

PUBLIC INFORMATION : CONVENING DINNERS/LUNCHEONS

Inviting local professionals involved with helping alcoholics to a lunch or dinner can be a valuable public information exercise. It is an excellent opportunity to provide information on Alcoholics Anonymous to these professionals, some of whom will be unaware of our role in helping the sick and suffering alcoholic. This can be done at Group, District or Area level.

Do your homework first. Things to consider are:

- How many professionals are you going to invite? A corresponding number of AA members should also be in attendance.
- Are you targeting a specific group, such as health care workers (doctors, nurses) etc. or will you be inviting a broad range of professionals? Target groups are listed on the PI Planner available from General Service Office.
- Format of meeting:

Suggestion:

Before the meal: an AA member gives a brief explanation of the Alcoholics Anonymous programme of recovery. You may also want to invite a professional who has had some experience with AA to give a short talk on his/her experience.

After the meal: No more than four AA speakers (2 men and 2 women) to briefly tell their story. No more than 5 minutes per speaker should be allocated.

Finish: with time for questions.

- Do your preliminary costings:
 - o Select an appropriate venue and make sure that there will be no overcrowding.
 - o Cost of meal to be served. Make sure that you provide an appetising meal. Buffet style lunches are ideal.
 - o Other costs – hire of microphone, etc.
 - o An event of this type is covered by the Public Liability Insurance Policy held by the General Service Board. You should register the event with General Service Office and you will be issued a Certificate of Currency, which may be required by the venue landlord.
 - o If you do not have adequate funds in reserve, start fundraising. It is very important that you get the involvement of local groups. Remember, the purpose of this exercise is not only to provide information to professionals. It is also to carry the message to the sick alcoholic. Involving local groups will generate enthusiasm and support.

- Book the venue and organise catering. Provide them with anticipated attendance numbers. You should organise three months in advance of the event.
- Issue invitations to speakers and let them know time allocated and what they will be required to speak on.
- Experience has shown that often, many professionals are invited but few attend: an improved positive response may come from 'the personal touch' rather than just receiving an invitation out of the blue from an unfamiliar organisation.
- Issue invitations to local AA members to attend. Let them know that numbers will have to be limited, so participation will be on a first come-first served basis.
- Issue invitations to professionals. The invitations should look professional and make sure that you ask for an RSVP by a certain date.
- Once you have confirmed attendance numbers, let the venue know.
- Organise seating arrangements. Ideally organise round tables of eight. Seat AA members next to professionals. Prepare place cards.
- Prepare information packs for giving away. These should include a selection of appropriate literature, information on local meetings and contact telephone numbers.
- Two weeks before the event, follow up with phone call to confirm attendance.
- Organise AA members to greet people. Offer tea/coffee on arrival.
- Following the event, write to all professionals who attended, thanking them for their participation and letting them know you are available to help at any time.