Special funds: Buck of the Month Club — where members contribute, and funds are used for corrections literature; special meetings or dinners, at which a collection is taken; special cans at regular meetings, marked “For Corrections Literature.”

NOTE: Corrections Discount Packages are available from G.S.O.

PRERELEASE/BRIDGING THE GAP/RE-ENTRY TEMPORARY CONTACTS, ETC.

Experience suggests that with the constant reminder that A.A. has only sobriety to offer, many committees do try to provide prerelease contacts, so transition to outside A.A. is easier.

Past experience has shown that attending an A.A. meeting on the outside on the day of release from prison is one of the most effective tools for an inmate to maintain continued sobriety. It is strongly recommended that an inmate who is an A.A. member have an A.A. contact on the outside (preferably with at least one year's sobriety and of the same sex) to meet on the day of release and help in attending A.A. on the outside. This service is known by a variety of names in the A.A. Fellowship, such as “Bridging the Gap,” “Prerelease,” “Contact Upon Release,” “Temporary Contact,” etc., but all committees do essentially the same type of Twelfth Step service.

This A.A. service is a way for outside A.A.s to meet up with inside A.A.s getting released from prison/jail and accompanying them to their first few local meetings. This is not intended to be a long-term A.A. relationship, but simply to help ease the newly-released member's transition to outside A.A. and to help them get started on the road to sobriety in their home community.

More information is available in the Corrections Workbook and in the Corrections section on G.S.O.'s website. Local committees often arrange outside contacts while G.S.O. helps with referrals of inmates being released to other areas.

NEWSLETTER

Sharing from Behind the Walls is a quarterly newsletter selected from inmate letters sent to G.S.O. With their permission, inmates from the U.S. and Canada contribute. Current and back issues can be printed from the Corrections section of the G.S.O. website. The newsletter is published and mailed quarterly and is available for use in A.A. correctional service. It can also be printed from the Corrections section of G.S.O.'s website.

RELATIONSHIP TO AL-ANON

Many areas report it is extremely helpful to cooperate with Al-Anon Family Groups, in order that the family of the inmate may gain a better understanding of our Fellowship. For information, contact Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., 1600 Corporate Landing Parkway, Virginia Beach, VA 23454-5617. Tel: (888) 425-2666. Website: www.alanon.alateen.org

RELATIONSHIP TO G.S.O.

G.S.O. lists corrections chairpersons (U.S. and Canada). The people on this mailing list are sent the following material:

1. *Box 4-5-9* — quarterly.
2. Corrections Workbook.
3. Activity update from the G.S.O. Corrections desk.

CORRESPONDENCE SERVICE

The Corrections Correspondence Service (C.C.S.), coordinated through G.S.O., across the U.S. and Canada offers a rewarding opportunity for “A.A.s on the “outside” to share experience, strength and hope with incarcerated alcoholics from another region. Helpful guidelines are available to outsiders (F-26), and to insiders through (F-73) G.S.O. For more information, please contact G.S.O.'s Corrections Desk: corrections@aa.org

SHARED EXPERIENCE

Please keep in touch with the G.S.O. Corrections Desk (corrections@aa.org) to share your activities and experiences with carrying our A.A. message behind the walls. Doing so will pass it on to help other local committees across the U.S. and Canada as we add your experience to our files and share information in the G.S.O. newsletter, *Box 4-5-9*.

A.A.® Guidelines Cooperation with the Professional Community

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

A.A. Guidelines are compiled from the shared experience of A.A. members in various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada). In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy, except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an *informed* group conscience.

By action of the General Service Board, January 1970, the trustees' Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community (C.P.C.) — a spin off from the Public Information Committee — was developed. A similar Conference committee was formed the following year. Since that time, A.A. members in local areas have been responding to local need by establishing C.P.C. committees.

A.A. is considered by many professionals to be a valuable resource for alcoholics who want help. When there is a good working relationship between A.A. members in the community and paid alcoholism workers, the sick alcoholic is the winner — he or she gets the help needed from both.

We are not in competition with these non-A.A.s; we have our separate functions. A.A. is not in the business of education, research, medicine, counseling, treatment, prevention, or funding. We simply have a message to carry about a program of recovery for alcoholics — a program that works for hundreds of thousands who want it.

The professional can reach out to alcoholics — by education, counseling, and rehabilitative treatment — and can also be of aid through making the community aware of the millions still suffering from the progressive illness of alcoholism.

PUBLIC INFORMATION, COOPERATION WITH THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY, TREATMENT AND CORRECTIONS COMMITTEES

The following descriptions of the responsibilities of P.I., C.P.C., Treatment and Corrections committees are given for purposes of clarification.

P.I. — The purpose of P.I. service work is to provide accurate A.A. information to the public when requested. P.I. committees visit schools, businesses and community meetings for this purpose. They also serve as resources for our friends in the local media, emphasizing our Traditions of anonymity, singleness of purpose and nonaffiliation, as well as offering A.A. public service announcements to radio and television stations.

C.P.C. — Members of these committees provide information about A.A. to those who have contact with alcoholics through their profession. This group includes healthcare professionals, educators, members of the clergy, lawyers, social workers, union leaders, and industrial managers, government officials, as well as those working in the field of alcoholism. Information is provided about where we are, what we are, what we can do, and what we cannot do.

Corrections and Treatment — The purpose of Corrections, Treatment, or combined institutions committees, is to coordinate the work of individual members and groups who are interested in carrying our

message of recovery to alcoholics in hospitals, alcoholism treatment and rehabilitation centers, and correctional facilities.

In many areas, liaisons have been established among these committees — i.e., Corrections, Treatment, institutions and P.I. committees send a liaison to C.P.C. committee meetings. There are many instances of overlapping responsibilities. It should be clearly established that A.A. committees are not in competition with each other. Local circumstances determine who does what.

GETTING STARTED

One of the best ways to start your C.P.C. Twelfth Step work is to read the C.P.C. Workbook, which contains a bounty of information gathered from A.A.'s past experience in C.P.C. work. As an example, in many areas C.P.C. committees are organized as follows:

1. Area C.P.C. chairperson and co-chairperson elected or appointed by the area committee.
2. District C.P.C. chairperson and co-chairperson elected or selected in each district.
3. The P.I., Corrections, Treatment and C.P.C. committees each assign a member to attend meetings of the other three committees, thus maintaining communication and cooperation within A.A.
4. A budget figure from area committee funds is established and approved.
5. The chairperson of an area, district or intergroup (central office) C.P.C. committee is listed with the G.S.O. in New York.

Whether you work primarily through the area and district structure, through the local central office or intergroup, or your group, it is a good idea to have overall organization. If you don't, problems of communication, duplication of effort, and outright confusion will undoubtedly arise.

C.P.C. KIT AND PAMPHLETS

The C.P.C. Kit contains information on all aspects of C.P.C. service, including the C.P.C. Workbook. The kit also includes guidelines, literature catalog, pamphlets, the DVD "A.A. Cooperation with the Professional Community" — which contains videos directed to H.R., E.A.P., Legal, Correctional and Healthcare professions — copies of *Box 4-5-9* (which may include a section on C.P.C. news) and *About A.A.*, our newsletter for professionals, along with a sign-up card. It is suggested that the basic "text" for C.P.C. committee members is the Conference-approved pamphlet "How A.A. Members Cooperate with Professionals."

Most C.P.C. committees have found it helpful for each member

to have a personal copy of the Cooperation with the Professional Community Workbook. G.S.O. furnishes a C.P.C. Kit to the area committee chairperson at no charge. Additional Kits and Workbooks may be purchased.

The C.P.C. Workbook and C.P.C. Kit contents are available to read, download and print a single copy from G.S.O.'s A.A. website www.aa.org through the "A.A. Service Committees" portal (click on "For A.A. Members" from the home page).

C.P.C. IN ACTION

One suggestion is to work with one group of professionals at a time. When a list of professionals has been compiled, members of the C.P.C. committee make initial contact (by email, letter, phone or face-to-face), and offer to come and talk about what A.A. is and what it is not. Sample C.P.C. letters are available in the C.P.C. Workbook (pp. 23-29), which can be found on www.aa.org. You might also offer to take a professional or student to an open A.A. meeting in your area or provide A.A. literature describing our A.A. program of recovery, stressing our eagerness to act as a resource to the recovering alcoholic. The *About A.A.* newsletter for professionals can be a great C.P.C. tool to have with you when meeting with professionals. Since this newsletter can be found online, it would be easy to select a few issues that the committee feels would be of interest to certain professionals, print them and have them copied. Some committees take a combination of: 1) issues that are targeted to the specific profession; and 2) those issues that might help the professional understand a certain aspect of A.A.

ANONYMITY IN C.P.C. SERVICE

It is generally wise to clarify the A.A. Tradition of Anonymity with those arranging the meeting at which you are speaking, especially if you think a report of the meeting might be published, disseminated via social media or broadcast.

C.P.C. service workers frequently gain access to professional events and are sometimes asked to supply identification. This is not an anonymity break at a public level — you are simply following the rules of the particular facility you are entering. When staffing a booth, one's badge can read either "A.A. Volunteer" or "Sally — A.A. Volunteer," without any last names being used. The same holds true when C.P.C. committees give presentations on A.A. to professionals — only first names should be used.

When approaching C.P.C. service work, some A.A. members are concerned that revealing their identity to members of the professional community constitutes an anonymity break, since the Eleventh Tradition states that "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films." This Tradition of anonymity lies at the heart of A.A. and is a constant and practical reminder that personal ambition has no place in A.A. As the Twelfth Tradition states: "Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities." Humility, expressed by anonymity, is the greatest safeguard that Alcoholics Anonymous can ever have.

However, the purpose of C.P.C. and Public Information (P.I.) service work is to share with the general public what A.A. is, what we do, and how to get in touch with us. Our hope is that an alcoholic, or a concerned friend or relative, who hears about A.A. will know that we offer a solution to alcoholism.

Our cofounder, Bill W., shared about anonymity in P.I. service in a 1946 Grapevine article (reprinted in the pamphlet "A.A. Tradition: How It Developed"): "In most places, but not all, it is customary for A.A.s to use their own names when speaking before public or semipublic gatherings. This is done to impress audiences that we no longer fear the stigma of alcoholism. If, however, newspaper reporters are present, they are earnestly requested not to use the names of any of the alcoholic speakers on the program." The general sense is that A.A. members remain anonymous at the public level involving all forms of media, but that the A.A. name itself (as well as phone numbers, websites, etc.) should be known, and that accurate and consistent information on A.A. needs to be made available.

PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES

Area C.P.C. committees may request to be placed on the mailing list with community, state or area professional agencies. Specific suggestions and information about exhibiting at professional meetings is available from the General Service Office.

PRESENTATIONS

See the C.P.C. Workbook for suggestions on presentations you might give in your community. Most C.P.C. committee members will be informed on A.A. and its history, and are able to give an accurate and positive impression of Alcoholics Anonymous. We stress our primary purpose and Traditions of nonaffiliation, self-support and anonymity. Please keep in touch with G.S.O. so that we may share your activities with others. The DVD "A.A. Cooperation with the Professional Community" — which contains videos directed to H.R., E.A.P., Legal, Correctional and Healthcare professions — could be shown at presentations to professionals. Professionals can also view or stream videos on their own digital devices. Additional A.A. videos and audios are available on the G.S.O. website.

The C.P.C. desk has a PowerPoint presentation that can be adapted to local needs. A hardcopy of the slides with notes is included in the C.P.C. Kit. Email cpc@aa.org to request an electronic copy.

STAFFING AN A.A. BOOTH

Many C.P.C. committees are active in staffing "A.A. booths" at health fairs and other events in the communities they serve. The invitation to participate may come directly to the local C.P.C. committee or through the G.S.O. staff person on the C.P.C. desk. The local C.P.C. committee ascertains if taking part serves A.A.'s primary purpose. The invitation is acknowledged with appreciation whether or not the invitation can be accepted.

Many times, a simple table is provided by the organization hosting the function, and two or more committee members staff the booth. C.P.C. committees rotate this responsibility to assure that all have an opportunity to participate.

A.A. literature specifically for the public is set out on the table and offered to interested passersby, along with "C.P.C. mailing labels" from G.S.O. for those wishing more information. Soon after the event, completed mailing labels are sent to G.S.O., who sends information packets to each.

G.S.O. can help by sharing experience and by furnishing basic literature to the committee undertaking this service. It is vital that requests for special-event literature be received by G.S.O. in ample time to allow for packing and shipping — usually three weeks' notice is sufficient.

LITERATURE

The Conference-approved Literature and Other Service Material catalog has a section on C.P.C. specific items. There is also a section of the catalog focused on Accessibilities, and much of the literature is also available in Spanish and French. When planning a meeting with professionals, committees carefully consider what literature to share. Some committees take a combination of literature targeted to the specific profession and literature that might help the professional understand certain aspects of A.A., along with general recovery literature oriented to the new member.

BASIC C.P.C. LITERATURE

For C.P.C. Committee Members

[Speaking at Non-A.A. Meetings](#)
[C.P.C. Workbook](#)
[Understanding Anonymity](#)
[Information on Alcoholics Anonymous](#)

[Many Paths to Spirituality](#)
[A.A. Membership Survey](#)
[How A.A. Members Cooperate...](#)
[A Member's-Eye View of A.A.](#)

For Professionals

[Understanding Anonymity](#)
[If You Are a Professional...](#)
[Members of the Clergy Ask About A.A.](#)
[Problems Other Than Alcohol](#)
[Is There a Problem Drinker in the Workplace?](#)
[This Is A.A.](#)
[A.A. In Your Community](#)
[A.A. Fact File](#)
[A Brief Guide to A.A.](#)
[The A.A. Member —](#)
[Medications and Other Drugs](#)

[A.A. as a Resource for the Health Care Professional](#)
[A.A. as a Resource for Drug & Alcohol Court Professionals](#)
[A.A. Membership Survey](#)
[A Message to Corrections Professionals](#)
[Information on Alcoholics Anonymous](#)
[A.A. at a Glance](#)
[The A.A. Grapevine](#)
[La Viña](#)
[A.A. and the Armed Services](#)

For the People Professionals Serve

[Young People and A.A.](#)
[A.A. at a Glance](#)
[A Message to Teenagers](#)
[This Is A.A.](#)
[Is A.A. for You?](#)
[A.A. for the Woman](#)
[Frequently Asked Questions About A.A.](#)
[A.A. for the Gay/Lesbian Alcoholic](#)
[A.A. for the Native North American](#)

[A.A. for the Older Alcoholic](#)
[A.A. for the Black and African American Alcoholic](#)
[A Brief Guide to A.A.](#)
[Too Young?](#)
[Do You Think You're Different?](#)
[Is There an Alcoholic in Your Life?](#)
[Problems Other Than Alcohol](#)
[A Newcomer Asks](#)

[A.A. Guidelines on: C.P.C. Committees; Cooperating with Courts, D.W.I. & Similar Programs; Relationship Between A.A. and Al-Anon; For A.A. Members Employed in the Alcoholism Field; Public Information Committees; Accessibility for All Alcoholics.](#)

[Videos: A.A. Cooperation with the Professional Community](#) — which contains segments directed to H.R., E.A.P., Legal, Correctional and Healthcare professions; [Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous.](#)

[Discount Packages:](#) G.S.O. has C.P.C. Discount Packages for sale to help C.P.C. committees with quantity purchases of basic A.A. information for the public. C.P.C. discount packages are available

in English, Spanish and French. For information about Discount Packages, please contact G.S.O., Grand Central Station, Box 459, New York, NY 10163, (212) 870-3400, or e-mail cpc@aa.org.

A.A. WEBSITE

G.S.O.'s A.A. website (www.aa.org), which is available in English, Spanish and French, has been successful as a C.P.C. tool. We have received positive comments from many professionals interested in Alcoholics Anonymous. We invite you to visit the website and provide information about it in your C.P.C. presentations. Look for service material used in C.P.C. work in the portal labeled "[Cooperation with the Professional Community Committees](#)" in the "[A.A. Service Committees](#)" section (click on "For A.A. Members" from the home page.) Helpful contents of the website are:

- Link to "What Is A.A."
- A.A. Cooperation with the Professional Community videos directed to H.R., E.A.P., Legal, Correctional and Healthcare professions.
- The A.A. General Service Conference-approved [A.A. Fact File](#).
- Conference-approved pamphlets and the [Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous](#).
- Link to search function to find closest A.A. office, answering service or website with meeting location information.
- List of Central Offices/Intergroups/Answering Services in U.S./Canada.
- List of international general service offices and intergroup/central offices.
- [Anonymity letter](#) and video to the media.
- [Information on A.A.](#) (service piece).
- The [A.A. Guidelines](#).
- Link to A.A. Grapevine/La Viña website.
- "For Professionals" portal, which includes an email response form for requesting additional information.
- *About A.A.*, newsletter for professionals. Not only is the current issue available online, all issues since the winter of 1998 can be located at G.S.O.'s A.A. website organized by date or topic. Your committee is welcome to print copies of the newsletter from the website and make copies for C.P.C. events. Professionals and A.A. members can sign up to receive *About A.A.* (as well as other periodicals produced at this office) via email. Bringing a laptop or mobile device to presentations offers the opportunity for those interested to sign up on the spot. Go to G.S.O.'s A.A. website at www.aa.org and click the link on the homepage labeled "G.S.O. Newsletters" and follow directions.

The General Service Office contacts C.P.C. committees to act as a local resource to professionals who request additional information or help starting an A.A. meeting at their facility. A.A. experience indicates that this provides a valuable opportunity for C.P.C. committees to reach the still-suffering alcoholic through cooperation with the professional community.

A.A.® Guidelines

Cooperating with Court, D.W.I. and Similar Programs

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

The A.A. Guidelines below are compiled from the shared service experience of A.A. members throughout the U.S. and Canada. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference. In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an *informed* group conscience.

WHEN AND WHY A.A. BEGAN COOPERATING WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

In 1942, members from San Francisco brought the first A.A. meeting into San Quentin Prison at the request of Warden Clinton T. Duffy. This example led to A.A.'s cooperation with court systems, including direct communications with judges and parole and probation officials. The sole purpose of this Twelfth Step work, then and now, was to carry A.A.'s message to the still-suffering alcoholic. To fulfill that purpose, A.A.s have learned how to share A.A. information within court systems.

Probation and parole officers, as well as judges, often require people involved in alcohol-related offenses to attend A.A. meetings. Some A.A. members find it difficult to accept this "outside" policy in light of our Third Tradition, "The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking." Perhaps it's helpful to remember that our Traditions apply to us, and aren't affected by the regulations established by outside institutions — we cooperate without affiliating. By adhering to all Twelve Traditions, many groups welcome each newcomer regardless of how they got to the meeting.

In recent years, a larger number of "safe driving" programs have been set up for drivers in trouble with the law because of some episode related to drinking. These programs have many different names — such as Alcohol Safety Action Project (A.S.A.P.), Driving While Intoxicated (D.W.I.), Driving Under the Influence (D.U.I.), and the like. Many A.A. committees that cooperate with these programs offer attendees a chance to learn about A.A., and some are now members of A.A. as a result.

From page 89 of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*: "Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail.... You can help when no one else can.... because of your own drinking experience you can be uniquely useful to other alcoholics. So cooperate; never criticize. To be helpful is our only aim."

Therefore, as long as carrying the message helps those of us already in A.A. maintain our own sobriety, this kind of message-carrying is a success. Our responsibility is to make the seed of A.A. freely available. What the sufferer does with it is not our responsibility. Only one "statistic" interests us in A.A. — the next person who may need our help.

WHAT BASIC ELEMENTS ARE COMMON TO ALL SUCH NON-A.A. PROGRAMS?

In most cases, this general outline is followed by most court programs for "alcoholic" offenders:

- *Pretrial interview*

- *Release, conviction or case continued (if conviction, sentence or probation comes next)*
- *Court classes on alcoholism, regular (outside the court) A.A. meetings or incarceration*

The offender under suspended sentence or on probation may be required by the judge to attend meetings of one type or another.

The court class (sometimes called an honor court meeting) usually meets in the court building, and may be one of three types:

1. Meetings *about* A.A., usually run by A.A. members, though sometimes an officer of the court presides.

2. Meetings handled by several agencies, with a doctor explaining alcoholism, and other professionals and/or volunteers talking about alcoholism. Usually, at least one session is turned over to A.A. members, who put on a "sample" A.A. meeting. They tell briefly their own stories, and also tell how A.A. works. A.A. members experienced at this say it is important to avoid criticizing anything. These classes seem to work best when A.A. speakers emphasize the benefits of sobriety and the A.A. way of life.

3. Meetings sponsored by domestic relations or family courts, which may include sample Al-Anon and Alateen meetings held for the spouses and children of offenders. These are separate from the A.A. meetings, of course.

It is important to explain the difference between these court classes and regular (outside) A.A. meetings, and to have A.A. literature on hand at each session.

Meetings Outside the Court

Sometimes meetings become so big that they lead to the formation of new, "outside" groups — regular A.A. groups that meet away from the court building and choose a new name with no relation to the court.

When some judges require offenders to attend regular A.A. meetings as a condition of the suspended sentence or probation, they may be legally required to have each offender offer proof that he or she attended the required number of meetings.

WHICH A.A. TRADITIONS GUIDE US IN COOPERATING WITH THESE PROGRAMS?

All of them, but these have been specially mentioned:

One — Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.

Two — For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.

Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

Three — The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

Five — Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Six — An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

Ten — Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

Eleven — Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.

Twelve — Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON PROBLEMS AND HOW ARE THEY SOLVED?

A. Getting A.A. members involved.

Many A.A. members are not aware that this kind of Twelfth Step work is available and that they can participate in it.

In some locales, this service is coordinated by the Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community (C.P.C.). Often ongoing Twelfth Step work within the court system leads to a sub-committee connected to the district or central office/intergroup. It's important to include enough A.A. members to cover A.A. commitments in the court system without detracting from other service work.

Usually, it is up to members of these committees to share this experience with other A.A.s, so that more A.A.s understand how to take part in this kind of Twelfth Step work (see Which A.A. Members are Best Suited..., page 3).

B. Misunderstanding of these programs by A.A.s, and by the offenders.

1. When such a program first starts, a small A.A. group may have more newcomers than regular members at its meetings.

This can usually be solved by setting up a meeting with the judge and members of several nearby groups, asking the judge to refer the newcomers around among several "open" meetings.

One option, when many newcomers under court order turn up at a meeting, is for the members to divide into small discussion groups, with a few home group members sitting with each set of newcomers.

In any case, it is probably a good idea for the judge to refer people to "open" A.A. meetings, in the event that some of those referred do not believe themselves to be alcoholics. Often, providing the court with a list of "open" meetings will avoid referrals to "closed" meetings.

2. Some members have the mistaken impression that such programs "affiliate" A.A. with outside enterprises, or constitute "endorsement" by A.A. of a court or D.W.I. program. However, A.A.'s cooperation with these programs no more constitutes "affiliation" or "endorsement" than do A.A. meetings held in hospitals and prisons.

A.A. members involved in court classes or meetings about A.A., explain that these are not regular A.A. meetings. It is pointed out

that A.A. is self-supporting, so A.A. groups do not accept rent-free meeting rooms or literature furnished by any non-A.A. source, and are totally independent of a court or other enterprise. It is shown that A.A. groups do not force attendance or keep attendance records. Courts can do these things as they are not bound by the A.A. Traditions.

C. Mandatory attendance at A.A. meetings.

All of us sober in A.A. know that to get well we really had to want it for ourselves — eventually, if not at first. We could not stay sober just because we were "required" to, or for anybody else.

Yet, in a real sense, many A.A. members are referred to A.A., either by their employer, family, friends or doctor, or they come because of their own inner suffering. In A.A., we are not concerned about who or what first brings the alcoholic to us. Our responsibility is to show A.A. as a way of life, so that all newcomers who need it might want it.

D. The hostile attitude of some who are required by a law enforcement agency to attend A.A. meetings.

Some of these newcomers originally approach A.A. very resentful at having to be there. This is easy to understand. It is up to us to be patient and tolerant toward the newcomer.

When sending offenders to A.A., one judge tells them about the Fellowship and hands each one a small card showing information about meetings, plus suggestions for behavior at A.A. meetings including being on time, staying for the entire meeting, not being disruptive, etc. When a judge is willing to do this, it helps to prevent offenders arriving late, interrupting to demand signed attendance cards, and otherwise disturbing the meeting.

E. Proof of attendance at A.A. meetings.

It is important for judges and probation officers to understand that attendance at A.A. meetings does not guarantee anybody's future sobriety. Nevertheless, some judges require written proof that offenders have attended a certain number of meetings. Often, when the court-ordered newcomer attends an A.A. meeting, an A.A. member acknowledges attendance on a slip that has been furnished by the court. The referred person is responsible for returning the proof of attendance.

Groups cooperate in different ways. There is no set procedure. The nature and extent of any group's involvement in this process is entirely up to the individual group.

All involved recognize that neither the group nor the members are "bound" in any way by the signature, nor does this courtesy signify affiliation of the group with any other program. It simply illustrates cooperation.

It is important to note that an Advisory Action of the 1983 Conference Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community states, "A.A. does not provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers, court officials, social agencies, employers, etc."

F. Offers by an agency to pay A.A. members for taking prospects to and from A.A. meetings.

It is important for A.A. members to explain to the agency officials and judges that A.A. is strictly self-supporting (see Tradition Seven) and that A.A. members do not accept money for Twelfth (or any other) Step work (see Tradition Eight, on nonprofessional-

ism). We work with other alcoholics for our own sobriety, not for money. It is our responsibility to make this clear to court-ordered newcomers, too.

As A.A. members, we are not qualified to judge, endorse or oppose any other program in the field of alcoholism, nor is it a good idea to give the impression that we are professional, scientific experts. We can help only with our own experience.

(Note: A.A. members who are hired to work as professionals in the field of alcoholism are, of course, a different matter, since they are paid for professional services. Even so, they are not paid to do Twelfth Step work.)

WHICH A.A. MEMBERS ARE BEST SUITED FOR COOPERATION WITH SUCH PROGRAMS?

Any A.A. member may join with other A.A.s in this valuable asset to service. It seems that those who have been most successful at it are A.A. members who:

- have several years' continuous sobriety, serenity and steadfastness, mixed with a clear grasp of the purpose of Twelfth Step work;
- have had wide A.A. experience, not only in more than one group, but also in central office (intergroup) and general service affairs;
- have an understanding of A.A. experience recorded in the Big Book, A.A. Comes of Age, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, and other A.A. publications.

HOW CAN YOU HELP START A PROGRAM IF NONE EXISTS IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

You've already made a good start by familiarizing yourself with this material. Follow that up by finding out whether any other A.A.s in your community are interested in and knowledgeable about such programs.

See whether your local central office or area general service committee knows where such help is needed.

Talk it over with other A.A.s, and meet with some groups in the community to inform them of your plans and to see which groups would be willing to cooperate, and in which ways. (Be patient — not all members may be interested in this work; their feelings need to be respected, as yours are.) Once you have a nucleus of A.A.s, two or three of you might visit with a local court official or probation officer. Take along A.A. information, such as the pamphlets "If You Are a Professional" and "A Brief Guide to A.A.," along with "A.A. as a Resource for Drug & Alcohol Court Professionals," and offer to take court administrators and parole officers to an "open" A.A. meeting.

If you have a smartphone or a computer with Internet access, you may also want to show the court personnel G.S.O.'s A.A. website (www.aa.org) during your visit. The website has the short informational video for court and legal professionals, as well as many other resources for professionals to learn about A.A. and information they may wish to share with newcomers.

Relax. If this is the right time, the program will happen. If it doesn't, wait for a more appropriate opportunity.

G.S.O.'s A.A. WEBSITE: WWW.AA.ORG

G.S.O. has received positive comments from many court professionals interested in A.A. regarding the usefulness of G.S.O.'s A.A. website, which is also available in Spanish and French. We invite you to visit www.aa.org and become familiar with this site to be better able to use it as a successful tool when working with those employed in court-related fields. Many A.A. committees provide information about useful links in presentations and email communications to court personnel.

Information for Professionals can be found under the tabs:

- [What is A.A.?](#)
- [For Professionals](#)

Conference-Approved Pamphlets:

["This Is A.A."](#)

["A.A. at a Glance"](#)

["Problems Other Than Alcohol"](#)

["A Message to Corrections Professionals"](#)

Service Material

[A.A. Fact File](#)

[Information on Alcoholics Anonymous](#)

[A.A. as a Resource for Drug & Alcohol Court Professionals](#)

Videos

Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous

A New Freedom

A.A. in Correctional Facilities

Carrying the Message Behind These Walls

Young People's Videos

A.A. Video for Legal and Correctional Professionals

Available at www.aa.org: "A.A. Cooperation with the Professional Community" videos directed to H.R., E.A.P., Legal, Correctional and Healthcare Professionals.

A.A.® Guidelines

Conferences, Conventions and Roundups

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

A.A. Guidelines are compiled from the shared experience of A.A. members in various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada). In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy, except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an *informed* group conscience.

HOW A.A.s MAKE THEIR GET-TOGETHERS ENJOYABLE AS WELL AS EFFECTIVE IN CARRYING THE A.A. MESSAGE OF RECOVERY

WHY HAVE AN A.A. CONVENTION?

It's clear that A.A. get-togethers beyond the group have become an established part of A.A. life. The calendar of events in any [Box 4-5-9](#) or on Grapevine's website, AAGrapevine.org shows some conventions, conferences, and roundups that are being held by A.A.s.

What makes an A.A. convention click for its participants? It's probably not style or form that matters so much as the spirit and feeling behind it. As one member puts it, the best A.A. convention is "just a darned good A.A. meeting blown up big." Just watch enthusiastic members at any A.A. convention and you'll get what he means. The atmosphere alone is worth the trip. Here you'll find fellowship, laughter, warmth, and understanding — "heaped up, pressed down, and running over."

CONVENTIONS COME IN MANY SHAPES AND SIZES

An A.A. convention is almost any A.A. get-together beyond the group-meeting level. These range from special meetings of one evening's duration to longer events like area, statewide, or regional weekend conventions. They will, most likely, be one of the following:

1. The special open meeting. This kind of gathering can serve useful purposes. It will, of course, bring together the A.A. members in a city or area. But it also provides a good opportunity to invite interested friends of A.A. to the meeting. Certainly, it's proper on such occasions to send special invitations to members of the clergy, doctors, lawyers, social workers, public health officials, and others who may have a special interest in A.A.

2. The one-day session. This might include several general meetings throughout the day. For a start, there's a "welcome" meeting in the morning, followed by other activities. There may be another open meeting in the afternoon, while the main open meeting with the featured speaker is saved for the windup meeting in the evening. If the convention is held in a school, civic hall, or other building with additional rooms, it's likely that the program for a one-day session can also include A.A. workshops and panels, service meetings, assemblies, and closed meetings.

3. The banquet. Many intergroups or central offices now sponsor annual banquets, often to help support their office operations. Some groups and areas also have banquets (or informal buffet and

potluck dinners) as anniversary or gratitude observances. The banquet often features an after-dinner speaker or some other program of interest to A.A. members.

4. The weekend convention. This is an ideal form for a state, provincial, or regional convention. Members often arrive for an opening meeting session or "coffee & conversation" on Friday evening. Additional meetings and workshops—as well as other activities—continue through Saturday and even into Sunday afternoon. The convention may include a banquet, luncheons, special breakfasts, Saturday-night dancing and entertainment, and perhaps a spiritual meeting on Sunday morning.

THE CONVENTION BEGINS WITH A PLANNING COMMITTEE

Once a get-together has been scheduled, it needs a planning committee. The work in setting up a convention is too much for one person. He or she will need at least a dozen assistants, frequently more.

One method of forming the committee is simply to appoint a general chairperson who then completes the committee by finding able volunteers to chair the various committees.

Another method, popular when a number of groups sponsor a convention, is to send a committee representative from each group. Once in session, representatives can elect a chairperson and receive assignments to specific committees.

In some cases, the convention may be the responsibility of the general service committee from the area. In others, the convention committee may be organized separately. Either method works well if it corresponds to the wishes of the A.A. groups in the area.

In some areas, there is a permanent convention committee, set up within the area committee, so that valuable experience of convention planning can be carried over from one year to the next. Membership on such a committee is, of course, on a rotation basis, so that new members are added yearly, but a proportion of experienced convention planners is retained at any given time.

Once assembled, the convention committee is usually organized along functional lines, with each chairperson responsible for a phase of the planning. Here's how a typical committee might be arranged:

1. Chairperson (assisted by one or two co-chairpersons) oversees the entire convention; coordinates the work of subcommittee chairpersons; keeps informed on the progress of all the arrangements; calls committee meetings when needed.

2. Secretary keeps all written records, including minutes of the committee meetings; also sends out notices of committee meetings and other mailings to committee members.

3. Treasurer is, of course, responsible for all money, including revenues from registration and banquet tickets; pays all bills; usually advises the chairperson on cash supply and income flow as well as rate of expenditures.

Experience indicates it's best if the treasurer is a person with four or more years' sobriety and some solid business experience. Each check usually calls for two signatures. Most convention committees require a complete report from the treasurer within a month or two of the convention. Some committees have the report audited as a further safeguard for convention funds.

4. Program Chairperson. Since this is often a very complex job, its objectives are discussed under the separate heading "What Makes a Good Convention Program?" This person usually sends invitations to speakers and panel members who chair various meetings.

5. Registration Chairperson supervises the production and distribution of all tickets, including those from online registrations. This job requires special attention to the task of tracking payments and bringing in the collection. This person is responsible for creating printed and online registration forms, name tags and welcome packets; and oversees the registration table.

6. Public Information Chairperson has the sensitive task of encouraging a large attendance without abandoning A.A.'s principle of "attraction rather than promotion." Publicity efforts can be kept within the dignity and spirit of A.A. through the following means:

a. Preparation and distribution of material about the program, speakers, and time and location of the convention (perhaps including map of area, if necessary). It's advisable for the convention committee to rent a post office box and/or create a generic email address, and use that on all mailings, with no reference to A.A. on return addresses or in email subject lines. When sending A.A. mail to multiple recipients use can be made of the BCC (Blind Courtesy Copy) option to protect the anonymity of all recipients.

The convention publicity material could also be sent to the press, radio, and TV outlets in the immediate area. (The [Public Information Workbook](#), available from G.S.O., gives useful advice on approaching the media.) If media or the general public are invited, be sure to attend to the details of how they will be greeted and if special meetings or contacts will be set up for them.

b. Regular flyers about the convention are usually mailed monthly to all groups in the area, with the first mailing beginning about six months before the convention date.

c. Dates and location of the convention, with a mailing address, and/or website, for information or registration, should be sent four months in advance to the A.A. Grapevine and to [Box 4-5-9](#), to be published in their calendars. Only area, regional, state, or provincial events of more than one day's duration are listed. Send A.A.

Grapevine notices to the GV Editorial Department, 475 Riverside Dr., New York, NY 10115 or submit to the online calendar at www.aagrapevine.org. Send [Box 4-5-9](#) notices to [Box 4-5-9](#), Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163, or via the [Box 4-5-9](#) event information form on www.aa.org.

7. Entertainment Chairperson will arrange for the convention dances and floor show if there is one. The chairperson hires the band and other performers (or arranges for recorded music). At some conventions, the local A.A.s provide entertainment by putting on a play about A.A. Traditions (for script, write to G.S.O.), or putting together choruses and variety shows. This chairperson might also arrange to make sightseeing available for conventioners.

8. Hospitality Chairperson serves as convention host, organizing a committee that will greet out-of-town guests, arrange transportation for them when necessary, and see to any other needs they might have while attending the convention. Usually members of the hospitality committee wear special identification badges and are available to answer questions and provide assistance to conventioners.

9. Display and Literature Chairperson is responsible for displays and posters and for having A.A. literature available for all. G.S.O. provides a literature display to all conferences and conventions. (See "Displays" on page 6.)

10. Recording Chairperson is responsible for negotiating with the individual or company who will be recording the convention. That individual will be directly responsible to the convention chairperson (see Recording Guidelines on page 5).

PAYING THE BILLS

How are the costs of a convention covered and what can be done to make sure that the venture won't go deep in the red? Some conventions may involve spending several thousand dollars, so the committee must have a fair picture of the financial arrangements long before the convention opens. There's no substitute for common sense here; the committee must take a businesslike approach to finances and keep expenditures somewhere within a conservative estimate of anticipated revenues. As for financing the convention, several sound methods seem to be in general use:

1. The Underwriting Method. The groups in the area, perhaps through their representatives on the convention committee, agree to underwrite the complete costs of the event. Since the registration fees can be established at a level sufficient to cover the total costs, this should result in no actual out-of-pocket costs to groups. It's a good idea, though, to put the tickets on sale well in advance of the convention and to know where the break-even point lies. Registration fees cover costs for special events.

2. The Convention Fund. In some areas, the groups make year-round contributions to a convention fund. Then, there is no registration fee, except possibly for out-of-state visitors.

One method of covering deficits, provided it is done with tact and sufficient explanation, is to take up a special collection at the convention. But if the groups have already been consulted and have agreed to underwrite the convention, making up the deficit is their ultimate responsibility.

Most conventions, however, make a profit. What's to be done with

these surplus funds? In most cases, part of the surplus is held in trust for next year's convention. Then the committee may use the balance to help support local service offices or the General Service Office. In accordance with our Seventh Tradition, only funds from A.A. members attending the event should be contributed to support A.A. activities.

3. Self-support. Based on A.A. experience shared with G.S.O., committees have found it best not to solicit for outside donations of any kind. This is in keeping with our A.A. principle of self-support. (This does not pertain to ordinary business negotiations with the facility where the event is taking place.) For additional resources visit the "contribution and self-support" page on G.S.O.'s website.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD CONVENTION PROGRAM?

One A.A. member shared his opinion that the program wasn't really the most important thing at a convention. He looks for something in addition — the joys of meeting new and old friends, working together for our common good, and sharing our experience, strength and hope with each other.

He goes on to say that there can also be a letdown feeling when we leave a convention if the program hasn't been imaginative and inspiring. This takes careful thought well in advance of the convention date. A well-balanced program might include:

1. The Convention Theme. Often, it's easier to plan the overall program by organizing it around a simple theme. Such a theme might be "Unity," "We Came to Believe...", "First Things First," or a similar A.A. saying or topic. This does not mean that the entire program must be devoted to the theme idea; it does, however, serve as a reminder that an A.A. convention advances the common purpose of Alcoholics Anonymous. Some events adopt the current year's General Service Conference Theme.

2. Main Features-Banquets, Open Meetings, etc. In planning a convention, program chairpersons usually schedule several **large open** meetings throughout the event, although not necessarily in immediate succession. A Saturday-night banquet may also serve as an open meeting, with a speaker following the dinner.

The large open meeting brings unity to the convention and gives the opportunity for presenting certain matters — such as the selection of the next year's convention site — before the entire assembly of A.A.s attending. But too many open meetings in any single convention can be tiresome; as a general rule, three or four such meetings are sufficient in a weekend convention.

3. Panels. Many program chairpersons schedule workshops and panel sessions to provide suitable convention activity without overloading the program with open meetings.

Workshops and panels may take a variety of forms; one popular arrangement is to set up a panel with three speakers and a chairperson. Each speaker may be assigned a topic and a time limit. The session may be followed by a short question-and-answer period, if time allows.

On the subject of panels, experience has shown that topics such as "How the General Service Office Works" or "Why G.S.O.?" attract

only a small audience and therefore do not carry the message in a satisfactory fashion. G.S.O. staff members can best be used as speakers on regular panels — where their familiarity with A.A. worldwide can add an extra dimension to the presentation.

Any one of the trustees (especially your own regional trustee) would be invaluable on such topics as "A.A. and Responsibility." They are in a crossroads position where they are aware of our Fellowship — particularly on the public level — and also have an overall perspective on our purposes, strengths, and weaknesses. They can be of great value in helping us learn more about worldwide A.A.

Don't forget your own G.S.R.s, committee members, delegates and past trusted servants. From their work in carrying the message outside their own groups, they'll have many ideas on such subjects as "Is A.A. Changing?," "A.A. at Work, Then and Now." Many other A.A.s — oldtimers and not-so-oldtimers — also have worthwhile information and thoughts on such subjects.

Here are some suggested topics appropriate for workshops and panels:

Correctional Facilities

Treatment Settings

Public Information

Cooperation with the Professional Community

Sponsorship

Service

G.S.R.s

Twelve Traditions

Twelve Concepts

Intergroups and Central Offices

A.A. Grapevine/La Viña

Accessibilities

(Some program committees select phrases from A.A. literature as workshop or panel topics.)

"Balance" and "flow" are two key words in the planning of a convention program, particularly in setting up the panels. It's important that the program flow smoothly, with one feature following another in a pleasant, logical series. It's also important that the panel topics and participants be balanced, so as not to give the audience too much of any one subject, too many speakers from one area, or too many panel participants of similar experience and viewpoint.

One effective way to insure maximum interest and participation in the convention is to farm out each meeting, workshop, or panel to a different group or area within the convention territory. Thus, the groups themselves plan and organize the meetings, always working closely with the general program chairperson to assure balance.

4. Care of Speakers. Most conventions feature speakers from out of town, sometimes A.A. members living a thousand miles or more from the convention site. This means that program chairpersons have a responsibility to see that certain important matters are properly handled on the speakers' behalf:

a. Expenses. It should be clear, when the speakers are booked, what terms are being made for expenses. Unless it's otherwise

specified, speakers have a right to assume that all their travel, meal, and hotel expenses will be paid for the entire trip. Speakers will also expect hotel or motel accommodations as a matter of course; if they're to be guests in private homes, this should be explained before their arrival.

b. **Speaking Arrangements.** Speakers should know when they're expected to speak, as well as on what topic and length of time, and whether their presence is also required elsewhere in the convention. (Some speakers may be unable to attend the entire convention.) No other commitments besides speaking should be made for speakers without their knowledge and consent. Most speakers will also appreciate knowing something about the conditions under which they'll speak; let them know whether there'll be a podium, public address system, etc. If the speaker will be taped, be sure that the speaker is aware and agrees in advance.

c. **Speaker Hosts and/or Hostesses.** Responsible members from the local group should be assigned the duty of being host to the visiting speakers and making sure that they have proper accommodations, as well as transportation and other conveniences.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL ALCOHOLICS

For Deaf Members

A.A. members who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing may need particular considerations when attending an A.A. conference or convention. For those who have a fair amount of hearing and/or who read lips, seating near the speaker may be all that is required. In some cases amplified headsets are provided. Others who are Deaf may require the use of a sign language interpreter. Here are some points to consider when planning a conference or meeting that will be attended by A.A. members who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing.

1. Reserve interpreters well ahead of time because they are in great demand.
2. Budget the interpreting expenses. Find out early what the estimated cost will be, whether by the hour or by the day. If you are holding concurrent workshops, you may need more than one interpreter at the same time. If your event is small (and short) you may be fortunate to find a qualified volunteer, but do not expect to rely on volunteers.
3. In arranging preferred seating for Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing members, designate the reserved area clearly: "Please reserve for members who require sign language interpretation."
4. Sensitize workshop leaders and meeting chairpersons to the use of the interpreter.
5. Stick with your plans once you have announced that an event is sign-language accessible. Consider that there may be fewer events accessible in ASL to members who are Deaf. Any unexpected or last minute removal of services could be problematic, especially for those members who may have travelled long distances to attend.
6. If the event is a large one with concurrent meetings and workshops, plan for continuous availability of several interpreters.
7. If you are listing the event with the General Service Office, your

local intergroup, or in any A.A. publication, specify that it is sign-language interpreted. If possible, have a T.D.D. number that people who are Deaf can call for more information.

For A.A.s with Other Needs

Committees assist A.A. members who have a variety of challenges to accessing the A.A. message.

For example, for blind people, some convention committees provide programs in braille. Also, if meetings are wheelchair accessible, this may be noted in the program.

GUARDING ANONYMITY

Announcement for Press

When A.A. conventions are being covered by members of the press, it's customary to begin meetings by asking their cooperation in protecting members' anonymity. Such an announcement might go like this:

"Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.

"Thus, we respectfully ask that A.A. speakers and A.A. members not be photographed, videotaped, or identified by full name on audiotapes and in published or broadcast reports of our meetings, including those reports on new media technologies such as the internet.

"The assurance of anonymity is essential in our efforts to help other problem drinkers who may wish to share our recovery program with us. And our Tradition of anonymity reminds us that 'A.A. principles come before personalities.'"

It's unusual that any newspaper or broadcasting station these days will fail to cooperate with this request; not only is the A.A. principle of anonymity well known generally, but our G.S.O. in New York City has advised the press and broadcasters year after year of A.A.'s position on this matter.

But it's possible that members' anonymity may be violated through indirect methods. There's a likelihood, for example, that too much promotional zeal on the part of the convention committee may lead them to reveal a great deal of information about speakers without actually disclosing last names. This means, in the case of some well-known individuals, that their anonymity is technically protected but actually broken, since their identity can be readily recognized by anybody familiar with them or their work.

In one case, for example, a university professor had been invited to address a large A.A. banquet in the same state where he lived and worked. Only his first name, nickname, and last initial appeared on the announcement posters, but the name of his school and a previous academic connection were fully displayed. The professor's actual identity couldn't have been more clearly revealed if his last name and photograph had been included.

Is there a safe way to avoid making such de facto anonymity breaks? Well, one good procedure is to ask speakers how they wish to be listed on posters and advance notices. They'll know better than anybody else how much information about themselves ought to be revealed. In any case, whatever the speakers' feelings,

the practice of using initials rather than last names should always be followed for the protection of A.A., as well as the individual.

PICTURE TAKING GUIDELINES

Many A.A. event committees announce that the taking of photographs during A.A. meetings might make some attendees uncomfortable regarding their anonymity. Even when photographs are permitted to be taken, some committees provide reminders that any photographs taken should be away from crowds, to ensure that no images are taken of people who have not given permission to be in the picture. The A.A. Anonymity Display Card (M-61, available from G.S.O.) is often used for such announcements.

As the long form of Tradition Eleven reminds us, “Our names and pictures as A.A. members ought not be broadcast, filmed, or publicly printed” (this would include on digital media such as social networking, Internet and other nonpassword protected websites). In 2013 the General Service Conference affirmed “...that the Internet, social media and all forms of public communications are implicit in the last phrase of the Short Form of Tradition Eleven, which reads: ‘...at the level of press, radio and films.’”

As a further note about anonymity, event committees may announce, “Out of respect for others, please do not take photographs during any of the meetings. Also, be considerate when taking photographs around convention venues. Take care that you do not capture images of A.A. members, family members, and friends who did not give permission and may not wish to appear in your pictures. Please do not post recognizable photos of identifiable A.A. members on websites accessible to the public, including unrestricted pages on social networking sites.”

AUDIO RECORDING GUIDELINES

Shared experience makes it clear that recording of an A.A. convention cannot be left to chance. It is a difficult and time consuming job, including preliminary work with the speakers and decisions about who will record the convention, the conduct of the recorder during the convention, and his/her staff and follow-up after the convention. Following are some suggestions if the convention committee decides to use an outside vendor:

1. The recording chairperson may represent the convention in reaching agreements with the person who will be recording that particular convention, and in developing a written agreement.
2. The convention recording chairperson may develop a release form on which speakers agree to being recorded or decline to be recorded.
3. Experience shows that it is best to encourage speakers not to use full names and not to identify third parties by full names in their talks. The strength of our anonymity Traditions is reinforced by speakers who do not use their last names and by recording companies or recorders whose labels and catalogs do not identify speakers by last names, titles, service jobs or descriptions.

Experience also indicates that speaker recordings are being disseminated over the Internet, a public media outlet. In addition, some A.A. members, if being recorded for future play on a public website,

may choose to leave out other details of their lives that may make themselves or their families identifiable.

4. The recording chairperson ensures that a recorder has an understanding of the Traditions.
5. The agreement prepared by the convention committee determines what the recorder sells or displays on-site.
6. The convention committee clarifies that recording may be done by an outside vendor, and is not an official part of the convention.
7. Convention committees discourage any recording royalties to the convention committee.

VIDEO RECORDING GUIDELINES

In keeping with a 1980 General Service Conference recommendation, it is suggested that speakers not be recorded on video.

MISCELLANEOUS TIPS ON GOOD CONVENTION MANAGEMENT

When your committee is discussing the convention, try to go over the things you liked and didn't like at past conventions, especially matters that caused petty irritations and annoyances; most likely, they can be avoided. Here are a few suggestions:

1. **Badges.** A.A. conventions don't seem to be right without identification badges. See that they're in bold, colorful letters, so they can be read at a glance.

Try not to subject guests to more than a few minutes' wait in registering for the convention and picking up their badges. Organize the registration so the process will flow smoothly and quickly.

2. **Coffee.** It's an essential feature — plenty of coffee sessions throughout the convention. Don't forget, some A.A.s come more to talk to each other than to listen to speakers, so be sure they have lots of opportunity to gather 'round the coffeepot.

3. **Accessibility.** At large conventions, it's sometimes necessary to hold some of the open meetings in buildings other than the one used as convention headquarters. Try to plan the meetings so members do not have to go more than a few blocks for a meeting or panel session. One exception to this might be the last open meeting of the convention, from which the guests will most likely be making their departure.

4. **Hotel & Motel Registrations.** Often, printed lists of local accommodations, giving prices and other information, are available from local chambers of commerce and similar offices. If possible, send these lists out with the registrations and give members a chance to make their reservations long before the convention.

In sending out the lists don't assume that all A.A.s intend to stay in medium- or high-priced accommodations; also include the lower-priced hotels and motels. In some places, hotels or camping facilities are also listed for the A.A.s who may arrive in campers.

5. **Professional Assistance.** Don't hesitate to avail yourself of assistance from local chamber of commerce officials and convention managers. They already know all about the problems you'll be facing, and they can give invaluable advice and assistance.

6. Displays. You can pass along important A.A. information in an attractive way by requesting the convention literature package to make up an A.A. literature display. This complimentary package is available in English, Spanish or French from G.S.O. for local conventions/conferences/roundups in the U.S. and Canada and contains one copy of all A.A. book dust jackets; one copy of all A.A. Conference-approved pamphlets; A.A. Guidelines; flyers; List of Central Offices, intergroups and Answering Services for the United States and Canada; List of General Service Offices, Central Offices, Intergroups and Answering Services Overseas; List of Service Material Available from G.S.O.; The A.A. Service Manual; and the Conference-approved Literature & Other Service Material catalog.

You can also purchase the current Membership Survey Display (M-13, *English only*) that offers a “snapshot” of A.A. through survey-based statistics on age, sex, occupation, length of sobriety, etc. This display is 27” high, 39” wide; has a double easel in back. It may be available for sale at your local intergroup/central office, or at A.A.’s online store, orders@aa.org.

7. Don’t Compete with Last Year. While it’s best not to try to compete with previous conventions, if you’re the convention chair-

person, you will naturally want to benefit from the experience of previous, convention committees.

A.A. AND AL-ANON

The following questions often arise:

How may A.A. and Al-Anon cooperate in area and regional conventions and get-togethers?

In accordance with the Twelve Traditions, a convention would be either A.A. or Al-Anon — not both. However, most A.A. convention committees invite Al-Anon to participate and plan their own program, and the committee arranges for facilities for the Al-Anon meetings.

Should an A.A. convention committee make a contribution to Al-Anon from the financial profits of the convention?

In accordance with the self-support Traditions of both Fellowships and to abide by the concept of “cooperation but not affiliation,” it is suggested that A.A. should not make gifts or contributions to Al-Anon. By the same token, A.A. should not accept contributions from Al-Anon. If separate registrations have been kept for both A.A. and Al-Anon, however, income may be easily assigned. For further shared experience please see the A.A. Guidelines on the Relationship Between A.A. and Al-Anon (MG-8).

A.A.® Guidelines

Central or Intergroup Offices

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

The A.A. Guidelines below are compiled from the shared service experience of A.A. members throughout the U.S. and Canada. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference. In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an *informed* group conscience.

WHAT IS A CENTRAL OR INTERGROUP OFFICE?

A central or intergroup office is an A.A. service office that involves partnership among groups in a community — just as A.A. groups themselves are partnerships of individuals. A central/intergroup office is established to carry out certain functions common to all the groups — functions which are best handled by a centralized office — and it is usually maintained, supervised, and supported by these groups in their general interest. It exists to aid the groups in their common purpose of carrying the A.A. message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

FUNCTIONS OF A CENTRAL/ INTERGROUP OFFICE

A.A. experience has demonstrated that central/intergroup offices are helpful, particularly in populous areas. There are nearly 700 central/intergroup offices throughout the world, performing vital A.A. services. These constitute a network of service outlets and A.A. contacts to help carry the A.A. message.

The following suggestions outline the basic services a central/intergroup office might offer:

- 1) *A.A. Inquiries* — By providing an Alcoholics Anonymous listing in the local telephone directory and on appropriate websites, the central/intergroup office may receive inquiries from those seeking help. They will refer the caller to a nearby A.A. group, where sponsorship may be arranged, or have a twelfth stepper contact them. Many local A.A. offices now have their own websites.
- 2) *Office Facilities* — The central/intergroup office can maintain a conveniently located office in which paid workers and/or volunteers coordinate local A.A. services.
- 3) *Meeting Lists and Other Literature* — At regular intervals, the central/intergroup office may publish and distribute up-to-date lists of meetings and other information about local A.A. services. Many intergroup/ central/intergroup offices sell A.A. Conference-approved literature for the convenience of local groups.
- 4) *Information Exchange* — The service office may function as a clearinghouse for the circulation and exchange of information among all the A.A. groups in the community. In this same connection, a logical function of the central/intergroup office is to provide “exchange” meetings, where group program chairpersons meet regularly to exchange meetings with other groups.
- 5) *Local Committees on Public Information (P.I.) and Cooperation with the Professional Community (C.P.C.) in cooperation with district and area P.I. and C.P.C. committees* — The central/intergroup office is an ideal contact with those in the community seeking information about A.A. Thus, A.A.’s relations with the public and professionals in the alcoholism field are often handled through the cooperation of gen-

eral service committees and central/intergroup offices. To avoid duplication of efforts and other difficulties, good communication between all parts of A.A. is paramount. A.A. Guidelines and Workbooks on P.I. and C.P.C. are available on G.S.O.’s website at www.aa.org.

6) *A.A. in Correctional and Treatment Facilities* — The central/intergroup office can maintain contact with local groups in correctional facilities and treatment facilities, offering literature and prerelease A.A. contacts and arranging for A.A. speakers and visitors to meetings. When there is a corrections or treatment committee for this purpose, the service office may assist it through close cooperation with local hospitals and prisons.

Central/intergroup offices handling institutional contacts can find A.A. Guidelines and other service material on aa.org for shared experience in providing these services.

7) *Local A.A. Events* — An A.A. central/intergroup office is a logical body to manage the details of an annual dinner, picnic, or convention, if the participating groups wish it.

8) *A.A. Bulletin or Newsletter* — The preparation of a publication for periodic distribution to A.A. groups is often a function of the central/intergroup office.

9) *Accessibilities* — Many central/intergroup offices carry information on groups that are wheelchair accessible, or which may provide American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation for members who are Deaf. Some offices have equipment or materials for communicating with alcoholics who have visual and auditory challenges, those who are housebound or chronically ill, those who are living with the effects of brain damage or stroke, and others who may have less visible challenges.

MAKING A GOOD BEGINNING

Like many well-meant ventures in A.A., central/intergroup offices sometimes suffer because they are conceived and established without advance planning. The unhappy and damaging experiences of such ventures indicate that a few questions should be raised before a central/intergroup office is opened.

One question should concern actual need. Is there a sufficient number of groups in the community to justify opening a central/intergroup office? Is there a widely-expressed need? Has the potential impact on other local A.A. offices in the community been discussed? Are the groups willing and able to support such a service office financially? Have the groups been consulted as to whether such an office could address their specific service needs? Will they cooperate with and support a new office’s aims and purposes? (If, after such consideration, an office seems impractical or not necessary at the time, a tele-

phone answering service may fill the service needs of the community. If additional information is needed, G.S.O. has Guidelines on A.A. Answering Services.)

Questions should also be raised about proposed locations for the central/intergroup office and the personnel and equipment needed. It's sometimes tempting to consider moderately priced or free facilities supplied by agencies or organizations working in the field of alcoholism or in other fields. But it's better to forgo this short-term advantage if there's any likelihood that A.A. would lose its independent status in the bargain or appear — in the public mind at least — to be sponsored or controlled by the other organization.

The question also comes up whether to buy property or a building. A.A. traditionally does not own property, "lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose." Experience also indicates that it is not fair or wise to commit future A.A. members to financial obligations for which they have not initially assumed responsibility, so renting a facility has proved best. It may also appear attractive to consolidate the central/intergroup office with the facilities and operations of a club. But the risks and pitfalls involved in this are almost too numerous to mention here. One reason for discouraging this is the possibility that the problems of operating the club and the service office will become intertwined, to the detriment of each activity. An even more important point is the need for keeping a clear separation between club operations and A.A. group activities; any strong identification with a club may impair a central/intergroup office's ability to serve the groups.

A central location for the office is usually desirable, if finances permit. It's also well to take in possible future needs at the same time the original quarters are being considered; sometimes it's possible to rent facilities in buildings where adjoining rooms may become available later. Sufficient room should be provided for copying, mailings, committee meetings, and consultation with newcomers. Since a central/intergroup office is intended to provide services for all A.A. groups in a community, experience indicates that it is best for the office not to give or rent space to any one group for meetings. The decision, however, is really up to each office, acting autonomously.

GETTING UNDER WAY

Once some of these preliminary matters have been satisfactorily disposed of, the road is clear for the formal organizational work. Here's a suggested plan that has worked well.

Each group in the community is asked to send both a representative and an alternate representative to a special meeting to form a central/intergroup office committee (also called a steering committee in some places). In large communities, it is sometimes necessary to divide the group into zones, with a zone representative serving several groups. Once formed, the committee takes over the responsibility for the project and outlines its aims and purposes for approval by the participant groups. Such an outline might cover these points:

- 1) Listing of all groups in the community that want to participate.
- 2) A reminder that financial support is voluntary and not a condition of membership (in keeping with A.A. tradition).
- 3) A clear explanation that responsibility for the maintenance of the service office rests with the groups. Therefore, each group should name a central/intergroup office representative and an alternate to

serve a specified term as the connecting link between the group and its central/intergroup office.

- 4) A summary of the functions of the central/intergroup office and an explanation of how it will be staffed and operated.

- 5) A discussion of how the service office will handle such vital matters as inquiries from newcomers, relations with the press, and similar duties.

- 6) Assurance that the service center will be operated in keeping with A.A.'s Twelve Traditions.

GROUP REPRESENTATION AT A CENTRAL/INTERGROUP OFFICE

Service centers usually have no authority on their own account; they derive it from the participating groups. Central/intergroup offices are essentially A.A. service entities, "directly responsible to those they serve," as described in Tradition Nine. Local group representatives reflect the groups' conscience in the service center operations. In most communities, a central/intergroup office committee or steering committee is set up to handle the administrative activities of the service office. The steering committee holds regularly scheduled meetings and deals with general policy and plans. Periodically, the steering committee reports to group representatives on central/intergroup office problems and accomplishments. It is extremely important to keep a two-way flow of information going between the central/intergroup office and groups.

STAFFING THE INTERGROUP

Most A.A. central/intergroup offices now employ at least one paid full-time secretary or manager, as well as A.A. volunteers — members who respond to Twelfth Step calls at the office, answer the telephone, and often carry out other service office duties. Large offices may also have paid clerical workers on the staff to assist the full-time person. Although the principles involving certain paid employees of A.A. service centers are now widely known in A.A., it is still helpful to review the appropriate A.A. Tradition at the time of opening a new service office. As it states in Tradition Eight: "Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers." It should be clear from this that the paid secretary functions as a paid employee of the central office — not as an A.A. member — during duty hours and is hired largely on the basis of professional skill.

Regarding compensation for paid workers, Bill W. writes in "Twelve Concepts for World Service" as follows: "We believe that each paid executive, staff member, or consultant should be recompensed in reasonable relation to the value of his or her similar services or abilities in the commercial world." Also, Social Security and certain insurance benefits are provided, as well as sick leave and vacations. It is suggested that the central/intergroup office full-time secretary also be accorded a vote as well as a voice on the steering committee. This policy is successfully followed by A.A. World Services, Inc.: The staff coordinator — a paid employee as well as an A.A. member — also serves as a director and thus has a vote on policy matters.

SUPERVISION — MAKING THE OFFICE SERVE

It's plain that the success of the central/intergroup office requires community-wide agreement on matters concerning administrative

responsibility and authority. The steering committee should reach an early consensus on this; if necessary, they should explain it in the bylaws or some other set of guidelines. For, while it's difficult to establish hard-and-fast rules and then live by them, it's at least reasonable to clarify such matters as the functions of the office and the extent of the paid secretary's authority and duties.

Some decisions can be entrusted to the paid secretary. In other cases, it may be wiser for the steering committee to maintain full oversight of many matters. In any case, it's important that problems get an early review by someone who is authorized to deal with them and can solve them as quickly as possible. Otherwise, the service office operations are bound to suffer.

Special attention might be given to the following matters in the operation of the office:

1) *Fair distribution of Twelfth Step calls.* However tempting it may be to assign follow-up calls to those individuals and groups that seem especially willing, the Twelfth Step work is something all the groups in the community should be encouraged to share. But it's also important that calls are distributed according to the location of the group; that is, newcomers should usually be put in touch with the group nearest to them.

2) *After closing hours,* A.A. volunteers or a telephone answering service — carefully chosen — should handle incoming calls. (See Guidelines on A.A. Answering Services.)

3) *Authority and responsibility* should be related. It is unfair to assign certain responsibilities to a paid secretary or volunteer without giving commensurate authority.

FACING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Incorporation: By its very nature, a service office involves making financial commitments quite different from those usually encountered in the operation of an A.A. group. Office facilities have to be leased; a secretary must be hired and paid; office supplies must be purchased; the telephone bill has to be paid regularly. To adequately take care of these responsibilities, it is generally wise to incorporate separately special facilities, such as a service office, which require money or management.

Since group purposes, local conditions, and state laws vary, it is suggested a local lawyer be consulted regarding such incorporation. At the same time, the following points might be emphasized: If possible, eliminate the name "Alcoholics Anonymous" from the corporate title. (This name is the sole property of A.A. as a whole.) Limit the activities of the corporation to the one locality only. Expenses create a need for financial responsibility that should be recognized at the outset; if properly understood and dealt with, it never need become a source of trouble.

Sometimes, however, central/intergroup office ventures have gotten caught up in disputes over money, authority, and like matters — thus becoming less effective in carrying the A.A. message. It's not always clear why these troubles have come up, but often it's been because the proper functions of a central/intergroup office were not clearly explained or understood, or there was some disregard of the principles in A.A.'s Twelve Traditions.

Suggested methods of financing a central/intergroup office:

1) *Group Collections.* A.A. groups participating in the financial support

of the service office may choose to make their contributions by setting aside fixed sums from their regular collections. Many groups pledge a fixed amount, which is paid periodically. This assures the central/intergroup office of a regular income, and certainly helps it to plan the best means of meeting its own obligations.

Occasionally there are groups that do not support a central/intergroup office. In these cases, the spirit of contributing voluntarily, that prevails throughout A.A., applies. If groups can't or choose not to pay their share of the costs, they shouldn't be denied the services of the office.

2) *Special Contributions.* Some groups provide a special collection box or basket in a convenient place during meeting times, inviting members to contribute. In that same vein, A.A. members may make individual contributions, on a pledge or voluntary basis, directly to the service office. Also, many A.A.s make contributions to their central/intergroup office in celebration of their A.A. birthday or anniversary. Some offices accept electronic Seventh Tradition contributions through their websites.

3) *Sale of Literature.* Many service offices publish their own meeting lists; others also produce introductory pamphlets explaining A.A. These can be sold at a slight profit to help defray office expenses. It is also possible to buy books from G.S.O. for resale at the retail price, the profit going to support the central/intergroup office. The Conference-approved literature catalog describes various discounts.

4) *Special Events.* Some service offices hold yearly banquets, conventions, and similar events, using the "profits" for support of the office.

For help in financial planning, the 1977 General Service Conference recommended that "a suggested prudent reserve... preferably be one to 12 months' operating expense, depending on local needs."

CENTRAL/INTERGROUP OFFICES AND G.S.O.

The common experience has shown that A.A.'s worldwide unity is best served if A.A. groups maintain their own separate contacts with G.S.O. Direct group contact with G.S.O. doesn't take the place of services provided by a local service office, but helps G.S.O. to keep in closer touch with all groups.

There are, however, some important areas of interest in which close contact between the central/intergroup offices and G.S.O. is not only desirable but necessary. Some central/intergroup offices, for example, like to be provided with New Group Information Forms so that newly formed groups can be immediately listed with G.S.O. These forms as well as forms for changing group information, are available on aa.org.

Groups should not assume that if they list themselves with a central/intergroup office they are automatically listed at G.S.O. New groups are encouraged to send a Group Information Form directly to the General Service Office, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163, or emailing records@aa.org.

NEWSLETTERS OR BULLETINS

Newsletters or bulletins published by central/intergroup offices may include not only office news and events, but similar information about the groups and committees served by these offices (such as meeting

times, openings of new groups, or changes of group meeting locations or officers). Frequently, material from A.A. literature is reprinted and discussed, and articles on subjects of interest to A.A.s also are published.

Experience indicates that, as in most A.A. service activities, it is prudent to make a committee (rather than one or two individuals) responsible for the format, planning, and content of the bulletin. Many local publications quote from A.A. literature such as the Big Book, the *Twelve and Twelve*, *The A.A. Service Manual*, and Conference-approved pamphlets. Any A.A. newsletter, bulletin, or meeting list is more than welcome to use this material. Please be sure to include the proper credit line in your publications, in order to insure that the copyrights of A.A. literature are protected.

The A.A. Preamble is copyrighted by the A.A. Grapevine. For information on A.A. Grapevine's reprint policy for the Preamble and other Grapevine material, please visit aagrapevine.org/copyright-and-reprints-policy.

The Steps and Traditions should be followed by these words: *Reprinted with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.*

After a quotation from an A.A. book or pamphlet, these words should appear: *Reprinted from [name of book or pamphlet, page number] with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.*

The initials A.A. and the name Alcoholics Anonymous are registered trademarks and should be followed by the © mark, to comply fully with trademark law. Please indicate the symbol © with the first prominent use of the name, for example: Alcoholics Anonymous © or A.A.® All entities, other than A.A.W.S., Inc., should also state in a footnote that the symbol or name is a registered trademark of A.A. World Services, Inc. Additional information is available on the "Terms of Use" page on aa.org.

More suggestions you might consider, based on local experience with A.A. newsletters and bulletins.

- Scheduling a "theme issue," centering on some aspect of the A.A. program and using excerpts from Conference-approved material (with proper credit) relating to the theme.
- Asking for and publishing letters from your A.A. readers.
- Carrying highlights of minutes from various committee meetings — central/intergroup office steering committee, institutions, public information, etc.
- Including committee financial reports and records of group contributions.
- Running occasional appropriate cartoons. (If these are from the A.A. Grapevine or Conference-approved pamphlets, please remember that illustrations, too, are copyrighted, and the proper credit should accompany any of these that are used.)
- Running a "Calendar of Events" feature.

- Conducting a subscription campaign (perhaps making announcements at group meetings), to build paid readership.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is the key to working together — Central or Intergroup Office and General Service Area Committee or the District Committee and the General Service Office of A.A. In 1990 the General Service Conference stressed the importance of communication and recommended that delegates establish and maintain contact with offices in their areas to share Conference information and assure that central/intergroup offices have a voice in the Fellowship through their existing service structure.

Try to find out what is going on by getting together from time to time with corresponding committees in your area. It is important to share ideas and discuss activities so as to avoid duplication of effort. It is not important who does the work (the General Service Committee or the Central/intergroup office Committee in your area) but that the work gets done — that help is there for the next alcoholic who needs us and our Fellowship.

Central/intergroup offices and general service area committees are complementary, rather than competitive, A.A. operations. Both exist to help insure A.A. unity and to fulfill A.A.'s primary purpose of carrying the message.

In 1986, the first A.A.W.S./Intergroup/Central Office Seminar was held to discuss questions on literature distribution, pricing and discounts, and to share ways to work together. Seminars are now held each year. Seminar history and information can be found at: www.icooa.org.

For its own part, G.S.O. also seeks to keep central/intergroup offices well informed. As a regular policy, the G.S.O. newsletter, Box 4-5-9, as well as activity updates and A.A.W.S. Highlights, are sent to each central/intergroup office that lists itself with G.S.O. Therefore, it is important to remember to update office contact information. The staff member on the Group Services assignment is the liaison with central/intergroup offices. You may contact Group Services by calling (212) 870-3400 or emailing groupservices@aa.org.

GOOD LUCK AND SMOOTH SAILING

We hope these suggestions will help make your central/intergroup office venture a vital and fruitful addition to the A.A. activity in your area. These are suggestions only, and it's the spirit and cooperation behind the central office idea that will make it work.

If you are starting a new office please write to G.S.O.; your office will be added to the mailing list and you will receive a Central/intergroup Office Kit and some literature.

Your office will be included in the U.S. and Canadian Directories so that you may share A.A. experience with others and be available for any alcoholic seeking help.

A.A.® Guidelines

Archives

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

A.A. Guidelines are compiled from the shared experience of A.A. members in various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada). In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy, except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an *informed* group conscience.

SERVICE THROUGH ARCHIVES

Whenever a society or civilization perishes there is always one condition present; they forgot where they came from.

—Carl Sandburg

Like any other A.A. service, the primary purpose of those involved in archival work is to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous. Archives service work is more than mere custodial activity; it is the means by which we collect, preserve, and share the rich and meaningful heritage of our Fellowship. It is by the collection and sharing of these important historical elements that our collective gratitude for Alcoholics Anonymous is deepened.

A.A. members have a responsibility to gather and care for the Fellowship's historical documents and memorabilia. Correspondence, records, minutes, reports, photographs, newspaper and magazine articles from the past and the present should be collected, preserved, and made available for the guidance and research of A.A. members and others (researchers, historians, and scholars from various disciplines) — for now and for generations to come.

Many areas, districts, intergroup/central offices, and groups have elected to develop archives collections to preserve their own local history. These guidelines have been developed to assist with these efforts.

GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE ARCHIVES

In 2006, the trustees' Archives Committee revised the mission and purpose applicable to the Archives of the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, which can serve as a foundation from which each local and area A.A. archives collection can develop its own principles according to its group conscience. The G.S.O. Archives' mission and purpose read as follows:

MISSION

The mission of the Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Office Archives is to document permanently the work of Alcoholics Anonymous, to make the history of the organization accessible to A.A. members and other researchers, and to provide a context for understanding A.A.'s progression, principles and traditions.

PURPOSE

Consistent with A.A.'s primary purpose of maintaining our sobriety and helping other alcoholics achieve recovery, the Archives of Alcoholics Anonymous will:

- Receive, classify, and index all relevant material, such as administrative files and records, correspondence, and literary works and artifacts considered to have historical importance to Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Hold and preserve such material.
- Provide access to these materials, as determined by the archivist in consultation with the trustees' Archives Committee, to members of Alcoholics Anonymous and to others who may have a valid need to review such material, contingent upon a commitment to preserve the anonymity of our members.
- Serve as a resource and laboratory to stimulate and nourish learning.
- Provide information services to assist the operations of Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Promote knowledge and understanding of the origins, goals and programs of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The General Service Office Archives is administered by the G.S.O. archivist. The policies, procedures, and projects of the General Service Office Archives are overseen by a trustees' committee of the General Service Board (which meets three times per year), as well as a committee of the General Service Conference (which meets jointly with the trustees' Archives Committee during the annual General Service Conference).

For more information about the G.S.O. Archives collections, projects, and services, see the *Archives Workbook*, or G.S.O.'s A.A. website, at www.aa.org. You can also contact us anytime with specific questions. You will find our contact information in the "References" section on page 3.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT ANONYMITY

The question often arises if, in collecting, writing up, or displaying local or area history, full names or full face photos should be used of group founders, early members or group officers, regardless of whether the manuscripts are to be retained in the area only, or are also intended for sharing with G.S.O. and other area archives. Development of procedures seems to be a matter of local policy decision by the archives committee, but the necessity for protecting the anonymity of A.A. members whose identity could be determined by photos or correspondence is without question an important consideration and a trust that falls upon all A.A. archivists and archives committees.

Archives committees that plan to exhibit in venues that might be viewed by the public, such as at certain events or on the Internet,

may wish to limit the display to only those items that are in keeping with our principle of anonymity. Archival displays at A.A. events might also include signs about anonymity throughout the exhibit area, and discourage picture taking of certain items. For more information, the pamphlet "[Understanding Anonymity](#)" contains shared experience of how A.A. members practice our principle of anonymity, including posthumous anonymity.

GETTING STARTED LOCALLY

One of the best ways to get started in archival service work is to contact G.S.O. in order to obtain the [Archives Workbook](#), as well as other service pieces. The workbook contains helpful information gathered from shared experience over many years.

The idea of setting up an archives collection in a specific geographic area most often occurs to someone who has been in A.A. for a while, or to several oldtimers who realize the need to create local or area archival centers, often beginning with a project to collect material for an area history.

Often, after a need for an archives collection has been identified, the idea is brought to the area or other local committee, as applicable, for wider discussion. Following sharing and reaching a group conscience, it may then be agreed upon to create an [Archives committee](#), responsible to the area or local committee. Archives committees usually include A.A. members knowledgeable about the early history, who have sources for obtaining historical A.A. material.

THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

The Archives committee is responsible for establishing policies, budgets and procedures. Through its group conscience, it undertakes and maintains final responsibility and authority for the use of the Archives. In all of its actions, the Archives committee needs to be guided by A.A.'s primary purpose. Thus, if non-A.A. friends are asked to serve on the committee, which may be desirable due to their interest and special knowledge or expertise, they ought to be people who are thoroughly familiar with our primary purpose, as well as all of our A.A. Traditions.

One of the most important functions of the Archives committee is to establish a Collection Scope, defining and describing what the archives will and will not collect, and why. These parameters will guide the archivist in gathering material of historical significance and will reduce the amount of time and space spent collecting and preserving relatively insignificant materials. For an example of a defined Collection Scope, please contact the G.S.O. Archives.

THE ROLE OF THE ARCHIVIST

The Archives committee may decide, as its first act, to select a member to serve as the archivist, so that there will be a central administrator for the collection. From shared experience we know that it takes a considerable amount of time to become familiar with a collection of historical information. Therefore, it is recommended that the archivist not rotate frequently. Some areas choose to appoint non-rotating archivists who hold the position for many years.

The archivist is the person responsible for the collection, including documents, books, recordings, and artifacts. He or she maintains the

physical integrity of the collection, and also develops an index, inventory, and/or finding aid, to provide easy ways to search and access the collection. The archivist is also responsible for ensuring the protection of the anonymity of members, and the confidentiality of all A.A. records. In most cases, the archivist regularly reports to the local A.A. entity that supports the work, giving updates on current projects. It is desirable that the archivist take at least an introductory course in archival science or library science, and have a membership in a local archivists' organization. For more information about how to find these educational opportunities, contact the G.S.O. Archives.

The function of the archivist can be considered therefore to be two-fold: primarily, a custodial responsibility for assuring the physical integrity of the collection and its availability to persons with a valid reason for study; and also a parallel and critical role of information gatherer. The archivist gathers facts and documentation, from both the distant and recent past, to preserve A.A.'s message. Bill W. urged that archives are needed "so that myth doesn't prevail over fact." In a real sense, A.A. archivists are "keepers of the past."

FINANCING THE ARCHIVES

In keeping with Tradition Seven, the archives ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions. It is better when funding for the archives is derived from an overall budget of the A.A. entity it serves, rather than through separate A.A. contributions. In this way, archival activity can better reflect the support of the membership, and maintain the perspective of the entire range of Twelfth Step activity.

HOUSING THE ARCHIVES

Over the years it has become clear that, whenever possible, an archives collection ought to be housed in rented space, rather than in an individual A.A. member's home. Renting space for the archives eliminates both any appearance of there being a "private collection," and any problems that might arise later regarding issues of ownership following the death or departure of a custodian. Additionally, with rented space, displays of all general material can be made available on a regularly scheduled basis.

DEVELOPING A COLLECTION

The foundation of an archives collection may include: books; pamphlets; directories; G.S.O. bulletins and reports; Grapevine materials; Conference Reports; International Convention materials; newsletters; local meeting lists; area and district minutes and reports; written histories, biographies, and obituaries; photographs and audio recordings; and more. The archivist might also arrange to audiotape local oldtimers, thus adding irreplaceable oral histories to the collection. If you need more information on collecting oral histories, the G.S.O. Archives can send you a complete [Oral Histories Kit](#), which provides more tips, technical information, forms and questionnaires, and a source list for more information.

Whenever possible, the archivist seeks out and accumulates local A.A. historical material on an ongoing basis — including letters, bulletins and photographs — from oldtimers, past delegates, various committee members and so on. It is important to note that whenever a donation is made to an archives, a signed Deed of Gift should be included, indicating that the material has been legally transferred to

the archives (rather than to an archivist) to avoid any later misunderstanding regarding ownership of the donation. For a sample Deed of Gift, see the [Archives Workbook](#).

There are many other ways to develop collections. The archivist can contact other local archives for ideas and guidance by contacting the G.S.O. archivist and requesting a list of those local archivists who have indicated a willingness to exchange information. In addition, archives committees can participate in and publicize local history-gathering efforts, making presentations, and offering table displays at many A.A. events, such as oldtimer meetings, conventions, and roundups.

ARCHIVAL PROCEDURES

At a very basic level, archivists do four things with an archives collection:

1. Organize it: Sort the collection somehow; chronologically, alphabetically, by subject, and/or by type of object, in a sensible manner.
2. Catalog it: Create a searchable list or inventory describing each item in the collection.
3. Preserve it: Perform preservation tasks, from the very simple to the very complicated, to prolong the life of the item.
4. Let people know about it: Create exhibits and displays, publish articles about the archives in a newsletter, provide research access, and give information to those who have questions.

As soon as an item is received in the archives, it should be organized, filed appropriately, and added to the inventory list. Each item should be entered into some kind of retrieval system or database, either manual or computerized, in order to provide readily accessible information to researchers.

Next, the conservation and preservation needs of the collection should be evaluated. As a general rule, materials should be simply housed in acid-free folders and boxes to stabilize, protect, and preserve them. Archivists should avoid performing any 'repair' on a document or item that is not reversible. For example, documents should never be laminated, and Scotch tape should not be used, as this will inevitably do more harm than good. Sometimes it may be necessary to seek outside professional help to ensure the integrity of an item, through conservation, repair, reformatting, or digitization.

The G.S.O. Archives has the following classifications that we assign to our materials based on their contents: "Open to all," "Open to A.A. members," "Open with the approval of the trustees' Archives Committee" and "Closed at this time." This final classification means that it is not available to anyone; sometimes donors request that documents remain sealed for a certain period of time. However, the archives should remain as open as possible, with very few documents sealed forever that are completely inaccessible to the Fellowship.

RESEARCH IN THE ARCHIVES

Researchers working in the archives ought to be informed that they will be expected to adhere strictly to our Anonymity Traditions. Only first names and last initials may be used to identify A.A. members. With respect to G.S.O. Archives, the trustees' Archives Committee

has recommended that there be no photocopying of private correspondence, in order to assure anonymity protection, to maintain the physical integrity of archival documents, and to respect copyright laws. The G.S.O. Archives Photocopying Policy is available on the G.S.O. A.A. website.

In addition to the preservation of the anonymity of the author of the correspondence, the writer's private opinions and observations, some of which might be controversial, must be treated with delicacy. In some cases members donate these documents with a trust and expectation that their remarks will be held in confidence. It is essential that the archives committee provide access to these kinds of materials only after great care and consideration of each individual's privacy.

AVAILABLE ARCHIVAL ITEMS

The following items, available from G.S.O. through the [Catalog/Order Form](#), might appeal to those with an interest in A.A. history:

- Books such as *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, *"Pass It On,"* and *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*.
- "History of Service," two CDs containing audio recordings of Bill W. and other A.A. longtimers.
- "Voices of Our Co-founders," five excerpts from different talks by Bill and Dr. Bob available on audiocassette and CD.
- "Markings on the Journey," a DVD of A.A. history.

In addition, several items may be ordered directly from the G.S.O. Archives: A photocopy of a prepublication manuscript of *Alcoholics Anonymous*; sets and individual 8"x10" black-and-white photographs of many places and individuals involved in the establishment of A.A.; the A.A. Archives service piece; and historical articles on A.A. and alcoholism. Contact the G.S.O. Archives for a complete list of available items.

REFERENCES

For a more detailed discussion of archival matters, please review the ["Archives Workbook,"](#) (M-441) \$2.50, available from G.S.O.

For answers to any specific questions, and lists of additional resources, feel free to contact the G.S.O. Archives at archives@aa.org or 212-870-3400. Other valuable information is available on G.S.O.'s A.A. website, at www.aa.org.

For basic archival information the Society of American Archivists (SAA) is a good source. They have published several books in their "Archival Fundamentals" series. SAA also offers a literature catalog and a list of archives workshops and seminars, and may be reached at: The Society of American Archivists, 17 North State St., Suite 1425, Chicago, IL 60602-3315. Tel: 312-606-0722; www.archivists.org.

Annually, A.A. archivists come together for the National A.A. Archives Workshop (NAAAW). In this weekend event, A.A. archivists from all over the U.S. and Canada gather to learn from one another and share ideas. Instruction is given in basic archival techniques and ideas. This event is hosted by a different area each year. Learn more at: www.aanationalarchivesworkshop.com, or by contacting the G.S.O. Archives to be connected with this year's host area.

A.A.® Guidelines

Accessibility for All Alcoholics

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

A.A. Guidelines are compiled from the shared experience of A.A. members in various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada). In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy, except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an *informed* group conscience.

Accessibility issues apply to all alcoholics who have difficulties participating in Alcoholics Anonymous, whether those difficulties are mental, physical, geographic, cultural, ethnic, spiritual, or emotional. While there are no special alcoholics, there are alcoholics who face additional personal barriers to accessing the A.A. message. For the purpose of these Guidelines in defining the accessibility issues that many alcoholics face, we refer primarily to persons who have visual and auditory challenges, those who are housebound or chronically ill, those who are living with the effects of brain damage or stroke, and many others who may have less visible challenges.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ACCESSIBILITIES MODIFICATIONS

When most of the people in our meetings are able-bodied, sighted, and hearing, it's easy to take accessibility for granted – easy to overlook the isolation of a personal barrier to what we perceive as full participation. Respect for the dignity of others is the foundation for all our efforts to carry the message to alcoholics with diverse needs, with emphasis on identification rather than on how we are different. As one A.A. member who is Deaf put it, "I'm just an alcoholic, like everyone else here. I have the same need to be a 'worker among workers' and not be singled out for special treatment. If you can just make the program available to me, I'll do what I have to do to work it."

It is important also to invite all members to participate in every aspect of service within the group or at an A.A. event. Communication works both ways, and groups can ask members who are Deaf or have other physical or mental challenges if they would like to give A.A. talks, with interpreters switching gears and translating for the benefit of hearing members. The goal is to include all alcoholics in the wonderful experience of belonging to a group and partaking in the full range of benefits of membership.

Beyond helping those in your own group or committee, others may be informed about carrying the message to alcoholics with diverse needs through workshops and presentations at A.A. gatherings, such as area assemblies, conventions, conferences, round-ups and Regional Forums.

If we can do a better job of reaching out to alcoholics who may face personal challenges in receiving the A.A. message, we help them to carry the message to other alcoholics they may already know or will come into contact with, providing a powerful example that it's possible to achieve sobriety despite perceived barriers.

CARRYING THE MESSAGE TO A.A.s WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES AND/OR CHRONIC ILLNESSES

Our Fellowship includes A.A. members who are brain injured, confined to their beds with a chronic illness, or who use wheelchairs, walkers or

crutches. Members of a group may feel stymied when first faced with these out-of-the-ordinary challenges but, in fact, there are many modifications which can be made so that alcoholics with diverse needs can be active, participating members of a "regular" group. Some adjustments are simple and some are more complicated—but all are possible.

Often A.A.s take a meeting to an A.A. member who is home- or house-bound. "I can't tell you," one hospitalized A.A. reported, "what a difference it made in my mental and emotional state when those six people showed up in my room carrying the message of A.A. and all the love and support of our Fellowship. And they did it twice a week for three months, until I was able to make meetings again! I was so down in the dumps before; I really had sort of given up—and, to be honest, I had started thinking I might as well have a drink, since I was dying anyway. But hearing the experience, strength and hope of others in the program inspired me to fight both my illnesses—the cancer and my alcoholism. I don't know what I would have done without A.A. at that low point in my life."

For members with physical challenges who aren't confined to bed, A.A.s in their group often drive them to and from meetings, install wheelchair ramps over steps to the meeting room, and arrange the room so that there is ample space for wheelchairs or walkers. It is important to identify meetings accessible for wheelchair users in local meeting schedules. It is also important to make sure restrooms at the meeting place are truly wheelchair accessible, with space enough to maneuver in the room or stall.

Services and material available for members who are chronically ill and/or have limited ambulatory ability include the *Loners/Internationalist Meeting (LIM)*, a newsletter for A.A. members who are in isolated areas, at sea, or home- or hospital-bound (known as Homers) and stay in touch with other members by mail and newsletters. For information about *LIM* call G.S.O., 212-870-3400, or email LIM@aa.org. Many A.A.s share via online meetings. You may contact the Online Intergroup of A.A. (www.aa-intergroup.org) for further information.

CARRYING THE MESSAGE TO A.A.s WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD-OF-HEARING

For members who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing, the use of a skilled American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter is encouraged. Interpreters allow members who are Deaf and hearing members to *share* experience, strength and hope with each other, as communication with the Deaf is not a one-way street. Hearing A.A.s, however, should not let the lack of ASL skills or an interpreter prevent them from reaching out to Deaf alcoholics. Pen and paper, as well as text messaging, are excellent tools for starting up a conversation. The Accessibilities Committee can compile and maintain a list of meetings where ASL interpreters are available, as well as a list of ASL interpreters who are

willing and able to sign at A.A. functions. The cost of ASL interpreters can be a factor for groups. In some areas, the intergroup or district committees provide financial assistance and/or help coordinate efforts to make signed meetings available.

Some intergroup/central offices communicate with A.A. members and newcomers who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing through the Video Relay Service (VRS). To use VRS, a person who is Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing must have video conferencing equipment or a videophone, and a high speed Internet connection. VRS enables a person who is Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing to make and receive telephone calls through a communications assistant who is a qualified American Sign Language interpreter. For many individuals who are Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing, VRS is closer to “functionally equivalent” telephone services than any other form of relay service.

With the help of local central office/intergroup, district or area Accessibilities Committees, A.A.s can initiate efforts to start new A.A. groups or meetings that are more accessible to members who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing. It is important to reach out to the Deaf community in your area when thinking of starting a new meeting that is to provide ASL translation. Make up flyers; give them out at other interpreted meetings, and send them to local professionals who work with Deaf alcoholics.

Services and material available for alcoholics who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing include a DVD of *Alcoholics Anonymous, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and the pamphlet “A.A. for the Alcoholic with Special Needs” in ASL. G.S.O. can provide the following pamphlets, which have been written for reading and signing purposes: “A Newcomer Asks,” “A Brief Guide to Alcoholics Anonymous,” “Translation of the Twelve Steps,” “Translation of the Twelve Traditions,” “Is A.A. For You?,” “Do You Think You’re Different?,” How It Works, “This is A.A.,” and “Is A.A. for Me?” Members who are Deaf are welcome to participate in the LIM. For more detailed information see the A.A. Guidelines on Sharing the A.A. Message with the Alcoholic Who Is Deaf.

CARRYING THE MESSAGE TO A.A.s WHO ARE BLIND OR HAVE LOW VISION

For A.A. members who are blind or have low vision, simply getting to the meeting room can be the biggest problem. The Accessibilities Committee can compile and maintain a list of sighted members who are willing to provide transportation to and from meetings and other A.A. functions. Several groups have asked their local central office or intergroup to code Twelfth Step lists to identify members who are willing to provide transportation. Volunteers may be asked to guide the blind or visually impaired newcomer to chairs, the hospitality table and rest rooms, until that member is acquainted with the surroundings. Meeting rooms should always be set up exactly the same way, or else the blind or visually impaired members should be alerted to what’s different. Banging into a chair or a table in what was empty space at the prior meeting can be both dangerous and embarrassing.

Services and material available to help the alcoholic who is blind or has low vision include books and pamphlets available in Braille, in large print, and/or on CD.

EASY-TO-READ LITERATURE

If you become aware that a member might have a limited ability to read, there are several ways to be helpful without embarrassing him or her.

For instance, when your group’s literature chairperson announces which books and pamphlets are available at that meeting, he or she can also mention the numerous books, pamphlets and Grapevine articles which are available in audio formats. Or, if you think a member of your group might have limited reading skills, you can structure your Step and Traditions meetings so that the Step or Tradition is read aloud at the beginning of the meeting—which is great for everyone!

Services and material available to help A.A.s who have developmental disabilities include CDs and DVDs; illustrated, easy-to-read literature, such as “Is A.A. For Me?,” “Twelve Steps Illustrated,” “Too Young?,” “What Happened to Joe,” “It Happened to Alice,” and “It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell.”

ACCESSIBILITIES COMMITTEES

Accessibility issues apply to all alcoholics who have difficulties participating in Alcoholics Anonymous, whether those difficulties are mental, physical, geographic, cultural, ethnic, spiritual, or emotional. Yet, throughout the Fellowship A.A.s are discovering that the common bond of recovery can transcend these and other personal barriers and diverse needs.

Some A.A. entities are attempting to meet these diverse needs by forming Accessibilities Committees. In some localities committees name themselves according to the particular need addressed, such as “Homebound Committee.” Members of Accessibilities Committees often explore, develop and offer resources to make the A.A. message and participation in our program available to everyone who reaches out for it. A G.S.O. staff member who serves on the Accessibilities assignment, is available as a resource to share Accessibilities experience and to answer questions from local Accessibilities Committees.

In the interests of good communication and working together, Accessibilities Committees are encouraged to keep their area committees and local central/intergroup offices informed of their activities. It is also helpful to work closely with committees handling Public Information and Cooperation With the Professional Community in terms of keeping the public and appropriate agencies informed about A.A. being accessible to alcoholics with diverse needs.

HOW TO ORDER A.A. ACCESSIBILITIES MATERIAL

The final section of the catalog Conference-approved Literature and Other Service Material lists a wide range of literature and audio-visual material for alcoholics with diverse needs.

SUMMARY

Our Big Book says, “We are people who normally would not mix,” and this is especially true when someone is a little “different” from the others. But group unity grows stronger when all members are included and respected and able to function as fully-participating members of the group, and everyone’s sobriety is strengthened. When faced with the challenges of meeting the diverse needs of some members, we would do well to remember A.A.’s Responsibility Declaration: “When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.”

Please share with the General Service Office your experiences and successes in carrying our A.A. message of recovery to alcoholics with mental, physical, geographic, cultural, ethnic, spiritual, or emotional challenges to receiving that message. G.S.O. will in turn share your experience with any A.A. member trying to reach out to alcoholics with diverse needs.

The General Service Office publishes an *Accessibilities Checklist* to help groups determine the overall accessibility of their meeting spaces. The checklist is included below and is available from the General Service Office.

ACCESSIBILITIES CHECKLIST

For Meetings and Groups

How accessible is your meeting? This is a guide to help diminish the trials that people with access barriers may encounter in attending meetings in your location.

Introduction

People with physical challenges should be able to arrive on site, approach a building, and enter as freely as everyone else. At least one route of travel should be safe and accessible to everyone.

Following are some questions your group can answer to determine the overall accessibility of your meeting space.

PARKING:

- ☐ Are an adequate number of accessible parking spaces available?
(9 feet wide for car, plus 5-foot wide access aisle)
- ☐ Are spaces close to accessible entrances?
- ☐ Are spaces marked with identification signs?
- ☐ Is the parking area or street clear of snow, ice, or other debris?
- ☐ Is a path of travel by wheelchair accessible from the street or parking area?
- ☐ Are the sidewalks even and in good repair? Are there curb cut-outs to facilitate access to the sidewalk?

ROUTE OF TRAVEL:

- ☐ Is the meeting place accessible to public transportation?
- ☐ Is there a clear route of travel that does not require the use of stairs?
- ☐ Can any potential obstacles along pathways — including hanging objects — be detected by a person using a cane or other mobility device?
- ☐ If the meeting is at night, is the pathway well lit?

ENTRANCE:

- ☐ Does the entrance have steps, a threshold, or other physical barriers?
- ☐ If so, is there a ramp, lift, or an alternate entrance that is accessible?
 - ☐ Is the ramp excessively steep? Does it have railings?
 - ☐ Is the lift in good working order? If the lift is operated by a key, does someone on location have possession of the key or know where the key is kept?
 - ☐ Is there signage indicating the location of the alternate accessible entrance?
- ☐ Does the entrance door have adequate width (32") and clearance to accommodate a wheelchair?
- ☐ Can the doors be opened by someone in a wheelchair or would he or she need assistance?

INSIDE THE BUILDING:

- ☐ Is there level access from the wheelchair accessible entrance to the meeting area?
- ☐ If not, are there ramps to enable someone in a wheelchair to reach the meeting?
 - ☐ Lifting someone over steps or stairs is not an acceptable solution for access.
- ☐ If there is an elevator or a lift, is it in good working order? If the elevator or lift is operated by a key, does someone on location have possession of the key or know where the key is kept?
- ☐ Are corridors and door widths (32") adequate for passage of a wheelchair?
- ☐ Are corridors clear for wheelchair passage? Can any potential obstacles along corridors or walkways be detected by a person with a visual impairment using a cane — including hanging objects?

RESTROOMS:

- ☐ If there are restrooms for the general public, are wheelchair accessible restrooms in the same location?
 - ☐ If not, is at least one fully accessible restroom available (one for each sex or unisex) within reasonable proximity?
- ☐ Are the stall doors operable?
- ☐ Is there adequate space for a person in a wheelchair to maneuver within the stall? (44" for forward movement and a 5-foot diameter or T-shape of clear space to make turns.)
- ☐ Are there grab bars on the walls behind and to the side nearest the toilet?
- ☐ Can the faucet be operated without grasping, twisting, or turning?

THE MEETING ROOM:

- ☐ Are chairs set up with adequate aisle space for a wheelchair?
- ☐ Is the lighting adequate?
- ☐ Is there a designated section for members who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing?
 - ☐ If so, is there adequate space for a sign language interpreter to sit with easy access to that group?
- ☐ Is someone available to provide information about the meeting space — where the restrooms are, where the best seating might be, noting any obstacles, etc. — for people with disabilities when they first arrive at the meeting?
- ☐ Is the meeting set up with the same configuration each time to help people who are Blind or have low vision become familiar enough with the layout to navigate without assistance?
 - ☐ If the meeting is set up differently, is someone responsible to alert attendees who may have difficulty navigating the space?
- ☐ Is the coffee service accessible to a person in a wheelchair or with another type of mobility device?
- ☐ Is A.A. literature available that addresses the needs of people with disabilities?
- ☐ Does the local intergroup/central office know that the meeting space is available to people with diverse accessibility needs?

Additional information about Accessibilities and setting up your meeting space may be available from your district or area Accessibilities Committee or your local intergroup/central office. You may also want to search the internet for a variety of Accessibilities Guides and information.

A.A.® Guidelines

A.A. Answering Services

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

A.A. Guidelines are compiled from the shared experience of A.A. members in various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada). In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy, except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an *informed* group conscience.

WHAT IS AN A.A. ANSWERING SERVICE?

An A.A. answering service offers a local gateway to reach Alcoholics Anonymous. The service receives inquiries from those seeking help and may refer callers to a nearby A.A. group or may have a twelfth stepper contact them.

In the past, the A.A. answering service provided a listing for Alcoholics Anonymous in the local telephone directory. As technology has changed, A.A. members providing this service have found new avenues for problem drinkers seeking help to find A.A. — for example, getting the answering service number listed online with A.A. websites, Internet directories and local community websites.

GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS SERVED

Most answering services serve groups in one community only, or in one county. In some places, general service districts form the geographical boundaries. Some areas have started state-wide answering services.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ANSWERING SERVICE?

Sharing on this question varies: one or two members may be responsible; an answering service committee may handle matters; an intergroup or central office may manage this service; or the answering service may be the responsibility of the district or area general service committee.

WHO ANSWERS THE PHONES — A.A. MEMBERS OR COMMERCIAL ANSWERING SERVICE PERSONNEL?

Some answering services rely on A.A. members exclusively. Many answering services hire a commercial service which answers the phone and connects callers to an A.A. group or A.A. contact. If a commercial answering service is hired, it is suggested that one person be appointed to make the arrangements, pay the bills, and handle contacts with the answering service, in order to avoid confusing the answering service personnel.

Following is a list of the methods for handling Twelfth Step calls:

1. The commercial answering service has a list of members who are available for Twelfth Step calls. After taking the first name and phone number of the caller, the answering service reaches an A.A. member, who then calls the alcoholic seeking help.
2. The Twelfth Step list is arranged according to geographical areas

or zip/postal code. When the address of the prospect has been ascertained, an A.A. member in the vicinity is called. Some A.A. experience suggests there should be separate lists of men and women Twelfth Steppers.

3. Several A.A. members serve on a rotating duty basis. The commercial service refers calls to them, which they in turn refer to names on their list of Twelfth Steppers.
4. In some instances, the calls are referred to the nearest group, rather than to an individual member.
5. In some places, the groups take responsibility for Twelfth Step calls for one week each on a rotating basis.
6. Some answering services use a diverter or patch system whereby they answer the call but immediately plug in the number of an A.A. volunteer.
7. A screening committee arranges for a different person to receive calls each night from the answering service. That person then refers the calls to A.A. volunteers.

One A.A. answering service committee shared the following information they supplied to a commercial service to explain their needs to its personnel.

When an alcoholic calls for help...

1. Answer by saying, "A.A. answering service."
2. Try to find out what the caller wants.
3. If the caller is reluctant to give a name or other information, try to cross-connect (patch) the call with an A.A. member.
4. If the caller is reluctant to give a name, don't insist.
5. Never argue with the caller. Explain that you are an answering service and will try to put them in touch with an A.A. member.
6. Tell the caller that many A.A. members are at meetings in the evenings, often up until 10:30 or 11:00, so they won't expect an immediate call-back.
7. Please remember that alcoholics and members of their families who call for help are sick people; dealing with them can sometimes be frustrating unless this is kept in mind.
8. If you are criticized, tell the caller that you are acting on instructions from the answering service committee.
9. Problems or questions should be referred to this committee.
10. This committee will keep the commercial service informed about meeting changes, special events, and any other items that A.A. members might inquire about.

11. Record each call with the name of the caller (if possible), time, phone number, and reason for call. The operators note the disposition of the call with the name and phone number of the A.A. member to whom it was referred.

FINANCING

1. Carefully estimate how much money will be needed and how much will be available.
2. Be sure that the groups will finance the venture.
3. Encourage groups to pledge a regular amount each month.
4. When prorating costs among participating groups, add a small amount each month in order to build a reserve for emergencies or expansion of the service.

Paying for Commercial Answering Services

When several groups get together and decide to contract a commercial answering service, the usual experience seems to be that each group contributes according to its own group conscience. In some cases, each group is charged exactly the same amount. In a few instances, groups are charged for the answering service on the basis of group size. When district committees are responsible, groups contribute to the district committee and the committee pays the bills.

STARTING AN ANSWERING SERVICE

Sometimes an answering service has been started by one A.A. group or even by one or two members who felt the need for such a service. As the service begins to fill the need and as A.A. grows locally, other groups nearby become interested and join in the support of the answering service.

General service district committees sometimes are responsible for starting an answering service. If possible, before making such a decision, the group conscience of all groups involved should be consulted, in order to ensure both financial support and a supply of volunteers to take Twelfth Step calls.

Groups are usually aware that the service is filling a real need and consequently are willing to support it. It is important to be assured in advance of support and of willingness to stick with the answering service until it has a chance to catch on and prove its worth.

The importance of keeping the list of volunteer Twelfth-Step workers up to date and on a rotating basis cannot be over-emphasized.

A Few Suggestions: Getting Started

1. Check with your area, district and nearby central or intergroup office to make sure this service is not duplicating an already existing A.A. service.

2. Start small, and remember “Easy Does It.” It is easier to expand than to reduce services.
3. Abide by the group conscience of the groups involved. Take care to separate individual opinions from group conscience.
4. Generally answering services are listed under “Alcoholics Anonymous” or “A.A.” in the local telephone directory.
5. Since many people seek help via an Internet search, consider getting the answering service number listed on a local A.A. website and on G.S.O.’s A.A. website www.aa.org (contact the Group Services desk at groupservices@aa.org for the A.A. Answering Service Information Form and for more information).

Volunteer Support of A.A. Members

1. Consider the need for a responsible person to take charge.
2. In areas that use volunteers only, rather than a commercial answering service, there are many options available: call forwarding, voice-mail, a cell phone passed among volunteers, a voice-activated prompt system that gives callers options, etc.
3. If you cannot or do not choose to use a commercial service, start out with two A.A. members — a man and a woman, each with a reasonable length of sobriety — to handle the calls.
4. Consider the number of A.A. people available to answer Twelfth Step calls.
5. It is suggested that volunteer Twelfth Step workers should have at least six months sobriety and should state the days and hours when they will be available for calls.
6. Be sure that the list of A.A. volunteers is current and active.
7. Consider providing volunteer training and a list of suggested tips and referral numbers.

A SAMPLING OF SOME OF THE EXPERIENCES THAT WERE SHARED WITH US

“We asked for a show of hands at just one meeting, and seven people indicated they had come to A.A. through the answering service. Is it worth it? We should say it is!”

“We are pleased with our answering service. We have ‘twelfth stepped’ the operators, and they are gracious and sympathetic. We feel fortunate and grateful.”

“From the time our service was started, the attendance at our meetings increased tremendously. We have some volunteers who started with our answering service seven years ago and are still at it, on a rotating basis.”

A.A.® Guidelines **For A.A. Members Employed in the Alcoholism Field**

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

A.A. Guidelines are compiled from the shared experience of A.A. members in various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada). In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy, except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an *informed* group conscience.

These Guidelines are for A.A. members who are employed in the field of alcoholism. This can cover a variety of jobs in the alcoholism world: social workers, nurses, counselors and those who head national or local programs. A.A. contributors to these Guidelines overwhelmingly agreed that it is professional skill and experience, not A.A. membership, which qualifies one for professional positions.

WHAT KINDS OF A. A. EXPERIENCE CAN BE HELPFUL IN THE ALCOHOLISM FIELD?

1. Several years of good, uninterrupted A.A. sobriety would be important in tackling any paid alcoholism job, or enrolling in an alcoholism training program. Five years was mentioned most frequently, but a couple of people suggested three.
2. Some A.A.s have held positions as “trusted servants” in A.A., and at the same time worked for alcoholism agencies. The General Service Conference has affirmed that an A.A. employed in the alcoholism field could be eligible for service within the Fellowship provided he or she has the necessary A.A. qualifications.
3. Understanding of A.A. Traditions and how they developed out of experience is “absolutely indispensable” for A.A.s employed in the alcoholism field. “To deepen my understanding, I read the books *Alcoholics Anonymous*, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, and *A.A. Comes of Age* over and over,” one man wrote.
4. For information about education, prevention or alcoholism in general, you may wish to contact the following agency:
National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)
www.niaaa.nih.gov
5. Some have found it helpful to have a sponsor who does not work in the alcoholism field.

HOW CAN ONE FULFILL BOTH ROLES SUCCESSFULLY?

Keep it perfectly clear in your own mind which context you are functioning in and stick to one role at a time.

One way to do this, several program directors noted, is to be sure that job titles never contain the initials “A.A.” Members working in the field of alcoholism tell us that professional agencies save themselves lots of grief by using the term “alcoholism counselor,” *never* “A.A. counselor.”

Other shared experience points out that it is important to maintain, outside or in addition to your job, a personal A.A. life. Also, to participate regularly to A.A. meetings — not as a “guest expert,” but as an A.A. member trying to stay sober.

Some A.A.s refuse to discuss their job with other A.A. members or at an A.A. meeting. At the other extreme, there are those who talk easily about both in all settings. As one person put it, “From nine to five on my job, I am a paid professional. But after hours, I turn into just another alcoholic trying to improve the quality of my sober life.”

A recommendation of the 1978 A.A. General Service Conference, dealing with A.A. groups in treatment facilities, concluded: “It was felt that A.A.s employed by the facility should not run the A.A. groups at the facility.”

A majority of A.A. members seemed to feel that what is needed most is good common sense. Keep it simple. Approach each situation on its own merits. Be sure you are deeply acquainted with A.A. Traditions and their application. Be sensitive to keep professional terminology separate from A.A. language.

“I never sponsor or Twelfth Step the clients I meet on my job,” one counselor wrote. “I counsel them and arrange for other A.A.s to do the Twelfth Stepping. But at my A.A. meetings, I Twelfth Step newcomers like everyone else — being careful, of course, not to confuse my sponsees and my clients. And in A.A., I am careful to avoid all professional-sounding jargon.” Another professional said, “I cannot afford to start mistaking my professional work with alcoholics for the healing process provided me by the A.A. Steps and meetings.”

WHAT ABOUT FUND-RAISING, RESEARCH, THE A.A. DIRECTORIES, SINGLENESSE OF PURPOSE AND PROBLEMS OTHER THAN ALCOHOLISM?

Experience has shown that these four subjects can cause misunderstandings between A.A. and the professional world. However, such problems can easily be solved, if not avoided.

Fund-Raising: There is agreement that A.A. members' names should never be used in fund-raising or in any way that might imply A.A. endorsement of or affiliation with any program or organization.

According to Tradition Seven, no A.A. office or group accepts financial contributions or gifts from non-A.A. sources. In accord with Traditions Six and Ten, A.A. is not allied with and does not endorse or oppose any other organization or program. See pp. 155-165 and 176-179 in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and pp. 107-114 and other sections in *A.A. Comes of Age* for the principles behind the Tradition.

Research: Some A.A. members are not interested in alcoholism research, and some even fear that such research could publicize their A.A. membership. However, a number of worthwhile research projects involving A.A. members as private citizens have been accomplished. There is a service piece available from G.S.O.:

“Memo on Participation of A.A. Members in Research and on Other non-A.A. Surveys.”

A.A. Directories: The purpose of these directories is to enable A.A. members to get in touch with each other in regard to A.A. matters *only*. The 1994 General Service Conference recommended that G.S.O. not provide A.A. confidential directories outside the Fellowship. However, the Directory of Central Offices/Intergroups and Answering Services is available to treatment facilities and alcoholism agencies.

Singleness of Purpose and Problems Other than Alcoholism: Some professionals refer to alcoholism and drug addiction as “substance abuse” or “chemical dependency.” Nonalcoholics are, therefore, sometimes introduced to A.A. and encouraged to attend A.A. meetings. Anyone may attend open A.A. meetings, but only those with a drinking problem may attend closed meetings.

ANONYMITY

Tradition Eleven: *Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.*

Tradition Twelve: *Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.*

The values of these Traditions for individual recovery, as well as protection of our Fellowship, are clearly spelled out in *A.A. Comes of Age*, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, and the pamphlets “A.A. Tradition — How it Developed” and “Understanding Anonymity.”

Practically no one recommends setting up a rigid policy for yourself and never deviating from it no matter what the circumstances. “Speaking to troubled alcoholic clients,” one man wrote, “maybe you could help them with your own story — but it is also possible this might hinder their own affiliation with A.A. They may not understand your motive.

“Remember that what you do can affect yourself, your listeners, and A.A. as a whole,” he advised. “To sum up, I’d say examine your conscience fearlessly, then pray for guidance in each case.”

ONE HAT– EVEN AT PUBLIC LEVEL

Keeping the “one hat” in mind, whether or not you discuss your own A.A. membership is your own affair, as long as you do not

do it at the public level of print, radio, films, the internet, or other public media.

A.A. members employed in the field who communicate about recovery from a professional point of view — through blogging and other public media — find it helpful to stick to “the hat” of the professional, and not that of the A.A. member. This avoids confusion as to the nonprofessional nature of A.A. and also honors our Eleventh and Twelfth Traditions — A.A. has no spokesperson.

IT CAN BE DONE

For many years, A.A. members have been working professionally in the field of alcoholism. In 1944 Marty M., one of the first women in A.A., started to educate the public about alcoholism, with the full support of Dr. Bob, Bill W., and other early A.A.s. They saw then that the organizing and fund raising necessary for public education on alcoholism were outside A.A.’s ability and primary purpose.

By 1957, as Bill W. pointed out in *A.A. Comes of Age*, many A.A.s were already successfully employed to work on alcoholism problems by non-A.A. organizations in such capacities as social workers, researchers, educators, nurses, personnel advisers, counselors, and other professionals.

“We see that we have no right or need to discourage A.A.s who wish to work as individuals in these wider fields,” wrote Bill W. “It would be actually antisocial were we to discourage them.” (*A.A. Comes of Age*, p. 117).

Many A.A.s have made remarkable professional contributions to the world’s knowledge and understanding of alcoholism, while acting fully within both the letter and the spirit of the A.A. Traditions. It can be done; it has been done.

RESOURCES

G.S.O.’s A.A. website, www.aa.org, is a valuable resource for both A.A. members and professionals who may come into contact with alcoholics.

Additionally, you can direct inquiries to the Cooperation with the Professional Community assignment at G.S.O. by calling (212) 870-3400 or emailing cpc@aa.org

www.aa.org